

SCRIPTURE

What causes quarrels and what causes fights among you? Is it not this, that your passions are at war within you? **2** 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. **3** You ask and do not receive, because you ask wrongly, to spend it on your passions. **4** 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. **5** 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"? **6** But he gives more grace. Therefore it says, "God opposes the proud but gives grace to the humble."

7 Submit yourselves therefore to God. Resist the devil, and he will flee from you. **8** Draw near to God, and he will draw near to you. Cleanse your hands, you sinners, and purify your hearts, you double-minded. **9** Be wretched and mourn and weep. Let your laughter be turned to mourning and your joy to gloom. **10** Humble yourselves before the Lord, and he will exalt you.

11 Do not speak evil against one another, brothers. The one who speaks against a brother or judges his brother, speaks evil against the law and judges the law. But if you judge the law, you are not a doer of the law but a judge. **12** There is only one lawgiver and judge, he who is able to save and to destroy. But who are you to judge your neighbor? *ESV*

DISCUSS

1. Before we dig into the text, let's talk about that video. Why do you think they shot this part in the prison at Alcatraz? Did it add a particular meaning or feeling to the things that Francis Chan was saying?
2. According to verse 1, where do fights and quarrels come from?
3. How do you feel about the word "murder" in verse 2? Does that surprise you? Do you think it belongs there? Were these people really killers?
4. In verses 2-4 there are three words that are also found in the Ten Commandments. Can you find them? Do you think this is intentional? Why would James want to tell his readers how they were breaking the Ten Commandments?
5. What do verses 2-3 tell us about the spiritual life of James's audience?

6. When they did ask God for things, what do you think they were asking for?
7. Is verse 4 saying that we shouldn't be friends with non-Christians? What is it saying?
8. So just when we're lined up for a smackdown from our holy God, what do we get in verse 6?
9. What is our best response to this? How can we access God's grace?
10. How can we "cleanse our hands" and "purify our hearts"?
11. Why should we turn "joy to gloom"? Is it wrong to be joyful?
12. How will God "exalt" us?

■ LIVE IT OUT

The book of James emphasizes the active side of our faith, so let's consider several ways we might put its teaching into practice.

Humble Prayer: In biblical times they wore rough sackcloth and sprinkled ashes on themselves to come humbly before God. What could you do to show God (and remind yourself of) your humility? Kneel? Wear a dirty shirt? Put soil on your face? The specifics don't matter as much as your attitude. Take a good long time to listen to God. Ask about the things He cares about. Ask what He wants for you. Confess your sins and receive His forgiveness. Ask again for wisdom.

Memorization: Learn James 4:7-8.

Peacemaking: Are there "fights and quarrels" in your life? If you're not seeing eye to eye with someone, do what you can to set that relationship right.

Service: Find a humble way to serve your church or community. Clean up, fix up, help those who routinely get neglected. This is not about you getting props for a good deed, but about showing the love of God to others.