

FIGHT

FOR YOUR FAMILY
DECLARING WAR ON OUR SIN



JAN 30 - MAR 1

(1) "Envy/Jealousy"

HIGHLIGHT: *James 3:14-16; Psalm 18:30-43*

H

Below are excerpts from the overall passage for use with the APPLICATION and RESPOND. It will be beneficial for the group to read the whole passage to understand the entire context.

James 3:14-16 NLT

14 But if you are bitterly jealous and there is selfish ambition in your heart, don't cover up the truth with boasting and lying. **15** For jealousy and selfishness are not God's kind of wisdom. Such things are earthly, unspiritual, and demonic. **16** For wherever there is jealousy and selfish ambition, there you will find disorder and evil of every kind.

Psalm 18:30-43 NLT

30

God's way is perfect.

All the Lord's promises prove true.

He is a shield for all who look to him for protection.

31

For who is God except the Lord?

Who but our God is a solid rock?

32

God arms me with strength,
and he makes my way perfect.

33

He makes me as surefooted as a deer,
enabling me to stand on mountain heights.

34

He trains my hands for battle;
he strengthens my arm to draw a bronze bow.

35

You have given me your shield of victory.
Your right hand supports me;
your help has made me great.

36

You have made a wide path for my feet
to keep them from slipping.

37

I chased my enemies and caught them;
I did not stop until they were conquered.

38

I struck them down so they could not get up;
they fell beneath my feet.

39

You have armed me with strength for the battle;
you have subdued my enemies under my feet.

40

You placed my foot on their necks.
I have destroyed all who hated me.

41

They called for help, but no one came to their rescue.
They even cried to the Lord, but he refused to answer.

42

I ground them as fine as dust in the wind.
I swept them into the gutter like dirt.

43

You gave me victory over my accusers.
You appointed me ruler over nations.

EXPLAIN

E

The purpose of this section is to deepen everyone's understanding of the Word.

My mom often said to me, "The proof is in the pudding." The ability of a baker is proved in the eating of his cake. Do people want more, or are they quick to say, "No thanks. I've had enough"? Now, I was never cooking pudding or anything else when she said, "The proof is in the pudding." The context of her little proverb was usually a *decision I had made—or was about to make*. She was reminding me that my decisions had consequences. The wisdom of my choices—or lack thereof—would be seen in the final product. Too often the pudding turned sour and curdled.

James 3:14-16 James says the same thing in 3:13—*The proof is in the pudding*; "If you are wise and understand God's ways, **prove it...**" Wisdom is not something you possess; it is something you live. And what grows from it shows you what kind it is: godly or demonic (vv.15, 17).

v.14 In the fight for our families (or any of our relationships), taking an honest look at ourselves is difficult. It's easier to see the speck in someone else's eye (spouse, co-worker, parent, children, neighbor) than it is to see the log in our own (see Matthew 7:3-5). If there is one thing more difficult than self-examination it is likely to be self-disclosure—admitting who we are and asking for help. We try to **cover up the truth**. None of us is proud of **bitter jealousy**. The sound of those two words smack of unattractiveness. It pierces (bitter) the heart of the one who embraces it and the life of the one who is its target. **Selfish ambition**, while very descriptive, might be better translated *strife*. It's an ambition that keeps things stirred up so that self gets the advantage. It is the fruit of following our sinful natures (see Galatians 5:20). Instead of facing bitter jealousy and selfish ambition head-on, we try to cover it up with **boastful pride** and **lying** to ourselves—a prescription for pain and frustration (see Psalm 32:1-5).

vv.15-16 If we "harbor bitter envy and selfish ambition in our hearts" (v.14 NIV) they will become idols that are **earthly** (part of the "world system" that Paul warns us not to copy (Romans 12:2), **unspiritual** (originating in the natural, the flesh), and **demonic** (of the father of lies [see John 8:42-44]). At best, my relationships will not be genuine if I hold to these idols; at worst there will be **disorder** (confusion, instability, tumult) and **evil of every kind**. James does not give a list of evils. He simply says that any and every kind of evil (he uses a word that means *vile, foul, expressing a hatred of light—the absence of righteousness and the presence of ALL EVIL*). If there is instability in my relationships, I need to take a good look at myself before blaming others.

Psalm 18:30-43 The 18th psalm was originally "sung to the Lord on the day the Lord rescued him from all his enemies and from Saul (see the heading at the beginning of Psalm 18 and 2 Samuel 22). It is a testimony to God's strength—especially when our own strength is not enough. It would be helpful to read the entire psalm this week, keeping in mind that David was being hunted down by the insanely jealous King Saul. Here is a breakdown of the thoughts: God's Strength (1-3); David's Distress (4-6); God's Display of Righteous Indignation (7-15); David Delivered (16-19); David Rewarded (20-24); the Humble and the Proud (25-27); God's Grace (28-36); David's Victory (37-42); David's Kingdom (43-45); God's Glory (46-50). Today we will focus on 30-43—David's recognition of God's grace for his victory.

vv.30-36 David recognizes that it is God's grace that arms him for battle. David's struggle is a life-and-death battle (see vv.4-6 and 16-19). In vv.28-29 David has exalted the Lord as his strength. Strong as David is and as mighty in battle, he is in a situation now that will eat him alive without the reinforcements of God. **The Lord, [his] God lights up the darkness**. When the enemy lies **crushed** on the field it is because of **[God's] strength. God's way and God's word (ESV) shield** David and all others **who look to Him for protection**. Ah, where do we go when we need help? Too often we are like Israel of whom God said, "...my people have done two evil things: They have abandoned me—the fountain of living water. And they have dug for themselves cracked cisterns that can hold no water at all" (Jeremiah 2:13). David doesn't go to dry cisterns. In vv.30-36 David makes reference to "God", "he" (God), "you" (God) thirteen times in the NLT as the source of grace that sustains and enables him in his battle. When we are fighting a vicious enemy—even if it is ourselves—the God of grace who becomes our armor so that "[we] will be able to stand firm against all strategies of the devil" (Ephesians 6:10-11). But you have to put it on!

vv.37-43 David describes the fight: **chased my enemies, caught them, conquered, struck them down so that they could not get up**. No doubt, David was a great warrior, but he is humble enough to recognize his strength (vv.27-29). It was not self-confidence, but "confidence in God's goodness" (Psalm 27:13-14). "My fear doesn't stand a chance when I stand in Your love" (Josh Baldwin). In spite of David's

abilities and accomplishments in this battle, he sees the hand of God as the orchestrator of the **victory** (v. 43).

Jealousy and selfish ambition are killers; just ask King Saul. Humility and trust in God can bring life and victory to just about anything our families face; just ask David. How will you fight for your family?

A

APPLY

Be comfortable with some silence as people think back to the sermon or reread the text. Answer honestly. You don't have to answer every question.

1. What stuck out to you in what you heard in the sermon or read in the text?
2. How can sinful jealousy and selfishness lead to other evils? How have you seen this take place in your own heart?
Where has it caused problems in your family, workplace, or some other relationship?
3. James says that sinful jealousy and selfishness do not come from God. Instead, these things are earthly, unspiritual, and demonic. Discuss these three words and how they are different from God's wisdom.
4. When life gets hard, when it's tempting to be jealous or selfish, where do you find your strength, in God as David describes, or some other source? (Be honest about where you *actually* find your strength, not just where you *should* find it.)

R

RESPOND

Be comfortable with some silence as people think back to the sermon or reread the text. Answer honestly. You don't have to answer every question.

1. Is there a relationship that you have damaged because of your selfishness or jealousy? Go, confess your sin to that person and ask their forgiveness.
2. "God's way is perfect. All the Lord's promises prove true. He is a shield for all who look to him for protection." (v. 30) How can you specifically look to God to be your shield and protection?

How can you depend on him to give you strength and "make [your] way perfect?" (v. 32)