

Small Group Guide

FAITH SUBMITS

The Church at Brook Hills,

Dr. David Platt

October 11, 2009

James 3:13-4:12

This guide is to help you facilitate discussion with your Small Group. Use it as a resource to lead your group in discovering and owning the truths of God's Word. There may be questions you do not want to use and there may be instances where you just want to focus on a particular point or truth. Some questions may bring out emotions and cause people to dwell on their relationship with God. Your role is to facilitate this experience not to complete the discussion guide. Use this as a flexible teaching tool not a rigid teaching task list.

Connect . . .

Use one or both of the following options to introduce the discussion time to follow.

Option 1

Invite learners to discuss a time when they resisted God or someone in godly authority over them (wise counsel from a parent or mentor). Maybe they thought they were being wise according to the world's standards. Invite them to tell about the consequences of their decision and how they came to realize the foolishness of their actions. Explain that today we will see the difference between worldly wisdom and godly wisdom.

Option 2

Invite learners to discuss a time when a friendship had a good influence on them or a time when a friendship had a negative influence on them. How did the friendship begin? How did the friendship end (if it has ended)? What were the marks or characteristics of the friendship? How did they try to protect the friendship (if it was a good one)? Explain that today we will examine two pictures of friendship, with the world and with God.

Review the Message . . .

Two Pictures of Wisdom...

Worldly wisdom...

- Comes from hell.
- Motivated by self-centered ambition.
- Results in disorder and evil.

Godly wisdom...

- Comes from heaven.
- Motivated by God-centered humility.
- Results in peace and righteousness.

Discussion . . .

- Enlist a learner(s) to read James 3:13–18.
- What or who is the focus of worldly wisdom?
- According to James, what is the root cause of disorder and every evil practice? How does selfish ambition destroy individuals, families, businesses,

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governments?

- What or who is the focus of the wisdom that comes from heaven?
- Read James 1:5 and Proverbs 2:1–8. Is this wisdom from heaven available to all believers? How?
- Read and compare Matthew 5:1–12, called the Beatitudes, with James 3:17. How are the two passages similar? When the wisdom of God flows out of our lives, what are the kinds of blessings promised in Matthew 5:1–12? How should this motivate us to seek wisdom from heaven?

Application . . .

- James 3:15 says there is a “wisdom” that comes from the devil. Is it always obvious that this wisdom comes from hell? How has this type of wisdom subtly influenced our lives?
- If “self” is at the heart of worldly wisdom, how can we dethrone self in our lives? What does Jesus say about this?
- Compare James 3:16 and James 3:18. How do we want our lives to look? Why and how do we sacrifice peace and righteousness for selfish ambitions?
- Think about an argument or quarrel you’ve had recently. What was the root cause? What did you want that you weren’t getting? Was the need legitimate? If it wasn’t, why did you want it? If it was legitimate (i.e. respect, rest), how did it become more important to you than peace and righteousness (honoring God)?
- Is it worth sacrificing truth (purity) for the sake of peace? How can appropriate conflict be handled in a peaceful, God-honoring way?
- Can we rely only on our experience and knowledge for wisdom in the family, in the church? What role does prayer play in seeking wisdom? What role does humility play in the wisdom that comes from heaven?

Two Pictures of Friendship...

Friendship with the world...

- Comes from the sinful desires of the flesh.
- Motivated by a longing for earthly pleasure.
- Results in spiritual adultery against God.

Friendship with God...

- Comes from the gracious desire of God.
- Motivated by a longing for eternal satisfaction.
- Results in submission to the authority of God.
 - Resist the devil forcefully.
 - Seek God passionately.
 - Pursue purity holistically.
 - Treat sin seriously.
 - Trust God completely.

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Discussion . . .

- Enlist a learner to read James 4:1–5. Where do fights and quarrels come from?
- How does James link quarrels in the church between brothers and sisters with spiritual adultery toward God?
- How are verses 2 and 3 a condemnation of prayerlessness first, and then the health-and-wealth gospel? Does God want to give us material things to waste away on our pleasures?
- Read again verse 5 and any notes to the text. If we take this to mean that “God jealously longs for the spirit that he made to live in us,” do we see the pain of spiritual adultery? Read Exodus 20:5 and 34:14 for additional insight. How does God’s jealousy for us differ from insecure jealousy?
- Read James 4:6-10. Where does James say our friendship with God begins? How does grace sustain our friendship?
- What practical steps does James outline for being a friend of God, in verses 7 to 10? What is the result?

Application . . .

- In verse 4, keep in mind that “friendship,” though it may seem casual to us today, was in that time a serious word describing close intimacy. Have we become friends with the world today? In what ways? Do we take friendship with the world seriously?
- Look at verses 7 to 10, do these actions and attitudes mark our current friendship with God?
- Do we have trouble submitting to God? If so, why? Do we tend to see things through an eternal perspective or an immediate, worldly perspective? How is submission related to faith and trust?
- Read Psalm 63 and James 4:8. Are we seeking God passionately? How can we make sure our hearts and our actions are in line with God’s desires? How does the beginning of verse 8 encourage us?
- How can we actively resist the devil? What are our sources of strength?
- Do we grieve our sin as we should? Why or why not? Are you concerned about offending friends and family? Are you as concerned about offending a perfectly holy, almighty God? How can we treat sin more seriously in our daily lives?
- If we humble ourselves before God, what does he promise us?

Two Pictures of Speech...

Worldly speech...

- Discourages one another.

Dishonors God.

Godly speech...

- Encourages one another.
- Exalts God.

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Discussion . . .

- Enlist a learner to read James 4:11–12. To slander is to speak against another person, to attack another person, to be critical toward another person, or to speak critically to someone else about another person.
- When we slander, who and what are we setting ourselves above, according to James?
- How is this passage related to James 3, and to the rest of chapter 4 so far?
- Read Proverbs 6:16–19. What is God’s attitude toward those that stir up dissension?

Application . . .

- Who is the only Lawgiver and Judge? How should that affect our speech?
- How does slander dishonor God?
- In what ways might we commonly slander others? At home? At work? In the church?
- How can we choose to encourage others and exalt God with our speech? At home? At work? In the church?
- How can we avoid selfish ambition even in confrontation or correction of sin?

One Prayer in Faith...

O God, for the glory of Christ amidst urgent spiritual and physical need in the world, we submit our minds, our hearts, our voices, and our lives to You.

Application . . .

- Spend some time as a small group praising God for his glorious names, character, and attributes.
- Pray together for the grace to submit our lives to God’s purposes.
- Pastor Platt said, “We are trying to love the world without loving the world.” How can we live differently for the sake of the world’s needs?