

## Lesson #6

### Priorities of Prayer

#### **Main Passage:**

##### **James 4:3-8**

*When you ask, you do not receive, because you ask with wrong motives, that you may spend what you get on your pleasures. <sup>4</sup> You adulterous people, don't you know that friendship with the world means enmity against God? Therefore, anyone who chooses to be a friend of the world becomes an enemy of God. <sup>5</sup> Or do you think Scripture says without reason that He jealously longs for the spirit He has caused to dwell in us? <sup>6</sup> But He gives us more grace. That is why Scripture says: "God opposes the proud but shows favor to the humble." <sup>7</sup> Submit yourselves, then, to God. Resist the devil, and he will flee from you. <sup>8</sup> Come near to God and He will come near to you. Wash your hands, you sinners, and purify your hearts, you double-minded.*

#### **Big Idea:**

We know we should pray, but there seems to continually be things that get in the way of us having a fruitful prayer life. In this lesson, we will look at how pride fuels most of the major obstacles we face, and how God provides something better for us through prayer.

#### **Outline:**

**1<sup>st</sup> Teaching Point:** Pride is the major enemy of prayer.

**2<sup>nd</sup> Teaching Point:** Pride prioritizes our timing; Prayer prioritizes God's plan.

**3<sup>rd</sup> Teaching Point:** Pride prioritizes our pleasures; Prayer prioritizes God's desires.

**4<sup>th</sup> Teaching Point:** Pride prioritizes our position; Prayer prioritizes God's salvation.

#### **Lesson:**

##### **1. Pride is the major enemy of prayer.**

- James 4:6 says that *"God opposes the proud, but shows favor to the humble."*
- Pride is the root to the weeds that spring up to attack our prayer life.
- If we attack these issues at their source, it makes it easier to see the solutions to our surface problems with prayer.

##### **2. Pride prioritizes our timing; Prayer prioritizes God's plan.**

- One of the most common excuses to not having a fulfilling prayer life is, "I don't have time."
- By doing this we admit our own pride in that our time is more valuable than God's.
- We also see our pride in praying for things to happen in the timeline we have set, instead of God's.
- Jesus shows us the example of how we should pray for God's plan instead of our own in Matthew 6:10, *"Your kingdom come, Your will be done, on earth as it is in heaven."*

- In Proverbs 16:9 we are reminded that, *“in their hearts humans plan their course, but the LORD establishes their steps.”*
- By laying down our pride, we submit to the plans of God that ultimately lead to what is best.
- Quote from Charles Spurgeon, “It is not a matter of time so much as a matter of heart; if you have the heart to pray, you will find the time.”

### **3. Pride prioritizes our pleasures; Prayer prioritizes God’s desires.**

- Due to our pride we value our pleasures over the desires of God.
- Read James 4:3-5 together.
- When we ask God for things with the wrong motives, we don’t get what we ask for.
- Sometimes the things we ask God for reveal the state of our heart.
- **Psalm 66:18**  
*“If I had cherished sin in my heart, the Lord would not have listened.”*
- Putting the focus of our prayers on the desires of God, leads us away from praying for things with the wrong motives.

### **4. Pride prioritizes our position; Prayer prioritizes God’s salvation.**

- In our pride we normally accept one of two positions: I am self-sufficient and don’t need God, or that I am too broken that God either doesn’t want me or can’t help me.
- James 4:7-8 gives the invitation to come to God and be cleaned.
- James acknowledges that we are all sinners, meaning none of us are self-sufficient.
- James also gives us this invitation from God meaning that none of us are too broken for God either.
- The prophet Isaiah reminds us of this in Isaiah 59:1-2 that, *“the arm of the Lord is not too short to save.”*
- Isaiah 59 ends in v 21 with a promise from the Lord to not depart from us, and that His words will remain on our lips forever.

#### **Small Group Discussion Questions:**

1. What is the biggest obstacle you have in your personal prayer life?
2. How do you make time for daily prayer? What is your routine?
3. Why is it important for us to pray with the right motives?
4. How do you think God sees you?
5. What would help you in prioritizing prayer in your life?
6. APPLICATION: What is one thing you can take away from today’s lesson that can be applied this week? Please explain.

#### **Small Group Prayer Suggestions:**

1. Pray for us to desire God’s plan.
2. Pray for us to remember that God desires to talk to us.



3. Pray for God to take away our pride.

### **Additional Commentary: James 4:3-8<sup>1</sup>**

**4:3** The negative progression continues. As an afterthought, prayers are directed to God (lit. “you ask and you do not receive”), but not from a heart that is cleaving to him who is our greatest gift (lit. “because you ask wrongly”). Such prayers cannot lessen frustrated evil desire. No “spiritual benefit” is found under such psychological conditions from prayer. The imperative of prayer (1:5), of asking God for his provision, requires the prior knowledge of our true need. But the kind of asking practiced by some of James’s addressees is futile because it asks only on selfish and envious terms (lit. “in order that you may spend/squander in your pleasures”). As such, prayer becomes evil because of what is prayed for and why. Such prayers from the tongue, that is, the “world of evil” (3:6) within the body, are entirely rejected by the one to whom they are addressed.

The evil motives from which some have dared to shape their requests have their source, again, in evil desire, that is, their “pleasures” (v. 1). In such prayers God is regarded as a mere dispensary of instruments of vice. The language of monetary exchange is brought in by James. God does not answer their prayers not only because they are evil but also because they would just spend<sup>29</sup> his generosity on themselves. They would, as it were, simply “cash in” whatever they could exchange his gifts with for their idea of “gain.” This sort of religiosity represents the worst of pagan attitudes about deity. Indeed, such a heathen approach to God is at the heart of “friendship with the world” mentioned in the next verse.

**4:4** Very abruptly and just as harshly as his previous denunciation “fools!” (2:20), James, in classical diatribal fashion accosted his addressees with the charge “adulterers!” The gender of the plural noun is actually feminine, hence *adulteresses*.<sup>30</sup> Following the context, this charge harkens back to a standard image of covenant relationship between God and his people from the Old Testament. Israel was the wife of the Lord (cf. Isa 54:4–8), and he considered her idolatries as adulteries (cf. Jer 31:21; Hos 3:1; Ezek 23:45). Thus, spiritual adultery is synonymous with being an “enemy”<sup>31</sup> of God. Instead of being faithfully wedded, James’s hearers had, by their evil ways, turned their back on God and were having an “affair” with the world. This dangerous condition caused them to be opposed to God and his purposes for them. What the NIV translated “hatred,” evidently as a preferred antonym to “friendship,”<sup>32</sup> is literally “enmity.” Didn’t James’s audience know this? The rhetoric of this passage, again diatribal, indicates such knowledge, for James could presuppose their full awareness of the truth about God and themselves regarding this matter of infidelity. The terrible misdirection of their

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<sup>1</sup> Taken from: Kurt A. Richardson, *James*, vol. 36, The New American Commentary (Nashville: Broadman & Holman Publishers, 1997), 183–187.

<sup>29</sup> δαπανᾶω: “spend,” here in a wasteful way; cf. Luke 15:14.

<sup>30</sup> For a discussion of the feminine form of the noun, cf. J. J. Schmitt, “You Adulteresses! The Image in James 4:4,” *NovT* 28 (1986): 327–37.

<sup>31</sup> ἔχθρός: “the (personal) enemy,” where God or Christ is the object of enmity; Ps 109:1; Matt 22:44; Mark 12:36; Luke 20:43; Acts 2:35; Heb 1:13; 10:13; 1 *Clem.* 36:5.

<sup>32</sup> φιλία: “friendship,” “love,” as throughout the LXX; cf. Josephus *Ant.* 12.414; *Sir* 27:18; Philo *Fug.* 58; *Herm. Man.* 10, 1, 4.

friendship, which should have been with God (2:23), proves again how self-deceived they were. The status of unbelievers is enmity toward God and friendship with the world, and this worldly friendship is something Christians can flirt with (cf. Matt 6:24; 2 Tim 3:4; 1 John 2:15). James was not saying conclusively that his addressees were completely the “friends of the world” rather than “friends of God.” Rather, they were “adulteresses,” unfaithful lovers. James was speaking generally, but his hearers were dangerously close to this negative condition, not one of familiarity with the world or active participation in it but rather a personal investment in it and chief concern placed in its ways of life that do not follow the standards established by God for his people.

**4:5** This next verse is notoriously difficult to translate, although there are clues throughout James’s letter that will help. Although the commentators have offered numerous “solutions” to the variety of ways the passage can be punctuated and translated, the simplest and most natural reading follows.

As in the previous verse, James presented his hearers with a rhetorical question to penetrate into what they were thinking—misguided as it was! But of course their thinking was misguided because they had allowed their desires for God and their desires for the idols of the world to wrap them up in a total conflict of desire and interpersonal relations. Instead of appreciating the power of the tongue and God’s requirement to bridle it, they had allowed their tongues to spew forth both blessing and cursing (3:10). Instead of pursuing the wisdom from above that counsels humility and peace, they had allowed the “wisdom” from below to dominate their aspirations (vv. 15–17). This dichotomous movement of the will back and forth between different worlds of desire and deed was what James had in mind.<sup>33</sup> Just how much James was influenced by rabbinic thinking on the “two inclinations” is in some dispute. If James were so influenced, then behind all of this focus on desire is the belief that the will must exert itself toward good desires or evil desires and that the righteous life under the Torah, the Old Testament law, is a matter of training oneself to choose the good. But what of this reference to “the spirit he caused to live in us” (lit. “the spirit that lives in us”)?

There is really no pneumatology, that is, doctrine of the Holy Spirit, in the Epistle of James. His specific doctrinal and practical concerns evidently did not warrant such a discussion. So the verse is probably not concerned with God either desiring his Holy Spirit to indwell believers or what Paul called grieving the Holy Spirit (Eph 4:30). A second interpretive option understands the Holy Spirit as desiring believers. But both these options, while not contrary to scriptural truth at all, are not likely interpretations. The more likely reading is based upon God as Creator and as lawgiver and as the one who is giving new life to his dying creation. Humans are his perishing creatures. The spirit of life that transformed the newly formed body of the first man into a “living being” (Gen 2:7) is likely what is meant here. God is the giver of the spirit of life; it belongs to him. Moreover, the human spirit is not merely the vitality of the body (cf. 2:26) but also that which communes with God on the one hand or adulterates itself with idols on the

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<sup>33</sup> The literature covering many different presuppositions is vast; e.g., J. A. Findlay, “James IV. 5, 6,” *ExpTim* (1926): 381–82; J. Jeremias, “Jak 4:5: epiphothei,” *ZNW* 50 (1959): 137–38; L. T. Johnson, “James 3:13–4:10 and the Topos PERI PHTHONOU,” *NovT* 25 (1983): 327–47; S. Laws, “Does Scripture Speak in Vain? A Reconsideration of James IV.5,” *NTS* 20 (1973–74): 24–38; H. von Lips, *Wiesheitliche Traditionen im Neuen Testament* (Neukirchen: Neukirchener-Verlag, 1990), 427–35; J. Michl, “Der Spruch Jakobusbrief 4.5,” *Neutestamentliche Aufsätze: Festschrift für J. Schmid*, ed. J. Blinzler et. al. (Regensburg: Verlag Friedrich Pustet, 1963), 167–74.

other (cf. 1 Cor 6:17). The most natural understanding of “spirit” then is the human spirit, which gives us life and makes us spiritual beings.

Another important clue for understanding James’s intention here is what is meant by the phrase, “Or do you think the Scripture says without reason ...?” As with other passages in which James referred to the thinking or speaking of his readers (1:26; 2:14, 18–19; 3:1), he stood to correct them. He did this to intensify the point he was trying to make: the spirit vivifying our natural selves tends toward intense envying (one can translate “the spirit ... longs jealously”). By saying this, did James accuse God of causing human sin? No, that is our own spirit’s doing. But in a world of real human decisions and powerful temptations, without the guidance of heavenly wisdom the desires of the body will be guided by the hellish “wisdom” (3:15) of earthly thinking. Which Scripture James was referring to is unclear, unless he was appealing to the sense of Scripture as a whole. It is doubtful that he was quoting missing biblical material. But the issue is difficult because of the known Scripture citation in the following verse.

Thus the sense of our text is something like this: the natural inclination of the spirit, especially when unguarded from the temptations of the world, is to envy. Here is the simple truth about your spiritual adultery. Without active faith, making prayerful request for wisdom from God, you will be at the mercy of your most base desires. Destructive envy, which is as much a relational as a personal sin, will dominate the scene even of the church and inflame all sorts of quarrels and conflicts among its members. In this particular case, then, the NIV has rendered one of the most valuable translations available. This way the interrogative that expects an affirmative answer can stand without adjustment. Yes, James’s addressees had forgotten what their spirits tended toward without the “law that gives freedom” (2:12), that is, without the wisdom of God.

**4:6** In contrast to the spiritual adultery he necessarily attacked, James then cited Scripture to present the antidote. His addressees needed the gracious cure of God because he will oppose those who oppose him. This prescription was not the first word, however. Instead, he reminded his fellow believers that their spiritual sins could be overcome by God’s grace.<sup>34</sup> The “more” grace here is like Paul’s “where sin increased, grace increased all the more” (Rom 5:20). God wills the correction of his people through the continuing application of his favor. James conspicuously used the inclusive “us” here, hearkening back to the earlier expression, “We all stumble in many ways” (3:2). These many ways may even include deep descent into worldliness. But God remains generous with his gifts (cf. 1:5, 17). Unlike envy with its rivalry toward all, God maintains a favorable disposition toward believing sinners.

Quoting Prov 3:34, James recalled for his audience that God is determined to resist the proud.<sup>35</sup> Those who wrap up their selfishness and self-sufficiency in arrogance will receive the full measure of divine rejection. Such is the universal announcement throughout Scripture and the extrabiblical writings. Pride is frequently listed among the human vices and is closely associated with the sin of envy. Earlier in James’s Letter the story of the proud rich and the envious church leaders and their followers (2:2–4) shows both God’s opposition to the self-

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<sup>34</sup> χάρις: “grace,” “favor;” in this context, that which is eminently of God bestowed upon creatures; quoting Prov 3:34 as does 1 Pet 5:5; cf. 1 Clem 30.2.

<sup>35</sup> ὑπερήφανος: “arrogant,” “haughty,” “proud,” a very unfavorable expression, a vice; cf. Luke 1:51; Rom 1:30; 2 Tim 3:2; Josephus Ant. 4.224; Josephus Bell. 6.172; T. Levi 17.11; Did. 2.6; 1 Clem. 30.2; 59.3; Ign Eph. 5.3.

promoting rich and their self-serving welcomers as well as God's preference for the humble poor. Pride stirs up the desires of all those who have succumbed to various temptations of the heart. Pride leads to boasting. The sin of haughtiness not only tends to boast in what it has and in its own life but even boasts in what it does not have and takes credit for someone else's accomplishments. Arrogance totally obscures the faith that trusts in things unseen, hidden in God.

On the other hand, God shows favor to those who humble themselves. All of James's hearers were invited to join the ranks of the humble<sup>36</sup> who trust in God. The term here for the "humble" is rooted in the condition of lowliness and poverty. Biblically, God is particularly interested in reversing the hierarchies of status in the world. This is why God has "chosen those who are poor ... to be rich in faith" (2:5). The close connection between the condition of lowliness and the virtue of poverty is reflected in the story of Saul wishing to make David his son-in-law in 1 Sam 18:23. David's simple response was, "I'm only a poor man and little known." But precisely this attitude, which he maintained in spite of gross sin throughout his life, made David a man after God's own heart, that is, favored, graced. David exemplifies what the proverb is intent to teach: God is always ready to accept those who accept him and to give them more grace. Should we sin that grace might increase? No!—but grace does more than meet the challenge of our sinful desires.

**4:7** These next four verses outline a format for spiritual exercise, in a sense a "how to" for repentance. Lapses in the corporate and personal Christian faith of James's audience now had redress in these steps of spiritual self-discipline. Without these stages of true conversion in repentance and reconciliation with God, conversion is stillborn; true humility will always be thwarted. Interestingly, James did not call for a reorientation to any human authorities, even to his own. His addressees were to convert in and through direct communion with God. The series of plural imperative verbs is stunning for its cumulative effect toward purifying faith. No doubt James understood repentance to be a lifelong practice for every believer. All fall into sins that undermine faith and relationship to God; all must return to him for the restoration of whole-hearted commitment.

Repentance begins with the exhortation to submit<sup>37</sup> to God. The word *hypotassō*, "submit," is the opposite of the word *antitassomai*, "oppose," in the previous verse. Like the imperative to humble oneself before the Lord in v. 10, the call is to stop resisting God in anything. This call implies that James's addressees knew the will and truth of God and what it was to do it; similar is John's writing to his audience because they "do know [the truth]" (1 John 2:21). This beginning of restoration compares with the imperative to seek wisdom from God (1:4) rather than relying on one's own ability. Significantly, although there were conflicts within the community to whom James was writing that needed immediate resolution, he appealed to them to turn to God first. His approach implies that in real submission to God there is contained

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<sup>36</sup> ταπεινός: "lowly," "humble," as in those who participate in this condition virtuously; cf. Matt 11:29; *T. Gad* 5.3; *Barn.* 19.6; *Did.* 3.9. Of course the meaning is rooted in the reality of the position, lack of power and esteem of those "of low position," "poor," "lowly," "undistinguished," "of no account." The attitudinal and socioeconomic senses are joined together in grace because of God's compassion for and will to reverse status; cf. Isa 11:4; 14:32; Zeph 2:3; Luke 1:52; Rom 12:16; 2 Cor 7:6; Josephus *Bell.* 4.365; *Barn.* 3.3.

<sup>37</sup> ὑποτάσσω: "subject oneself," "be subjected," or "subordinated," "obey," all in the absolute sense of adhering to the authority of another. It is in this context that the exhortations of the NT call its hearers to respond to earthly but God-ordained authorities, even the secular ones; here it is submission to God (cf. Ps 61:2; Rom 8:7; 1 Cor 15:28; Heb 12:9; 1 *Clem* 20.1; *Ign. Eph.* 5.3).

the necessary mutual submission to reconcile with one another. James's was a different kind of "conflict management" than is common today. Understanding how corrupt religious practices can be because of our self-deceiving ways, leadership should never resolve conflict simply by praying for those with whom believers have conflict, even prayers with them. What James was saying was that conflicts with one another are symptomatic of conflict with God. All conflict resolution should begin by a renewed submission to God by the internal act of submission to him.

The next admonition of this verse calls the believer to put up active resistance<sup>38</sup> to the devil and his influence. Although humbling oneself does not cause the devil to flee, such submission to God is an important precondition for doing battle with the devil. But a defensive posture is all that is required to rout the evil one: resist him, and he will flee.<sup>39</sup> The word for "resist," *anthistēmi*, is different from the word for "oppose," *antitassomai*, in the previous verse that describes God's activity toward the proud. Against the devil<sup>40</sup> resistance is the effective attack for believers. This promise of the devil's flight bears upon our understanding of his nature and influence. The devil had been referred to only indirectly up to this point (cf. 2:19; 3:6). He is the embodiment of all that resists God and is at enmity with God (v. 4). James's discussion of the nature of temptation (1:13–15) and the Gospels' temptation narratives of Jesus (e.g., Matt 4:1–11) reveal absolute evil is never a positive force. Evil cannot coerce the human will but is dependent upon it, much like a parasite. The devil is the active opponent of God and his people, but he resorts to his lying, deceptive capacities. Human creatures who believe these lies contribute their physical and mental strengths to his cause of influencing humanity for their destruction and his glory. The devil is not called the tempter within James, for temptation results from evil desire within the self (cf. 1:14). But the devil is close by the temptations and conflicts that humans cause. Nevertheless, if he is consciously resisted, in submission to God, the devil cannot fight back and must flee the attack that is our resistance to him. How do believers know that he is present? Wherever envy and selfish ambition are present in the conflicts and quarrels of the body of Christ, the devil is there.

**4:8** The next step in James's spiritual exercise begins with a positive exhortation and concludes with a promise: draw near<sup>41</sup> to God and he will draw near to you. Nearness to God is a basic call and claim of biblical faith. The language of opposition has characterized action performed by God, us and, by implication, the devil. Now the language of approach conveys the sense of reconciling action performed by God and us. Each of the exhortations of this verse is a means of entering into intimate relation with God. A progression is detectable: from submitting to God, to a mutual drawing near, then "washing" the hands, and finally purifying of the heart. A second progression in the next verse explains what James meant by purifying the heart.

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<sup>38</sup> ἀνθίστημι: "set oneself against," "oppose," "resist," "withstand," expresses well the believer's proper reaction to the devil and his influence; cf. 1 Pet 5:9; *Herm. Man.* 12, 5, 2.

<sup>39</sup> φεύγω: "flee," "seek safety in flight"; cf. *Herm. Man.* 12, 4, 7; 12, 5, 2, where evil is said to flee from the good that resists it.

<sup>40</sup> διάβολος: "the slanderer," "the devil," is a name constructed from a verbal idea. This is the LXX translation of הַשָּׂטָן (*hasšāṭān*) from Job 2:1; cf. 1 Chr 21:1; Zech 3:1–2; Matt 13:39; 25:41; Luke 4:2–3, 6, 13; 8:12; John 13:2; Eph 4:27; 6:11; 1 Tim 3:7; 2 Tim 2:26; Heb 2:14; 1 Pet 5:8; James is in contrast to early Christian tradition that regards the devil as a positive force, e.g., *Ign. Rom.* 5.3; *Herm. Man.* 5, 1, 3.

<sup>41</sup> ἐγγίζω: "approach," "come near," "draw near" to God; cf. Exod 19:22; 34:30; Lev 10:3; Ps 148:14; Isa 29:13; Matt 15:8; Heb 7:19; *Jdt* 8:27 *Philo Leg. All.* 2.57; *Philo Deus. Imm.* 161.

What James meant by drawing near to God is founded upon the approach of the priest to God in his temple for worship and sacrifice. Godly people approach God to perform their spiritual service. Believers come near to God by focusing attention on him in the devout uttering of his name in the knowledge of God and his promises to be with them. The believer goes to God in prayer ready to hear the will of God for service and made ready to go away from the encounter to perform that service. Part of this approach to God involves service in the presence of God, who draws near to the believer. In this service the language of priestly activity is apparent, suggestive of the doctrine of the priesthood of all believers, interceding before God (cf. 1 Pet 2:5, 9; also Rom 15:16; Rev 5:10; 20:6). This approach to God in service is done in view of God's approaching, his initiative in coming to his people whom he has chosen as his witnesses in the earth. The mutual drawing near of people and God is their unique privilege.

Sin is that which causes spiritual uncleanness, and it is particularly the appendages of the body that represent acts of sin. The members of the body, symbolically, are those parts that need to be "cleansed." Cleaning<sup>42</sup> the hands and purifying the heart both recall first the ritual purity required of worshipers and of priests at the temple and second the prophetic call to the purification of the heart. One might think that this cleansing must precede the approach to God, but such is not the case with the believers to whom James wrote. God, their Father, had already planted his Word in them, had already chosen them for the new birth (cf. 1:18). Cleansing themselves was allowing God to cleanse them. Jesus' statements upon washing of his disciples' feet, "Unless I wash you, you have no part with me" (John 13:8) and then later, "You are already clean because of the word I have spoken to you" (15:3; cf. Isa 1:16), combine the themes of washing and cleansing by the Word in a similar way. Paul's declaration that the Roman Christians should now devote the members of their bodies to doing righteousness (Rom 6:13) points to the consciousness that sins are deeds committed through the body. Now believers are to dedicate afresh their hands (and the other parts of their bodies) to the purity of true religion (1:27). They are to be aiding sinners in repentance from sin (5:20), not in committing it themselves. How could they do this restorative work if their hands were constantly acting out sin? Instead, believers should be offering up hands of praise to God, as Paul recommended to Timothy, "without anger or disputing" (1 Tim 2:9). The hand of God has blessed believers with good gifts; now they should be offering up good gifts of a purified life to God. Sinners they are, but they are accepted by God and called into a morally pure life in relation to him.

The hand and the heart, however, must move together in a purified relation of deeds and commitment before God. Morality that flows from sincere faith requires an inner life that has been purified<sup>43</sup> and thus corresponds with the character of God. The heart being the center of the self, of its feeling and willing, has purity as one of its chief virtues (cf. Matt 5:8; 1 Tim 1:5). God and the heart of the believer have come together in close relation, and the one should

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<sup>42</sup> καθαρίζω: "cleanse," "purify" from sin, here in the active sense of cleansing a part of oneself; cf. Matt 23:26; *Herm. Sim.* 6, 5, 2; *Herm. Vis.* 3, 9, 8. For the passive or middle sense of being cleansed by, e.g., the Spirit or the Word or of the whole self; cf. Lev 16:30; Pss 18:14; 50:4; Acts 15:9; 2 Cor 7:1; Eph 5:26; Titus 2:14; Heb 9:14 (vv. 22f. are a special case where the priestly and spiritual frames of reference merge); 10:2; *Sir* 23:10; 38:10; Josephus *Ant.* 12.286; *T. Reub.* 4.8; *Herm. Man.* 9.4, 7; 10, 3, 4; 12, 6, 5; *Herm. Sim.* 7.2; *Herm. Vis.* 2, 3, 1; 3, 2, 2; 3, 8, 11; *1 Clem.* 60.2

<sup>43</sup> ἀγνίζω: "purify," drawing upon the rituals of OT practices of atonement; cf. Exod 19:10; 2 Chr 31:17–18. Later purification becomes a figurative expression for the work of God within the life of the believer; cf. 1 Pet 1:22; 1 John 3:3; *Barn.* 5.1; 8.1.

mirror the other. The God who freely gives wisdom to all who ask gives himself. None of God's gifts can be separated from God himself. The gift and the Giver are one and the same. Believers are to draw upon this heavenly wisdom that is itself "pure" (3:17) and use it to purify their hearts of "envy and selfish ambition" (v. 14). This purification is the sole antidote for their double-mindedness, witnessed in all its partiality and contradiction to this wisdom, to that which is "impartial and sincere."

Arrestingly, believing sinners are double-minded believers. No matter what particular sins believers are struggling with, they must find repentance in order to root out so much that actually resists God in their lives. Double-mindedness is sin and produces a life that cannot do the work of God (cf. 1:20). Attacking that which pollutes the heart will remove that which divides the mind. The means for this attack against the self that leads to gracious relation with God are laid out in the next verse.

