

Repeated Words, Themes, and Ideas

1. Sin, the wars and fights among James' audience come from their own wicked desires that war within them. They lust, murder, covet, fight and war. Yet they don't have because they don't ask God. When they do ask Him, they don't get it because they ask selfishly. They are adulterers and adulteresses, enemies of God because they have befriended the world, 4:1-4. God resists the proud, but gives grace to the humble, 4:6. They need to submit to God, resist the Devil and he will flee. If they draw near to God, He will draw near to them. Therefore, they must repent and cleanse their sinful, double-minded ways. They should lament, mourn, and weep and their laughter and joy should turn to gloom. If they humble themselves in the sight of the Lord, He will lift them up, 4:7-10. They must not speak evil of nor judge their brethren. Whoever does this, speaks evil of and judges the law, i.e., this is to set yourself in God's place, the Lawgiver. They have no right to do so; God is the only one with the power and right to save or destroy, 4:11-12. They should not presume to know the future, as if they could predict a profit for next year's business. They don't even know if they'll be alive tomorrow. They should rather say, "If the Lord wills, we shall live and do this or that." But instead they boast in their arrogance; all such boasting is evil. To know what is right and not do it, is sin, 4:13-17 (other places this appears: 1:6-8, 11, 13-15, 19, 20, 21, 22-24, 26, 27; 2:1-13, 14-17; 3:5-6, 8-12, 14-16, 17-18).
2. God, James' audience doesn't have what they want because they don't ask God and when they ask Him, they ask selfishly, 4:2-3. Their alignment with the world has made them adulterers and adulteresses; they are enemies of God because they have befriended the world, 4:4. God's Spirit who dwells in us yearns jealously for us. That's why He gives more grace. Therefore He says, "God resists the proud, but gives grace to the humble," 4:5-6. They must submit to God, resist the Devil, and he will flee. If they draw near to God, He'll draw near to them. Therefore, they must repent and cleanse their sinful, double-minded ways: their laughter and joy should turn to mourning and weeping. They must humble themselves in the sight of the Lord, and He will exalt them, 4:7-10. They don't have the right to judge their brethren; God is the only Lawgiver with the power and right to save or destroy, 4:12. When it comes to future plans, James' audience should say, "If the Lord wills, we shall live and do this or that," 4:15 (other places this appears: 1:1, 5, 6-7, 12, 13, 17, 18, 19-20, 27; 2:5-6, 11, 18-19, 20-23; 3:9).
3. God's Word, the Scripture does not say in vain, "The Spirit who dwells in us yearns jealously," 4:5. Because God is super-gracious, He says, "God resists the proud, but gives grace to the humble," 4:6. Those who speak evil of and judge their brethren, speak evil of and judge God's Law. Whoever does this, puts themselves in God's place; but He's the only one with the power and right to save and destroy, 4:11-12 (other places this appears: 1:18, 21, 22, 23-25; 2:8, 9-12, 21-23).
4. Following Satan/World (Pride) vs. Following God (Humility), James' audience wants something but they're trying to get it Satan's way: they war, fight, lust, murder, and covet. Yet they don't get what they want because they don't ask God; if they do ask Him, they ask selfishly. They have become God's enemies because they have befriended Satan's worldly ways. But God's Spirit who dwells in them yearns jealously for them, which is why He gives more grace and says, "God resists the proud, but gives grace to the humble," 4:1-6. Instead of trying to get what they want Satan's way, they must submit to God, resist the Devil and he will flee. They need to draw near to God and He'll draw near to them. They must repent and cleanse their sinful, double-minded ways. Their joy and laughter should turn to mourning and lament. They must humble themselves in the Lord's sight and He will exalt them, 4:7-10. They must not speak evil of or judge their brethren; this is tantamount to putting themselves in the place of God as Lawgiver, Judge, Savior, and Destroyer, 4:11-12.