

James 4:4-5

1. The Bible uses a number of metaphors to describe our relationship with God, including

Husband and wife (Hosea, etc.)

Groom and bride (John 3:29)

Lovers (Song of Solomon)

King and subject (Ps 47:7)

Teacher and disciple

Master and slave/servant (2 Tim 2:24; 1 Pet 2:16; Col 1:7; etc.)

Father and child (Lord's prayer; Rom 8:17; Gal 4:6; 1 Cor 8:6; etc.)

Mother hen and chicks (Luke 13:34)

Vine and branch (John 15:1-11)

Doctor and patient (Ps 103:2-3)

Pioneer and follower (Hebrews)

Shepherd and sheep (John 10:1-18)

Potter and clay (Jer 17:1-6; Isa 64:8)

Friends (John 15:15)

Is there one or more of these which feel irrelevant to you? Others which you resonate with? How do you think about your relationship with God?

2. A **CENTRAL THEME** of James is that if you are divided you are helpless, powerless, impotent, and unstable, but if you are single-minded you will be blessed and fruitful and peaceful. (And the symptoms of this double-mindedness are impure speech, hoarding of wealth and maltreatment of the needy, and envy, boasting and related disharmony in community). This is sometimes misunderstood as a "faith vs. works" issue. James, as Paul does elsewhere, is trying to make clear a central teaching of Jesus', both in the Sermon on the Mount and elsewhere. See the passages on the other side of this page. Each of these passages conveys a different facet of the same basic message.

What does friendship with the world look like in each case? How about friendship with God?

<Listen to Tim Keller's "Courage" (March 3, 1996), 6:38-25:26>

3. We have discussed the way James and Paul point to our identity in Christ as the engine of change and central to unlocking the power of the Holy Spirit. Our identity can be stated in impersonal, even forensic terms: we are sinners freed from condemnation, we are born again (James 1:18), etc. Here, though, James points to the *relational* aspect of our new identity as motivation. Keller goes so far as to say that our ability to change derived from the depth of our relationship with God—the more we nurture it, the more we will change.

The practical question: Where is your relationship with God at currently? Do you just exchange information or do you talk? What have you found helps you feed this relationship? What hurts?

4. The metaphor of marriage used for our relationship with God, is explicitly intimate. Does it make you uncomfortable?
5. Did God *create* marital intimacy as a means of teaching us about the "mutual interpenetration" (Keller¹), the deep love of God for the Father and Spirit and for his creation? Discuss.

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Fun fact: The start of James 4:4, translated "You adulterous people" in the NIV is actually a single word, *moichalis*, meaning "Adulteresses!"

¹ Keller is referring to the Trinitarian concept of *perichoresis*, the idea that the individuality of the persons of the Trinity is maintained while each shares in the life of the other two (e.g. Jesus' saying that he and the Father are one).

Friendship with the World

Jesus' Teaching:

Mt 6:24: “No one can serve two masters; for a slave will either hate the one and love the other, or be devoted to the one and despise the other. You cannot serve God and wealth.”²

John 15:18-19: “If the world hates you, be aware that it hated me before it hated you. ¹⁹If you belonged to the world, the world would love you as its own. Because you do not belong to the world, but I have chosen you out of the world—therefore the world hates you.”

And related:

Mt 7:24-27: “Everyone then who hears these words of mine and acts on them will be like a wise man who built his house on rock. ²⁵The rain fell, the floods came, and the winds blew and beat on that house, but it did not fall, because it had been founded on rock. ²⁶And everyone who hears these words of mine and does not act on them will be like a foolish man who built his house on sand. ²⁷The rain fell, and the floods came, and the winds blew and beat against that house, and it fell—and great was its fall!”

The apostles' interpretation of Jesus' teaching:

James 4:4-5: “Those conflicts and disputes among you, where do they come from? Do they not come from your cravings that are at war within you? ²You 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. ³You 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”?** ⁶But he gives all the more grace; therefore it says, “God opposes the proud, but gives grace to the humble.” ⁷Submit yourselves therefore to God. Resist the devil, and he will flee from you. ⁸Draw near to God, and he will draw near to you. Cleanse your hands, you sinners, and purify your hearts, you double-minded.’

1 John 2:15-18: “Do not love the world or the things in the world. The love of the Father is not in those who love the world; ¹⁶for all that is in the world—the desire of the flesh, the desire of the eyes, the pride in riches—comes not from the Father but from the world. ¹⁷And the world and its desire are passing away, but those who do the will of God live forever.”

Romans 1:2: “Do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewal of your mind, that by testing you may discern what is the will of God, what is good and acceptable and perfect.”

Romans 8:6-8: “⁶To set the mind on the flesh is death, but to set the mind on the Spirit is life and peace. ⁷For this reason the mind that is set on the flesh is hostile to God; it does not submit to God’s law—indeed it cannot, ⁸and those who are in the flesh cannot please God.”

^TThis follows a list of prohibitions in Mt 6 against different forms of hypocrisy: practicing piety for the audience (6:1-5, 16-18); storing up treasures rather than trusting God (19-21); and looking at others with a judgmental eye (22-23).