



The Letter of James
Bible Study Session 11
James 4:1-10
“Stopping Wars”

Study By
Lorin L Cranford

Greek NT

4.1 Πόθεν πόλεμοι και πόθεν μάχαι ἐν ὑμῖν; οὐκ ἐντεῦθεν, ἐκ τῶν ἡδονῶν ὑμῶν τῶν στρατευομένων ἐν τοῖς μέλεσιν ὑμῶν; 2 ἐπιθυμεῖτε και οὐκ ἔχετε, φονεύετε και ζηλοῦτε και οὐ δύνασθε ἐπιτυχεῖν, μάχεσθε και πολεμεῖτε, οὐκ ἔχετε διὰ τὸ μὴ αἰτεῖσθαι ὑμᾶς, 3 αἰτεῖτε και οὐ λαμβάνετε διότι κακῶς αἰτεῖσθε, ἵνα ἐν ταῖς ἡδοναῖς ὑμῶν δαπανήσητε. 4 μοιχαλίδες, οὐκ οἶδατε ὅτι ἡ φιλία τοῦ κόσμου ἐχθρα τοῦ θεοῦ ἐστίν; ὃς ἐὰν οὖν βουληθῆ φίλος εἶναι τοῦ κόσμου, ἐχθρὸς τοῦ θεοῦ καθίσταται. 5 ἢ δοκεῖτε ὅτι κενῶς ἡ γραφή λέγει πρὸς φθόνον ἐπιποθεῖ τὸ πνεῦμα ὃ κατώκισεν ἐν ἡμῖν, 6 μείζονα δὲ δίδωσιν χάριν; διὸ λέγει ὁ θεὸς ὑπερηφάνοις ἀντιπάσσεται, ταπεινοῖς δὲ δίδωσιν χάριν.

7 ὑποτάγητε οὖν τῷ θεῷ, ἀντίστητε δὲ τῷ διαβόλῳ και φεύξεται ἀφ' ὑμῶν, 8 ἐγγίσατε τῷ θεῷ και ἐγγιεῖ ὑμῖν. καθαρίσατε χεῖρας, ἁμαρτωλοί, και ἀγνίσσατε καρδίας, δίψυχοι. 9 ταλαιπωρήσατε και πενήθησατε και κλαύσατε. ὁ γέλως ὑμῶν εἰς πένθος μετατραπήτω και ἡ χαρὰ εἰς κατήφειαν. 10 ταπεινώθητε ἐνώπιον κυρίου και ὑψώσει ὑμᾶς.

La Biblia de las Américas

1 ¿De dónde vienen las guerras y los conflictos entre vosotros? ¿No vienen de vuestras pasiones que combaten en vuestros miembros? 2 Codiciáis y no tenéis, por eso cometéis homicidio. Sois envidiosos y no podéis obtener, por eso combatís y hacéis guerra. No tenéis, porque no pedís. 3 Pedís y no recibís, porque pedís con malos propósitos, para gastarlo en vuestros placeres. 4 ¡Oh almas adúlteras! ¿No sabéis que la amistad del mundo es enemistad hacia Dios? Por tanto, el que quiere ser amigo del mundo, se constituye enemigo de Dios. 5 ¿O pensáis que la Escritura dice en vano: El celosamente anhela el Espíritu que ha hecho morar en nosotros? 6 Pero El da mayor gracia. Por eso dice: DIOS RESISTE A LOS SOBERBIOS PERO DA GRACIA A LOS HUMILDES.

7 Por tanto, someteos a Dios. Resistid, pues, al diablo y huirá de vosotros. 8 Acercaos a Dios, y El se acercará a vosotros. Limpiad vuestras manos, pecadores; y vosotros de doble ánimo, purificad vuestros corazones. 9 Afligíos, lamentad y llorad; que vuestra risa se torne en llanto y

NRSV

4.1 Those conflicts and disputes among you, where do they come from? Do they not come from your cravings that are at war within you? 2 You want something and do not have it; so you commit murder. And you covet something and cannot obtain it; so you engage in disputes and conflicts. You do not have, because you do not ask. 3 You ask and do not receive, because you ask wrongly, in order to spend what you get on your pleasures. 4 Adulterers! Do you not know that friendship with the world is enmity with God? Therefore whoever wishes to be a friend of the world becomes an enemy of God. 5 Or do you suppose that it is for nothing that the scripture says, “God yearns jealously for the spirit that he has made to dwell in us”? 6 But he gives all the more grace; therefore it says, “God opposes the proud, but gives grace to the humble.”

7 Submit yourselves therefore to God. Resist the devil, and he will flee from you. 8 Draw near to God, and he will draw near to you. Cleanse your hands, you sinners, and purify your hearts,

NLT

4.1 What is causing the quarrels and fights among you? Isn't it the whole army of evil desires at war within you? 2 You want what you don't have, so you scheme and kill to get it. You are jealous for what others have, and you can't possess it, so you fight and quarrel to take it away from them. And yet the reason you don't have what you want is that you don't ask God for it. 3 And even when you do ask, you don't get it because your whole motive is wrong -- you want only what will give you pleasure. 4 You adulterers! Don't you realize that friendship with this world makes you an enemy of God? I say it again, that if your aim is to enjoy this world, you can't be a friend of God. 5 What do you think the Scriptures mean when they say that the Holy Spirit, whom God has placed within us, jealously longs for us to be faithful? 6 He gives us more and more strength to stand against such evil desires. As the Scriptures say, “God sets himself against the proud, but he shows favor to the humble.”

7 So humble yourselves before God. Resist the Devil, and he

vuestro gozo en tristeza.
10 Humillaos en la presencia del Señor y El os exaltará.



you double-minded. 9 Lament and mourn and weep. Let your laughter be turned into mourning and your joy into dejection. 10 Humble yourselves before the Lord, and he will exalt you.

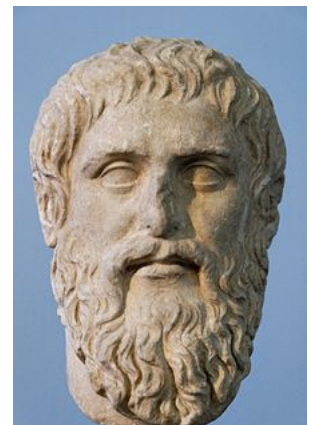
will flee from you. 8 Draw close to God, and God will draw close to you. Wash your hands, you sinners; purify your hearts, you hypocrites. 9 Let there be tears for the wrong things you have done. Let there be sorrow and deep grief. Let there be sadness instead of laughter, and gloom instead of joy. 10 When you bow down before the Lord and admit your dependence on him, he will lift you up and give you honor.

The Study of the Text:¹

The Swiss theologian and Reformed Church pastor Karl Barth (1886 - 1968) on one occasion in Basel, Switzerland described the role of the sermon and the pastor this way: “He should hold a Bible in one hand and the daily newspaper in the other. The task of the sermon is to connect the two.” By that Dr. Barth meant the responsibility of the preacher is that the sermon is to enable God’s Word to address vital and relevant issues in one’s own world. The preacher is not a speaker, but rather a facilitator that provides God the platform to speak to His people through scripture.



Clearly James exemplifies this idea in 4:1-10 where he picks up a widely discussed theme in the ancient world and with biblical based modification applies it to the congregations he wrote to for them to find a way to resolve the developing conflicts in their churches. One of the popular catch phrases of our contemporary society is ‘conflict resolution.’ It has become a separate industry in the business and professional world. Increasingly church groups and Christian denominations set up a department with individuals supposedly trained especially in conflict resolution for churches. In the world of James, the Greek philosophers, and in particular Plato, had devoted considerable attention to the issue of human conflict. In some of his writings four centuries before James, the philosopher Plato had raised this issue using virtually the identical words of James in v. 1, Πόθεν πόλεμοι καὶ πόθεν μάχαι ἐν ὑμῖν; And in the initial answer of James in v. 1b, Plato was in substantial agreement with James’ reply to the beginning question. But the full response of James takes a very different direction than the one given by Plato in *Phaedo* and a few other writings.



As 1:19-27 and 3:13-18 especially have suggested, growing tensions were surfacing in at least some of the congregations that James’ targeted in his writing. Lack of respect for the views of others combined with some sense of spiritual elitism and a desire to control the thinking of the group was hurting the fellowship of these churches. Thus James picks up on a theme his Jewish Christian readers in the Diaspora would have been familiar with due to its popularity in Greek speaking circles. He revamps that theme to fit the developing situations in the churches and then applies a Christian solution to the problem of conflict. He does this in a masterful way that should help his readers see clearly the dangers lurking in not solving these tensions.

¹With each study we will ask two basic questions. First, what was the most likely meaning that the first readers of this text understood? This is called the ‘historical meaning’ of the text. That must be determined, because it becomes the foundation for the second question, “What does the text mean to us today?” For any applicational meaning of the text for modern life to be valid it must grow out of the historical meaning of the text. Otherwise, the perceived meaning becomes false and easily leads to wrong belief.

1. What did the text mean to the first readers?

Background:

Historical Setting.

External History. In the history of the copying of this passage across the first ten centuries of Christian history, only two places of variation in wording surface that the editors of the United Bible Societies *The Greek New Testament* (4th rev. ed.) considered important enough to impact the translation of this text. These two places show up in verses four and five.

In verse four, the direct address μοιχαλίδες is replaced with μοιχοὶ καὶ μοιχαλίδες in several manuscripts.² The meaning shift is slight and goes from “You adulteresses” to “You adulterers and adulteresses.” The feminine plural μοιχαλίδες is actually substantially blunter along the lines of “You whores.” The weight of the manuscript evidence is heavily in favor of the shorter reading.³

In verse five, the verb κατώκισεν, *has caused to dwell*, is replaced with one of several different spellings: κατώκησεν, *dwelt*, or κατώκεισεν, *may have dwelt*.⁴ The difficulty faced by the copyists centered in uncertainty over the subject of the verb.⁵ The adopted reading with κατώκισεν slightly stronger manuscript evidence in its favor, and should be the understood original reading.

As one would imagine, several more variations than these two surface when the totality of currently existing manuscripts of this passage are compared. The text apparatus of the *Novum Testamentum Graece* (27th rev. ed) gives this more complete listing.⁶ Again, a careful examination of



²{A} μοιχαλίδες P¹⁰⁰ N* A B 33 81 1175* 1241 1739 1852 it^{ar, ff, s, t} vg syr^p cop^{sa, bo} geo Augustine // μοιχοὶ καὶ μοιχαλίδες N² Ψ (322) 323 436 945 1067 1175^c 1243 1292 1409 1505 1611 1735 2138 2298 2344 2464 Byz [K L P] Lect syr^h slav

³“In scriptural imagery, μοιχαλῖς (adulteress) is used figuratively of Israel as the unfaithful spouse of Jehovah (for example, Ps 73:27; Isa 54:5; Jer 3:20; Ezek 16 and 23; Hos 9:1; and similarly in the NT in Matt 12:39; 16:4; Mark 8:38). When copyists, however, misunderstood the word here in its literal sense, they were puzzled why only women were mentioned and therefore considered it right to add a reference to men (μοιχοὶ) as well. The shorter reading is strongly supported by both Alexandrian and Western manuscripts.

“Nearly all interpreters understand the term as figurative language here. Therefore, if readers are likely to understand a literal translation as a reference to human marriage, a translation such as “You people aren’t faithful to God!” (CEV) may be better. Or, alternatively, a footnote could explain the scriptural imagery.”

[Roger L. Omanson and Bruce Manning Metzger, *A Textual Guide to the Greek New Testament: An Adaptation of Bruce M. Metzger’s Textual Commentary for the Needs of Translators* (Stuttgart: Deutsche Bibelgesellschaft, 2006), 475.]

⁴{B} κατώκισεν P⁷⁴ vid N B Ψ 1241 1739 slav // κατώκησεν 33 322 323 436 945 1067 1243 1292 1409 1505 1611 1735 1852 2138 2298 2344 Byz [K L P] Lect it^{ar, ff, l, s, t} vg syr^{(p), h} arm eth geo Nilus // κατώκεισεν A 81 1175 2464 I 680

⁵“The verb κατώκισεν has better manuscript support than the verb κατώκησεν (dwelt). Since the verb κατοικίφειν (to cause to dwell) occurs nowhere else in the NT, copyists were more likely to replace it with the much more common verb κατοικεῖν (to dwell), than vice versa. The reading in the text means ‘the spirit/Spirit which God has made to dwell in us.’ The variant reading means ‘the spirit/Spirit which dwells in us.’

“The translation of this verse is further complicated by the uncertainty regarding the subject of the verb ἐπιποθεῖ (longs for) and the uncertainty whether the phrase πρὸς φθόνον has a positive or negative nuance here. Interpretations include the following: (1) God is the subject of the verb and πρὸς φθόνον is positive. NRSV (also RSV, TOB, FC, and Seg) follows this interpretation: ‘God yearns jealously for the spirit that he has made to dwell in us.’ Dibelius (*A Commentary on the Epistle of James*, p. 224) notes that ‘spirit’ here is probably not the Divine Spirit in the Christian sense but rather is to be equated more with the ‘heart.’ (2) The human spirit, or the Holy Spirit, is the subject of the verb and πρὸς φθόνον refers to a longing for God. NJB says, ‘The longing of the spirit he sent to dwell in us is a jealous longing.’ (3) The human spirit is the subject of the verb and πρὸς φθόνον refers to a longing for the pleasures of the world. REB (similarly NIV and TEV) says, ‘Or do you suppose that scripture has no point when it says that the spirit which God implanted in us is filled with envious longings?’ (For more extensive discussions of the problems of translating this verse, see Martin, *James*, p. 141, notes f and g and pp. 149–51; Davids, *The Epistle of James*, pp. 162–64; Moo, *The Letter of James*, pp. 188–90; and Loh and Hatton, *A Handbook on the Letter from James*, pp. 142–46.)

[Roger L. Omanson and Bruce Manning Metzger, *A Textual Guide to the Greek New Testament: An Adaptation of Bruce M. Metzger’s Textual Commentary for the Needs of Translators* (Stuttgart: Deutsche Bibelgesellschaft, 2006), 475-76.]

⁶Jakobus 4,1

* 1 3-5 M vg sy^p (the sequencing of the words καὶ πόθεν μάχα ἐν ὑμῖν varies in different manuscripts)

| 4 5 1-3 A Ψ 623. (2464) pc; Cyr

| txt N B C P (33). 69. 81. 614. 630. 945. 1241. 1505. 1739 al ff sy^h; Hier

Jakobus 4,2

[φθονεῖτε Erasmus cj] (φονεύετε is replaced with φθονεῖτε)

these variations reveals that almost every one represents a stylistic effort to update to patterns considered more natural at the time of the manuscript copying. None of the variations reflect an alteration of the meaning of the text.

Thus we can exegete the adopted reading of the text with full confidence that it represents the original wording of the passage.

Internal History. The time and place markers inside the passage do not raise background historical issues of any significance. But the one indirect reference relates to the broad issue of the issue of civil unrest in society as a very popular topic of discussion in the ancient world. Two ancient philosophers prior to James have detailed discussions while using some of the same vocabulary as James does:

Philo, De Gigantibus, XI. 51: (49) And again, the scripture saith in another passage, “But stand thou here with me. For this is an oracle of God, which was given to the prophet, and his station was to be one of unmoved tranquillity by God, who always stands immovably; for it is indispensable, that all things which are placed by the side of him must be kept straight by such an undeviating rule. (50) On this account it is, as it seems to me, that excessive pride, named Jethro, marvelling at his unvarying and always equal choice of what was wise, a choice which always looked at the same things in the same way, was perplexed, and put a question to him in this form, “Why cost thou sit by thyself?” (51)⁷ *For any one who considers the continual war raging among men in the middle of peace, and existing, not merely among nations, and countries, and cities, but also among private houses, or I might rather say, between every individual man and the inexpressible and heavy storms which agitate the souls of men, which, by their evident impetuosity, throw into confusion*

* και ουκ εχ. κ P Ψ 322. 323. 614. 623. 1243. 1505. 1852 al ff vg^{sl} sy bo (Either και or δε is added before/after ουκ εχετε)
 | ουκ εχ. δε 945. 1241. 1739. 2298 pc
 | txt P¹⁰⁰ A B 33 M vg^{st,ww} sa

Jakobus 4,3

* δε P74vid P Ψ 69. 81. 623. 945. 1241. 1243. 1739. 2464 al (δε is inserted after αιτειτε)

Jakobus 4,4

* μοιχοι και κ² P Ψ m syh

| txt P100 κ*A B 33. 81. 1241. 1739 pc latt sy^p (μοιχοι και is added before μοιχαλιδες)

* τουτου κ vg sy (τούτου is inserted after κόσμου)

* εστιν τω θεω κ pc vg^{mss}; Firm (τοῦ θεοῦ ἐστιν is replaced with ἐστιν τῷ θεῷ)

Jakobus 4,5

[(cf Ps 41,2) τον θεον Wettstein cj] (φθόνον is replaced with τὸν θεὸν)

* κατωκησεν P 33 m sy(p) (κατόκησεν is replaced by κατόκησεν)

| txt P74 κ B Ψ 049. 1241. 1739 al (A 81 pc incert.)

Jakobus 4,7

* K L P Ψ 630. 1241. 1243 pm (δε is omitted by some manuscripts)

| txt κ A B 049. 33. 81. 323. 614. 1505. 1739 pm lat sy^h

Jakobus 4,8

* †εγγισει B pc (ἐγγιῖ is replaced by ἐγγίσει)

| txt κ A P Ψ 33. 1739 M

Jakobus 4,9

* 2 κ A; Aug^{pt} (καὶ κλαύσατε is omitted by a few manuscripts)

| – 36. 2344 al vg^{mss} sy^p bo^{ms}

* –στραφητω κ A Ψ 33 m (μετατραπήτω is replaced with μεταστραπήτω)

| txt P¹⁰⁰ B P 614. 630. 945. 1241. 1505. 1739 pc

Jakobus 4,10

* ουν κ pc vg^{ms} ac? (οὖν is inserted before ἐνώπιον)

* του κ. P¹⁰⁰ M (κυρίου either has the article τοῦ placed before it or is replaced by τοῦ θεοῦ)

| του θεου 945. 1241. 1739. 2298 pc vg^{ms} bo^{pt} ac

| txt κ A B K P Ψ 33. 81. 614. 630. 1505 al

[Eberhard Nestle, Erwin Nestle, Kurt Aland et al., *Novum Testamentum Graece*, 27. Aufl., rev. (Stuttgart: Deutsche Bibelstiftung, 1993), 594-95.]

⁷ ἰδὼν γάρ τις τὸν ἐν εἰρήνῃ συνεχῆ πόλεμον ἀνθρώπων οὐ κατὰ ἔθνη καὶ χώρας καὶ πόλεις ἀπὸ μόνον συνιστάμενον, ἀλλὰ καὶ κατ’ οἰκίαν, μᾶλλον δὲ καὶ καθ’ ἓνα ἄνδρα ἕκαστον, καὶ τὸν ἐν ταῖς ψυχαῖς ἄλεκτον καὶ βαρὺν χειμῶνα, ὃς ὑπὸ βιαιοτάτης φορᾶς τῶν κατὰ τὸν βίον πραγμάτων ἀναρριπίζεται τεθαύμακεν εἰκότως, εἴ τις ἐν χειμῶνι εὐδίαν ἢ ἐν κλύδωνι κυμαινούσης θαλάττης γαλήνην ἄγειν δύναται

[Peder Borgen, Kåre Fuglseth and Roald Skarsten, *The Works of Philo: Greek Text With Morphology* (Bellingham, WA: Logos Bible Software, 2005).]

all the affairs of life, may very naturally wonder, if in such a storm, any one can enjoy tranquillity, and can feel a calm in such a billowy state of the stormy sea.

Plato, Phaedo, 66C-D: [66b] And when they consider all this, must not true philosophers make a reflection, of which they will speak to one another in such words as these: We have found, they will say, a path of speculation which seems to bring us and the argument to the conclusion that while we are in the body, and while the soul is mingled with this mass of evil, our desire will not be satisfied, and our desire is of the truth. For the body is a source of endless trouble to us by reason of the mere requirement of food; and [66c]⁸ also is liable to diseases which overtake and impede us in the search after truth: and by filling us so full of loves, and lusts, and fears, and fancies, and idols, and every sort of folly, prevents our ever having, as people say, so much as a thought. *For whence come wars, and fightings, and factions? whence but from the body and the lusts of the body? For wars are occasioned by the love of money, and money has to be acquired for [66d] the sake and in the service of the body; and in consequence of all these things the time which ought to be given to philosophy is lost. Moreover, if there is time and an inclination toward philosophy, yet the body introduces a turmoil and confusion and fear into the course of speculation, and hinders us from seeing the truth; and all experience shows that if we would have pure knowledge of anything we must be quit of the body, and the soul in herself must behold [66e] all things in themselves:* then I suppose that we shall attain that which we desire, and of which we say that we are lovers, and that is wisdom; not while we live, but after death, as the argument shows; for if while in company with the body, the soul cannot have pure knowledge, one of two things seems to follow -- either knowledge is not to be attained at all, or, if at all, after death. For then, and not till then, the soul [67a] will be in herself alone and without the body. In this present life, I reckon that we make the nearest approach to knowledge when we have the least possible concern or interest in the body, and are not saturated with the bodily nature, but remain pure until the hour when God himself is pleased to release us. And then the foolishness of the body will be cleared away and we shall be pure and hold converse with other pure souls, and know of ourselves the clear light everywhere; [67b] and this is surely the light of truth. For no impure thing is allowed to approach the pure. These are the sort of words, Simmias, which the true lovers of wisdom cannot help saying to one another, and thinking. You will agree with me in that?

These are but two examples of many discussions about social unrest in the world among the philosophers in the ancient world.⁹ Various writers had their own ideas about the source of such conflict. Clearly each writer approaches the subject within the framework of his own particular Weltanschauung, his particular view of reality. But the fascinating aspect for me is the common interest in exploring why people of different cultures etc. cannot live peacefully with one another. James had some awareness of these discussions that were widely circulated in the ancient world, and very creatively uses the topic as the starting point for a discussion of the sources of conflict and disharmony inside the communities of faith that he was writing to with this document.

One side note to be explored in greater detail in the exegesis of the passage is that the terms πόλεμοι καὶ μάχαι, *wars and fightings*, although literally referring to physical violence could and often were used to refer to verbal conflict between individuals and groups of individuals. James' use of these terms at a figurative level of meaning is quite normal for writers in the ancient world. His Jewish world of the late 50s clearly was beginning to come unraveled through armed insurrection against the Romans by the Zealot movement. But James does not address this issue; he sensed an even greater problem inside the communities of believers who were struggling to work together in harmony and peace, and this was his focus. Although some traces of the philosophical theme of 'envy,' reflected more clearly in the references ζήλος καὶ ἐριθεία (cf. 3:14-16), are present in his discussion, a mistake is made in trying to interpret 4:1-10 around the theme of an theoretical discussion of the wrongness of envy in the Greek philosophical tradition of his day. James is far too practical minded than to spend time in such theoretical discussions.

⁸*Phaedo* 66c: [66ξ] τροφήν ἔτι δέ, ἂν τινες νόσοι προσπέσωσιν, ἐμποδίζουσιν ἡμῶν τὴν τοῦ ὄντος θήραν. ἐρώτων δὲ καὶ ἐπιθυμιῶν καὶ φόβων καὶ εἰδῶλων παντοδαπῶν καὶ φλυαρίας ἐμπίμπλησιν ἡμᾶς πολλῆς, ὥστε τὸ λεγόμενον ὡς ἀληθῶς τῷ ὄντι ὑπ' αὐτοῦ οὐδὲ φρονῆσαι ἡμῖν ἐγγίγνεται οὐδέποτε οὐδέν. *καὶ γὰρ πολέμους καὶ στάσεις καὶ μάχας οὐδὲν ἄλλο παρέχει ἢ τὸ σῶμα καὶ αἱ τοῦτου ἐπιθυμίαι. διὰ γὰρ τὴν τῶν χρημάτων κτήσιν πάντες οἱ πόλεμοι γίνονται, τὰ δὲ χρήματα [66δ] ἀναγκαζόμεθα κτᾶσθαι διὰ τὸ σῶμα, δουλεύοντες τῇ τοῦτου θεραπείᾳ: καὶ ἐκ τούτου ἀσχολίαν ἄγομεν φιλοσοφίας περὶ διὰ πάντα ταῦτα. τὸ δ' ἔσχατον πάντων ὅτι, ἐάν τις ἡμῖν καὶ σχολὴ γένηται ἅπ' αὐτοῦ καὶ τραπέμεθα πρὸς τὸ σκοπεῖν τι, ἐν ταῖς ζητήσεσιν αὐτῷ πανταχοῦ παραπίπτον θόρυβον παρέχει καὶ ταραχὴν καὶ ἐκπλήττει, ὥστε μὴ δύνασθαι ὑπ' αὐτοῦ καθορᾶν τάληθές. ἀλλὰ τῷ ὄντι ἡμῖν δέδεικται ὅτι, εἰ μέλλομέν ποτε καθαρῶς τι εἶσεσθαι, [66ε] ἀπαλλακτέον αὐτοῦ καὶ αὐτῇ τῇ ψυχῇ θεατέον αὐτὰ τὰ πράγματα*

⁹"This idea appears frequently in the philosophical tradition from the time of Plato on, and especially where a dualistic view-point influences the ethic."⁴¹ [Martin Dibelius and Heinrich Greeven, *James: A Commentary on the Epistle of James*, Hermeneia—a Critical and Historical Commentary on the Bible (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1976), 215.]

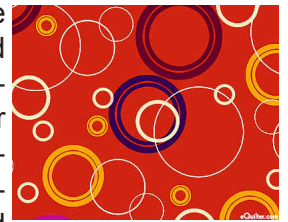
Literary:

Genre: The general tone of 4:1-10 is a continuation of the *paraenesis* that we have consistently seen in the document up to this point.

The one subcategory that surfaces in the passage is James' citation of an Old Testament passage. This is the fourth and final place in the entire document where an OT text is used directly as a scripture proof in support of James' point: 2:8 (Lev. 19:18 et al); 2:11 (Ex. 20:14/ Deut. 5:18); 2:23 (Gen. 15:6); and 4:6 (Prov. 3:34 LXX). That the language and thought world of the Old Testament played a formative role in shaping the contours of James' expression is unquestionable. And the Wisdom tradition of both the Old Testament and intertestamental Judaism in particular is pivotal to understanding James.¹⁰ But direct citation of OT texts are very limited in James, say in comparison to the Jewish Christian orientation of Matthew's Gospel with extensive quoting of the OT, mostly from the LXX but occasionally from the Hebrew text tradition (in translation). Allusions to OT principles and individuals are fairly commonplace in James, such as 5:10-11 to the prophets and Job.

This way of using the Hebrew Bible by James both identifies him with intertestamental Judaism, and at the same time distinguishes him from it. Much of this extremely voluminous body of writings will not often cite specific texts from the OT but will be profoundly influenced by the thinking and language of the Hebrew Bible, and additionally by the Greek translation, the Septuagint (LXX). Particularly, the Diaspora oriented Jewish writings, of which there are literally hundreds of existing works known in our day, will reflect patterns similar to that of James. Yet James remains clearly Christian in his perspective while conversant with this Jewish tradition.

Context: Different opinions on the literary setting of 4:1-10 will surface in the commentaries.¹¹ Clearly a connection to 3:13-18 exists on the basis of some shared vocabulary along with the transitional nature of verse eighteen. And in a manner consistent with the observed pattern to this point, James will frequently reach back to earlier statements which is somewhat accurately pictured as "bubbling circles" from the quilting pattern diagram on the right. Clearly this is the case in 4:1-10 with repeated vocabulary, extended ideas from earlier statements (1:27b in the background of 4:1-10), and related themes that complement one another.



Chapter four of James possesses some inter connectedness with the three distinct pericopes of 4:1-10, 4:11-12, and 4:13-17. Yet these three passages are treating separate themes and should not be viewed as progressions of one to the other. The last one, 4:13-17, will reflect traits that will link it more closely to 5:1-16, than with the preceding two pericopes in chapter four.

Some commentators struggle with the language of 4:7-10 in relation to 4:1-6.¹² In spite of these perceived difficulties, the text seems to clearly move from the substructural point of problem (vv. 1-6) to solution (vv. 7-10), with the quote from Prov. 3:34 both summarizing and transitioning between the two units. James

¹⁰“Despite all these resemblances to the wisdom tradition, however, James is scarcely defined by it. James' appropriation of the legal and prophetic aspects of the biblical tradition are equally important. And although James shares many wisdom motifs, no biblical wisdom writing offers a genuine literary antecedent for the form of this composition as a whole. James has fewer aphorisms and more argument than either Proverbs or Sirach. James is less oblique in its exhortation than the Wisdom of Solomon, less introverted than Qoheleth and less dialogical than Job. Above all, James' distinctive moral voice, as we shall see below, cannot be collapsed into any of its biblical predecessors.” [Luke Timothy Johnson, vol. 37A, *The Letter of James: A New Translation With Introduction and Commentary*, Anchor Yale Bible (New Haven; London: Yale University Press, 2008), 33-34.]

¹¹The view of Dibelius in the Hermeneia commentary series has been virtually discarded by contemporary scholarship. He saw James as nothing more than isolated sayings without any identifiable context inside the document. Even 4:1-6 is to be detached from 4:7-10 as two separate and largely unrelated pericopes. On the other extreme is an older tradition that sought to find a consistently progressive line of thinking in James -- something that few if any modern commentators would try to argue for today.

¹²“The link between 4:6 and the following passage (4:7–10) is less easy to see, in spite of the connective οὖν in v 7 (Johnson, “Friendship,” 168). Nevertheless it is obvious that we are dealing with a rhetorically defined unit in which the indicative statement of v 6—God gives grace to the humble (ταπεινοῖς)—is succeeded by the series of imperatives. These latter admonitions reach a climax in the call, ‘Humble yourselves (ταπεινώθητε) in the Lord's presence,’ thus forming an inclusion in the overall topos. 4:6 may well set the ‘thematic announcement’ (Schökel, “James 5,2”) which is then enlarged and applied in the following section, at least up to 4:10 (Davids notes that this is as far as the unit extends, 165). The promise of ‘grace to the humble’ is answered by the axiom in v 10.” [Ralph P. Martin, vol. 48, *James*, Word Biblical Commentary (Dallas: Word, Incorporated, 1998), 142.]

Also
 108 **you covet**
 and
 109 **--- are not able to obtain;**
 110 **you fight**
 and
 111 **--- do battle.**

112 **You do not possess**
 because you do not ask;

113 ^{4.3} **you ask**
 and
 114 **--- do not receive**
 because you ask wrongly,
 so that you might squander your requests
 on your passions.

^{4.4} You harlots,
 115 **do you not know**
 that friendship with the world is enmity
 with God?

 Therefore
 116 **whoever chooses to be the world's friend** **shows himself**
 to be God's enemy.

^{4.5} Or
 117 **do you suppose**
 that the Scripture to no purpose says |
 /-----|
 that the spirit...tends toward envy?
 which He caused to live in us

^{4.6} But
 118 **He gives greater grace;**

 wherefore
 119 **it says,**
 "God sets Himself against the proud;
 but
 --- gives grace to the humble."

^{4.7} Therefore
 120 **be submissive to God;**

 and
 121 **be opposed to the devil,**
 and
 122 **he will flee from you;**

^{4.8} draw near to God
 and
 124 **He will draw near to you.**

You sinners,
 125 **cleanse your hands,**
 and
 you double-minded ones,
 126 **purify your hearts.**

 127 ^{4.9} **Become miserable**
 and
 128 **begin mourning**
 and
 129 **start weeping;**

 130 **Let your laughter be turned into mourning**
 and
 131 **--- your joy -- ----- into gloominess.**

 132 ^{4.10} **Be humbled before the Lord,**
 and
 133 **He will exalt you.**

The rhetorical structure of this pericope is rather well defined. The author's thesis position is once more introduced by a rhetorical question (statement 103) then followed by his own answer (statement 104). At this point James follows a typical line of reasoning found in Plato, Philo, and other philosophers, although he is addressing the general topic to conflict inside the communities of believers.

The second section (statements 105 - 119) represent his elaboration of his position about the source of disruption and chaos in human experience. This expansion unfolds in two segments: (1) statements 105 through 114 develop a logical exposition of the nature of 'passion' set forth in statement 104; (2) statements 115 through 119 build on the first section with an exposition on 'friendship with the world,' which is at the heart of 'passion.'

Statements 105 to 111 pose one of the more controversial issues in the entire passage, in that most commentators -- untrained in literary structural analysis -- don't know what to do with this string of rapidly given admonitions and declarations. But the above diagram clearly presents the patterns structurally present in the Greek text, as two sets of expressions in parallel to one another with progressive emphasis (step parallelism):

105 ^{4.2} You crave	108	Also you covet	Desire
		and	
106 --- do not possess;	109	--- are not able to obtain;	Unfulled desire:
107 you kill.	110	you fight	Action(s)
		and	
	111	--- do battle.	

The parallelism of these two sets of expressions is clear and it built off the conceptual structure of sinful desires (#s 105 and 108) that are unfulfilled (#s 106 and 109). The result is sinful action (#s 107 and 110-111). The more severe consequence of φονεύετε, *murder*, is introduced first for dramatic effect, because in the second set of #s 110-111, James returns to the initial allusion to πόλεμοι καὶ μάχαι (v. 1) with the verb forms μάχεσθε καὶ πολεμεῖτε in a chiasmic sequence of AB // BA' with verse 1a. This ties these subsequent statements clearly back into the opening question in verse one.

Then in statement 112 James picks up on the verb οὐκ ἔχετε in statement 106 with an exact repeating of it. This pulls statement 109 into the concept. These two statements then provide a launchpad for statements 112-114 in which James identifies why the desires continue unrealized. The concept of asking in statements 112 (τὸ μὴ αἰτεῖσθαι) and 113 (αἰτεῖτε) pull these two statements together. Clearly, statements 112-114 then lay the foundation for the emphasis on worldliness in statements 115-119.

The third section (statements 120 - 133) apply the previous discussion through a series of rapid fire admonitions to abandon worldliness and return to God. This is the solution to the issue of disruption of rela-

tionships.

In summary, disruption of relationships with others is due to passion. Passion by nature has an orientation to this world, not to God. The solution then is to abandon the world and return to God.

You will notice from the block diagram that the writing style of James changes somewhat here from the previous passages. A lot higher ratio of admonitions (imperative mood Greek verbs) is found here. Also, the sentences are characteristically very short and pointed in meaning. Additionally, references to Old Testament scripture passages play a more important role in this pericope than is usually the case in this NT book. The effect is to pick up the tempo of thought expression with more forceful statement of viewpoint. Ironically, the topic of this pericope is commonly found in the non-religious Greco-Roman literature all the way back to the classical Greek philosophers some three hundred plus years earlier.

Exegesis of the Text.

Conceptually the entire passage is organized around the structure of a problem (vv. 1-6) that needs solving (vv. 7-10). That will form the basis of our exegeting the verses.

a) The Problem of conflict, vv. 1-6:

4.1 Πόθεν πόλεμοι καὶ πόθεν μάχαι ἐν ὑμῖν; οὐκ ἐντεῦθεν, ἐκ τῶν ἡδονῶν ὑμῶν τῶν στρατευομένων ἐν τοῖς μέλεσιν ὑμῶν; 2 ἐπιθυμεῖτε καὶ οὐκ ἔχετε, φονεύετε καὶ ζηλοῦτε καὶ οὐ δύνασθε ἐπιτυχεῖν, μάχεσθε καὶ πολεμεῖτε, οὐκ ἔχετε διὰ τὸ μὴ αἰτεῖσθαι ὑμᾶς, 3 αἰτεῖτε καὶ οὐ λαμβάνετε διότι κακῶς αἰτεῖσθε, ἵνα ἐν ταῖς ἡδοναῖς ὑμῶν δαπανήσητε. 4 μοιχαλίδες, οὐκ οἴδατε ὅτι ἡ φιλία τοῦ κόσμου ἐχθρα τοῦ θεοῦ ἐστίν; ὅς ἐάν οὖν βουληθῆ φίλος εἶναι τοῦ κόσμου, ἐχθρὸς τοῦ θεοῦ καθίσταται. 5 ἢ δοκεῖτε ὅτι κενῶς ἡ γραφή λέγει· πρὸς φθόνον ἐπιποθεῖ τὸ πνεῦμα ὃ κατώκισεν ἐν ἡμῖν, 6 μείζονα δὲ δίδωσιν χάριν; διὸ λέγει·

ὁ θεὸς ὑπερηφάνους ἀντιτάσσεται,
ταπεινοῖς δὲ δίδωσιν χάριν.

4.1 Those conflicts and disputes among you, where do they come from? Do they not come from your cravings that are at war within you? 2 You want something and do not have it; so you commit murder. And you covet something and cannot obtain it; so you engage in disputes and conflicts. You do not have, because you do not ask. 3 You ask and do not receive, because you ask wrongly, in order to spend what you get on your pleasures. 4 Adulterers! Do you not know that friendship with the world is enmity with God? Therefore whoever wishes to be a friend of the world becomes an enemy of God. 5 Or do you suppose that it is for nothing that the scripture says, “God yearns jealously for the spirit that he has made to dwell in us”? 6 But he gives all the more grace; therefore it says,

“God opposes the proud,
but gives grace to the humble.”

The breakdown of these six verses is relatively clear, in spite of many commentators struggling with how they are put together. James identifies the topic to be discussed and then amplifies the nature of that problem by increasingly moving toward the assertion that worldliness lies at the heart of the conflicts that exist in church life.

Identifying the problem, v. 1. Πόθεν πόλεμοι καὶ πόθεν μάχαι ἐν ὑμῖν; οὐκ ἐντεῦθεν, ἐκ τῶν ἡδονῶν ὑμῶν τῶν στρατευομένων ἐν τοῖς μέλεσιν ὑμῶν; James begins with a pair of rhetorical questions. The first one raises the issue and the second one assumes an answer that James’ readers are expected to agree with.

The problem: The phrase πόλεμοι καὶ μάχαι literally means **wars and fightings**. If taken in its literal meaning then James is alluding to physical violence that is occurring in his world and that of his readers. This would then allude to various wars conducted by the Roman army. Or it could allude to the emerging Zealot rebellion about the Jews. But either of these understandings are very theoretical in nature and have little to do with either James or his readers directly.¹⁴ Additionally it is highly unlikely that physical violence was taking

¹⁴“The wars and conflicts in question are not external to the community (either within the Jewish community as Schlatter, 240–241, believes, or as a Zealotic revolutionary force among Roman Jews, as Reicke claims, *Diakonie*, 341–344); not only would such an interpretation fail to fit the preceding and following contexts, but it would take ἐν ὑμῖν in a most unnatural sense.” [Peter H. Davids, *The Epistle of James: A Commentary on the Greek Text*, New International Greek Testament Commentary (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1982), 156.]

place among the various communities of believers that James was targeting. One important point to remember is that this phrase πόλεμοι καὶ μάχαι also frequently refers to verbal conflicts among different groups, especially when both terms are used together.¹⁵ Thus another very likely possibility is that the terms are being used by James at a figurative level of meaning. But then what does he mean at the figurative level? Some interpreters believe that James in 4:1-10 are a part of a ‘topos’ discussion on envy that typically includes the language in 4:1-6 as a part of that discussion.¹⁶ But this pushes the discussion into an abstract level and is something that James does not do in this document. The most likely target in this discussion can be seen in the emerging profile of his readers in the background signals coming out of several pericopes. With the theme of speech in 1:19 where everyone insisting on talking at the same time was creating anger, in 1:26 where failure to control speech was seen as a signal of worthless religion, in 2:2-4 where showing partiality to wealthy church visitors with flattering words is condemned, in 2:15-17 where complete ignoring poor members in dire physical need takes place with insulting words by the spiritual leaders, in 3:1 where too many individuals aspired to become teachers who could dominate the life of the congregation, in 3:14-15 where the false wisdom of this world was adopted with divisive consequences in the churches -- in this composite picture where James strongly suggests substantial problems existing in at least many of the congregations he was targeting we find the most likely scenario for the verbal πόλεμοι καὶ μάχαι taking place which he seeks to address in 4:1-10.

The clear signal of this is ἐν ὑμῖν, *among you*, which parallels the same phrase in 3:13. Who does this identify? The prepositional phrase alludes to the many house church groups within the scope of ταῖς δώδεκα φυλαῖς ταῖς ἐν τῇ διασπορᾷ, *to the Twelve Tribes in the Diaspora*, in 1:1. Our conclusion in Lesson 1 was that the primary regions targeted by this letter were Alexandria Egypt¹⁷ and Asia Minor. During the 50s of the first century the large Jewish community in Alexandria enjoyed relative calm and stability, which would have encouraged Christian witnessing among the Jews.¹⁸

The picture to be drawn from this data both text and background is of some groups of believers struggling to maintain unity and harmony. The generalized nature of the paraenesis in the book of James does not signal clearly defined historical situations that can be pinpointed as to time and location. But just below the surface of James’ writings seems to be lurking some real problems that had the potential of working havoc in many of the Christian groups. James is determined to propose solutions that will prevent a loss of credible

¹⁵“Conflicts’ (πόλεμοι, strictly, ‘wars, battles’) and ‘fightings’ (μάχαι) do not refer to political or national conflicts,⁴³ or these two terms are used in such admonitions as synonyms for strife and quarreling.⁴⁴” [Martin Dibelius and Heinrich Greeven, *James: A Commentary on the Epistle of James*, Hermeneia—a Critical and Historical Commentary on the Bible (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1976), 216.]

¹⁶“But if the question posed is part of James’ argument that is using the Hellenistic topos on envy, then it should be seen as one of the standard features of that topos, based less on the supposed activities of his readers than the logic of the argument. This was seen clearly by Bede, who connects the question about wars to the “zeal and contentiousness” discussed in the previous verses; it is also seen partially by Windisch, 26. The phrase *en hymin* thus has the same sort of rhetorical force as in 3:13. In fact, envy is constantly associated with wars and battles, as it is with social upheaval: see Anacharsis, Letter 9:10–25; Plutarch, On Tranquillity of Soul 13 (Mor. 473B); On Brotherly Love 17 (Mor. 487E–488C); Epictetus, Discourses, III, 22, 61; Dio, Or. 77/78:17–29; T. Gad 5:1–6; T. Jos. 1:2–7; T. Sim. 3:1–5; 4:8–9; Sentences of Pseudo-Phocylides 70–75; Philo, On Joseph 5.” [Luke Timothy Johnson, vol. 37A, *The Letter of James: A New Translation With Introduction and Commentary*, Anchor Yale Bible (New Haven; London: Yale University Press, 2008), 276.]

¹⁷“The origins of Christianity in Alexandria are obscure, but it is safe to assume that the earliest Christians were Jews from Palestine. During the 2d century C.E. Christianity became a significant presence in the city, although archeological evidence for Christianity before the 4th century is very scanty.” [Birger A. Pearson, “Alexandria (Place)” In vol. 1, *The Anchor Yale Bible Dictionary*, ed. David Noel Freedman (New York: Doubleday, 1992), 153.]

¹⁸“With the coming of Roman rule in 30 B.C.E., the economic situation of the Jews in Egypt began to change. With the imposition of the *laographia* (‘poll-tax’) in 24/23 B.C.E., applicable to native Egyptians and other non-Greek groups, the concern for civic rights among many of the Jews became acute, and relations with the Greek population became strained. A pogrom against the Jews in 38 C.E. prompted a group of Jews, led by Philo, to appeal to the emperor, an appeal that was unsuccessful. *The assassination of Caligula in 41 and the favorable attitude adopted by Claudius brought a temporary lull in the strife. Matters came to a head again in 66 when, with great loss of life, a riot was put down by Philo’s apostate nephew, Tiberius Alexander, Prefect of Egypt (JW 2.487–98). A revolt of the Jews under Trajan in 115 brought massive destruction, and by the time it was put down in 117 the Jewish community had been virtually annihilated (Eus. Hist. Eccl. 4.2).*” [Birger A. Pearson, “Alexandria (Place)” In vol. 1, *The Anchor Yale Bible Dictionary*, ed. David Noel Freedman (New York: Doubleday, 1992), 153.]

witness to the Gospel by these congregations.

The nature of the tensions does not seem to be fussing over doctrinal differences, as one finds in the Prison Letters and Pastoral Letters of Paul written during this same general time period. Instead, the fussing centered over issues of control and issues of moral behavior demanded by the Gospel. Just how extensive this problem was among the targeted churches is unclear. But enough of a problem existed in order to prompt James to address it with his writing. What James sensed was that this such unchristian behavior would severely hinder the advance of the Gospel. At least in the province of Asia in the northwest Mediterranean world, there were clearly serious problems surfacing in the churches. From Corinth to Thessalonica eastward to Ephesus and Colossae the presence and activity of false teachers working havoc in the churches was a very real issue. In Paul's addressing of these issues both doctrinal and misbehavior were central to the problems.

In today's church life similar problems can be found although usually driven by different dynamics. Doctrinal issues surface all over the place in many congregations with a hugely divisive impact. Power struggles for control and combination of a congregation are rampant in many places. Problems with blatant immoral behavior that is tolerated by the church does exist extensively. For these reasons the younger generation in the churches tend to drop out of church life in frustration over the lack of genuine spirituality in the congregations. Thus James' word become all the more important for us.

The core source of the problem, v. 1b: οὐκ ἐντεῦθεν, ἐκ τῶν ἡδονῶν ὑμῶν τῶν στρατευομένων ἐν τοῖς μέλεσιν ὑμῶν; The second rhetorical question presents James' basic answer to the first question. The way the question is structured in Greek, he assumes that his writers will agree with his answer. The interrogative adverb πόθεν repeated before both πόλεμοι and μάχαι raises the issue of origin: [where do these things originate?](#) In the second question the interrogative adverb ἐντεῦθεν proposes an origin: [from this?](#) And with the negative οὐκ, the sense of the question is [Do they not come from this?](#)

The answer then follows: ἐκ τῶν ἡδονῶν ὑμῶν τῶν στρατευομένων ἐν τοῖς μέλεσιν ὑμῶν, [out of your passions which carry on warfare among your members](#). The first part is the basic answer: ἐκ τῶν ἡδονῶν ὑμῶν, [out of your passions](#). A wide variety of Greek words define desire.¹⁹ But ἡδονή stresses the desire for physical

¹⁹*The Louw-Nida Greek Lexicon lists topics 25.1 -11 as words defining "Desire, Want, Wish."* These words include **25.1 θέλω**; **θέλησις**, εὐσ f: to desire to have or experience something; **25.2 θέλημα^a**, **τοσ** n: (derivative of θέλω 'to desire,' 25.1) that which is desired or wished for; **25.3 βούλομαι^a**: to desire to have or experience something, with the implication of some reasoned planning or will to accomplish the goal; **25.4 βούλημα^a**, **τοσ** n: (derivative of βούλομαι 'to desire,' 25.3) that which is desired, with the implication of accompanying planning and will; **25.5 ἀξιόω^a**: to desire something on the basis of its evident worth or value; **25.6 εὐχόμαι^b**: to desire something, with the implication of a pious wish; **25.7 δοκέω^b**: to be disposed to some desire or intent; **25.8 εὐδοκία^b**, **ας** f: (derivative of εὐδοκέω 'to prefer,' 30.97) that which is desired on the basis of its appearing to be beneficial; **25.9 ζητέω^a**; **ἐπιζητέω^b**: to desire to have or experience something, with the probable implication of making an attempt to realize one's desire; **25.10 νοσέω**: to have an unhealthy or morbid desire for something; **25.11 κνήθομαι τὴν ἀκοήν**: (an idiom, literally 'to itch with respect to hearing') to have one's ears tickled by what is heard.

But the following are listing under the label "Desire Strongly" in topics 25.12 - 25.32: **25.12 ἐπιθυμέω^a**; **ἐπιθυμία^a**, **ας** f: to greatly desire to do or have something; **25.13 ἐπιθυμητής**, **οῦ** m: (derivative of ἐπιθυμέω 'to desire very much,' 25.12) one who very much desires something, whether good or bad; **25.14 πλησμονή**, **ἡς** f: the process of indulging in or procuring the satisfaction of certain desires or needs; **25.15 ὀρέγομαι**: to eagerly desire to accomplish some goal or purpose; **25.16 ἐκκαίομαι ἐν τῇ ὀρέξει**: (an idiom, literally 'to burn with intense desire') to have a strong, intense desire for something; **25.17 διψάω^a**; **πεινάω^b**: (figurative extensions of meaning of διψάω 'to thirst,' 23.39, and πεινάω 'to hunger,' 23.29) to have a strong desire to attain some goal, with the implication of an existing lack; **25.18 ἐπιποθέω^a**; **ἐπιποθία**, **ας** f; **ἐπιπόθησις**, **εὐσ** f: to long for something, with the implication of recognizing a lack; **25.19 θυμός^b**, **οῦ** m: an intense, passionate desire of an overwhelming and possibly destructive character; **25.20 ἐπιθυμέω^b**; **ἐπιθυμία^b**, **ας** f: to strongly desire to have what belongs to someone else and/or to engage in an activity which is morally wrong; **25.21 ζηλώω^c**: set one's heart on something that belongs to someone else; **25.22 πλεονεξία^a**, **ας** f: a strong desire to acquire more and more material possessions or to possess more things than other people have, all irrespective of need; **25.23 πλεονέκτης**, **ου** m: (derivative of πλεονεξία 'greed,' 25.22) one who is greedy or covetous; **25.24 ἄρπαγή^c**, **ἡς** f: a state of strong desire to gain things and, if necessary, by violent means; **25.25 ἄρπαξ^b**, **αγος** (adj.): pertaining to being violently greedy; **25.26 αἰσχροκερδής**, **ἑς**; **αἰσχροκερδῶς**: pertaining to being shamefully greedy for material gain or profit; **25.27 ἡδονή^b**, **ἡς** f: desire for physical pleasure, often sexual; **25.28 κοιλία^a**, **ας** f: desire for gratification of the body; **25.29 σαρκὸς θέλημα**: (an idiom, literally 'desire of the flesh') desire for sexual gratification; **25.30 πάθος**, **ους** n; **πάθημα^b**, **τοσ** n; **καταστρηνιάω**: to experience strong physical desires, particularly of a sexual nature; **25.31 πυρόομαι^c**: to experience intense sexual desire; **25.32 ὁμοιοπαθής**, **ἑς**: pertaining to having the same kinds of feelings or desires.

[Johannes P. Louw and Eugene Albert Nida, vol. 1, *Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament: Based on Semantic Domains*, electronic ed. of the 2nd edition. (New York: United Bible Societies, 1996), 287-291.]

pleasure that satisfies some physical appetite.²⁰ Plato in *Phaedo* 66c gave a similar answer as τὸ σῶμα καὶ αἱ τούτου ἐπιθυμίαι.²¹ But the Jewish philosopher Philo thought that ὁ περισσὸς τύφος, *excessive arrogance*, lay behind the conflicts of human society (*Gigantibus* 50). James is of the same general opinion as popular thinking about the source of human conflict being human desires. But this dynamic inside the church takes on an even more serious tone. Despite what was probably claimed that the passion for God's Truth motivated the elitism of these teachers, James saw their motivation simply as τῶν ἡδονῶν ὑμῶν. These passions promoted continual conflict inside the congregations: τῶν στρατευομένων ἐν τοῖς μέλεσιν ὑμῶν. The pleasure derived from controlling the thinking of the group was what these people actually sought.

One interpretive issue is the precise meaning of ἐν τοῖς μέλεσιν ὑμῶν, *among your members*. In 3:5-6, μέλος was used in reference to the human body with the tongue as a member, μέλος. Paul, on the other hand, can and does use μέλος to refer to individual members of a congregation in 1 Cor. 12:12, 27; Eph. 4:16; 5:30; Rom. 12:5. But in the same writings he also uses μέλος to refer to the physical body and its parts: 1 Cor. 6:15-16; Rom. 6:13, 19; 7:5, 23. Could James be doing the same thing? Or, could he be using the plural τοῖς μέλεσιν to refer to passions inside individual lives of members that have collective impact upon the congregation? A few church members motivated by ἡδονῶν can and will prove disastrous for the entire congregation.²²

The nature of the problem, part 1, vv. 2-3: 2 ἐπιθυμεῖτε καὶ οὐκ ἔχετε, φονεύετε· καὶ ζηλοῦτε καὶ οὐ δύνασθε ἐπιτυχεῖν, μάχεσθε καὶ πολεμεῖτε· οὐκ ἔχετε διὰ τὸ μὴ αἰτεῖσθαι ὑμᾶς, 3 αἰτεῖτε καὶ οὐ λαμβάνετε διότι κακῶς αἰτεῖσθε, ἵνα ἐν ταῖς ἡδοναῖς ὑμῶν θάπτανῃσθε. Commentators in general seem perplexed and confused about these short statements. It's clear that a poetic structure is present but just what is it? Two words seem to bother most commentators: καὶ before ζηλοῦτε, and φονεύετε. The presence or the absence of καὶ seems to bother commentators on either side of the issue.²³ The simple explanation for its inclusion is to serve as a connector of the two segments, ἐπιθυμεῖτε... φονεύετε and ζηλοῦτε... πολεμεῖτε. If it were not in the original, the ellipsis simply highlights the linkage stronger. The second problem word, φονεύετε, *you kill*,

²⁰“25.27 ἡδονή^b, ἥς f: desire for physical pleasure, often sexual—‘desire, passion, desire for pleasure.’ ἐκ τῶν ἡδονῶν ὑμῶν τῶν στρατευομένων ἐν τοῖς μέλεσιν ὑμῶν ‘from the desires for pleasure that battle within you’ Jas 4:1.” [Johannes P. Louw and Eugene Albert Nida, vol. 1, *Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament: Based on Semantic Domains*, electronic ed. of the 2nd edition. (New York: United Bible Societies, 1996), 291.]

²¹“The community conflicts come not from a passion for truth or godly wisdom, but from ‘your pleasures’ or, better, ‘your desires.’ Here is a shift in terminology from ἐπιθυμία of 1:14–15, but the meaning remains the same. The term ἡδονή appears only 4 times in the NT (here; Lk. 8:14; Tit. 3:3; and 2 Pet. 2:13), but, as in Greek literature in general (cf. G. Stählin, TDNT II, 909ff.), the term usually parallels ἐπιθυμία, as in Tit. 3:3 where the former state of error is characterized as δουλεύοντες ἐπιθυμίαις καὶ ἡδοναῖς ποικίλαις (in contrast to meekness, πραῦτητα), and in Lk. 8:14 where in the interpretation of the parable of the sower ἡδονῶν τοῦ βίου replaces the longer Marcan αἱ περὶ τὰ λοιπὰ ἐπιθυμίαι. The reason for the use of the synonym here is harder to ascertain. On the one hand, one is probably dealing with a source (or sermon; cf. Introduction, 12–13, 22–25) different from that in chap. 1, the ἡδονή indicating one of the seams in the material; and on the other hand, the use of ἐπιθυμεῖτε in 4:2 may have kept the redactor from unifying his vocabulary. The source of conflict, however, is clearly the desire or yēser of the community members. No noble ‘fighting for the truth’ this, but a disguised form of the evil inclination, the person’s fallen nature.” [Peter H. Davids, *The Epistle of James: A Commentary on the Greek Text*, New International Greek Testament Commentary (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1982), 156-57.]

²²“These pleasures, or the desire for them, wage war ‘in’ your members, which may be understood as internal (within a person) or external (among members of the community). Those who see the horse and ship of James 3 as metaphors for the church, and the tongue as the teacher, no doubt will favor the latter view. On the other hand, James’s concern appears to be to trace the external conflict to evil internal motivations (1:14), and hence the predominance of external conflicts in the church could be seen as, in effect, an indication of a lack of genuine faith within the individuals in it. Good arguments therefore can be made for either reading, but although the war taking place inside the Christian individual is a common theme in the NT (Gal. 5:17; 1 Pet. 2:11; and perhaps Rom. 7:15, 23), James seems more concerned with actual expression than with inward conflict, and so it seems more likely that his concern here is that selfish desires produce conflict between people.” [Dan G. McCartney, *James*, Baker Exegetical Commentary on the New Testament (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic, 2009), 207.]

²³“First, as Mussner, 173; Dibelius, 218–219; and Adamson, 167–168, point out, the pleonastic καὶ on Hort’s reading is at least as much of a problem as the lack of καὶ in the first reading. Furthermore, ⋈ P it. Vg syr and others do have the bracketed καὶ, thereby indicating the possibility that it was original or at least the way many ancient authorities read the text. Thus the more comprehensive structure appears to have the advantage.” [Peter H. Davids, *The Epistle of James: A Commentary on the Greek Text*, New International Greek Testament Commentary (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1982), 158.]

either written or coming at the end of the first segment is troublesome to a few.²⁴ Again, the very questionable arguments used especially for the conjecture of Erasmus to replace φονεύετε with φθονεῖτε, *you envy*, carry no legitimate weight at all in my estimation. But clearly James ups the level of seriousness to πόλεμοι καὶ μάχαι by making the initial point that wars and battles kill people! Inside the church, this may not happen on a physical level,²⁵ but verbal wars kill the spirit and commitment of people to serve God, as any long term church member knows only too well.²⁶ By placing the serious issue of murder on the table at the beginning, James then can conclude with the parallel expression, μάχεσθε καὶ πολεμεῖτε, that ties these two segments back to the initial issue of πόλεμοι καὶ μάχαι in the first rhetorical question.

The above explanation under Literary Structure very adequately explains the thought pattern of James here:

105	4.2	You	crave	108	Also	you	covet	Desire
			and				and	
106		---	do not possess;	109		---	are not able to obtain;	Unfulled desire:
107		you	kill.	110		you	fight	Action(s)
							and	
				111		---	do battle.	
							καὶ	
105	4.2	ἐπιθυμεῖτε		108		ζηλοῦτε		
		καὶ				καὶ		
106		οὐκ	ἔχετε;	109		οὐ	δύνασθε ἐπιτυχεῖν;	
107		φονεύετε.		110		μάχεσθε		
							καὶ	
				111		πολεμεῖτε.		

In diagram both the structure and the nature of the parallelism become clearer. James uses ἐπιθυμεῖτε for τῶν ἡδονῶν ὑμῶν, which was common in ancient literature. ζηλοῦτε in the second segment is used as a synonym for these but with stronger force. Clearly the parallelism is stepping up the intensity in the second strophe. The unfilled desire segment οὐκ ἔχετε and οὐ δύνασθε ἐπιτυχεῖν underscores the inability of wrongly motivated desires to accomplish anything spiritual in the life of the church. These control minded teachers may succeed in taking over a church, but nothing of a lasting spiritual nature comes out of it. The consequent actions from unfulfilled desires, φονεύετε and μάχεσθε καὶ πολεμεῖτε, dramatically conclude what hap-

²⁴“Second, neither structure eliminates the problem of φονεύετε. How does murder fit into this series? Many would answer: ‘It does not fit!’ Erasmus’s conjecture that instead of φονεύετε an original φθονεῖτε stood in the text has found wide acceptance for three reasons: (1) no reason for a metaphorical ‘murder’ has proved convincing, (2) the corruption is likely from the nearby references to wars and fightings and known occurrences of the same corruption (Test. Ben. 7:2 in APOT II, 357; 2:1 in B and 1175; perhaps Gal. 5:21), and (3) the φθόνος-ζῆλος pair is frequent in biblical literature (1 Macc. 8:16; Test. Sim. 4:5; 2:7; cf. 4:7; Gal. 5:21; 1 Clem. 3:2; 4:7, 13; 5:2). Thus Dibelius, 217–218; Adamson, 167–168; Laws, 171; Windisch, 27; Spitta, 114; and Cantinat, 197–198, among others opt for the conjecture.” [Peter H. Davids, *The Epistle of James: A Commentary on the Greek Text*, New International Greek Testament Commentary (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1982), 158.]

²⁵Unfortunately down through the centuries of Christian history, physical wars that have killed thousands of people have been fought in the name of both religion, and of Christianity. In recent times in the US, church members have been shot and killed by other disgruntled church members even inside the church building. There is, thankfully, no indication of such brutal violence among Christians toward one another in the early church.

²⁶“One notes first that φονεύω is connected in a metaphorical sense to the sins of the tongue and to jealousy in many texts (e.g. Sir. 28:17, 21; Test. Gad 4:6; Did. 3:2; 1 Clem. 3:4–6:3). Second, one has the biblical tradition stemming from the Cain-Abel, Ahab-Naboth pairings to influence such a connection. Third, one has Christian warnings against murder (e.g. 1 Pet. 4:15 and many vice lists, which also include envy; in this light the Gal. 5:21 example could tell against Dibelius’s argument). Fourth, one must take note of Jas. 2:11 (where the selection of commands is hardly arbitrary) and 5:6, at which places the commentary points out that the failure to care for the poor or the oppression of the poor was often called murder in Jewish tradition. This metaphorical sense of murder (cf. Did. 3:2) would fit well with the tone of the passage: they desire, yet never obtain. They oppress the poor (cf. Jas. 2:14ff.), either by legal oppression or by withholding needed aid, and envy those who are more successful, yet their desires slip between their fingers. All their struggles and intrigues among themselves (μάχεσθε καὶ πολεμεῖτε clearly reflecting the structure of 4:1) lead to nothing because they do not ask. The theme reminds one of Malachi: unjustly obtained wealth slips away as God withholds his blessing.” [Peter H. Davids, *The Epistle of James: A Commentary on the Greek Text*, New International Greek Testament Commentary (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1982), 158-59.]

pens when people are wrongly motivated in their service through the church. The qualities of true wisdom (3:17) are replaced by the divisiveness and destructive sinful behavior (3:15) of false wisdom. No καρπὸς δικαιοσύνης, **fruits of righteousness**, are being planted in the life of the church.

How can this deplorable situation develop in the church? In vv. 3b-4, James answers that question.²⁷ He reaches back to the unfulfilled desire portion of the preceding parallelism and picks up οὐκ ἔχετε (cf. statement 106 above). Our desires should be submitted to God: οὐκ ἔχετε διὰ τὸ μὴ αἰτεῖσθαι ὑμᾶς. The very unspiritual nature of these desires pushes us inward to egotistical elitism and away from honest submission to God. Were we to submit our desires to God, we would not be granted our requests: αἰτεῖτε καὶ οὐ λαμβάνετε. Why? διότι κακῶς αἰτεῖσθε, ἵνα ἐν ταῖς ἡδοναῖς ὑμῶν δαπανήσητε, **because you ask wrongly, so that you can waste your desires on immoral living**. Clearly the negative sense of δαπανᾶω is the meaning here, and interestingly is the same word Luke uses in describing how the prodigal son wasted his father's inheritance in the 'far country' in Luke 15:14.²⁸

James' contention that God does not always answer prayers raises an interesting point in connection to Jesus' teaching in the Sermon on the Mount (Matt. 7:7-11):

7 Αἰτεῖτε καὶ δοθήσεται ὑμῖν, ζητεῖτε καὶ εὕρησεται, κρούετε καὶ ἀνοιγήσεται ὑμῖν· 8 πᾶς γὰρ ὁ αἰτῶν λαμβάνει καὶ ὁ ζητῶν εὕρισκει καὶ τῷ κρούοντι ἀνοιγήσεται. 9 ἢ τίς ἐστὶν ἐξ ὑμῶν ἄνθρωπος, ὃν αἰτήσῃ ὁ υἱὸς αὐτοῦ ἄρτον, μὴ λίθον ἐπιδώσῃ αὐτῷ; 10 ἢ καὶ ἰχθὺν αἰτήσῃ, μὴ ὄφιν ἐπιδώσῃ αὐτῷ; 11 εἰ οὖν ὑμεῖς πονηροὶ ὄντες οἴδατε δόματα ἀγαθὰ διδόναι τοῖς τέκνοις ὑμῶν, πόσω μᾶλλον ὁ πατήρ ὑμῶν ὁ ἐν τοῖς οὐρανοῖς δώσει ἀγαθὰ τοῖς αἰτοῦσιν αὐτόν.

7 Ask, and it will be given you; search, and you will find; knock, and the door will be opened for you. 8 For everyone who asks receives, and everyone who searches finds, and for everyone who knocks, the door will be opened. 9 Is there anyone among you who, if your child asks for bread, will give a stone? 10 Or if the child asks for a fish, will give a snake? 11 If you then, who are evil, know how to give good gifts to your children, how much more will your Father in heaven give good things to those who ask him!

Was there some kind of twisted understanding of Jesus' teaching that prayer was the 'blank check' for gaining our every wish and desire? A few commentators believe this was the case.²⁹ While this remains unclear in the early church, it is clearly the case in the modern 'health and wealth' gospel preachers. But both early Christianity as well as the Judaism of that day understood the promise of answered prayer and also of unanswered prayer.³⁰

²⁷This is another instance of a horrible verse division. The verse three marker should have come after πολεμεῖτε, not in the middle to two closely connected statements: οὐκ ἔχετε διὰ τὸ μὴ αἰτεῖσθαι ὑμᾶς, **3 αἰτεῖτε** καὶ οὐ λαμβάνετε....

²⁸δαπανᾶω (fr. δάπτω 'devour' [of wild beasts Il. 16, 159 al.] via δαπάνη) fut. δαπανήσω; 1 aor. ἐδαπάνησα, imprv. δαπάνησον. Pass.: aor. 3 sg. ἐδαπανήθη 2 Macc 1:32; pf. ptc. δεδαπανημένος LXX (Hdt., Thu.+; ins, pap, LXX; TestAbr A 6 p. 83, 12 [Stone p.14]; EpArist, Philo, Joseph.; Just., A I, 13, 1)

1. **to use up or pay out material or physical resources, spend, spend freely** w. acc. as obj. property Mk 5:26 (cp. 1 Macc 14:32; Jos., Ant. 15, 303; SEG XLI, 311, 3 [II A.D.]). τὶ εἰς τι (Diod S 11, 72, 2; Appian, Bell. Civ. 3, 32 §126; Artem. 1, 31 p. 33, 11f; Sb 8331, 17f [98 A.D.]) πολλὰ δαπανήσας ἰς τὸ ἱερόν; OGI 59, 15; Bel 6 LXX, 3 Theod.; Jos., Ant. 4, 277) spend someth. for or on someth. Hs 1:8; also ἐν τινι (BGU 149, 5 ἐν πυρῷ κατ' ἔτος δαπανᾶται τὰ ὑπογεγραμμένα) ἐν ταῖς ἡδοναῖς ὑμῶν on your pleasures **Js 4:3**. ἐπὶ τινι spend (money) on someone=pay someone's expenses **Ac 21:24**; cp. ὑπὲρ τινος **2 Cor 12:15** (s. BBetzinger, ZNW 18, 1918, 201; Seneca, Providentia 5, 4 boni viri ... impendunt, impenduntur, et volentes quidem=good men expend, are expended, and, in fact, voluntarily).—W. the connotation of wastefulness (Hesychius; Suda δαπ.: οὐ τὸ ἀπλῶς ἀναλίσκειν, ἀλλὰ τὸ λαμπρῶς ζῆν καὶ σπαθᾶν καὶ δαπανᾶν τὴν οὐσίαν=not a matter of mere spending, but of living luxuriously, and squandering and wasting one's estate): πάντα spend or waste everything **Lk 15:14** (though the neutral sense use everything up is also prob.). Cp. also **Js 4:3** above.—In a bold fig. αἱ δεδαπανημένα καρδίαι τ. θανάτῳ hearts indentured to death, i.e., they were extravagantly handed over to death (the phrase is amplified by the succeeding phrase: 'given over to lawless wandering') B 14:5; the bridge to mng. 2 is apparent.

[William Arndt, Frederick W. Danker and Walter Bauer, *A Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament and Other Early Christian Literature*, 3rd ed. (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2000), 212.]

²⁹For Dibelius, 219, this is evidence that the book is a reaction to dashed hopes aroused by the pneumatic consciousness and eschatological hopes stimulated by such passages as Mt. 7:7-11 (cf. Jn. 14:13; Mk. 11:23-24; Mt. 17:20). He notes the qualifications introduced in Lk. 18:7; 1 Jn. 5:14, 16; Hermas Vis. 3.10.6 and Man. 9.4 as being explanations of this failure." [Peter H. Davids, *The Epistle of James: A Commentary on the Greek Text*, New International Greek Testament Commentary (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1982), 159.]

³⁰Without arguing about the relative dates of the literature cited, there is evidence that such qualifications as those in James existed alongside the unqualified sayings from the beginning. First, the OT already gave specific promises of answered prayer to the

James already has put unanswered prayer on the table in 1:5-8,³¹ and thus what he says here is consistent with the earlier statement. All requests to God will be answered in a way that is consistent with the holy character of God and most importantly within the framework of the will of God. James 1:5-8 makes it abundantly clear that the one praying has obligations of commitment and submissiveness to God with his requests. And the answer he receives will be consistent with God's desires for the individual. In 4:2-3 James makes it clear that wrong motives in praying will guarantee non granting of requests by God. To grant such requests would violate God's character and His will -- something He absolutely will not do.

The nature of the problem, part 2, vv. 4-6. In the next segment on the nature of conflict in the churches, James lays bare the heart of the problem: worldliness. He begins with a rhetorical question (v. 4a) and then draws two implications from the question (vv. 4b-6). The first implication states clearly the nature of the problem: friend of the world = God's enemy (v. 4b). The second implication draws directly on scripture proofs (vv. 5-6).

The question: μοιχαλίδες, οὐκ οἶδατε ὅτι ἡ φιλία τοῦ κόσμου ἔχθρα τοῦ θεοῦ ἐστίν; In exceedingly blunt language, James addresses his readers as μοιχαλίδες, **whores**. Such blunt language was typical in ancient polemical texts, and James has already made use of similar language in 2:20.³² Although to modern readers such language seems inappropriate, it was considered normative in the world of James. Clearly James' choice of terms comes out of the Hebrew Bible comparing the disobedience of ancient Israel to God to spiritual prostituting of themselves.³³ The tradition of Jesus in Mk. 8:38, Matt. 12:39; 16:4 with the term γενεὰ μοιχαλίζ, **adulterous generation**, probably also stands behind James' term. The reality behind conflict in the church is idolatry of the kind the Israelites were guilty of time and time again.

He asks his readers, οὐκ οἶδατε ὅτι ἡ φιλία τοῦ κόσμου ἔχθρα τοῦ θεοῦ ἐστίν; **Do you not know that friendship with the world is enmity with God?** He assumes readers do indeed know this, but for one reason or another have forgotten it. Or else, are paying little or no attention to it. The issue is clear and pointed: ἡ φιλία τοῦ κόσμου equals ἔχθρα τοῦ θεοῦ. Religious commitment is an exclusive commitment! One cannot have a little of both and be legitimate.³⁴ The phrase ἡ φιλία τοῦ κόσμου stands as the exact opposite of Abraham's title:

just (e.g. Pss. 34:15-17; 145:18; Pr. 10:24). Second, the gospel tradition apparently had no trouble with juxtaposing the two types of saying (Mt. 7:7-11; the milieu that produced 1 John also produced John). Third, at least some parts of late Judaism also knew this problem (e.g. b. Sanh. 106b; b. R. Sh. 18a; b. Taan. 4a; m. Ber. 9:3—note that in b. R. Sh. especially it is prayer 'with the whole heart' that is important). Thus the two types of sayings/teachings have differing functions and would emerge together: the unqualified form simply encourages one to trust God and to depend upon him, while the qualified form tells one how to pray and corrects abuses. The saying here is parallel to the prophets' denunciations of Israel's cult: injustice makes religious exercise meaningless. The unqualified form of promise will also appear in Jas. 5:14-18." [Peter H. Davids, *The Epistle of James: A Commentary on the Greek Text*, New International Greek Testament Commentary (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1982), 159-60.]

³¹**James 1:5-8.** 5 Εἰ δὲ τις ὑμῶν λείπεται σοφίας, αἰτείτω παρὰ τοῦ δίδόντος θεοῦ πᾶσιν ἀπλῶς καὶ μὴ ὀνειδίζοντος καὶ δοθήσεται αὐτῷ. 6 αἰτείτω δὲ ἐν πίστει μηδὲν διακρινόμενος· ὁ γὰρ διακρινόμενος ἔοικεν κλύδωνι θαλάσσης ἀνεμιζομένῳ καὶ ῥιπιζομένῳ. 7 μὴ γὰρ οἰέσθω ὁ ἄνθρωπος ἐκεῖνος ὅτι λήμψεται τι παρὰ τοῦ κυρίου, 8 ἀνήρ διψυχός, ἀκατάστατος ἐν πάσαις ταῖς ὁδοῖς αὐτοῦ.

5 If any of you is lacking in wisdom, ask God, who gives to all generously and ungrudgingly, and it will be given you. 6 But ask in faith, never doubting, for the one who doubts is like a wave of the sea, driven and tossed by the wind; 7, 8 for the doubter, being double-minded and unstable in every way, must not expect to receive anything from the Lord.

³²"The harsh condemnation of the audience is not an uncommon feature of the diatribe (see 2:20 and the references given there). Some scribes were surprised by the exclusive use of the female gender for this charge here, just as many contemporary readers are likely to be offended (Schmitt, 331). The scribes therefore amended to *moichoi kai moichailides* ('adulterers and adulteresses'). The shorter text, however, is both harder and better attested and therefore to be preferred." [Luke Timothy Johnson, vol. 37A, *The Letter of James: A New Translation With Introduction and Commentary*, Anchor Yale Bible (New Haven; London: Yale University Press, 2008), 278.]

³³"Despite Hort's conviction that James was addressing the literal problem of adultery in the community (Hort, 91), virtually all major commentators otherwise agree that James is using the symbolism found in Torah for the covenantal relationship between Yahweh as groom and Israel as bride. The covenant was like a marriage (Isa 54:4-8) in which Israel's frequent infidelities could be considered as adultery (see LXX Ps 72:27; Jer 3:6-10; 13:27; Isa 57:3; Hos 3:1; 9:1; Ezek 16:38; 23:45). In symbolic shorthand, James' epithet accuses the readers of idolatry, which is precisely what their manner of prayer (4:3) revealed (see also Ropes, 260; Cantinat, 201; Chaine, 99; Davids, 160; Mayor, 139; Laws, 174; Vouga, 115; Marty, 157)." [Luke Timothy Johnson, vol. 37A, *The Letter of James: A New Translation With Introduction and Commentary*, Anchor Yale Bible (New Haven; London: Yale University Press, 2008), 278.]

³⁴James characterizes this adultery as friendship with the world (ἡ φιλία τοῦ κόσμου; this sentence is probably not a precise

φίλος θεοῦ (2:23). Abraham in a faith driven obedience stood as God's friend, while the readers of James causing division and conflict stand as φίλος τοῦ κόσμου, *the world's friend*. They have adopted the posture of ἡ φιλία, *friendship*, toward the world.³⁵ The surrender to τῶν ἡδονῶν, *passions for pleasure*, has turned them toward the ways of the world that stand in opposition to God and His will.³⁶

Implication 1: ὃς ἐὰν οὖν βουληθῆ φίλος εἶναι τοῦ κόσμου, ἐχθρὸς τοῦ θεοῦ καθίσταται, *whoever therefore chooses to be the world's friend makes himself God's enemy*. The same contrast between the world and God is repeated here although in more personal terms, i.e., *friend / friendship* and *enemy / enmity*. The fundamental implication lies in the two verbs: βουληθῆ, *chooses*, and καθίσταται, *makes himself ---*. It is the individual who has made this decision to turn toward the world and away from God. He cannot blame God for this (cf. 1:13). And thus personal accountability for such a choice is implicit in this deliberate choice. James, consistent with personal responsibility teaching in 1:14-16, stresses the responsibility of each person for their choices. A choice, βουληθῆ, produces consequence, καθίσταται. This is inescapable.

Implication 2: vv. 5-6. Here James turns directly to the Hebrew Bible for support of his contention: ἡ γραφή λέγει, *the scripture says*, and διὸ λέγει, *therefore it says*. He places two statements in contrast to one another: v. 5 and v. 6. In a manner very typical of scribal Judaism, he juxtaposes two biblical concepts against one another. The second reference is very clear in its origin: Prov. 3:34 (LXX). But the first reference is a summarizing statement of scripture principle rather than a quote. Consequently its origin is less clear.

Reference one: ἢ δοκεῖτε ὅτι κενῶς ἡ γραφή λέγει· πρὸς φθόνον ἐπιποθεῖ τὸ πνεῦμα ὃ κατώκισεν ἐν ἡμῖν, μείζονα δὲ δίδωσιν χάριν; The last part of the sentence, μείζονα δὲ δίδωσιν χάριν, *but He gives greater grace*, is not a part of the OT reference in most translations. Instead, it is the transitional statement of James leading into the second reference from Proverbs 3:34 in verse six, but it could be considered a part of the scripture reference intended by James.

The scripture talks, James declares. And when it does it speaks with substance, not without it, κενῶς.

quotation; see Spitta, 116–17). The dualistic stance is reminiscent of 1 John 1:15–17 and the Qumran texts (Davids, 161), as well as 2 Tim 3:4 (φιλήδονοι μᾶλλον ἢ φιλόθεοι — a close parallel; 1 Enoch 48.7). No room for compromise is permitted, as James concludes in the final sentence of the verse: ‘Anyone who is determined to be the world’s friend sets himself at enmity (lit., ‘as an enemy’) with God.’ The resulting friendship with the world stems from a deliberate (Adamson, 170; an act of ‘will with premeditation,’ so too Hort) choice to do so (the verb βουληθῆ implies this). Those who go this way ‘constitute themselves’ (καθίσταται; see 3:6) as opponents of God. Not that they intend to fall away from God; but rather James is pointing out that such worldly behavior borders seriously on apostasy. He is suggesting that some of the readers do not appreciate that their deliberate choice to befriend the world is actually an action that sets them against God. So he has to summon them to repentance. Indirectly, then, and by contrast they are compared to Abraham, the friend of God (2:23). For the latter was justified by his works expressing faith, while the former are condemned because of their evil works (3:14–16). At the final judgment Abraham’s life of faith will be pronounced righteous because he demonstrated it through deeds pleasing to God; but at the same judgment those who fail to honor God by their works will find no mercy (cf. 2:13). While James seems to be suggesting that the Christians of 4:4 are not without hope (though woefully misguided), he is quite clear when he says that their present conduct is deplorable and ranks them with the ungodly. This somber verdict accounts for the kerygmatic idiom in the appeals that follow (vv 7–10).” [Ralph P. Martin, vol. 48, *James*, Word Biblical Commentary (Dallas: Word, Incorporated, 1998), 148-49.]

³⁵“It must be remembered above all that ‘friendship’ involved ‘sharing all things’ in a unity both spiritual and physical. Thus, friends are *mia psychē* (‘one soul’; see Euripides, *Orestes* 1046; Aristotle, *Nicomachean Ethics* 1168B). The scholia therefore understands the phrase to be equivalent to ‘the world’s lustful desires.’” [Luke Timothy Johnson, vol. 37A, *The Letter of James: A New Translation With Introduction and Commentary*, Anchor Yale Bible (New Haven; London: Yale University Press, 2008), 279.]

³⁶“Nowhere is James’ thematic opposition between ‘the world’ and ‘God’ more explicit than here. For *echthra tou theou* (‘enmity with God’), compare Rom 8:7, to *phronēma tēs sarkos echthra eis theon* (‘the tendency of the flesh is enmity towards God’). As we would expect, *echthra* is the opposite of *philia* (see LXX Sir 6:19; 37:2; Luke 23:12). The more difficult question is why James should assume his readers would know this. There is no such proverb in the Greco-Roman moral literature, or in Hellenistic Jewish writings. Only a very partial parallel is offered by phrases like that in T. Iss. 4:6, *apo tēs planēs tou kosmou*. Mayor’s conclusion that ‘the reference is to our Lord’s words, Matt 6:24’ (p. 139), is surely wrong, for although the sayings are compatible as to substance, both the phrasing and sense are different. Nor is a true parallel offered by 2 Tim 3:4, which refers to false teachers as *philēdonai mallon ē philotheoi* (‘friends of pleasure more than friends of God’). The closest parallel is found in 1 John 2:15: ‘Do not love the world or the things in the world. If anyone loves the world, love for the father is not in him.’ The passage is close enough to suggest the existence of a shared Christian tradition to which both John and James could appeal. The fact that John uses the language of ‘love’ rather than ‘friendship,’ however, only heightens the perception of ‘friendship’ language as distinctively James’ own and fitted to his thematic concerns.” [Luke Timothy Johnson, vol. 37A, *The Letter of James: A New Translation With Introduction and Commentary*, Anchor Yale Bible (New Haven; London: Yale University Press, 2008), 279.]

The adverb literally means completely empty of content. God's Word doesn't speak hot air! Consequently, we should pay close attention to what it says.

The challenge here is knowing for certain what scripture principle James refers to with the summation, πρὸς φθόνον ἐπιποθεῖ τὸ πνεῦμα ὃ κατώκισεν ἐν ἡμῖν.³⁷ Greek by nature is infinitely more precise in thought expression than any modern western language could possibly be. But sometimes even the Greek is not clear.

This statement has been translated in the following ways, all legitimate possibilities of meaning:

- a) that he jealously longs for the spirit he has caused to dwell in us
- b) that the spirit he caused to dwell in us envies intensely
- c) that the Spirit he caused to dwell in us longs jealously

The uncertainties over meaning center on the first four words, πρὸς φθόνον ἐπιποθεῖ τὸ πνεῦμα. The meaning of the relative clause ὃ κατώκισεν ἐν ἡμῖν is clear.

1) *Is πρὸς φθόνον positive or negative?* Translations a and c take it positively while translation b sees it negatively. The prepositional phrase is never used positively elsewhere inside the New Testament,

2) *What is the subject of the verb ἐπιποθεῖ?* Is God longing (#a) or is the spirit -- either human (#b) or divine (#c)?

3) *What is the direct object of ἐπιποθεῖ as a transitive verb? Or is it used intransitively?* Translation a understands ἐπιποθεῖ as a transitive verb with τὸ πνεῦμα as the direct object. But translations b and c understand the verb as intransitive and thus without an object.

Drawing interpretive conclusions correctly employs the use of grammar analysis and contextual signals. Assumed meanings of the words must fall within the range of possibility; assigning arbitrary meaning without a basis in ancient literature is false.

The immediate context of the statement must play an important role in coming to a conclusion about its meaning. That context has several levels of meaning. **First**, the particle ἢ, or, which sets up the second rhetorical question in verse 5, clearly re-frames the issue of the first rhetorical question in verse four οὐκ οἴδατε ὅτι... (do you not know that...) as either friendship with the world is enmity with God or else one has to supposed that the scriptures have not meaning.³⁸ Thus James' reference to scripture in vv. 5-6 must be seen as supporting his contention in verse 4 that friendship with the world equals enmity with God. Any translation of verse five diminishing that support or ignoring it has to be highly questionable.

Second, the structural content of the rhetorical question in verse five must be determined? What is the scripture alluded to here? πρὸς φθόνον ἐπιποθεῖ τὸ πνεῦμα ὃ κατώκισεν ἐν ἡμῖν; Or, is it πρὸς φθόνον ἐπιποθεῖ τὸ πνεῦμα ὃ κατώκισεν ἐν ἡμῖν, μείζονα δὲ δίδωσιν χάριν; The issue here is whether μείζονα δὲ δίδωσιν χάριν, but He gives greater grace, is included in the scripture allusion, or whether it is James' transitional statement setting up διὸ λέγει, wherefore it says, which then cites Prov. 3:34. The latter understanding is the way most commentators and translations understand the text, although the two major printed Greek texts in their current editions take the former understanding.³⁹

³⁷An alternative but unconvincing approach is to not see James alluding to scripture at all. Note the following:

One suggestion is that he does not cite scripture in 4:5, but instead is making some type of parenthetical remark or midrashic argument (so de Wette and others; cf. Dibelius, 221; Cantinat, 203). The latest form of this has been proposed by Laws, "Scripture," 214-215, who argues that the verse consists of two questions: "'Is scripture meaningless? (v. 5a). Is this envious longing (according to scripture) the proper manner of the soul's desire? (v. 5b)?" The answer implied, if the allusion to Ps 41:2 or Ps 83:3 LXX is taken, must be, surely not!" The thesis is fascinating and avoids some problems, but contains its own internal difficulties: (1) one would expect μή in such a negative rhetorical question (BDF §427), (2) such an interpretation brackets 4:4 and jumps back to 4:1-3, contrary to the epistle's structure, (3) the allusions are not close enough to be convincing, and (4) in every other case in the NT the γραφή λέγει formula introduces a direct quotation, not a sense quotation, allusion, or reference to scripture in general (which normally use a plural form of γραφή; Jn. 7:38 may be an exception to this rule). It is this last point which is fatal not only to Laws's thesis and the older works cited, but also to those who would see a loose sense quotation of scripture (e.g. Ex. 20:5; cf. Hort, 93; Mayor, 140; Coppieters, 40).

[Peter H. Davids, *The Epistle of James: A Commentary on the Greek Text*, New International Greek Testament Commentary (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1982), 162.

³⁸"The particle *or* points to an alternative. The alternatives are: either friendship with the world is enmity with God, or what the scripture says is meaningless." [I-Jin Loh and Howard Hatton, *A Handbook on the Letter from James*, UBS Handbook Series (New York: United Bible Societies, 1997), 142.]

³⁹"The UBS places a stop after the first χάριν; the Nestle-Aland²⁶ has a semicolon, evidently to mark a question, but this is a highly unlikely sense. The δέ ("but") suggests a contrast." [Ralph P. Martin, vol. 48, *James*, Word Biblical Commentary (Dallas: Word, Incorporated, 1998), 151.]

Third, the introduction δοκεῖτε ὅτι κενῶς ἡ γραφή λέγει, *do you suppose that the scripture says in vain...*, sets up the parallel rhetorical question to the one in verse four (οὐκ οἶδατε ὅτι...ἡ δοκεῖτε ὅτι, *do you not know that...or do you suppose that...*). The second question set up by δοκεῖτε ὅτι assumes a faulty issue is being raised, to which one should answer, “Of course, the scripture never ever speaks without serious meaning!”⁴⁰

Additionally, ὅτι κενῶς ἡ γραφή λέγει carries with it the clear intention of James to be quoting a source that he considers scripture, or authoritative. Clearly in 2:8 and 2:23, ἡ γραφή means Holy Scripture because the citations that follow come directly from the LXX translation of Lev. 19:18 and Gen. 15:6. Thus one would assume that ἡ γραφή in 4:5 means the same thing. But the unanswered question is what scripture does πρὸς φθόνον ἐπιποθεῖ τὸ πνεῦμα ὃ κατώκισεν ἐν ἡμῖν refer to? There is no text anywhere in the Hebrew Bible or the Greek LXX translation that follows this wording.⁴¹ This poses the most difficult part of the issue with verses 5-6.

Fourth, if the statement μείζονα δὲ δίδωσιν χάριν, *but He gives greater grace*, is taken as James’ transitional statement, it then sets up the following quote from Prov. 3:34 in verse six. The conjunction δὲ normally introduces a contrast to a previous statement. This implies that the quote from Proverbs stands in contrast to the scripture allusion in verse five in some way. Thus whatever is concluded about verse five must possess a contrastive tone to the Proverbs reference in verse six.

This context establishes a setting that signals a more likely meaning for the scripture reference in verse five. The analysis of the grammar issues can take place and lead us to a reasonable conclusion about what πρὸς φθόνον ἐπιποθεῖ τὸ πνεῦμα ὃ κατώκισεν ἐν ἡμῖν should mean.

The beginning prepositional phrase πρὸς φθόνον grammatically can be either positive or negative in meaning. Several factors point strongly toward a negative meaning here: 1) φθόνος and related terms are always used negatively inside the New Testament, and overwhelmingly so in patristic Greek later on. 2) φθόνος is not the Greek word used in the LXX to translate the Hebrew כָּאַן, *qan*, in Exodus 20:5 etc.⁴² Rather it is translated θεὸς ζηλωτής, *a jealous God*. Thus any appeal that James is quoting Exod. 20:5 here rests on untenable grounds. The use of πρὸς φθόνον with a positive meaning largely comes out of the Latin Vulgate rendering as *ad invidiam*, which can suggest a positive meaning. This gave credibility to the positive meaning down through the centuries of Bible translation and interpretation. In summary, the substantial weight of evidence favors πρὸς φθόνον being understood with a negative meaning.

2) The next issue relates to the subject of the verb ἐπιποθεῖ. In the nine NT uses, the verb always takes a direct object of some kind. And this is consistent with the pattern of general usage in ancient Greek, where the object could be expressed either with the accusative case word, the genitive case word, or the preposition ἐπί if the object were a thing rather than a person.⁴³ Many take τὸ πνεῦμα that follows the verb as the direct object with the resulting reading, *he longs for the spirit*. The problem is that πρὸς φθόνον modifies the verb and thus creates the sense that with wrongful jealousy God longs for the spirit. The neuter gender spelling of τὸ πνεῦμα allows it to be taken either as verb subject or verb object of ἐπιποθεῖ. If taken as subject, as many commentators do, then which spirit is James talking about? The Greek word πνεῦμα can refer to

⁴⁰“For *dokein* (‘think/suppose’) as introducing a false opinion, compare 1 Cor 3:18; 8:2; 10:12; 14:37; Mark 6:49; Luke 12:51; 24:37; and, above all, James’ own earlier use in 1:26.” [Luke Timothy Johnson, vol. 37A, *The Letter of James: A New Translation With Introduction and Commentary*, Anchor Yale Bible (New Haven; London: Yale University Press, 2008), 280.]

⁴¹“Does he mean “Scripture as a whole” (see 2:8) or a specific passage (see 2:23)? If a specific passage, which one? There certainly is no passage in the OT, as we now have it, containing any such verse as we find here in 4:5 (Windisch, 27; Cantinat, 202–3). Is James, then, referring to a lost passage or one otherwise unknown to us (Marty, 159; Davids, 162; Mussner, 184)? Or is he making a broad allusion to the ‘sense’ of Scripture (Bede; Mayor, 140–41; Ropes, 262; Dibelius, 222)?” [Luke Timothy Johnson, vol. 37A, *The Letter of James: A New Translation With Introduction and Commentary*, Anchor Yale Bible (New Haven; London: Yale University Press, 2008), 280.]

⁴²“In the sense of ‘jealously,’ πρὸς ζῆλον would have been more in accord with LXX usage, cf. Num. 5:14 πνεῦμα ζηλώσεως, Ex. 20:5, Prov. 6:34, 27:4, Cant. 8:6, Eccles. 9:1, so 2 Cor. 11:2; but this meaning, ‘ardent desire for complete possession of the object’ as in the case of the husband (Hebrew נָאַן), seems to be foreign to ζῆλος in general Greek usage, which denotes that emotion by φθόνος, as here. πρὸς φθόνον is thus a phrase drawn from Hellenic models, not founded on the language of the LXX.” [James Hardy Ropes, *A Critical and Exegetical Commentary on the Epistle of St. James*, International Critical Commentary (New York: C. Scribner’s Sons, 1916), 263.]

⁴³“ἐπιποθεῖω, desire besides or yearn after, c. acc., Hdt.5.93, Ph.2.598; feel the want of, Pl.Lg.855e; ἐ. τινός LXXPs.118(119).20; ἐπί τι ib.61(62).11.” [Henry George Liddell, Robert Scott, Henry Stuart Jones and Roderick McKenzie, *A Greek-English Lexicon* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1996), 652.]

either the human spirit or the divine Spirit. Taking πνεῦμα as the divine Spirit leaves us, however, with the same problem as God being the understood verb subject. Thus seeing πνεῦμα referring to the human spirit seems preferable; see 2:26 for the other use of πνεῦμα in James and clearly a reference to the human spirit. If πνεῦμα is the verb subject along with the full negative force of πρὸς φθόνον, the resulting meaning is closer to translation b) above: *that the spirit he caused to dwell in us envies intensely*. But two matters raise uncertainty about this understanding. What is the verb object of ἐπιποθεῖ? There is no evidence that ἐπιποθεῖω is ever used in ancient Greek without an object of some kind, i.e., intransitively. This undermines the proposed translation since ‘*envies*’ is used here without an object, which is not justifiable from the Greek. Few, if any, would suggest the relative clause ὁ κατώκισεν ἐν ἡμῖν as the direct object; it is clearly tied on to πνεῦμα as an adjectival modifying clause. An alternative possibility is that ἡμᾶς from ἡμῖν should be supplied as the object. The idea then is that the spirit envies over us intensely. Few interpreters go this direction, however. What is the meaning of κατώκισεν? This single usage of κατοικίζω in the entire NT clearly has a ‘causative’ meaning.⁴⁴ If πνεῦμα is the Holy Spirit, then God placed His Spirit in believers at conversion.⁴⁵ But if πνεῦμα is the human spirit, then God placed that in people at creation.

From this attempted explanation of some very technical issues, it should be clear that understanding πρὸς φθόνον ἐπιποθεῖ τὸ πνεῦμα ὁ κατώκισεν ἐν ἡμῖν precisely is extremely complicated. The easiest interpretive understanding is to take the statement not as referring to some specific passage of scripture in the Hebrew Bible, but as James given a general sense of scripture teaching. And this could be that God jealously claims us as His own people and tolerates no friendship with the world from us. Or that the Holy Spirit placed in us at conversion does this in behalf of the Heavenly Father. This greatly diminishes the contrast with the next statement in verse six. The other approach is to see a general principle from the OT that the human spirit given us at creation has become so corrupted that it jealously longs to dominate and control us thus pushing us toward friendship with the world and away from God. This heightens the contrast with verse six as well as sees a closer parallelism with the friendship with the world / enmity with God contrast in verse four.

The truth of the matter is that none of the proposed solutions is free of criticisms and weaknesses.

Reference two: μείζονα δὲ δίδωσιν χάριν; διὸ λέγει· ὁ θεὸς ὑπερηφάνοις ἀντιπάσσειται, ταπεινοῖς δὲ δίδωσιν χάριν. Whereas the human spirit is prone to jealous domination and control in worldliness, God’s grace is a more powerful counter force that can off set this human tendency. James makes this point and then bases it on a scripture text, Prov. 3:34.

<p>James 4:6</p> <p>ὁ θεὸς ὑπερηφάνοις ἀντιπάσσειται, ταπεινοῖς δὲ δίδωσιν χάριν.</p>	<p>Prov. 3:34 LXX</p> <p>κύριος ὑπερηφάνοις ἀντιπάσσειται, ταπεινοῖς δὲ δίδωσιν χάριν.</p>	<p>Prov. 3:34 BHS</p> <p>יְהוָה לְרֹאשֵׁי לְלֹאִים אֵת :יְהוָה יִתֵּן חַסֵּד לְעֲנָוִים</p>
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As can clearly be seen, James follows almost exactly the LXX text in his citation of Prov. 3:34. The NRSV follows the Hebrew text rather than the LXX with its translation: *Toward the scorners he is scornful, but to the humble he shows favor*. But the meaning of the LXX is not far from the ideas in the Hebrew text. The two lines, i.e., strophes, of the text parallel the friendship / enmity point in verse four. The second line, ταπεινοῖς δὲ δίδωσιν χάριν, serves to establish James point μείζονα δὲ δίδωσιν χάριν that introduces the Proverbs reference. Further, this second line sets up the solution section in vv. 7-10.

The OT passage clearly defines God’s posture -- אָצַל or κύριος or ὁ θεὸς -- toward both those who mock God (אָצַל) or show arrogance (ὑπερηφάνοις), and also to the poor (עָנִי) or the humble (ταπεινοῖς) God gives grace (יְהוָה יִתֵּן חַסֵּד or χάριν). Thus the verse makes James’ point not just in verse four, but in the discussion lead-

⁴⁴**κατοικίζω** (s. four prec. entries) fut. κατοικιῶ; 1 aor. κατώκισα. Pass.: fut. κατοικισθήσομαι; aor. κατώκισθην; pf. κατώκισται (all LXX) *cause to dwell, establish, settle* (so Hdt. et al.; POxy 705, 24; LXX; EpArist; Jos., Ant. 1, 110 εις; 11, 19 ἐν) of the Spirit τὸ πνεῦμα ὃ κατώκισεν ἐν ἡμῖν the Spirit which (God) has caused to live in us **Js 4:5**. τὸ πνεῦμα ὃ ὁ θεὸς κ. ἐν τῇ σαρκὶ ταύτῃ **Hm 3:1**. τὸ πνεῦμα κατώκισεν ὁ θεὸς εἰς σάρκα God caused the Spirit to dwell in flesh **Hs 5, 6, 5**.—M-M. TW.

[William Arndt, Frederick W. Danker and Walter Bauer, *A Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament and Other Early Christian Literature*, 3rd ed. (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2000), 535.]

⁴⁵A related but secondary issue is comes from textual variations of the verb in the relative clause ὁ κατώκισεν ἐν ἡμῖν. The verb κατώκισεν in the adopted reading means ‘caused to dwell’ and has substantial manuscript evidence in support of it: P⁷⁴ x B Ψ 049. 1241. 1739 al (A 81 pc incert.). The alternative reading, κατώκησεν, meaning ‘dwells’ has some manuscript support (P 33 m sy^{pl}), and was adopted by some in an effort to strengthen the idea of τὸ πνεῦμα referring to the Holy Spirit who dwells in believers. The idea that God ‘caused to dwell in us’ the Holy Spirit is a strange idea that is not found in ancient Jewish or Christian writings.

ing up to verse four.

Being an enemy of God in James' point here is to adopt a posture of arrogant bragging about oneself. This is a signal that one has come under the thinking of this world that stands in opposition to God. To such a person Proverbs declares, God will resist and oppose you. The Greek ἀντιπάσσειται reflects the essential idea of מַצְלִל־מַח that God will mock the mocker. But to the one who stands humbly before God he will be given grace by God.

James point is that this divine grace is more powerful than the lure of this world: μείζονα δὲ δίδωσιν χάριν. Therefore those in the churches that have gotten taken in by the appeal of worldliness are not hopelessly trapped by this devilish power and influence. God's grace can deliver them from this and make them positive contributors to the congregation once again, rather than the destructive influence they presently have.

b) The solution to the problem, vv. 7-10.

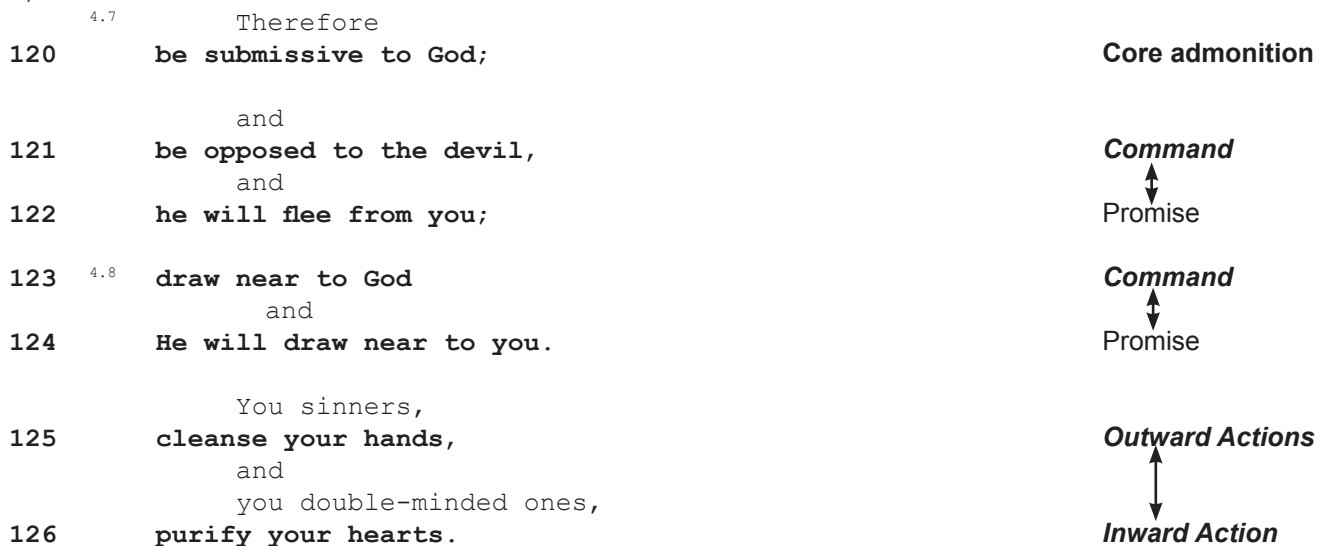
7 ὑποτάγητε οὖν τῷ θεῷ, ἀντίστητε δὲ τῷ διαβόλῳ καὶ φεύξεται ἀφ' ὑμῶν, 8 ἐγγίσατε τῷ θεῷ καὶ ἐγγιεῖ ὑμῖν. καθαρῖσατε χεῖρας, ἁμαρτωλοί, καὶ ἁγνίσατε καρδίας, δίψυχοι. 9 ταλαιπωρήσατε καὶ πενθήσατε καὶ κλαύσατε. ὁ γέλως ὑμῶν εἰς πένθος μετατραπήτω καὶ ἡ χαρὰ εἰς κατήφειαν. 10 ταπεινώθητε ἐνώπιον κυρίου καὶ ὑψώσει ὑμᾶς.

7 Submit yourselves therefore to God. Resist the devil, and he will flee from you. 8 Draw near to God, and he will draw near to you. Cleanse your hands, you sinners, and purify your hearts, you double-minded. 9 Lament and mourn and weep. Let your laughter be turned into mourning and your joy into dejection. 10 Humble yourselves before the Lord, and he will exalt you.

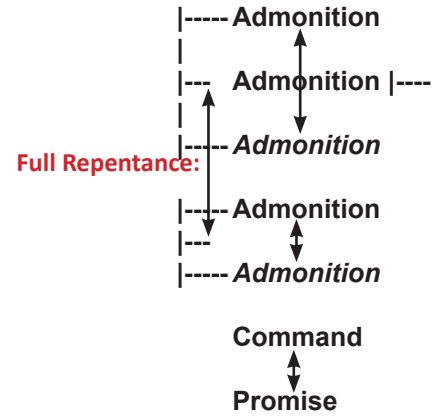
How is conflict resolved in a congregation? The first step is to recognize the root of the problem: worldliness. Conflict can be remedied only when worldliness is rooted out of the life of those who are the cause of the conflict. Verses 7-10 propose how to get rid of worldliness in one's life, and thus in the church.

It's important to realize here that James' proposal is addressed to professing Christians in the church. He is not preaching for conversion to Christianity, although this appeal would fit that evangelistic setting as well. Rather, James is pointedly calling on those among his readers who were causing conflict in the churches to straighten out their lives and to submit themselves unconditionally to God and His control of their lives. This is a prophet word in the OT tradition of calling ancient Israel to repent of its sins and to return to God.

At first glance these verses seem to contain a series of random admonitions gathered out of James' preaching. But careful examination will uncover a set of carefully selected admonitions woven together very creatively to produce maximum impact on the central theme stated at the very beginning: ὑποτάγητε οὖν τῷ θεῷ, **submit yourselves to God!** Most of the admonitions come in pairs and mostly follow the ancient Jewish thought structure of command / promise. As the diagram of the English translated text visually illustrates above,



127 4.9 **Become miserable**
 and
 128 **begin mourning**
 and
 129 **start weeping;**
 130 **Let your laughter be turned into mourning**
 and
 131 **--- your joy -- ----- into gloominess.**
 132 4.10 **Be humbled before the Lord,**
 and
 133 **He will exalt you.**



In James' mind, the only solution to conflicts in church life is to solve the problem of worldliness. At its roots are our ἡδονῶν, [cravings](#). This is a problem far too deep and complex for us to ever solve it ourselves. Only God has the ability to bring solution to such a devastating problem as this. The inferential conjunction οὖν underscores the connection of vv. 7-10 to vv. 1-6 in these terms of a divine solution is the only possible solution.⁴⁶

At the heart of the solution is a genuine submitting of ourselves to God: ὑποτάγητε οὖν τῷ θεῷ. Believers must give God complete control of their entire life, if problems of sin are to be resolved. The Aorist imperative passive voice command from ὑποτάσσω literally says: [Allow yourself to be in submission to God](#). Submitting to God's control must be a deliberate, sincere decision by the individual. It doesn't happen automatically, and entails much more than just mental action. The subsequent series of admonitions spell out aspects of this submission to God.

The first elaboration on submission is in two sets of command / promise expressions: ἀντίστητε δὲ τῷ διαβόλῳ καὶ φεύξεται ἀφ' ὑμῶν, ἐγγίσατε τῷ θεῷ καὶ ἐγγιεῖ ὑμῖν. The first set targets the Devil, while the second set targets God. These are flip sides of the same coin and must not be disconnected from each other.

Believers are to resist the Devil: ἀντίστητε δὲ τῷ διαβόλῳ καὶ φεύξεται ἀφ' ὑμῶν. This is a relatively common theme in early Christianity and especially in the Judaism of that time.⁴⁷ When temptation to sinful actions crop up against us, we simply say no! James has already put the responsibility for sinful actions on the individual's shoulders in 1:14, ἕκαστος δὲ πειράζεται ὑπὸ τῆς ἰδίας ἐπιθυμίας ἐξελκόμενος καὶ δελεαζόμενος, [But one is tempted by one's own desire, being lured and enticed by it](#). Now he makes it clear that behind every worldly desire lies the Devil who must be resisted. Peter's even more dramatic admonition underscores the same principle in 1 Peter 5:8-9,

8 Νήψατε, γρηγορήσατε. ὁ ἀντίδικος ὑμῶν διάβολος ὡς λέων ὠρυόμενος περιπατεῖ ζητῶν [τινα] καταπιεῖν· 9 **ᾧ ἀντίστητε** στερεοὶ τῇ πίστει εἰδότες τὰ αὐτὰ τῶν παθημάτων τῇ ἐν [τῷ] κόσμῳ ὑμῶν ἀδελφότητι ἐπιτελεῖσθαι.

8 [Discipline yourselves, keep alert. Like a roaring lion your adversary the devil prowls around, looking for someone to devour.](#) 9 **Resist him**, steadfast in your faith, for you know that your brothers and sisters in all the world are undergoing the same kinds of suffering.

The promise from God is that when we resist the Devil he will get away from us as quickly as possible. Thus

⁴⁶“The οὖν clearly shows that these imperatives (10 in all in 4:7–10) are an expansion of the Pr. 3:34 quotation and the previous parenthesis (although Laws, 180–181, rejects this idea and makes the relationship tangential). Such a use of Pr. 3:34 must have been common in the early church, for, as Dibelius, 225–226, points out, 1 Pet. 5:5–9 has a similar set of ideas, i.e. submission to God (ταπεινώθητε as in 4:10) and resistance to the devil (ἀντίστητε), as does 1 Clem. 30, although with a different application. The structure was hardly a fixed one, even if the 1 Peter passage suggests that in at least some areas of the church resistance to the devil was joined to submission to God.” [Peter H. Davids, *The Epistle of James: A Commentary on the Greek Text*, New International Greek Testament Commentary (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1982), 165.]

⁴⁷“This submission is accomplished first by resisting (i.e. not submitting to) the devil, which is precisely what God does to the proud, whom James probably views as acting like the devil (4:6). The idea of resisting the devil occurs not only elsewhere in the NT (1 Pet. 5:8–9; Eph. 6:13), but also in Test. XII (Test. Sim. 3:3; Test. Iss. 7:7; Test. Dan 5:1; Test. Naph. 8:4; cf. Test. Ash. 3:3, which indicates that the double-minded serve Beliar) and Hermas (Man. 12.5.2). In most of these passages the flight of the devil is explicitly mentioned. The means of resistance is either good works (Test. XII) or total commitment to God. For James there would be little difference between these two, although his emphasis here is on total commitment.” [Peter H. Davids, *The Epistle of James: A Commentary on the Greek Text*, New International Greek Testament Commentary (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1982), 166.]

the best way to handle Satan is to say no to him. This will force him to leave us alone, at least for the time being. But as Luke observed regarding the temptation of Jesus by the Devil, his stepping away from us lasts only for a short time before he returns to try another temptation on us: Καὶ συντελέσας πάντα πειρασμὸν ὁ διάβολος ἀπέστη ἀπ’ αὐτοῦ ἄχρι καιροῦ, *When the devil had finished every test, he departed from him until an opportune time* (Lk. 4:13).

Believers must draw near to God in resisting the Devil: ἐγγίσατε τῷ θεῷ καὶ ἐγγιεῖ ὑμῖν. In order to cope with the temptations coming through our passions from the Devil, we must have God’s help. Thus we turn away from Satan by turning toward God.⁴⁸ We reach out to God in prayer, worship, and willingness to do His will in our lives. The plural form of these verbs underscores particularly the communal nature of these commitments. We do this together as the people of God. The promise is that when we reach out to God, He will respond by making Himself available to us for assistance. He doesn’t turn a deaf ear to the sincere pleas of His people.

The second elaboration is a very Jewish oriented pair of admonitions: καθαρίσατε χεῖρας, ἁμαρτωλοί, καὶ ἀγνίσατε καρδίας, δίψυχοι, *Cleanse your hands, you sinners, and purify your hearts, you double-minded.* In Jewish symbolism the hands signaled outward actions while the heart specified the inward part of our existence, especially the deciding part. The commands καθαρίσατε, *cleanse*, and ἀγνίσατε, *purify*, reflected the Jewish laws regarding religious purity. The Aorist imperative verb forms intensify the urgency of the admonitions. Together the pair demand a total cleaning up of one’s entire life, outward and inward.⁴⁹ The two vocative forms, ἁμαρτωλοί, *sinners*, and δίψυχοι, *double-minded*, are appropriate to each symbol and underscore present disobedience to God’s ways that need to be remedied quickly.⁵⁰ Thus those causing conflict in the church are guilty of being outside God’s will both in deed and in commitment. They urgently need to correct this serious problem.

The third elaboration is a set of admonitions (3 + 2) that define sincere repentance: ταλαιπωρήσατε καὶ πενθήσατε καὶ κλαύσατε. ὁ γέλως ὑμῶν εἰς πένθος μετατραπήτω καὶ ἡ χαρὰ εἰς κατήφειαν, *Lament and mourn and weep. Let your laughter be turned into mourning and your joy into dejection.* The Jewish background for these images is clear. The picture painted by these five expressions is dramatic.⁵¹ A funeral dirge is called

⁴⁸“The second half of the couplet, ‘draw near to God . . .,’ gives the positive aspect of the first. To resist the devil is to commit oneself to follow God or to draw near. God will not be unresponsive. On the one hand, this clause recalls many prophetic promises (2 Ch. 15:2–4; La. 3:57; Ho. 12:6–7; Zc. 1:3; 2:3; Mal. 3:7) indicating the conversion of the people; on the other hand, the act of drawing near is a cultic technical expression (Ex. 19:22; 24:2; Dt. 16:16; Psalms 122, 145) also used in other works with cultic imagery (Heb. 4:16; 7:19; Test. Dan 6:2). While James probably has no concrete idea in mind (e.g. the priesthood of all believers; cf. Mitton, 159; Cantinat, 209), the cultic imagery was part of his heritage and bridges between the military metaphor of 4:7b and the cultic metaphor of 4:8b.” [Peter H. Davids, *The Epistle of James: A Commentary on the Greek Text*, New International Greek Testament Commentary (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1982), 166.]

⁴⁹“The junction of hand with heart, of outward deed with inward disposition was also pre-Christian (Pss. 24:4; 73:13; Sir. 38:10). The term ‘purify’ is likewise a term for fitness for cultic participation (e.g. Ex. 19:10; Nu. 8:21; Jos. 3:5; 1 Ch. 15:12; Jn. 11:55; Acts 21:24, 26) which has taken on an ethical meaning (1 Pet. 1:22; 1 Jn. 3:3; Barn. 5:1; 8:3; cf. H. Baltensweiler, DNTT III, 101–102). Thus in the NT one finds the moral call to purity (Mt. 5:8; Mk. 7:21–23 par.), a call that John, Hebrews, 1 Peter, and the Pastorals take up. The call is for right deed and right commitment: pure hands would do good works and pure hearts would be totally committed.” [Peter H. Davids, *The Epistle of James: A Commentary on the Greek Text*, New International Greek Testament Commentary (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1982), 167.]

⁵⁰“This sense is underlined by the two vocatives. The ἁμαρτωλοί (cf. 5:20) are those who act contrary to the law of God (Pss. 1:1–5; 51:15 [50:13]; cf. Cantinat, 209); they disobey God in their actions. The δίψυχοι (cf. the longer discussion on 1:8) as in Test. Ben. 6 and Test. Ash. 3:1–2 (cf. Sir. 2:12; Hermas Man. 9.7; Vis. 3.2.2) are those who try to be committed to both good and evil, God and the world. They lack the virtue of ἀπλότης and thus must indeed purify their hearts.” [Peter H. Davids, *The Epistle of James: A Commentary on the Greek Text*, New International Greek Testament Commentary (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1982), 167.]

⁵¹“The purification demanded should take the form of repentance, a repentance the aorist imperatives imply needs to begin (MHT I, 76; BDF §337). Ταλαιπωρήσατε, an NT hapax legomenon, indicates neither voluntary asceticism (Mayor, 147) nor an eschatological judgment (Dibelius, 227–228), but the inner sorrow and wretchedness one experiences when one realizes that he is in a sad condition (BAG, 810; cf. ταλαιπωρία: Rom. 3:16; 1 Clem. 15:6; Ps. 12:5 [11:6]; ταλαιπωρος: Rom. 7:24; Rev. 3:17; Epict. 1.3.5; Hermas Sim. 1.3, where this term describes the δίψυχος. The inner attitude is to be matched by outward expression, i.e. mourning and weeping, which was on the one hand the proper response to outward danger and distress (Ps. 69:10–11; Is. 32:11; Je. 4:8; 9:2; Am. 5:16; Mal. 3:14) and on the other became the response to fear of God’s judgment, i.e. the response of the repentant heart (2 Sa. 19:1; Ne. 8:9; Lk. 6:25; Acts 18:11, 15, 19, which all associate the two terms). The terms are in fact interchangeable (Mt. 5:5 par. Lk. 6:21; in both cases sin is the probable cause). This is the language of the preacher of repentance: judgment is coming;

for over the death of worldliness in one's life. This is no time for celebration. The first three imperatives are in the Aorist tense which intensifies the demands contained in the verbs. The single verb μετατραπήτω, *let it be turned*, which governs both clauses naming both γέλως, *laughter*, and χαρὰ, *joy*, as subjects, is present tense underscoring a continuing posture that establishes the validity of the actions. Prepare yourselves for the coming judgment of God by repenting today while there is opportunity -- this is at the heart of James' point here.

The fourth elaboration comes full circle back to the core admonition in verse seven: **ταπεινώθητε** ἐνώπιον κυρίου καὶ ὑψώσει ὑμᾶς, *Humble yourselves before the Lord, and he will exalt you*. The final command / promise structure in the passage, this one caps off the fundamental admonition of submitting oneself to the absolute control of God.⁵² Additionally it picks up the language of the second strophe, **ταπεινοῖς** δὲ δίδωσιν χάριν, in Proverbs 3:34, thus building a conclusion from this sacred scripture text.⁵³ The cultural background for this picture came out of the middle eastern tradition of monarchs. When subjects came into the presence of the reigning monarch they fell to the floor on their hands and knees with their face touching the floor. This was to show proper reverence to the authority of the king. If the king agreed to their presence before him, then he gave the command for them to stand up and look directly at him. Such a gesture meant the subject was granted permission to stand in the presence of the king in acceptance by the monarch. For those who lived in the eastern Mediterranean world this picture was vivid and conveyed a wonderful message. When we as God's subjects come into His presence we must express proper humility and respect (ταπεινώθητε ἐνώπιον κυρίου). God recognizes sincere humility and then grants us permission to stand up and face Him as His signal of acceptance of us (ὑψώσει ὑμᾶς). The command / promise structuring of this graphic picture becomes the divine promise of accepting those into His presence who sincerely humble themselves before Him.

Wow! If you want to know what true turning to God looks like, James paints a detailed picture for you that covers all of the aspects of turning loose of yourself and sinful actions to full surrender to God's control over our lives. This James sees as coming out of the scripture foundation of Proverbs 3:34. And it is the exclusive way to solving the problems of conflict in church life.

2. What does the text mean to us today?

Do church members in our world ever get cross ways with one another? Do pastors and churches ever get into conflict with one another? If you think the answer to these questions is no, then you haven't been in church life very long. One of the ongoing problems of church life is disunity and broken fellowship. The out-

therefore mourn now (repent) so that you do not mourn then.

“The parallel line of the couplet expands upon the first. Perhaps remembering the words of Christ (Lk. 6:21, 25: οὐαί, οἱ γελῶντες νῦν, ὅτι πενήθησθε καὶ κλαύσετε) and in tune with the OT (Am. 8:10; Pr. 14:13; 1 Macc. 9:41; Tob. 2:6) the author commands an end to feasting (the opposite of πένθος according to Philo *Exsec.* 171, and Amos) with its associated laughter (cf. K. H. Rengstorff, TDNT I, 658–661, who shows that laughter is associated with fools [Pr. 10:23; Sir. 21:20; 27:13] and with people who have declared their independence of God) and joy, both of which characterize a life devoid of tension with the world, thus a profane life (Jn. 16:20; Martyr, 164). Instead, one should have mourning and dejection (κατήφειαν, a biblical *hapax legomenon*; Plut. Mor. 528; Philo Spec. Leg. 3.193), for in the light of the coming judgment or a present realization of sin this response is only reasonable — they are, after all, sinners (4:8). The turning from one state to another is a sign of true repentance, for mourning is appropriate once the enormity of sin really crashes in upon one's world view.”

[Peter H. Davids, *The Epistle of James: A Commentary on the Greek Text*, New International Greek Testament Commentary (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1982), 167-68.]

⁵² “The first and last imperatives are virtual synonyms and thus form an inclusio. Verse 9 may be a parallel couplet in concept only or perhaps two units. The final imperative clause structurally resembles the first couplet and thus underlines the first imperative as the topic of the whole.” [Peter H. Davids, *The Epistle of James: A Commentary on the Greek Text*, New International Greek Testament Commentary (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1982), 165.]

⁵³ “The terminology deliberately calls one back to the quotation upon which this segment is a midrash and to 4:8a, where structurally similar Semitizing syntax first promises God's reception of the penitent. The theme here is well known in the OT (Jb. 5:11; 22:29; Ps. 149:4; Pr. 3:34; 29:25; Ezk. 17:24; 21:31), the intertestamental literature (Sir. 2:17, οἱ φοβούμενοι κύριον ... ἐνώπιον αὐτοῦ ταπεινώσουσιν τὰς ψυχὰς αὐτῶν; 3:18; Test. Jos. 10:3; 18:1; 1QH 3:20; 15:16), and the NT (Mt. 23:12; Lk. 14:11; 18:14); this NT literature (all Jesus logia) probably forms the immediate background for James (cf. the verbal similarity; cf. also 1 Pet. 5:6). The point is clear: all is not lost; only self-abasement and repentance is needed to gain the true exaltation which comes not from the world, but from God (cf. 1:9–11).” [Peter H. Davids, *The Epistle of James: A Commentary on the Greek Text*, New International Greek Testament Commentary (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1982), 168.]

side world often looks at a church fussing and squabbling with one another and wonders how Christ makes any real difference in the way one should live. Christians come through these kinds of conflicts weary with the battle scars of verbal attack after verbal attack against them.

Is this a new problem? Not at all. These kinds of problems surfaced in the life of the early church very quickly as the issue over Hellenistic Jewish Christian widows arose in the church at Jerusalem within a short time of its establishment, as Acts 6:1-7 describes. These problems and others continue to persistent down into our time with most churches going through periods of turmoil at one time or another. As my mentor professor at SWBTS in Ft. Worth, Dr. Jack MacGorman, used to tell his students, "the only place no friction exists between individuals is in a cemetery!"

Is our problem today the same as the one James was treating? Yes! He defined church conflict in general, inclusive terms but diagnosed the root problem precisely: worldliness. We love to do things more the way our world does, than the way God demands. That remains just as true today as it was in the first century. And James' solution to the problem of worldliness is the same today as well: turn loose of yourself in complete submission to God. James offers here a recipe for spiritual renewal of powerful measure. God help us to follow his instructions!

- 1) Have you been the cause of conflict in your church?

- 2) What motivates people to want to control the life of a church?

- 3) How do you define worldliness?

- 4) How willing are you to turn everything over to God and follow His leading completely?

- 5) What constitutes genuine repentance, in James' definition? Does that correspond to your understanding?