



# VILLAGE BIBLE CHURCH SUGAR GROVE CAMPUS

## Real Faith. Real Life.

Part 10: Warning Against Worldliness  
James 4:1-6 | Tim Badal | March 19, 2017

Turn in your Bible to the book of James. We're in the middle of a letter in which James is telling the first-century Christians, who have been scattered because of persecution, what it means to live out a faith that might change the world. As is true today, these believers were in danger of having their faith eroded because of the many temptations and distractions that kept them from the vibrant and healthy faith God has called all of us to live out.



In the first three chapters James has addressed what it means to live out our faith. Like a jack-hammer, he has chiseled away at some of our thoughts and presuppositions regarding what it means to be a follower of Jesus Christ, living our lives in accordance with His Word. He is not writing these things because he hates these people. He has said over and over that they are “beloved” people. He loves them and wants nothing more than to help them find the blessing God promises to give.

As we read this, we should remember that God, Who is the true Author of this book, longs for us to live in communion with Him and dwell with Him. But in order to receive that blessing, in order to live out the wisdom God wants us to have, we must do certain things to align ourselves with His ways. We are given the choice between godly wisdom and worldly wisdom, and our response will lead us down one of two paths.

James describes the path of the world's way. In clear and easy-to-understand words, he gives us a warning against worldliness. So let's read James 4:1-6. He begins with a question.

What causes quarrels and what causes fights among you? Is it not this, that your passions are at war within you? <sup>2</sup> You desire and do not have, so you murder. You covet and cannot obtain, so you fight and quarrel. You do not have, because you do not ask. <sup>3</sup> You ask and do not receive, because you ask wrongly, to spend it on your passions. <sup>4</sup> You adulterous people! Do you not know that friendship with the world is enmity with God? Therefore whoever wishes to be a friend of the world makes himself an enemy of God. <sup>5</sup> Or do you suppose it is to no purpose that the Scripture says, “He yearns jealously over the spirit that he has made to dwell in us”? <sup>6</sup> But he gives more grace. Therefore it says, “God opposes the proud, but gives grace to the humble.”

Today we will focus on the question of what it means to be worldly. Some of us in the church may have a warped idea of what worldliness means—or maybe no idea at all. But we need to know how God wants us to approach our relationship with the world in a way that honors Him in all we say and do.

Years ago there was a show on television that I occasionally watched, fully knowing what was going to take place. Every episode had the same plot, so I could tell you how it would end as soon as it started. There was a wholesome kid from some obscure part of the country who had some special talent. Through a course of events this young person would be allowed to showcase his or her talent. At some point someone in the industry recognized the talent and wanted to bring it to the attention of the world. “You're a star, and you just don't know it.”

Then there was either a record deal or movie contract, and the person was catapulted from obscurity to a place of notoriety in the industry. Their meteoric rise to fame and fortune continues for a while, and during that “top of the world” season, all kinds of

pleasures and opportunities were presented to them, including many vices and sins. Their days were those of the rich and famous, and they seem to enjoy every moment.

Then, at the pinnacle of their career, something happens. Either their music falls out of vogue or their movies are no longer box-office hits, and as quickly as they rose to fame, their fortunes now fall apart. They begin to speak of what they have lost, their addictions, their broken relationships. What was that show? It's "E! The True Hollywood Story."

Here's the crazy thing. It is relived over and over and over again today. You see, there's something about the world that we want to gain. There's something about having people fall all over us, about having the accolades of crowds and cheering fans in arenas that warms our hearts. Somehow this ignites something deep within us that says, "I want more."

As I recall watching biographies of those famous actors and musicians, the Scripture that comes to mind is what Jesus said in Matthew 16:26, *"For what will it profit a man if he gains the whole world and forfeits his life?"* We see here that James picks up the subject of worldliness on the heels of his discussion on wisdom. His goal is similar to something my parents often told me: "Put your head on straight." James wants us to think rightly.

We're told in Romans 12:2 that we're not to conform ourselves to the pattern of this world, but to be transformed by the renewing of our minds. Last week we saw that James agrees with Paul, that we should focus our minds not on the things of the world, but rather on the things of God. Now he's telling us that if we choose to focus on the things of the world, trouble will come. You may think it's opening the door to all kinds of pleasures, possessions and opportunities, but as we learned in the text last week, every kind of disorder comes about when our ambition is to pursue the world instead of God.

In a smaller way, each of us may be playing out those Hollywood stories today. There may be some among us who once thought they could gain the world but in the process have lost their souls, who now are fighting addictions and the other consequences of sin. Sadly, our neighbors, friends and even other followers of Christ can find themselves living out that story each and every day.

Maybe you've heard the word "worldliness" used in church, but you really don't understand what it means. Perhaps if you're new to church you have no idea what I'm talking about. What is this idea of worldliness? If it's something we're warned about, we can be sure it's something bad, something we need to stay away from. Worldliness is a term we use when Christians have gotten too cozy with the world. Does that mean we can't enjoy the things of the world? What it means is that we have become too cozy with the practices and pursuits of the world. We have followed the desires of the world. This is not a problem for unbelievers, but for Christians, our pursuit must be God. He must be at the center of all we say and do. We cannot say no to Him and yes to the world, because as James will point out, they are enemies. If we choose to follow the enemy of God, we will oppose the One Who loves us, Who saved us, and as we will learn, Who gives us greater grace.

I love the definition that theologian and professor David Wells uses and I will explain later why his definition is so important. He says this: "Worldliness is anything that makes sin look normal and righteousness seem strange." This idea struck me when I saw our children watching a television program not too long ago in our family room. As I watched, I noticed that the producers had intentionally made to look normal certain activities which God defines as sin, things from which we should flee. While I was able to discern what they were doing, I realized that my children—and your children—may not have that ability to understand what was being presented. In fact, we can see on a daily basis how the world takes those things God has told us to stay away from and presents them not only as normal, but in fact as beautiful and desirable. They take what God considers to be abominations and portrays them as righteous. If we begin to allow sin to look normal, we're on the road to worldliness. What we will see today is that this inclination toward worldliness is in all of us.

Have you ever been in the workplace or a community gathering where you have taken a stand for what God's Word says is godliness and have someone comment, "Well, that's the oddest thing I've ever heard. Why would you pursue that?" Studies predict that because of the rise of cohabitation, in 50 years—which may seem like a long time—the relationship of a husband and wife in the lifelong commitment of marriage will not be the norm, but rather an oddity.

I've been in groups of people who are surprised when I tell them how long I've been married and that I've never considered divorce. To them that's strange: "Doesn't every couple consider divorce at some point?" Yes, statistics indicate that it's normal to give up on marriages when they get hard. And in that context, righteousness does seem strange to the world. Why would we do that to ourselves? Why would we commit ourselves to permanence when it's hard?

One famous actress recently said that people are not given to monogamous relationships. To her it was odd that anyone would commit themselves to be in bondage to one person, when one could be free to do what they desire. To people like her, righteousness is strange and sin looks normal. That is the essence of worldliness.

Now, where do we see it described in Scripture? Paul tells the church in Corinth, in 2 Corinthians 6:17, that we are to come out of the world and be separate from it. The Apostle John says in 1 John 2:15 that we are not to love the world. Peter says in 1 Peter 2:11 that we are to abstain from the fleshly appetites of the world. But that's not the whole story. If that was all we understood from the Scriptures, then some churches would say, "That's why we have no involvement with the world." They separate themselves completely and focus inwardly, fearing that if they go out into the world they will fall into sin. There's some truth in that, but Jesus prays to His Father concerning His children, *"I do not ask that you take them out of the world, but that you keep them from the evil one"* (John 17:15). He wanted His followers to be in the world but not of the world.

Now, that's a hard place to live. It's far easier just to say, "We're going to stay away from the world. We're not going to touch it or be involved in anything that might defile us or distract us from our walk with God." But Jesus wants us to go out into the world, to engage unbelievers without becoming one of them. I would call this a "life in tension." As a follower of Jesus Christ, I live in a perpetual state of tension—avoiding being tainted by the world, yet at the same time being engaged with the people of the world.

How do I separate myself from the world while still being in loving relationships with people in the world who are lost? How do I keep myself from the practices and the fleshly pursuits of the world, yet live life with people who themselves participate in those practices? How do I walk this tension without falling into sin myself? It's a real problem.

One way we Christians sort this out is by making ourselves a list. At the top of the page we write "Worldliness," and under this we write down the things we consider to be worldly: going to movies, smoking, certain music and so forth. We know the Bible says, "Thou shalt not go to movies." That was the 11<sup>th</sup> commandment. No, of course these items are not listed in Scripture, but rather they come from our personal preferences—our personal understandings of holiness.

Scripture actually includes people who lived by their "personal preferences of holiness"—the Pharisees. They had their lists and they would walk around in the temple or synagogues with their clipboards, checking off the worldly things they saw people doing. It's not an accident that they focused their greatest attention on Jesus Himself. According to their list, even the perfect Son of God behaved in a worldly manner—or worse, He was like the devil. "That's how bad He is at following our lists." So as someone comes up out of the baptismal tank, we tell them, "The world is a bad place to be, so don't go too far into it. It brings you no good. Stop living in the culture."

What happens today is that while we can separate ourselves from the bad culture of the world, we have created a Christian subculture to replace it. "You don't have to chew gum from the world—you can chew minty Christian gum." "You don't have to see all the bad movies that are out there, because every movie is bad. You can watch bad Christian movies." "You don't have to listen to that ungodly music with drums and guitars. No, we'll Christianize it by putting a Christian label on it, saying it's 'family friendly.'" The reason we have the Christian subculture comes from our decision to make these lists of what is worldly and our determination to stay away from those things. Then we create a whole new list of things we're allowed to do. But let me tell you: lists never work.

So our second way we deal with the tension caused by worldliness is to move into isolation, what I call the "boogeyman syndrome of Christianity." We gather together some place, then we look out at the world and see that it's filthy and without inherent goodness. But that's theologically flawed. While the earth and the people in it are marred by sin, God's goodness, His *imago dei*, is carried in each human being.

Instead of isolating ourselves and keeping ourselves from the world, God is calling us to engage the world. How sad it is that much of His ministry during Jesus' day was viewed as worldliness. He was condemned by the Pharisees for hanging out with drunkards and prostitutes and tax collectors. They fought the very ministry He was a part of, because what He did was on their "worldliness" lists. How much of what Jesus did would have been eliminated from Scripture if it had been held up to the Pharisees' lists? How much of our ministry is left undone because we have these lists that say to people in the world, "We can't be around you"?

So what do we do, since lists don't work? We need to have the mindset that is founded on the Word of God. We need to know the truth and perpetually live within the wisdom of God. As we learned last week, that means our lives should be pure, gentle, open to reason, full of good fruits, impartial and sincere. We should produce a harvest of righteousness. That is the kind of wisdom we are called to live out.

Yet the issue remains: we are called to engage the world, to be on the offensive rather than the defensive. When the Bible talks about the gates of hell not prevailing against the church (Matthew 16:18), we think that means the church is under attack by the devil, by the “gates of hell.” But think about it. Gates are defensive, not offensive. We tend to see ourselves hunkering down because the gates of hell are trying to overpower us—and yes, we’re promised that they won’t—but we still think invading armies are on the way.

Let me tell you something clearly: hell is on the defensive, not the offensive. We are to run against the gates of hell, invading its territory. We have been told that these gates will not prevail against our offense. We need to be active in our engagement of the world. So while a lot of what is in the world is bad, that doesn’t mean we’re never to leave our homes or never to allow our children to experience some of the things in this world. These are hard things for parents to hear, but I know this to be true.

When you got in your car this morning and rolled out of your driveway and on to the road, whether you knew it or not, you put your life at risk. We are told by the NTSB that hundreds of thousands of people will be killed in motor vehicle accidents in all kinds of ways. We’ve seen this with our own eyes. Either close to home or far away, we’ve seen both short and long trips end in disaster. You know as you get in your car that you’re putting yourself and your family at great peril when you head off to church. Yet, here you are today. You came here amidst the fear and the dangers. Why? Because you realize that if you don’t take risks, life would not be worth much. You would miss out on a lot of what God has called you to do. You would not fulfill the life God has led you to live. So as you left this morning, you were very alert to what was going on around you. You knew if you didn’t pay close attention but were distracted—whether by the kids or the cell phone or the radio or what was happening outside—you had a greater chance that these distractions could result in an accident.

So it is with life. We have to be vigilant, the Bible says. We have to be watchful and prayerful (1 Thessalonians 5:12–22). As we engage the world, we need to be people who are always prepared for whatever may come our way. We should approach our engagement with the world with the same caution and attention that we give to driving. It’s a mindset. And James assures us that if we have godly wisdom, we will weather the storms of worldliness.

## **1. James warns us about worldliness by reminding us of the symptoms that surface.**

What happens when the storm beats and batters our ability to say no to the world and yes to God? Do you want to know if you’re living in a pattern of worldliness instead of being engaged with heavenly wisdom? James says this in verses one to three:

*What causes quarrels and what causes fights among you? Is it not this, that your passions are at war within you? You desire and do not have, so you murder. You covet and cannot obtain, so you fight and quarrel. You do not have, because you do not ask. You ask and do not receive, because you ask wrongly, to spend it on your passions.*

How do we know if we’re losing the battle against worldliness?

### **The first symptom is unresolved problems.**

Most commentaries believe that James had heard first-hand accounts of conflict within the churches to whom he’s writing. That’s nothing new. It was true even before the church came into existence. Jesus’ disciples fought and quarreled. They wanted to know who was the greatest among them. We saw fights and quarrels among the people of God in the Old Testament. In fact, fights and quarrels have been taking place since the Garden of Eden, and they are still alive and raging today. Over a decade ago, we had some real doozies of fights in this church. There were people who didn’t get along with each other.

James speaks of unresolved problems, and explains some of the reasons why people were fighting. First, we see that there was stress from persecution. They were being driven from their homes. And when there are high levels of stress in a place, that makes it a breeding ground for fights and quarrels.

Also, there were issues because people were different. The churches were made up of both Jews and Gentiles. The Jews did things one way; the Gentiles did things another way. They both had their own cultural norms, which sometimes resulted in fights. Another division was between classes, between the rich and the poor. Favoritism was sometimes shown to the rich, and the poor weren’t always given the time and energy they needed as a people.

We were also told by James that the people were not quick to listen and were not slow to speak or to become angry. They allowed their tongues to be used in destructive ways and as a result, quarrels and fights started and were reigning within the church. What

types of fights and quarrels were they? Literally, they were warring amongst themselves. These weren't low-level skirmishes, but rather all-out war. When you get into an all-out war, your attention is focused on destroying your enemy. So the followers of the Prince of Peace were at war with one another and their focus was taken off worship of God Who deserves the highest esteem. Rather, they would come to church so they could knock down, beat up and destroy their opponents.

Notice how far this went. James says in verse two that they murdered as a result. We might think he was speaking figuratively, but up to this point in the text, and following it, we see no figurative language. He's not speaking in hyperbole. Most commentators believe that this wasn't simply that they murdered other people's reputations, but that in their fights and quarrels someone had lost a life. Followers of Jesus Christ were literally killing other followers because of the issues and passions that were alive in the lives of those Christians. These were wars that led to murder.

The reason for these fights can be found in phrases like "you do not have," "you cannot obtain," "you do not receive." Why would not having something or not being able to get something be an issue? Because worldly wisdom, as we learned last week, tells us we are god. Because you and I think we are gods, we deserve everything we want, when we want it and how we want it. Worldly wisdom steals Burger King's motto: "Have it your way." Any way, any time, any place. You're the king. They march to your drum.

When someone doesn't allow us to have what we want, and if we view ourselves as gods, we will do everything in our power to make sure that person knows, "You cannot test god in that way." We could see this illustrated if we all went down to the nursery. We could watch two young children vying for the same toy. It might make us laugh to see these little sinful savages see something they want that they can't have. In the Badal home this last week, a quarrel broke out because one of our sons had a new decoder pen that wrote with invisible ink and the other end was a flashlight. One son wrote with that pen, "I hate my brother." He gave him the flashlight and said, "See what I wrote?"

Where do fights and quarrels come from? It's when we do not have what we want and we think we deserve it. We will destroy anyone who gets in our way. While it's funny in the nursery, it is absolutely heartbreaking to see in the church. James says in the previous chapter that when selfish ambition is part of our lives, every disorder will ensue—and it did.

### **Another symptom is uncontrolled passions.**

James hits on this matter a number of times in our text. Look at the words he uses. Passions. Desire. Covet. "To spend it on yourself." This is a life focused not on the things of God, but on the things of self. It is the desire to satisfy not the God of the universe, but the person who thinks he is the god of this world. And the cause for this? Worldliness.

How do we know if worldliness is driving us? Let me ask you a few questions. What do you dream about? Are they the things of God? Are they the pursuits of God? Are they ways to become closer to God? Or do you dream of having a bigger house, a better car, a nicer spouse, that new piece of technology? What do you dedicate yourself to? Is it to the Kingdom work of God in the world? Have you joined that construction process? Or are you building your own kingdom, your own temples, so you might be worshiped and adored instead of God?

These are things we all struggle with. And where does this struggle come from? James says there are different kinds of passions that are waging war within us. Remember what he said about temptation? Passions, in and of themselves, are not sin. They're things God has given. But the question is this: will I pursue my passions according to God and His Word, or will I pursue them in my ways and on my timeframe? It's our decision to make.

Everywhere we go worldliness advertises, "You have dreams. You have desires. You can fulfill them through what the world provides." But this is offered apart from God. If you remember in Matthew 4, this is the same line of attack the devil used against Jesus in the wilderness. "Have it all, but have it apart from Your Father's hand. Get it for Yourself." Worldliness says you can do it on your own. How do we know if our passions are out of control? We must do a heart-check. So let me ask you what you treasure.

One thing Amanda and I do is look at our checkbook and ask, "Does this checkbook say we reign supreme? Or does God? Are we generous toward ourselves, or are we generous toward others?" If anybody had the right to be generous toward Himself, it was God. But instead we see, "God gave. God gave. God gave." He could have kept it all for Himself without sin—but He didn't. He gives. What does your checkbook say about your treasure? Your greatest desires?

What about your time? Does your time say that you're enlisted in the army of God? As a follower of God, are you investing your time and energy in His ways and His paths, not your own? Our treasure and our time are key indicators of whether worldliness is alive and well in our lives.

## A third symptom is unanswered prayers.

Worldliness affects first our relationship with ourselves—these passions that wage war within us. It also impacts our relationships with others—fights and quarrels amongst ourselves. And finally, it affects our relationship with God in prayer. James says worldliness can be detected in our lives when prayer is missing. If you want to know whether or not you are worldly, here is the number-one way to figure it out. If none of the other ways help you, here's one that will: how often this past week did you find yourself praying? How often did you go to God instead of the world? How often were you relying and depending on God and not on yourself or the world?

James says we do not have because we do not ask. Prayer is absent. His words can apply to us today, can't they? Is our prayer absent? Do we really think we can live this life on our own apart from God? Your prayer life will tell the tale. It will reveal whether you believe in what God says or what the world tells you.

The reason for prayerlessness could be that you're distracted by the things of this world. You might seek to pray, but the things of the world cramp your ability to do that. Or maybe you're deceived into thinking you don't need prayer. "I've got it all figured out. I've got plenty of money in the checking account. I've got a great relationship with my spouse. My kids are doing well. My job is good. I don't need prayer."

Maybe you've bought into this idea that prayer doesn't work because it doesn't avail much. James addresses that situation in chapter five, where he tells us the prayers of a righteous man do avail much. They do accomplish things. The lack of prayer is a tell-tale sign that we are without God and His guidance.

The second thing that can happen is that we pray, but we pray for the wrong thing. There's one group that doesn't pray at all. God says that's worldly. And then there are those who pray, but their times of prayer are so focused on themselves, they're trying to use God as a divine genie. "Give me. Give me. Give me." As a result, you have just a part of God in your life. Are you okay with just part of Him? A Christian who has God as a secondary portion of his life is actually way ahead of the world. So if we have a "side" of God on our "plate" of worldliness, that's more God than is on most people's plates, which makes us feel good about ourselves. But we are using God as a means to an end—and that's not His purpose for our lives. If God only plays a part in our lives, we need to ask ourselves whether He is really there at all. God demands our entire lives.

Unanswered prayers, uncontrolled passions and unresolved problems. As you evaluate your life, are you living at least in some ways as a worldly Christian? We all need to ask ourselves this question.

## 2. James warns us about worldliness by reminding us of the slide that sets in.

Worldliness doesn't just happen all at once—it moves ever so slowly.

### Worldliness begins with an attraction.

We see at the end of verse four that worldliness begins with an attraction: "...*whoever wishes to be a friend of the world.*" Whoever wishes. This was troubling for me as I thought back to my teenage years. As a teen and as a young adult, I wished to be in the world. I knew I couldn't be, but I wished to be there. I longed not to be tied to and burdened by the things of God so I could enjoy life.

I have to be honest with you. When I come home—as I'm driving into my neighborhood and see my neighbors on a Sunday afternoon out playing with their kids, washing their cars, cleaning their garages, making sure their yard looks way better than the Badal's yard does—I can think to myself, "What kind of life am I missing? Why am I wasting my time doing what I'm doing? They seem full of joy. Their yards look better than mine. What would happen if I stopped giving to the Lord and spend that money on myself?"

### Worldliness grows through an acquaintance.

When we wish and fantasize about the things the world offers, we are moving down the slippery slope. It starts with attraction, and then it moves to an acquaintance. We become a friend starting as an acquaintance, an associate. We find some commonalities with one another. Worldliness can be summed up in the old biblical adage, "Bad company corrupts good character." Do your acquaintances bring you down, or do you bring them up?

We need to ask that question about our friendships with the world. I have lots of friends who are outside the church and in the world, and I have to frequently ask myself, "Are they bringing me down in my relationship with God, or am I drawing them closer to God because I'm living out His likeness before them?" God doesn't want us in relationships that are going to keep us far from Him. He wants us in relationships that draw people closer to Himself. Jesus came to earth so He might closely associate with us—not so that we would bring Him down, but so that He might bring us up.

In order to make sure we don't allow them to knock us down—and I know this is a question a lot of you have—how do we live in the world with friends who do things contrary to the Word of God? How do I show them what Christ is like? Let me tell you: you need to do a DTR. You need to "define the relationship."

You need to make clear to your friends, to your neighbors, "I'm a follower of Jesus Christ. I love Jesus and His Word. And I'm taught by Jesus through His Word that I am to love you—and I do. I love you. I'm not just going to sit and judge you, or tell you how bad a person you are, because that's not how Jesus operated with me. I'm going to show you love and affection. I'm going to be your greatest advocate. I'm going to be your greatest friend. There are things I might not do with you, not because I judge you and think you're terrible and I'm good. I don't do them because I have a greater Friend Whose name is Jesus and I can't betray Him. So I'm going to refrain from those things."

I've shared this story before. I had an employee some years ago who had never been a fan of Jesus. In fact, he had never been a fan of his boss being a fan of Jesus. This guy challenged me numerous times. One day he came into the office. With tears in his eyes, this young man in his mid-20s told me his world was collapsing underneath him. Now, he was tough guy. And he was very clear. "I don't want you to ever think I like Jesus, or that I'm buying into this thing you're doing. But I've come to the conclusion that I'm sure glad you have—because you're a different kind of boss. You've been generous and forgiving. And if your relationship with Jesus is making that a reality, then I like your relationship with Jesus...even though I don't want Jesus." We need relationships like that. I remember that was when I got on the phone and called Amanda and said, "I did something right! It's working."

### **Worldliness becomes an affair.**

We need to define relationships with people, because if we don't, we'll fall on the other side. We'll go from being an acquaintance, a friend of the world, to being an adulterer. It becomes an affair. "*You adulterous people!*" Those are strong words, but they ring true. In the book of Colossians, Paul spoke of a man who loved the present world more than God. Can that be said of you?

James uses the analogy of a marriage for several reasons. First, marriage paints a picture of our relationship with God. Two people being melded into one—God in you and me. Second, it shows what happens when we flirt with the world. We have affairs. Third, it shows us how serious this flirting with the world is. We break and damage the covenant where intimacy was supposed to be found. We now find that intimacy with the world. And fourth, like adultery—which is done in secret—it one day will become public. You can keep your worldliness private for a season, but in the end it will be found out by others.

Right away you might say, "Wait a minute. If I've had an affair against God, surely He's divorced me and I'm no longer a believer." Let us remember that marital infidelity doesn't break the covenant bonds of marriage. It doesn't destroy it. Oh, it creates problems and issues. But just because adultery has occurred doesn't mean that marriage is dissolved. It may take a lot of time and energy and forgiveness, but I want to remind you—adulterous people listening to a message from an adulterous pastor—that we have a God Who forgives and Who loves.

You see, there's a whole book in the Old Testament named Hosea that depicts a real-life story of a prophet with an adulterous wife. It's a picture of how God, time and again, loves that adulterous wife, forgiving her and bringing her back to Himself, only to have her run away again. Then He goes back and does the same thing again. We adulterous people can find forgiveness, mercy and grace in God.

### **Worldliness makes you an adversary.**

What happens when we choose to not return to God? It makes us an adversary. We become an enemy of God. How could James call Christian followers enemies of God? The same way an adulterer is an enemy to the covenant of marriage. While adultery doesn't destroy that covenant, it fractures it. But what the adulterer is doing to his or her marriage is attacking the marriage which is supposed to be upheld.

When we become friends with the world, we attack the God we are called to love. He tells us He will oppose that and fight against it. And let me tell you something: you don't want to be opposed by God. You'll never win that wrestling match. So God says, "When you're My enemy—proud individual—I will oppose you, because you think you can take Me. But you can't."

### **3. James gives us the solution for the sin of worldliness.**

So what do we do? We who have become acquaintances to the world? We who have gotten involved in all kinds of affairs with the world? We who have become adversaries of God? James gives us a solution to this sin. But first we need to ask, "Is there worldliness in me? Am I flirting with the world? Do I see the world as a playground or as a battleground?" Sadly, all too many of us have fallen in one way or another with this insidious foe.

But there's a solution. There's salvation. We who are too friendly with the world, we who have cheated on God with the world, we who have attacked the very God Who has loved us, we who stand guilty and condemned are not people without hope. Jesus is hope and James gives us that hope and comfort.

#### **The solution for sin involves knowing how God operates.**

First of all, in verse five, we learn how God operates: "*Or do you suppose it is to no purpose that the Scripture says, 'He yearns jealously over the spirit that he has made to dwell in us?'*" I want you to know that God is like a loving husband. We will go to great lengths to protect our wives from any kind of trouble or pain. Whatever comes along, we want to protect and take care of them and minister to them. We want nothing bad to happen to them. When someone tries to invade our spouse's life, we're going to be jealous. We'll do everything in our power to stop that invading individual from bringing disgrace to our spouse.

That's what God is going to do as well. Like a jealous husband who has the right to be jealous, He goes to great lengths to protect you, cleanse you and provide for you. He does so for His glory and our good. It's how He operates. He loves you.

#### **The solution for sin involves knowing what God offers.**

Then notice what God offers us in verse six: "*...but he gives more grace.*" It's the greatest line in the whole book of James. You've been thinking, "Man, James has been nailing us from every direction. I'm getting tired of it. I'm so glad this series is almost over, because I can't take it anymore." Then James says, "*He gives more grace.*"

Whatever you've done to ruin your relationship with God, remember, God gives more grace. No matter how far your sin extends, remember God's grace goes even farther. No matter the depths to which your sin has taken you, remember God's grace goes deeper. God loves you, He lavishes His love upon you, and He longs to dwell with you. He wants you. Even though you may feel unwanted by the world, God loves you and desires a relationship with you.

So here's what we need to do: We run to Jesus. We embrace His love. We rest in His forgiveness and we dedicate our lives to living for Him. That is how we cure ourselves of worldliness. We don't do it in and of ourselves. We do it by relying and resting on the One Who can save us.