

Friend of the World or Friend of God?
JAMES 4:4-5

Once again James brings a probing question... **You adulteresses, do you not know that friendship with the world is hostility toward God?**

That question is more bashing with a blunt instrument than it is probing.

James has referred to his audience as “brethren or beloved brethren” several times, but now he calls them “adulteresses”.

We DARE NOT think, “This doesn’t apply to me, or to us.”

You adulterers and 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. 5 Or do you think that the Scripture speaks to no purpose: He jealously desires the Spirit which He has made to dwell in us”?

There is a lesson here for us: Your beloved brethren and sistren are adulterers and adulteresses. That includes you and me. Do you know that?

We have to come to grips with that or we’ll drive ourselves and others crazy.

All too often we hear the critique that “the church is filled with hypocrites”.

Why do people say that?

BECAUSE IT IS TRUE.

But the world was not the first to call out the church on this. God has been doing it in the NT for 2000 years and prior to that, He did it in the OT, speaking of His people, Israel.

So, unbelievers and skeptics need to find a new critique, otherwise they are just plagiarizing what God has already said.

Motyer - It is a depressing commentary on the state of the Christian church in the world that James could have written a circular letter to many congregations scattered over great distances (1:1) and assumed that the hard words he wrote about dissension, hostility, pride, and friendship with the world would hit the mark.

Here is a bit of good news; what James refers to is not adultery as defined by the 7th Commandment, or even as Jesus defines it by saying, “Any man who looks on a woman with lust in his heart has committed adultery.”

Here’s the bad news; James gives a broader understanding in the context of our relationship with God and friendship with the world.

(ESV study Bible)

In using the language of adultery, James recalls the OT prophets who used this language to describe Israel’s unfaithfulness to God (e.g., [Jer. 2:20](#); [3:6-10](#); [Hos. 1:2](#)). Such people have chosen friendship with the world by imitating worldly ways of thinking and worldly activities, making them enemies of God. It will always be impossible to satisfy the expectations of unbelievers, whose hearts are set on this world ([1 John 2:15-16](#); [5:19](#)), and at the same time please God ([Gal. 1:10](#); [2 Tim. 3:12](#); [1 John 3:13](#)).

WARNING: If you try to play that expectation game to find popularity with the world or the spirit of the age, but you still want to hold on to core Biblical truths ,such as God exists and Jesus is the only way of

salvation, it won't work. Once they find out about the bare bone profession that you hold to, they'll come after you for that.

If the world hates you, you know that it has hated Me before *it hated* you. 19 If you were of the world, the world would love *you as its own*; but because you are not of the world, but I chose you out of the world, because of this the world hates you. John 15:18

We have not believed those words of Jesus in our culture because we haven't had to. Many Christians throughout church history have known this their whole lives. We are beginning to get a taste of it. When the world seeks to push you so that you will bend, they won't stop until you break. No matter how much you bend, they'll still hate you, if you don't break. And once you break, they'll still hate you. The world still hates Jesus.

The world cannot hate you, but it hates Me because I testify of it, that its deeds are evil. Jn 7:7
The word of Christ continues to testify today that the deeds of the world are evil.

The WARNING ALSO CONTAINS THE SOLUTION

Use the love of God on your hearts – v. 4. Temptation and sin aren't issues of breaking rules, they deal with violating a love relationship. The sin process begins when your mind goes to bed with a desire that holds out a promise of happiness / well-being / significance/ worth and identity in something other than Christ.

Use the love of Christ on your hearts by seeing what he has done for you. He was tempted and resisted for YOU. He obeyed and lost God, for you!!! When we see the love of Christ for us at the Cross it undermines envy and lust in our hearts. (Eph 3:18ff) When our hearts are filled and content with Christ, then the desires are put in their place. They no longer rule or enslave us. Use the love of Christ in a proactive way to control or replace sinful or inordinate desires.

THE PRIOR FAILURE IS THAT OF NOT RENEWING OUR HEARTS IN THE LOVE OF Christ THROUGH REPENTANT FAITH.

USE THE LOVE OF Christ TO RESIST SIN, NOT SIMPLY TO FIND FORGIVENESS. Use it to ward off spiritual adultery just as you would use love to ward off marital infidelity.

HOW? – Seeing our sin and God's provision for it, and the righteous record he gives us in Christ. When the wonder of forgiveness is fresh on the heart we find true contentment in it. When we know that our biggest and deepest need was and is forgiveness and that it has been met in Christ, we have a well of contentment that springs up in our lives. Humble submission to God and resistance to the devil are the result

YOU CAN'T PURSUE FRIENDSHIP WITH GOD AND BE FRIENDS WITH THE WORLD AT THE SAME TIME.

Friendship with God vs. Friendship with the World

grace	vs.	performance.
Godward focus	vs.	manward focus
Biblically informed mind	vs	Taken captive by the spirit of the age
Faith (Heb 11:6)	vs.	See, touch, feel

What is THE WORLD?

1 John 2

15 Do not love the world nor the things in the world. If anyone loves the world, the love of the Father is not in him. 16 For all that is in the world, the lust of the flesh and the lust of the eyes and the boastful pride of

life, is not from the Father, but is from the world. 17 The world is passing away, and also its lusts; but the one who does the will of God lives forever.

The “world” is a broad term that refers to a temporal worldview that is hostile toward God, His values, and His eternal kingdom. It includes the deceitful schemes of this present age and a life that is lived without regard to God. Worldliness is seeking our worth, significance, purpose, and reward in something other than God.

Friendship with the World is a way of saying, *“God you don’t and can’t satisfy me. I’ve found something else more beautiful and more rewarding. You can’t or won’t satisfy me so I must look elsewhere.”*

Worldliness isn’t merely the crude grasping for things or the following of gross practices in which outer indulgence is the key. It is also the respectable sin of many Christians who want to be “in” with the world and who consider friendship with the world an ideal. – Jay Adams

APPLICATION: HOW TO UNDERCUT ‘FRIENDSHIP WITH THE WORLD’ – Center your life calendar on personal AND corporate worship – 4th Commandment.

It sets the pattern and priorities for our week and for our lives.
It is NOT AUTOMATIC, but it is Essential.

“Friendship with the world” is NOT neutral. It is actually taking a step AWAY FROM friendship with God. We can’t do both – friendship with the world AND friendship with God.

The God of heaven and earth, the God of grace and glory doesn’t come into our lives to be a helper or side dish. Such a God can only be truly reflected when he is the CENTER, THE SWEETNESS AND THE MEANING OF OUR LIVES.

What are we saying about God when time with him, His Word, and His people become secondary to our agendas?

I KNOW YOU WANT ME TO TELL YOU WHAT ‘FRIENDSHIP WITH THE WORLD’ LOOKS LIKE.
WHAT’S ON THE LIST?

“Bob haired women and men with facial hair have taken a step toward friendship with the World. Don’t drink, smoke, or chew or go with girls that do.”
I wish it were THAT EASY.

Rather than focusing on “friendship with the world”, let’s zoom in on friendship with God.
What v.4-5 tell us about our relationship with God:

1. **v. 5 Love for God is exclusive – 1st Commandment**

Verse 5 has long been a notoriously difficult statement to interpret. Without confusing you with the details, let me simply say that the “For” with which the verse begins obviously indicates that what is being said in v. 5 confirms what was said in v. 4. *In other words, God is a jealous God who will brook no rivals, certainly not a rival spirit such as the spirit of the world. [Moo, 188-190; Tasker, 91] (Rayburn)*

2 . Being a friend of God is not just platonic – We have friendship with God, but much more. The biblical images are those of a marriage, of God as the lover of our souls. These images are so deep ,and at times so intimate, that it makes us uncomfortable. Husband to a wife Jer. 2 Ez 16, Hosea etc. In v. 4 he says, “adulteresses”. He call every person in the church an unfaithful wife.

EX : Hosea and Gomer is a picture of God and Israel. “Now you know what my life is like. “

The adulteress imagery conveys an important idea – We give our hearts and souls to something else in the same way that we give our bodies to someone in marital intimacy. Spiritually speaking, are you lying

down in the arms of something other than god? Where are you going to find your meaning and purpose? What does your heart fondle? Is it God, or something else, someone else – control, approval, success, morality, looking good, good kids, health, wealth, drugs, sex, rock n’ roll?

If we know what we have in God, we will not seek another. Think about what we have in Christ. (Col 3)

3. Our relationship with God is one of loving choice - you get married because you fall in love; it’s the same with Christ. It is not a business partnership. You fall in love and give yourself, heart, mind, and soul.

4. It is a relationship of vulnerability and commitment

The marriage metaphor teaches how to live. "Do I still have to obey the law? If I can never lose God's love, then why do I have to obey."

This shows a lack of understanding of this relationship.

EX: A man who asks, "Should I be faithful to my wife?" (He’s probably NOT married)

Why do you do what you do when you're in love? You want to please that person, not out of fear, but out of love. You want to please that person, you delight in his / her joy. A Christian sees the law in romantic terms, an expression of passions of our beloved.

Don't lie =God loves truth.

Wm Cowper

**Chorus: To see the Law by Christ fulfilled,
To hear His pardoning voice,
Changes a slave into a child
And duty into choice.**

LOVE FOR God ISN'T MANIFESTED BY HOW CLOSE YOU CAN GET TO THE WORLD WITHOUT YIELDING TO TEMPTATION, IT IS MANIFESTED BY OUR COMMITMENT TO PURSUE A RELATIONSHIP WITH God.

EX: Working with youth – A big issue was "How far can we go before it is sin?"

THAT'S THE WRONG QUESTION and the wrong starting point.

The RIGHT QUESTION is, "How can we glorify God in our relationship?"

Many people don't realize how vulnerable and how perilous the life of faith is. We dare not take for granted the faithfulness of our own hearts, as if vigilance and conscious endurance were not continually necessary. **BE ON THE ALERT!**

EX: Drifting while playing in the ocean.

APPLICATION QUESTIONS?

Are you being too friendly with the world?

Do you see it as a danger?

Are there things you say "No" too simply out of love for Christ?

Are you doing something to avoid friendship with the world? You can't Pursue righteousness and be friends with the world at the same time.

Are you more concerned about being seen as "cool" in the eyes of the world as about being holy in conduct and speech?

Do you expect godliness and love for God to just happen because you go to church?

Sporadic prayer and LITTLE Biblical engagement is like being married but never getting to "know" your spouse.

(Sadly, that is an all too common problem, but is a topic for another time.)

Is bible reading just information exchange? Get real before God, be vulnerable, an inter-communication. God speaks this way with this imagery because what is possible is beyond imagination.

It would have been enough for us to just be forgiven, but God makes us beloved children and gives us HIMSELF.

This sets us up for next week:

. 8 Draw near to God and He will draw near to you.

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