

Choosing Enemies . . . Making Friends

Satisfied!-Part II

James 4:4-6

Each August, Beloit College in Beloit, Wisconsin releases the Beloit College Mindset List which provides a look at the culture which shaped the lives of students entering college.

The List is shared with faculty and with literally thousands of educators who request it each year as the school year begins. It's a reminder of the rapidly changing frame of reference for this new generation.

Speaking of students entering college in the past year, they were born around 1993.

The Beloit Mindset List wrote that this incoming class has grown up in an era where computers and rapid communication are the norm, and colleges now no longer brag about the fact that residence halls are "wired". These students would not recognize the availability of telephones in their rooms since they have seldom used a landline. In fact, these students have never played with a telephone cord while talking on the phone.

Dorm roommates have already checked out each other on Facebook where they have shared their most personal thoughts with . . . the whole world.

They have been surrounded with computerized technology that has not distinguished [for them] information and knowledge. They have had instant access to

everything via computer. They have rarely researched anything in a book, so their professors will have to be patient as these students learn the difference between access and scholarship.

But here are some of the things they grew up with:

- The Soviet Union has never existed;
- Russia has never aimed nukes at the United States, and China has always posed an economic threat.
- They don't understand the Berlin wall;
- Girls in head scarves have always been part of school.
- The U.S. has always been studying global warming to confirm its existence.
- General Motors has always been working on an electric car;
- Airlines have always been bankrupt;
- In fact, these students have never had the chance to eat bad food on an airplane.
- To these students, Michael Moore has always been showing up uninvited;
- Clint Eastwood is a sensitive film director;

- And television stations have never concluded their broadcast day with the national anthem.
- Brides have always worn white for a first, second, or third wedding;
- And “outing” has always been a threat;
- This generation is wireless, yet always connected;
- Text messaging is *their* email and they have rarely mailed anything bearing a stamp.
- They have never written in cursive;
- And since cell phones give them the time, they’ve never owned a wrist watch.
- They grew up with virtual pets to feed, water, and play games with lest they die;
- Stadiums and sporting events have always had corporate names;
- And Grandma has always had wheels on her walker.
- They grew up pushing their own miniature shopping carts in the supermarket;
- Dolphin-free canned tuna has always been on sale;
- Disposable contact lenses have always been available;
- Food packaging has always included nutritional labeling;
- Whole grain has always been an option;
- All their water has been bottled;
- And they’ve never heard anyone actually “ring something up” on a cash register.
- The word “so” as in “Sooooo New York,” has always been a drawn-out adjective modifying a proper noun, which in turn modifies something else (I didn’t get that one either).

- They have never heard a gas station attendant ask “Want me to check under the hood?”
- To them, gas stations don’t fix cars, they sell food and cappuccino.

A couple more:

- This incoming freshman class grew up playing video games and watching movies in their minivans;
- They have never rolled down their window;
- And their temperature has always been taken in their ear – lucky them!

Talk about change . . . so much has changed in just a few years.

The culture is constantly changing! Which to me is one of the great proofs of the inspiration of the Bible and the everlasting, unchangeable power of the gospel.

The Bible is as fresh and relevant today as it was in 1993. As it was in the 93 A.D. about the time the first of the New Testament letters was becoming widely known as authoritative – God-breathed.

It was written by James, the pastor/teacher of the church in Jerusalem.

To this day, it speaks to who we are and how we live with, or without email, or global warming, or the Soviet Union, or battery powered cars and cappuccinos.

One author said, that this hard hitting powerful letter from James could be entitled, “In Your Face” or James, the “In Your Face, Epistle.”ⁱ

Which means, you can’t get away from it . . . you can’t dodge any of the bullets . . . it doesn’t pull any punches . . . you can’t duck or pull out, and you certainly can’t ignore it.

That is, if you want to grow up, in fact, if you want to be truly satisfied in life.

In our last session, as we began *James chapter 4*, the Apostle of this in-your-face letter exposed our hearts that seek satisfaction in our own pleasures.

In the first few verses of chapter 4, James exposed the downward spiral of sin. The battle begins internally and then surfaces externally.

One author from a generation ago spelled out the downward spiral with these words: It begins with a desire. That desire for that person, for that relationship, for that promotion, for that thrill, for that drug, for that whatever moves from a desire to something that dominates his thoughts; he thinks about it during his waking hours and dreams about it when he sleeps. It moves from a desire to becoming a ruling passion. He begins to form schemes in his mind to obtain it; and it might even involve eliminating someone or something that stands in his way. For long enough all this may go on in his mind. Then one day the imagination blazes into action, and he finds himself taking the steps necessary to obtain his desire. Every [sin] has come from desire which was first a feeling, but being nourished it became an action.ⁱⁱ

James even goes further in ripping of the religious mask from our vocabulary of prayer, showing us how we can pray but really only be praying for our own selfish pursuits.

We want our desires and hope that God will grant them like some sort of giant cosmic vending machine in the sky.

James says that this kind of Christian is not heading toward a life of satisfaction, but dissatisfaction. He is not headed toward a full life but an empty life.

He is not heading toward wisdom and discernment but stupidity and foolishness; he's not going to land on joy; he's going to land on guilt and despair.

Dr. Samuel Johnson put it this way to the 18th century church, "Of all that have tried the selfish experiment, let one come forth, and say that he has succeeded. He that has made gold his idol, has it satisfied him? He that has toiled in the fields of ambition, has he been repaid? He that has ransacked every avenue for sensual enjoyment, is he content? Can anyone answer in the affirmative? Not one!"ⁱⁱⁱ

So, what are we going to do about it? How do we pursue and find and live a satisfied life?

What James will provide next is the beginning of an inspired answer . . . and you will find that it is true in every generation.

No matter how much the culture changes; no matter how much the technology advances—whether you're riding on a horse or in a battery operated car—your path will lead to satisfaction only by heeding these truths.

And I've outlined James challenge into 4 imperatives; the first is this:

1. Get on the right side of the war

Look at *James chapter 4 and verse 4. You adulteresses, do you not know that friendship with the world is hostility toward God? Therefore whoever wishes to be a friend of the world makes himself an enemy of God.*

In other words, you have to choose your enemies . . . and you have to make the right friends—primarily God Himself—because there's a war on!

You better know who your real enemies are and who your real friend is.

Now the hard hitting vocabulary of James leads some to believe James can't be writing to Christians. I mean, he starts out by calling us all adulteresses!

Some would say that there's no way a believer would be called an adulterous. There's no way a believer could be hostile toward God to literally be opposed and at enmity with God.

But to the Jewish believers reading this letter they would have immediately understood the use of the word adulteress as a reference to spiritual unfaithfulness.

Israel is often referred to as the wife of Jehovah. In other words, there is a covenant of love and fidelity God and His people.

Going all the way back to Moses who warned the people not to play the role of a harlot and go after other gods (Exodus 34).

The prophet Hosea would literally live out the faithfulness of God toward Israel as he obeyed the Lord and married a harlot who was then continually unfaithful to him, yet the Lord would command Hosea to go and buy her back and love her faithfully as an illustration of God's unfailing love for His bride, Israel.

Jesus Christ also referred primarily to Israel as an adulterous generation.

So also, the New Testament speaks of the church as the bride of Christ (Ephesians 5 and Revelation 19). We are spiritually married to Christ (Romans 7:4)

James was speaking much like an Old Testament prophet, warning them that to pursue the world is tantamount to spiritual adultery.

For what does an adulterer do but say that he has not found satisfaction and delight in their spouse, so they will seek satisfaction in another.

So here's the question: can a Christian try to find satisfaction and delight in something or someone that would violate his commitment to Jesus Christ?

The answer's yes—it's called sin. James—the in-your-face Apostle considers sin to be spiritual adultery.

What an interesting way to look at sin – it is a violation of love between us and our bridegroom.

Now, James uses the word here for world—*kosmos* (κοσμος) which does not refer to this planet.

It refers to this present age, which is hostile toward God. It refers to the world system. It refers to the self-centered value system of the world.^{iv}

The word for world in scripture stands for all that is unholy. You have then these two contrasting affections—friendship with the world or friendship with God. If we love the one, we turn away from the other. You simply cannot keep close to both of them.^v

And by the way, the word that appears twice in this verse, translated friendship or friend, is a lot more than a casual friendship with someone

you see in school every so often or maybe someone at work you join in the break room for lunch every once in a while.

The word James uses here is *philia* (φιλια) the verb form is *philew* (φιλεω). It is a friendship based on common interests, common desires, and common pursuits. It is a deeply affectionate word that is often translated by the word "love" in the New Testament.

In fact, it's used of the Father's love for those who are saved (John 16:27).

It is a word that highlights the emotional connection and satisfaction that friends find in being with each other.

Is it possible for the believer and the world to have the same interests, to pursue the same things, to want the same things: money, fame, popularity, pleasure, promotion, comfort, health and so on? Is it possible for our interests and our concerns to be conformed to those of an unholy world?^{vi}

Yes! It's possible for the believer and therein lies the temptation to become more attached to the world than to God and to become more of a friend of the world than we are of God.

Have you ever thought about the fact that a loss of fellowship is really nothing more than a loss of friendship?

Not sonship—that can never be lost. But fellowship can be.

Think of it this way. *Philia*, the word James uses here for friendship, can be translated in its verb form, to kiss—an act of affection or desire.

James is saying, don't you know the battle that's going on? Look at **verse 4 – Do you not know that friendship with the world is hostility toward God?**

Don't you know that? James is asking a rhetorical question and he knows they will respond with, "Yes, we know that!"

Then why are you kissing up to the world system which is at war with God? Why would you ever show the world your affection? Why would you ever kiss up to sin? Why would you ever do that?!

A middle school in Oregon was having a problem I read about some time ago. The middle school girls were into makeup and lipstick and lip gloss and they were putting it on in the girl's bathroom between classes. They had started the tradition of kissing the mirror before leaving, which left behind dozens of little lip prints on the mirrors.

This took a lot of time to clean off, after it had dried. The Principal had warned the girls, threatened the girls, tried everything and nothing worked.

Then she hit on an idea. She told the custodian exactly what to do as she called the girls to the bathroom one afternoon after class.

They piled into the bathroom and there again were all the mirrors with dozens of lip prints on them. And she once again explained that all these lip prints were causing a major problem for the custodian who had to spend extra time cleaning the mirrors every day. In fact, she said, you need to know just how hard it is for our custodian to clean them off. She then asked the custodian to show the girls how difficult it was to clean the mirrors. He said, "Yes, Ma'am" and then took out his long-handled brush, dipped it into one of the nearby commodes, and then began to scrub one of the mirrors clean.

The Principal dismissed the girls and the lip prints disappeared.

Who in their right mind would want to kiss that?

That's James point; you should know better than that. You're kissing up to filth . . . and you're hurting the love of your life.

The world is at war with God and you are fraternizing with the enemy . . . you should know that puts you on the wrong side of the battle; you have no business being over there.

Besides, you'll never find satisfaction in that affection. You're drinking from the wrong well . . . you're embracing a corpse.

To put it as bluntly to this generation as James did to his, let me say it this way: If you

want a satisfied life—take a good look at what you're kissing up to.

Wake up . . . James says effectively in *verse 4*. You already know this . . . which is a nicer way of saying, "You know better!"

First, **Get on the right side of the war.**

2. Act out the truth of God's word

James asks another in-your-face rhetorical question in *verse 5*. Notice there as James asks, ***Do you think that the Scripture speaks to no purpose:***

In other words, does God mean what He says? Or did He put the Bible together for us because He always wanted to write a Book. He didn't have anything better to do, so He compiled a bunch of nice quotes and neat stories for us to read before bedtime.

James is writing with biting sarcasm here. He effectively says, "Do you think the Bible is something you can take or leave? Or, is it the authoritative word of God.

James knows that all the believers will say, "You're right, James, it is the word of God."

Then James has them cornered because, if it is indeed the word of God, then it speaks with the authority of God and it must then be followed and obeyed as the command of God.

So do you really believe what the scripture teaches? Do you really buy into the warnings of scripture? Do you really believe the promises of scripture? Do you really want to follow the commands of scripture?

James is expecting us to say, "Yes!"

Then act it out! Put it into practice! Follow it! The scriptures speak with a purpose!

Anything otherwise is nothing less than dangerous. That path leads to disillusionment and the spiral downward.

A man in our church told me some time ago about his training in deep sea diving. As part of his training, he was taken deep under the water's surface where apart from his searchlight, it was totally black. He told me

how easy it was to become disoriented as to which way was up or down or sideways.

He said, “Your body was weightless and without any landmarks around you in the dark you could literally be swimming down and all the while thinking you were swimming up.

He had been trained that if all else fails, and he didn’t know which way to swim to the surface, he was to simply follow the bubbles from his oxygen tank. Even though it might seem that down was up, he was to follow the bubbles; he was trained, “the bubbles are always right.”

We’re living in a changing culture where it’s easy to become disoriented to what is right or wrong; helpful or harmful; wise or foolish.

Here’s James’ lesson: follow the Bible . . . it speaks with purpose . . . and it’s always right.

You know you’re in trouble when you tell the Lord things like, “Lord, I’m not sure you know what’s best for me. I think I know the way to the surface. Your word is probably a little too old fashioned on that issue . . . we’re into email and iPads now.”

It might sound unsophisticated to deep sea divers with all their technology and instrumentation, but the bubbles are always right.

And just like the bubbles, the Bible is always right, and it will lead you toward life worth living.

Paul wrote to Timothy and reminded him that the God-breathed scriptures were profitable; their purpose was to teach, reprove, correct and train in righteousness—right-living.

So, get on the right side of the war;
Act out the truth of the word;

3. Tune in to the voice of the Spirit

Verse 5b. “He jealously desires the Spirit which He has made to dwell in us”

Again, it might sound odd to us that the Spirit of God is jealous.

But to the Jewish audience of James, they immediately knew that God often referred to Himself as a jealous God.

Right at the outset of the Ten Commandments God says “***I the Lord your God am a jealous God (Exodus 5:20)***

Later in ***Exodus 32***, Moses says to the people of Israel, “***For the Lord whose name is Jealous, is a jealous God.***” (***Exodus 32:14***)

It simply means that God is intolerant of any rival. Just as a husband and a wife has a holy, loving jealousy over each other, where they would protect and guard their own affections from any rival, so God is passionate about our fidelity.

By the way, this is another proof that James is writing to Christians because the Spirit does not dwell in the unbeliever. He dwells—***verse 5-in us***.

And the Spirit within us jealously guards our relationship with God is grieved when we sin against God’s love.^{vii}

The Spirit of God speaks to our hearts and minds through His word. He convicts our hearts with grief and sorrow and guilt whenever we go anywhere else but to Him to have our needs met.

James is saying, “Stop having an affair with the world.” If you want a satisfied life, you don’t go anywhere else but to Him to have your needs met.

This is a picture here to the Holy Spirit’s yearning for the undivided love of God’s people and grudgingly refusing to yield to a rival.^{viii}

God claims us entirely for Himself. He is that jealous. He wants our undivided devotion.^{ix}

He will not have a rival, and according to James chapter 4, the rival we must battle is not only the world in verses 4-6; but in our last session we learned that the rival to Godly affections will be our own flesh, our own desires in verses 1-4.

Dial into the frequency as it were of the Spirit and you will hear the melody that sings of God's way.

Tune into the frequency of the flesh and the songs and melodies will reinforce *our* way.

Did you know that the most popular song played at funerals in the English speaking world today is the same song that has become the most often used, repeated, copied, played and recorded song in pop culture entitled, *I Did it My Way*.

I hesitated reading the lyrics in my sermon, but I can't find a better illustration of the human heart, which tunes into the frequency of the world rather than the Spirit and then turns around and brags about it, than this song.

And to make matters even more tragic, the song is sung from the perspective of a man who's dying. He's come to the end of his life, which is why this song is so popular at funerals

And here are the lyrics.

*And now, the end is near,
And so I face the final curtain.
My friends, I'll say it clear;
I'll state my case of which I'm certain.*

*I've lived a life that's full -
I've travelled each and every highway.
And more, much more than this,
I did it my way.*

*Regrets? I've had a few,
But then again, too few to mention.
I did what I had to do
And saw it through without exemption.*

*I planned each charted course -
Each careful step along the byway,
And more, much more than this,
I did it my way.*

*Yes, there were times, I'm sure you knew
When I bit off more than I could chew
But through it all, when there was doubt
I ate it up and spit it out
I faced it all and I stood tall and did it my way.*

*I've loved, I've laughed and cried,
I've had my fill—my share of losing.
But now, as tears subside,
I find it all so amusing.*

*To think I did all that,
And may I say, not in a shy way
Oh no. Oh no, not me.
I did it my way.*

*For what is a man? What has he got?
If not himself then he has naught.
To say the things he truly feels
And not the words of one who kneels.
The record shows I took the blows
And did it my way.^x*

Which frequency are you tuned into? The world will sing—live it your way. The Spirit will say, “Do it God's way.”

Live it your way and you will reach a destination of dissatisfaction.

Live it according the Spirit of God through the word of God and it actually may be more painful and more uncomfortable and more difficult and more challenging and even more temporarily unrewarding, but you will reach a destination called satisfaction.

So, get on the right side of the war;
Act out the truth of the word;
Tune in to the voice of the Spirit;

4. Present the correct posture for receiving grace

Notice verse 6. A text I thought I'd use for an entire sermon, but James uses it to conclude this particular thought and so will I—notice, **But He gives a greater grace.**

Wait a second . . . greater than what? Greater than whatever it is the world offers.

- greater than the strength of your own depravity;
- greater than the power of the spirit of darkness;

- greater than your failure to give God your undivided affection; greater than your vilest sin^{xi}

For where sin increased, grace abounded all the more (Romans 5:20).

Grace for every situation; we have no need which outstrips His grace; for daily need there is daily grace; for sudden need, there is sudden grace; for overwhelming need, there is overwhelming grace.^{xii}

The tense of this verb—***He gives a greater grace***—is present indicative meaning God is giving us grace continuously.^{xiii}

It never stops flowing . . . we will never exhaust it . . . there is always more to follow!

Zodhiates told the story of a little boy, one of seven children, who had been in some accident and was taken to the hospital. He came from a poor family where hunger was seldom completely satisfied and a glass of milk had to be shared by 3 or 4 other siblings. Each child was able to drink but so much, until milk descended to a certain point in the glass before they had to stop. Well, after the young boy was made as comfortable as possible in the hospital bed, to his surprise a nurse brought him a large glass of milk. He looked at it longingly and then, shyly asked the nurse, “How deep shall I drink?” The nurse immediately knew why he asked, and with her eyes now moist and a sudden lump in her throat, she said to him, “You may drink it all.” You can drink as deeply as you like.^{xiv}

It is our nature to need . . . it is God’s nature to give.

The question is do you really want it?

Notice the qualifier in ***verse 6, God is opposed to the proud, but gives grace to the humble.***

In other words, do you really think you need it? The proud person would say, “I’m fine on my own.”

The humble believer will say, “Are you kidding . . . I need Thee every hour!”

In other words, those who benefit most from grace are those who recognize they need it most.

And those who need it most will receive it most and thank Him most and love Him most.

James says, effectively:

-Get on the right side of the war;

-Act out the truth of the word;

-Tune in to the voice of the Spirit;

-Present the correct posture for receiving grace.

Where your heart is positioned in humility to receive and welcome the grace of God.

And to you, the poet writes,

He giveth more grace when the burdens grow greater;

He sendeth more grace when the labours increase;

To added afflictions He addeth His mercy,

To multiplied trials His multiplied peace.

When we have exhausted our store of endurance,

When our strength has failed ere the day is half done;

When we reach the end of our hoarded resources,

Our Father’s full giving is only begun.

His love has no limits, His grace has no measure,

His power has no boundary known unto men;

For out of His infinite riches in Jesus,

He giveth and giveth and giveth again.^{xv}

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- i R. Kent Hughes, James: Faith That Works (Crossway Books, 1991), p. 176
- ii William Barclay, The Letters of James and Peter (Westminster Press, 1976), p. 100
- iii Hughes, p. 169
- iv John MacArthur, James (Moody Press, 1998), p. 193
- v Adapted from Spiros Zodhiates, The Labor of Love (AMG Publishers, 1981), p. 242
- vi Zodhiates, p. 241
- vii Warren W. Wiersbe, James: Be Mature (Victor Books, 1979), p. 124
- viii D. Edmond Hiebert, James (BMH Books, 1992), p. 233
- ix Charles R. Swindoll, James: Practical and Authentic Living (Insight for Living, 1991), p. 138
- x Written by: Paul Anka, Claude Francois, Gilles Thibault, Jacques Revaux Arranger: Don Costa
- xi Hiebert, p. 234
- xii John Blanchard, quoted by Hughes, p. 178
- xiii
Zodhiates, p. 252
- xiv Zodhiates, p. 252
- xv Annie Johnson Fint