



NEW TESTAMENT • LESSON 72

THE HEART'S DESIRES

Sinful desires lead us away from God.



MONDAY

THE STORY: JAMES 4:1-2

Sinful desires lie at the root of conflict. James gives us a wonderful look into the heart of every man. He tells us that our quarrels and fights spring from sinful desires. We want something but we don't get it. We like to blame sin on our situation, but James places responsibility for our behavior in our hearts.

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."

James cuts through our excuses and goes right for the heart. We sin because we don't get what we want. 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, inordinate desires wrestle for control against God's Spirit within us.

TALK ABOUT IT:

Do you have quarrels and fights? (Everybody does, but it is good to admit that we do and see our own lives in this text.)

What sinful desires do you have within you? (Parents, help your children look for the root causes that lead to their arguments and quarrels. For example, an inordinate desire for candy can lead to fights between siblings. Remember, if they have quarrels and fights, there are sinful “wants” at work in their lives.)

PRAY:

Pray that God would help you not to blame your circumstances for your sin.



TUESDAY

THE STORY: JAMES 4:3

Sinful desires lead to selfish prayers. If we don't check our sinful desires, soon we will be asking God to bless them and give us what we sinfully long for. We treat God as though He were a servant to our desires instead of the other way around. God wants us to pray according to His will, not 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. When God doesn't grant our selfish 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 a request for a lot of money, He may be helping us on a path away from the love of God.

TALK ABOUT IT:

What kinds of things do men desire sinfully? (The desire for just about anything, even good things, can become sinful. Money is not evil; wanting money more than God is evil. Football or other sports are not evil, but loving them more than God is.)

What kinds of things have you desired sinfully? (Parents, help your children here. You are probably more aware of what sinfully drives them than they are. If you

can't think of anything, just go back to James' key verse. What have they quarreled after?)

PRAY:

Have each person in your family confess their sinful desires and then ask the Lord to help your family want Him, his kingdom, and his righteousness above all else.



WEDNESDAY
WHERE IS THE GOSPEL?

THE STORY: JAMES 4:4

In James 4:4, James gives this rebuke: “You adulterous people.” This is not because the people were struggling in the area of physical adultery (stealing someone else’s wife or husband) but because they had turned to other loves. 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 upon Christ.

TALK ABOUT IT:

Why is loving other things instead of loving God such a serious sin? (God sent Jesus to die for us. If we turn to worldly things, we are rejecting Jesus.)

Are the things we turn to bad? (Sometimes they are bad, such as taking illegal drugs to feel good, but often they are not bad in themselves. It is not wrong, for instance, to play a computer game. But it is wrong to love computer games so much that if someone says we are not allowed to play, we get angry and say unkind things.)

PRAY:

Ask God to help you recognize when you are loving other things more than Him.



THURSDAY

THE STORY: JAMES 4:6-12

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. Paul told Titus, "For the grace of God that brings salvation has appeared to all men. It teaches us to say 'No' to ungodliness and worldly passions, and to live self-controlled, upright and godly lives in this present age, while we wait for the blessed hope — the glorious appearing of our great God and Savior, Jesus Christ" (Titus 2:12-14).

When we humble ourselves, we receive God's grace. 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.

TALK ABOUT IT:

What stands in our way of receiving God's grace? (Pride stands in our way. It can make us refuse to admit that the object of our desire has become an idol.)

What does James say we should do? (We should humble ourselves, demonstrate godly sorrow and draw near to God.)

How does pride keep you from admitting your weakness? (Parents, help your children recall their sinful responses to your correction. Help them to see pride at work in their lives. Keep the category of pride alive in your home this week. Point it out when you see it at work in their lives.)

PRAY:

Ask God to give you the grace you need to repent of your pride and humble yourself before the Lord.



FRIDAY
ON THE ROAD TO EMMAUS

THE STORY: PSALM 22:7,8

Psalm 22 details the suffering and crucifixion of our Lord with amazing accuracy. It is astonishing to consider that this psalm was written hundreds of years before the birth of Christ. In this passage we see that it even predicts what the mockers would say to our Lord when He was crucified.

TALK ABOUT IT:

Read Matthew 27:39-43. How are the two passages similar? (Draw out your children regarding obvious similarities.)

What does seeing this kind of detail prophesied hundreds of years before the event tell us about the sovereignty of God? (God does not simply know about what is going to happen. He knows exactly what is going to happen and is in control of all things, down to the last word!)

PRAY:

Thank God for His amazing, sovereign control over all things.