

Teaching Plan
EXPLORE THE BIBLE

Date: November 18, 2018
Lesson Title: "With Submission"
Lesson Passage: James 4:1-17

ABOUT THIS LESSON

In this lesson, James deals with human conflict--its causes, consequences and cure. He also condemns the arrogance of those who live in the present and plan for the future without taking God into account.

(NOTE: James 4:1-5 have been added to the lesson passage, since these verses constitute an important part of James' argument.)

TEACHING/LEARNING GOALS

- (1) Explain causes and consequences of human conflict.
- (2) Explain the relationship between personal desire and human conflict.

BEGINNING THE LESSON

Display several newspaper articles that refer to human conflict (political fights, courtroom battles, domestic violence, crimes, wars, racial tensions). Note that Philo, a Jewish philosopher who lived at about the time of James, once wrote of "the continual war which prevails among men even in times of peace." Point out that this is the very problem James is dealing with in this week's lesson, the problem of human conflict.

TEACHING PROCEDURES

1. Explore James 4:1-10, using the following outline:

CONFLICT: AN OUTWARD AND INNER REALITY (4:1).

THE CAUSE: LUSTS UNLEASHED (4:1b-2).

THE CONSEQUENCES: ALIENATION (4:3-4).

THE CURE: SUBMISSION TO GOD (4:7-10).

YOU CAN'T LEAVE GOD AT HOME (4:13-17)

2. Elaborate on each point. Share the following thoughts:

CONFLICT: AN OUTWARD AND INNER REALITY (4:1). *Comments:* (1) James is referring to the problem of "church fights." (In 3:13, "among you," implies that he is addressing Christians.) (2) We witness conflict at many different levels of human existence (e.g., family, church, nation, world). These visible conflicts are often outward reflections of the "wars and fightings" that go on inside individuals. ("Your members" in James 4:1b really means "your body.")

THE CAUSE: LUSTS UNLEASHED (4:1b-2). *Comments:* (1) James immediately answers the question asked in v. 1. The "wars and fightings" are caused by the "lusts that war in your members (your body)." (2) The word "lusts" is the Greek *hedonai* (i.e., sensual pleasure). (Read a dictionary definition of "hedonism," which comes from this word.) (3) Personal desire

is often the cause of human conflict. (If two persons desire the same thing and are unwilling to share it, they will fight over it.) (Picture two children fighting over a toy, yelling, "Mine! Mine!" The situation is basically the same when two men fight over a woman, politicians fight over a political office, family members fight over an inheritance or nations fight over a territory.)

THE CONSEQUENCES: ALIENATION (4:3-4). A consuming desire for pleasures and sensual satisfactions alienates one from God. Why? ANSWERS: (1) It robs one of the ability to pray (v. 3). (The proper attitude for prayer is, "Thy will be done." A person dominated by the desire for pleasure prays, "My desires be satisfied.") (2) A person who devotes his life to worldly pleasures can't at the same time be on good terms with God (v. 4). (The "world" refers not just to obviously sinful things; it also includes all earthly satisfactions that are indulged in apart from God.) (3) At the beginning of 4:4, James refers to the Old Testament concept of spiritual adultery (Hosea 9:1) in which those united with God in a covenant relationship forsook Him for other gods.

THE CURE: SUBMISSION TO GOD (4:7-10). (1) The "spiritual adultery" analogy helps us understand vv. 7-10. The sole remedy for adultery is for the unfaithful person to forsake other lovers and return to his or her marriage partner. Similarly, the only remedy for those who have been obsessed with worldly pleasures is to renounce them and return to God. (2) God gives victory to those who resist the devil ("he will flee from you"--v. 7b.) (3) Verse 8 calls for a twofold cleansing--outward cleansing ("cleanse your hands") and internal cleansing ("purify your hearts"). (4) James is not implying in v. 9 that Christianity must be joyless. But repentance is serious business, and should not be indulged in casually or light-heartedly. *Ask someone to read Psalm 51:1-4 as an example of the repentant attitude James is advocating here.*

YOU CAN'T LEAVE GOD AT HOME (James 4:13-17): (1) Verse 13 refers to business travel. It was not unusual for merchants to go into a foreign city and do business there for a year. (2) James had no quarrel with such business practices; in 4:15-16, he is arguing against the arrogant attitude of those who did not take God into account when making such plans. (3) Verse 14 is a reminder that, though we tend to become absorbed in day-to-day living, we should also stay mindful of a greater reality, the life to come; God is Sovereign over both. (4) *Use this illustration to explain the meaning of v. 17: When they think they're in trouble with Mom, children will say, "I didn't do anything!" But, for the Christian who lives under the law of love, "not doing anything" can be a sin. (See Mt. 25:41-45.)*

CLOSING THE LESSON

Conclude the lesson with a discussion of these questions: (1) What can we do to cope with the ever-present temptation to be caught up in the desire for comforts, pleasures and possessions so typical of our society today? (2) Why is the practice of criticizing and condemning other Christians so commonplace within religious circles today?

Lucien Coleman P.O. Box 2951 Weatherford TX 76086 682-262-1312