

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? When they did ask God for things, what do you think they were asking for?
6. Is verse 4 saying that we shouldn't be friends with non-Christians? What is it saying?
7. So just when we're lined up for a smackdown from our holy God, what do we get in verse 6? What is our best response to this? How can we access God's grace?
8. Who will tempt us to keep our focus on ourselves? (v. 7) How should we respond so we come out in triumph?
9. How can we "cleanse our hands" and "purify our hearts"?
10. Why should we turn "joy to gloom"? Is it wrong to be joyful? How will God "exalt" us?
11. James says speaking evil against another is judging them. What does James have to say about judging in verses 11-12?

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.