

LESSON 72

The Heart's Desires

JAMES 4:1-10



BIBLE TRUTH

SINFUL DESIRES LEAD US AWAY FROM GOD

LESSON SNAPSHOT

1. OPENING REVIEW 5 MIN

Use last week’s lesson outline to review with the children what they learned.

2. BIBLE STORY 10 MIN

Read James 4:1–10 from the Scriptures or read story 150, “The Heart’s Desires,” from *The Gospel Story Bible*.

3. OBJECT LESSON 1 10 MIN

Who Was in a Quarrel This Week?

4. TEACHING/DISCUSSION 10 MIN

Using the teaching points, teach through the lesson for today.

5. OBJECT LESSON 2 15 MIN

Before and After

SUPPLIES:

- ✓ pretzel rods—enough for the class

6. SWORD BIBLE MEMORY 5 MIN

7. ACTIVITY TIME 10 MIN

Color a Picture

SUPPLIES:

- ✓ coloring page for NT Lesson 72—one for each child
- ✓ markers or crayons

8. CLOSING PRAYER 5 MIN

9. BONUS OBJECT LESSON 10 MIN

Should God Give It to Me?

TOTAL 80 MIN

PREPARING TO TEACH

TEACHING POINTS

Sinful desires lie at the root of conflict—The Holy Spirit through James, the brother of Jesus, gives us a wonderful look into the human heart. He tells us that our quarrels and fights spring from sinful desires. We want something but we don't get it (James 4:1–2). We like to blame our circumstances for our sin, but God tells us squarely that our sin comes from within our hearts, not from outside us.

We might say, for example, “I needed to get a good grade, so that’s why I cheated.” Or we like to blame others as if they are responsible for our sin: “You make me so angry!” Sometimes we excuse our sin because of hardship or suffering: “I spoke harshly because I was tired.” God cuts through our excuses and goes right for the heart. We sin because we don’t get what we want: “You desire and do not have.” Our hearts are full of idols ready to replace God. In our hearts we want money, we want control, or we crave comfort and ease. The Bible says that these kinds of desires, though not always bad in themselves, can rise to sinful heights and lead to sinful behaviors. When that happens, we will strike out against anything or anyone who stands in our way of getting what we want. Inordinate desires wrestle for control against God’s Spirit within us.

Sinful desires lead to selfish prayers—If we don’t check our sinful desires, soon we will be asking God to fulfill them (James 4:3). While most folks would hesitate praying for God to bless them with a million-dollar lottery win, asking God to fulfill sinful desires can be much more subtle than that. Sometimes we treat God as if he were a servant there to fulfill our desires instead of the other way around. While God loves to bless us with good things, God wants us to pray according to his will, not just for what we want for our own pleasure.

God is not required to answer our prayers—He will always hear our prayers, but he will not always answer our prayers the way we want. Clearly, James says that God’s best for us is sometimes to refuse our requests (James 4:2). When God doesn’t grant our requests, he is actually loving us. Think of it this way: we tend to love worldly things instead of God. For example, the Bible says we cannot love both God and money. If God were to grant our request for a lot of money, he could be helping us on a path away from loving him.

God’s grace comes to those who repent—What a joy to know that if we humble ourselves, God will pour grace into our lives (James 4:6). Paul told Titus, “For the grace of God has appeared, bringing salvation for all people, training us to renounce ungodliness and worldly passions, and to live self-controlled, upright, and godly lives in the present age, waiting for our blessed hope, the appearing of the glory of our great God and Savior Jesus Christ” (Titus 2:11–13).

When we humble ourselves, we receive God’s grace (James 4:10). We need his grace to resist the devil and our own sinful desires. James tells us to repent and draw near to God. Then he promises that God will respond by drawing near to us (James 4:8).

Where Is the Gospel? _____

How does today’s Bible story fit into God’s greater plan of redemption?

James rebukes his readers by calling them “adulterous people” (James 4:4). This is not because they were stealing someone else’s wife or husband, but because they had turned to loving the things of the world instead of God.

Scripture compares our relationship with the Lord to a marriage. When we turn to idols, it is like turning to another husband or wife. It is adultery against God. This is a serious sin because God has demonstrated his love in the most profound way—by sending his own Son to take the punishment for our sins. When we covet something in the world, we are rejecting God’s love and the relationship he extends to us in Christ. God wants our pleasures, our desires, and our love to be focused on Christ.

THE LESSON

OPENING REVIEW 5 MIN

Use last week’s lesson outline to review with the children what they learned.

BIBLE STORY 10 MIN

Read James 4:1–10 from the Scriptures or read story 150, “The Heart’s Desires,” from *The Gospel Story Bible*.

OBJECT LESSON 1 10 MIN

Who Was in a Quarrel This Week?

Ask the children to raise a hand if they were in an argument or fight this week. Then ask the children what they were fighting about. The idea is to discover what they wanted but did not get.

For instance, if a child fought over a toy with a sibling, you could ask “What did you want that you were not getting?” They would answer “The toy.”

Try to do this again and again until you cement in their minds that we often fight over things we want but do not get. This will help them understand the lesson. Keep a mental list or write down each thing they say so that you can refer back to them as you teach the lesson.

Then, before you teach, share a time recently from your own life when you got into a quarrel over something you wanted but did not get (keep it age-appropriate). Use that story (or one of the children’s examples) to set the stage to teach the lesson from James 4.

TEACHING/DISCUSSION 10 MIN

Using the teaching points, teach through the lesson for today.

OBJECT LESSON 2 15 MIN

Before and After

SUPPLIES:

- ✓ pretzel rods—enough for the class

Use this exercise to help the children see how even a pretzel can be an idol. Read through and talk about the James passage before you do this exercise.

Recruit two volunteers to act out a skit. Tell them to pretend they are siblings and you are the parent. You are going to give them three pretzel rods to share and then leave the room. They are to demonstrate how our sinful desires lead to quarrels. Explain that you will hand the pretzels to one of them. The problem comes in when they try to decide how to split the third pretzel.

Let the kids act this out spontaneously. Remind them to demonstrate sinful desires.

Do the skit several times with different pairs of children and then ask the following questions:

- **Why was it so easy for the children to act out the scene?**
(We have all struggled with sinful desires. They were merely demonstrating what they have done in real life.)

- **Are pretzels evil?**
(No, it is the desire for drawing our comfort from food instead of our Lord that is evil.)

Now invite a few other pairs to act out the skits without sinful desires at work. Help the children to see that when we argue over things we disobey God's Word. Instead of obeying God and not arguing, we are obeying our desires to fight for what we want. Anytime we obey something over God, we are committing the sin of idolatry.

Give the extra pretzels to anyone who didn't get one.

SWORD BIBLE MEMORY 5 MIN

Take time during the class to review the SWORD Bible Memory verses with the class. Provide the opportunity for each child to recite the verses to an adult worker.

ACTIVITY TIME 10 MIN

Color a Picture

SUPPLIES:

- ✓ coloring page for NT Lesson 72—one for each child
- ✓ markers or crayons

While the children are coloring, engage them by asking the following questions:

- What are the children arguing about in the picture?
(a toy)
- Why do you think they are arguing about the toy?
(They both want the same toy.)
- Do you think they want God most of all right now?
(No, they want the toy more than they want God.)

CLOSING PRAYER 5 MIN

Pick several children to pray prayers based on the day's Scripture passages.

BONUS OBJECT LESSON 15 MIN

Should God Give It to Me?

The idea of this object lesson is for the children to put into practice what they learned from James 4, getting an idea of why God might not give us everything we want.

Ask the class, "If you were a parent and your child asked for one of the following would you give it to them?" Would you give them...

- ...clothes to wear so they can keep warm?
- ...food to eat?
- ...a whole container of chocolate ice cream to eat in one sitting all themselves?
- ...a sharp knife?
- ...a baseball to throw inside grandmother's house?
- ...a pet rattlesnake of their own?
- ...a bag of potato chips for them to share with their brother or sister?
- ...a pack of matches to help you start the grill?
- ...a ten-dollar bill to buy whatever they want?
- ...a hundred dollars to buy whatever they want?
- ...ten thousand dollars to buy whatever they want?
- ...a new pair of shoes?

...a new pair of shoes so they can have the cool pair they want?

...a chain saw?

...a bag of chocolate candy to stash under their pillow and eat at night?

Add more of your own if the children are enjoying them, and then take time to explain that parents don't just give their children whatever they want and James tells us that God doesn't just give us whatever we want either (James 4:3).

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