

# Undivided hearts

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[ 0 : 0 0 ] Well, hello again, Church. It's really been good to be with you over this weekend. I came on Friday from Singapore and had a wonderful time on Friday, and then yesterday I had the honor of doing the morning seminars on spiritual warfare, and then a little later on in the evening on the apologetic session on Is Christianity Intolerant? But this morning I understand from Pastor Brian that for these many weeks you have been going through the book of James. So be really good and helpful to you if you would please have that reading, which our brother read for us out open. The reason why I'm asking you to have the Bible open, whether on your app or whether a physical Bible, is that so you can follow and check whether everything

I say comes from the Word of God. So it will help you to have the Bible open. But we know that when the Word of God is proclaimed, we need the help of the Holy Spirit. So before I start, let's just commit this time to the Lord in prayer.

Gracious Father, we pray that you will proclaim and preach to us now through me. Grant that I am faithful, clear in teaching this passage of the truth, of refuting false notions, of rebuking false behavior and training us in all righteousness so that Jesus Christ might be truly proclaimed.

And Heavenly Father, may this time this morning not merely be a time of teaching, but a time of life transformation so that our Lord and Savior might be glorified for Jesus' name's sake. Amen.

There are many things in life which are quite controversial, which actually cause discussion and disagreement.

[ 2 : 5 5 ] Some people take one side, the other people take the other side of the argument. One of the things that I learnt when we got to Singapore last year from the United Kingdom, that people in Singapore disagree about, is durian.

Some people in Singapore don't like it at all, especially the smell.

So that is something that seems to divide people. People argue about durian. I personally like durian. But others I know don't.

And of course we see these disagreements all over our world, don't we? We see many disagreements and strife and quarrelling in this sphere of international politics.

You will know from watching your television or indeed from watching the news on the internet that our world is a very divided place.

[ 4 : 1 3 ] America against China, for instance, is a division. Even in my country of Great Britain, there is division, quarrelling and disagreement as to whether Britain should leave the European Union, what is called Brexit.

And I know here in Malaysia as well, you have had earlier this year a general election. And of course people voted on different sides.

There was disagreement and division. Thank God that is now over. And yet these disagreements, these quarrels, this tension, this strife and fighting is not merely in the world or even about little things like durian.

It is also in the church. There is disagreement in the church about this or that issue.

And not only is there disagreement in the church about theology and what we might believe, there is disagreement and quarrelling in the church about many different things.

[ 5 : 35 ] About, for instance, I heard in the United Kingdom one Christmas Eve service, and in the United Kingdom many churches have a Christmas Eve service just before Christmas Day.

About a fight that broke out in the church itself and chairs were thrown. That's amazing, isn't it?

On Christmas Eve, the festival of peace. And it seems that Christians, even in the church, fight over many things.

Even the smallest of things. Buildings, the way the services are, the way the worship is, this, that and the other, whether you like someone or don't like someone, all these things cause quarrelling, disagreement and fighting.

But this issue of fighting and disagreement and quarrelling and tension in the church is not actually a new problem.

[ 6 : 45 ] It is a problem that James, the brother of the Lord Jesus Christ, the half-brother, actually had to deal with 2,000 years ago, as he writes in the letter of James.

Now, I know that you have been covering this letter of James, that Pastor Brian has been covering and preaching through it, and I know that he will have explained actually the overall message of the book of James.

And I see that overall message actually on that sign over there. Give me an undivided heart, O Lord. That is basically, I think, the big picture of the book of James.

The problem was that James understood, according to the wisdom that God the Holy Spirit had given him, that basically the real problem was that people were, as he says in chapter 1, double-minded, literally two-souled.

That's the big message of the book of James. And indeed, in our passage, he also refers to that. Look at verse 8. You double-minded, he says.

[ 8 : 07 ] Literally, the two-souled. Now, it's very important for us to realize that when James talks about people in the church being double-minded, he does not mean doubts.

He does not mean normal doubts. He basically means people who are divided according to their commitment. That is what he means.

And the overall message of the book of James is to have an undivided heart, to have a spiritual wholeness within the church.

That is the ultimate message of the book of James. Now, before we get to our passage this morning, we need to look at a passage in context, because it's very clear.

Unless we interpret things in context, we will get the wrong message. And you will see, and you will remember from last week and the sermon of last week, that at the end of chapter 3 is entitled in our church Bibles, Two Kinds of Wisdom.

[ 9 : 18 ] He says there are two kinds of wisdom. There's a worldly kind and there's a godly, spiritual kind. Now, remember what James says about wisdom, the two kinds of wisdom, as we look at our passage, because actually he's continuing, at least in some senses, this overall theme of two kinds of wisdom.

But here, in chapter 4, verses 1 to 12, James' focus is very deliberately on disagreements and quarrels in the church.

So I want to look at what James says under three headings this morning. First of all, the real problem. Then secondly, the real solution.

And thirdly, the real application. That's where we're going this morning. So let's start. The real problem, according to James.

The real problem, according to James, is friendship with the world. The real problem is friendship with the world.

[ 10 : 35 ] Or to put it another way, the strife and the quarreling and the fighting in the church is caused by sinful desire and double-mindedness.

And James urges and pleads with the church to understand what the real problem is. You see, James is saying, unless you understand the real problem, unless you get the right diagnosis from the doctor, you cannot get a solution to your problem.

That's true, isn't it? If we ever go to a doctor, we need the doctor to say, this is the cause of your illness. If he misdiagnosis, then we won't get well.

And it's the same with the church. Please have a look at verse 1 with me. What, asked James as a question, causes fights and quarrels amongst you.

And whenever the Bible and the New Testament asks a question, it's up to us as readers to answer the question. So let's think about it.

[ 11 : 53 ] What causes fights and quarrels amongst you? I remember in some of the churches I was in, one of the causes of the fights and the quarrels was, well, basically, in one of my churches I was in in the UK, there were some iron gates outside the church building.

And some people wanted to repaint the iron gates black. Other people wanted to repaint the iron gates blue.

So that caused fighting and quarrels in the church, the color. But that is actually too easy an answer.

Why would people want to fight over the color of the gates and the paint? James goes deeper.

You see, that is not the real problem, the color of the gates or whatever the presenting issue in any church is. What is really going on beneath the surface?

[ 13 : 15 ] And then James goes on. Look at verse 2, please. You desire, but you do not have, so you kill. You covet, but you cannot get what you want, so you quarrel and fight.

Do you see what he's saying? He's saying the real problem is not blue or black. The real problem is your heart.

You desire what you, but you do not have. Of course, if 300 people or 400 people in the church all have a desire for their own thing, well, most people are not going to get their way.

They do not have, isn't it? And so you kill. I hope that James does not mean literally kill. I mean, that would be a very terrible church if the members started killing one another.

I don't think he does mean that. He means actually anger and hatred. You covet, that is, you want, I want.

[ 14 : 25 ] The 10th commandment, remember that? You shall not covet. You want, but you cannot get what you want, so you quarrel and fight.

And that's normal, isn't it, for us as human beings? You know, if we want something, if we go to the shop and we want something, and somebody in the family says, no, I want something else, well, it results in quarreling, doesn't it?

And fighting. And if we don't get our way, we get angry. We don't, so we quarrel and fight. And then he goes on, you do not have because you do not ask God.

What it means is that the wisdom he's already talked about in chapter 3, verse 13 to the end of that chapter, asking God for spiritual divine wisdom, you don't get because you haven't asked God for spiritual things in prayer.

You have asked God for material things. Why? Because as he says in verse 3, look at verse 3, when you ask, you do not receive because you ask with the wrong motives.

[ 15 : 37 ] I want a new car. I want a good job. I want more money. I want success in my career. I want a promotion. I want the best job.

I want the best results in my examinations. And James says, if that is the way you have it in your church, you ask with the wrong motives that you might spend what you get on your pleasures.

So what is the real problem then? We might want to ask James.

Well, look at verse 4. That brings us to the real heart of the matter. Do you see what he's saying? You adulterous people.

Literally, he calls the church a group of adulterous women, adulterous wives. And if we understand that image, then we can understand what is really going wrong in the church.

[ 16 : 45 ] After all, think of an unfaithful spouse. What does it show? The spouse has promised love and faithfulness to the spouse.

according to the vows made at the wedding. But by conducting another relationship, he or she becomes an adulterer or an adulteress.

They're split, aren't they? They've committed to something, but actually they're doing something completely else. They've said they love only this person, but in fact, they're loving somebody else.

And James says, it's just like that for the church. He says, look, O church, remember right from the beginning of the Bible, God married Israel as his bride.

Well, what did Israel do? It committed unfaithfulness with other gods. So Israel was an unfaithful wife to God.

[ 17 : 54 ] In the New Testament, Paul tells us very clearly that Jesus Christ is the husband of the church. And James is saying, watch out, O church, do not be unfaithful to your husband, the Lord Jesus Christ, you adulterous people.

Then he goes on to explain, 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.

Now, we need to understand what James means by friendship. You see, today, in many parts of the world, the word friendship simply means just say hello occasionally, maybe just meet for a coffee once in a while or something like that.

But that is not what James means. By James, he means somebody who really loves someone, who wants to spend good time with someone, who's happy with someone, who enjoys their company.

And he's saying, the church of Jesus Christ, the church he's writing to, loves the company of the world. That is, the pleasures of the world, the unbelieving world, the anti-Christian world.

[ 19 : 14 ] That is the problem. Friendship with the world. He says to the church, look, you've committed your life at baptism and all your other promises to Jesus Christ.

But actually, you're conducting an affair with the world. You go to the shops, you go to the shopping malls, you want the best of this, that and the other, and then it comes all into the church and all you want to do is to fight with one another.

That is why? Because actually, you're a friend, you're loyal, you're committed to the world. That is the real problem, says James, in the church.

And that, by the way, brothers and sisters, is what we must understand. If there is ever a problem in the church, ever a quarrel or a fight, what we must do is not say, this is what it's about, the color of the paint, whether it's blue or black, or the color of the chairs, or we should move the chairs this way or that way.

That's not the problem. What we need to do is to seek the spiritual problem, friendship with the world. Now, I trust and I pray that in this church there are no fights, there are no quarrels, there's no disagreement.

[ 20 : 44 ] But we are human beings and in many churches there are fights and quarrels and disagreements. That is what we need to remember.

Go for the spiritual heart of the problem. friendship with the world. You might say, okay, Ro, that is quite interesting, but we also need the right solution.

If we go to the doctor and he diagnoses what our serious problem is, well, we need medicine in order to get better. We need antibiotics.

Where are we going to get the problem of friendship with the world in the church? What's the solution? What's the answer to the problem? And that's a very good question and James gives us the answer as well.

And this brings us now to our second point. The real solution, the grace of God. God, the real solution, the grace of God.

[ 21 : 56 ] Or to put it another way, God gives his kindness and favor to those who are humble. Therefore, James tells the church, oh, church, be humble.

Look, please, at chapter 4, verse 6. grace. But he, that's God, gives us more grace.

That is why scripture says, and he quotes now from the book of Proverbs, Proverbs chapter 3, verse 34. He quotes it as an application to his church and the problems of his church.

He says, quoting scripture from Proverbs, God opposes the proud but shows favor to the humble. Now, you will know from your understanding of the book of Proverbs that Proverbs is about two kinds of wisdom, rather like James.

The wisdom of the world, worldly wisdom, where the person just wants to go and get and cut corners and be successful and rich and proud and all the rest of it and the wisdom of God, which means to fear God.

[ 23 : 21 ] That is the beginning of wisdom and understanding, says the book of Proverbs. And James repeats the wisdom of the book of Proverbs and he says, God opposes the proud.

Let's think about that for the moment. Why does God oppose the proud? Because the proud person says, look at me.

Look at how successful I am. Look at how gifted and talented I am. Look at how intelligent I am. Or, look at how sporty I am.

Look at my educational records, the great universities I've been to. Look at my career. Look at how successful I am. Look at my house, how big it is.

Look at my car, what a magnificent car I have. And actually, some people are so proud that they say, look at my yacht. I've got an amazing, great yacht worth millions and millions of ringgit.

[ 24 : 32 ] Or, look at my jewelry collection. Look at my shoe collection. that's the proud person.

And God says, that doesn't impress me. God opposes the proud. Because God has it all, isn't he? He's the ruler of the universe. He has all the riches at all.

He's not impressed by that sort of thing, because the proud person says, I don't need God. I stand for myself. I can do it all myself.

Works righteousness. That is what the proud person does. I will save myself. I do not need God. So God opposes the proud.

God says, but there's good news. God says, but shows favor to the humble.

[ 25 : 32 ] Favor means grace. Let me explain the difference between justice, mercy, and grace. Suppose tomorrow morning you went in your car and you parked your car somewhere in the town.

but you parked in the wrong parking space. And one of the parking attendants comes and says, sorry, that is wrong.

I am giving you a ticket. I don't know how much the ticket would be, but suppose that this is true. Well, that would be justice, wouldn't it?

You have done something wrong, so you have to pay a fine. That's justice, getting what you deserve. But suppose the parking attendant says, I feel sorry for you.

I'm not going to give you a ticket, I'm ripping it up into little pieces. That is mercy, getting what you don't deserve.

[ 26 : 37 ] But grace is if the man says, not only will I not give you a ticket, I will show mercy, I want to give you another car as a gift.

A lovely BMW. That is grace, giving you what you don't need. Do you see?

And that is what God gives us, and he shows favor to the humble. Why the humble? Well, think about it this way, the proud don't need anything.

They say, I don't need anything. I have it all myself, thank you very much. I don't need you, God. But suppose if you know that you're a sinner, suppose if you know that you're broken-hearted, suppose if you know that you so much need God.

God, please God, you say, please help me, please be with me, I really need you. God gives grace and favor and helps the humble.

[ 27 : 55 ] So, what is James' message to the church? be humble. Ask God to help the church because actually some churches think they're proud and say, we've got a great plan, we're going to do this, this, and this, we've got so much money, we've got so many wonderful buildings, we've got so many staff, we've got so many great things, we're going to do it of ourselves.

But God opposes the proud, even the proud church. but it shows grace and favor to the humble. A church which prays is a united church.

And a united church which prays is a church that prays and says, dear father, we cannot do church without you. We need your help. Please help us.

Please grant us grace and favor. That is the church. that God shows favor to. Now you might say, well, okay, thank you for that solution.

I understand it now as church, but what are we supposed to do? Practically speaking, applicationally speaking.

[ 29 : 18 ] And that's the third and the last thing that I want to cover this morning. The real application. submission. Submit to God.

The real application. Submit to God. Or to put it another way, change, O church, and repent.

Change, O church, and repent. Please have a look at verses 7 to 9. Submit yourselves, he says.

And he means this collectively to church. Submit yourselves, O church, then to God. That is another way of saying humble yourself.

Say to God, you're in charge of this church, not us. It's not the pastor or the eldership that is in charge of the church. It's him. God himself is in charge of the church.

[ 30 : 18 ] And if we submit to God because he is the ruler, he is the boss, it's Jesus Christ church, not our church, he is the head of the church, he is the husband of the church, he is the leader of the church, he is the elder of the church, he is the pastor of the church, he is everything to the church.

This is in fact his body and his bride. Submit to God. And then the consequences, resist the devil and he will flee from you.

Now I won't say anything more about that because we had three seminars yesterday on spiritual warfare. If you weren't there and are interested, then I think the sessions were recorded so you can get that.

So I won't say anything more about resisting the devil. But then he urges the church, do you see in verse 8, come near to God and he will come near to you.

Of course that's true, isn't it? We know that from our relationships. If we live far away from someone, if we live far away, well we can't really have a relationship, can we?

[ 31 : 29 ] You know, if some of us live in different countries, it's hard, it's not impossible of course today with the modern technology. But if we never see one another, never phone one another, never contact one another, never email or text one another, you have to ask what sort of relationship there is, isn't it?

So he says to church, come near to God and he will come near to you. Contact God in prayer. Be in constant contact through the word and through prayer.

But then he goes on, wash your hands, you sinners, purify your hearts, you double-minded. We've already considered the double-minded, the split-souled.

Grieve, mourn and wail. Change your laughter to mourning and your joy to gloom. What does he mean by that?

It means that his church, James' church, is very happy with their lives. They're very happy with quarreling and fighting in the church. They're very happy with rich people getting richer and exploiting the poor.

[ 32 : 42 ] They're very happy with the life, the comfortable life they lead without God. And he's talking here to the church. He's not talking to the world outside, by the way.

He's talking to his church community. And that's a serious problem, isn't it? So he says, well, repent.

Do you see all those words he said, wash your hands, because they're dirty. We know that. We need to wash our hands before we eat, isn't it? You sinners, purify your hearts, you double-minded.

How is our heart purified? By the washing of the Holy Spirit. And then he goes on, change your laughter to mourning and your joy to gloom.

What does he mean by that? Well, to come back to his illustration of the adulteress, basically, what happens if a husband or wife cheats?

[ 33 : 48 ] And they want the marriage to work. Well, you have to go back to your spouse and say, I am sorry.

Indeed, sorry might not be good enough. There have to be tears. There has to be brokenness. There has to be repentance, doesn't there?

There has to be a begging of forgiveness. That's what happens, isn't it? Any pastor will tell you, I'm sorry. Tears have to flow. Tears coming from the heart.

I did something so terribly wrong. Look, I'm crying. I'm begging you for your forgiveness. And James says it's just like that for a church.

If the church which is married to Jesus Christ goes off with the world, then the church needs to come back and cry before God. That is what he exactly means.

[ 34 : 48 ] So that is what a church needs to do. Now, please be aware, I'm not talking about this church because I don't know you and I'm sure and sure that none of these problems happen in this church.

But this is still a warning from Scripture to all churches because James is writing to the church community. So be aware of it. That if this ever happens, God forbid, this is what we need to do.

But then James wonderfully ends. Coming back to humility, to brokenness, begging before God. Humble yourselves before God and he will lift you up.

Now, the picture is something like this of somebody coming and falling on their knees before the Lord Jesus Christ, on their knees and saying, please, Lord Jesus, forgive me.

I am so sorry. And what does it mean to lift you up? Well, the Lord Jesus says, I see you're sorry. I see you on your knees.

[ 36 : 07 ] Come on. I'll lift you up. That's the illustration he has. The church, when it humbles itself, begs on its knees, will be lifted up.

It will be exalted by God and the Lord Jesus Christ according to the power of the Holy Spirit. So do that. And that's wonderful news, isn't it, for any church community.

However terrible the problems are in the church, and some churches have terrible problems and terrible strife and terrible friendship with the world.

That Jesus Christ is always willing to his dear, beautiful, beloved bride and wife, when he sees her tears, when he sees her on her knees, to lift her up and to embrace and love once more.

that's the great news of the gospel. But what happens in the end?

[ 37 : 19 ] What happens when we stand before the judgment seat of God? God. Well there, the church will be judged by the Lord Jesus Christ.

We see that in the book of Revelation. You know the letters to the churches. And so James closes our passage by saying, there is only one lawgiver and judge.

The one who is able to save and destroy. Therefore, do not be friends of the world.

Let's pray. Dear Father, we do know that in many churches in our world today, there are many churches that are friends with the world.

And yet, dearest Father, we thank you for the scripture that tells us that you oppose the proud, but you give grace and favor to the humble.

[ 38 : 44 ] Help us, Heavenly Father, to all the churches in our world, which might be friends with the world. that they might truly submit themselves to you, that they might humble themselves.

And we thank you for your kindness, your goodness, and your grace in our Lord Jesus Christ, that he lifts up the humbled church.

For Jesus' name's sake. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen.