

## BIBLE DISCUSSION GROUP STUDY QUESTIONS

In preparation for Sunday, October 2, 2011

Passage: James 4:1-6

Memory Passage: James 4:7-8

### DAY 1 – ASK FOR INSIGHT

### READ THE PASSAGE

- (a) **Read James 4:1-6.** What connections do you see between these verse and 3:13-18 (you should see a strong connection!)?
- (b) Why, according to v. 1, are there quarrels and fights among God's people? Explain how our "passions at war within" us cause quarrels & fights "among" us (remember to search the context)?
- (c) **Read Matt. 5:21-26.** How does Jesus relate "anger" & "murder" in this passage? What should you do if you know that another believer "has something against you" (notice that Jesus does not say "you have something against" another believer)? What is the ultimate goal of this action? How will being obedient to this teaching alleviate quarrels & fights in our body?
- (d) Does James speak of real or metaphorical murder (4:2) and upon what do you base your answer? How does Jesus' teaching affect our understanding of James' usage?
- (e) *Family: Read Matt. 5:21-26.* Explain that Jesus is saying that unrepentant & unresolved anger toward our Christian brothers & sisters is destructive, attacking another person who has been created in God's image, and is the foundational emotion that leads to murder. Ask, "How do we know if someone has an offense against us, and what should we do about it when we know?" (Answer: They might shed tears, they might act differently toward us, they might begin to be short or angry back to us or avoid being around us; We must approach them quickly to reconcile [work to restore our relationship] with them.) Walk your family through the process of reconciliation from both the offended and offending parties: Repentance, asking for forgiveness, granting forgiveness, watching for the fruit of repentance, full restoration of the relationship. Give examples, either from real life situations or by giving a hypothetical situation that might happen in your family.

### DAY 2 – ASK FOR INSIGHT

### READ THE PASSAGE

- (a) **Read James 4:1-6.** What are the 2 cause & effect statements James presents in 4a & b? To what types of unfulfilled desires is James referring, and how do they lead to such outward consequences? How does coveting lead to fights & quarrels in the body of Christ? Have you ever seen this happen in a church?
- (b) What internal unfulfilled desires/covetousness are you experiencing right now? How can/do/have these unrighteous, internal desires affected your relationship with other believers in our body? As you answer, consider things like: Your thoughts toward others, your complaining to friends about your situation or jealousy of others' situations, your envy of others who are better off than you, your desire for the life of another in any area (wealth, belongings, success, authority, joy, lack of struggle or stress, vacation time, spirituality of their spouse, etc.), your manipulation of others' feelings of compassion toward you, etc. What do these unrighteous desires reveal about you, your priorities, and your dependence upon Christ?
- (c) *Family: Read James 4:1-2.* Explain that "passions" refers to unrighteous desires, and that "covet" means to strongly desire what God has not given you. Ask your family, "What are some personal desires that we as a family can have that would cause quarrels & fights among us." Be ready to list these on your white board. Then lead your family in a discussion of how these intense passions lead to fights & quarrels (i.e. show how these internal, maybe unspoken desires can begin to seep into our relationships), how each family member can recognize in themselves when this is happening, and how to begin the process of reconciliation about which you spoke in last night's lesson.

### DAY 3 – ASK FOR INSIGHT

### READ THE PASSAGE

- (a) **Read James 4:1-6, Ps. 34:15, 145:18, Matt. 7:7-8, John 15:7 & 1 John 5:14.** James makes 2 statements on prayer (2b & 3). In the first one he tells his hearers that they do not have because they do not ask. What do these other passages on prayer state about the promises of God to His people with regard to their asking in prayer? What does it reveal about a professing believer if they do not pray?
- (b) What does James say about the motives of those who do ask, but do not receive (v. 3)? What do the other passages of Scripture that you read today reveal about the requirements of our asking God for anything in prayer? How do James' hearers violate these conditions? In what ways can you imagine these believers asking God for things in order to "spend it on (their) passions?" In what ways to you do this? Is your prayer life consumed with a desire to achieve your desires, or is it consumed with asking God to realign your desires with His? With a desire to see your kingdom advance or His?
- (c) Are you lacking in the amount of time you spend in prayer, maybe even spending *no* regular time in prayer? Remember that God is a God who loves & disciplines His children and loves when you, as His child, return to Him in obedience. Spend some time in prayer right now asking for His forgiveness and asking Him to restore or grow your passion to spend regular & consistent time with Him in prayer.

(d) *Family*: Walk your family through (a)-(c) above, with a specific emphasis on encouraging your children to (1) begin their own regular prayer life (apart from the times you pray with/for them) and (2) helping them to understand how to keep their motives correct in their prayer life (e.g. not to pray selfishly, not to pray for God to meet their unrighteous desires, to pray for His will to be done, not theirs, etc.).

#### **DAY 4 – ASK FOR INSIGHT**

#### **READ THE PASSAGE**

(a) **Read James 4:1-6**. James refers to his hearers as “adulterous people” because of their friendship with the world. He is using OT language that refers to the idolatry of God’s people, Israel (c.f. Jer. 2:20, 3: 6-10, Hosea 1:2, et. al.). Within our context of James 4:1-6, what is this “friendship with the world” of which James speaks, and why does he consider it idolatrous? What does this statement have to do with vs. 1-3?

(b) What does James mean when he says that one who “wishes to be a friend of the world makes himself an enemy of God?” Can a believer become an enemy of God? How does James 3:11-18 influence your answers?

(c) **Read Matt. 5:13-15, 6:24, John 17:11-19 & 1 John 2:15-17**. How do these verses help us understand James’ teaching in 4:4? Does avoiding “friendship” with the world require separation from the world? Why or why not? In what ways do you struggle with wishing to be a friend of the world, what are you hoping to find, and do you ever think of these struggles as being idolatrous? Meditate upon verses such as Ps. 16:11, Prov. 10:28, 12:20, Rom. 14:17, 15:13 & 1 Pet. 1:6-9 to remind yourself that true joy is not found in any earthly pursuit, but it is found in your relationship with and dependence upon God.

(d) *Family*: **Read James 4:4 & 1 John 2:15-17**. Explain to your family that avoiding friendship with the world does not mean that we separate ourselves from the world. The Bible is clear that we are to be salt of the earth & the unhidden light of the world (Matt. 5:13-16) and that Jesus commanded us to be in the world but not of the world so that through our witness the world might come to know Him (John 17:11-19). What it does mean is that we must not be overcome by the world’s systems & values, the world’s view of wisdom, and the lusts & passions that the world without Christ pursues. After laying this foundation teach 1 John 2:15-17 to your family, fully applying it by using examples of “desires of the flesh and the desires of the eyes and pride of possessions” that they will understand and with which they struggle.

#### **DAY 5 – ASK FOR INSIGHT**

#### **READ THE PASSAGE**

(a) **Read James 4:1-6, Rom 16:17-18 & Titus 3:10-11**. What are congregations & their leaders instructed to do with people who stir up divisions, quarrels & fights among God’s church? How are these commands carried out in light of Matt. 18:15-20?

(b) In the next section of James (4:7-10) we are taught about repentance. What role does repentance play in the whole process of dealing with divisions within our church? How do we recognize when repentance is real and when it is only words? How is this approach to division different from the “earthly, unspiritual, demonic” wisdom of the world?

(c) *Family*: Expand upon last night’s discussion by **Reading John 17:11-19**. Be prepared with a dry sponge sealed inside of a Ziploc bag and a bowl of water to serve as an object lesson to explain being in the world as a witness but not stained by the world’s system, values, lusts & desires (i.e. the sponge will be in the water but not get wet). This object lesson seems familiar, so forgive me if we have used this in the past ☺.

**DATE: October 2, 2011**

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#### *Unholy Passions*

In James 4:1-6 we find James asking and answering 3 thought-provoking questions concerning the results of our prideful lives & how the Gospel overcomes our pride.