



Vestry Voices

The Church Family Newsletter

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Ten Commandments for the Church

How God's Grace Overcomes Worldly Passions

But he gives more grace; therefore it says,
"God opposes the proud, but gives grace to the humble."

James 4:6 (RSV)



Rev. Gary Kiontke



James wrote his letter to churches made up of Christians from the twelve tribes of Israel who had been scattered over the Mediterranean basin in the aftermath of the Babylonian exile and the wars of Alexander and the Romans. They spoke Greek rather than Hebrew, which had been forgotten by the diaspora after several generations. James is writing to churches with many members made one by the Holy Spirit, but he always uses the plural pronoun. In all the letter, we must remember James' concern for the welfare of all the members of the church as a whole rather than special treatment for individuals (James 2:1-6).

What follows is an analysis of the first ten verses of chapter four in which James severely chastens the churches for their unfaithfulness to God in Jesus, exhibited by their out-of-control worldly passions. As a good under-shepherd of his flocks, James concludes by calling the churches to humbly submit to their Good Shepherd, Jesus (John 10:1-18).

Problem:

James begins with a two-pronged, provocative, rhetorical question. What is the source of the wars and fights among them? He answers with a negative question. Is it not from your passionate desires that are waging war among your members? The source of their continual conflict, passionate desires, is pronounced "*hay-don-ay*." The etymology of the English word *hedonism* identifies this Greek word as its source. Hedonism is defined as a lack of control of natural appetites. This may be marital love overpowered by lust, or enjoyment of food turning into gluttony. It is the opposite of the fruit of the Holy Spirit of self control-temperance: the virtue of mastering passions, especially sensual appetites (Galatians 5:23, RSV, KJV).

Next, he lists five of their ongoing wrong passions and sums up with the consequence of this. First, they are coveting (Romans 7:7-12) or lusting (Matthew 5:27-30), but they are not having. Second, they are murdering. Third, they are jealous and not able to obtain. Fourth, they are fighting (verse 1). Fifth, they are waging war (also verse 1). The consequence is that they are not having any of their hedonistic desires met because they do not ask (God in prayer). And, when they are asking (God in prayer) they are not receiving what they ask because they are wrongly asking in order to spend what they get on their hedonistic passions!

James addresses them strongly and angrily as adulterers! He confronts them because they do not have a strong love for God based on faith in Jesus. Have they not known that love of the world is hatred to God? Then anyone desiring to be a friend of the world makes himself God's enemy. James is saying that their hedonism has made them spiritual adulterers and exposed their unbelief. This lack of faith has made them God-haters and God's enemies.

James transitions to the solution by asking a question from Scripture. There are many translations of this question. The closest literal and best translation would be: He longs jealously for the spirit He placed in us. The interpretation would be that God breathed His spirit in man at creation (Genesis 2:7). And, even though this image was broken by sin, in His second commandment given to Moses, He said He is jealous for single-minded whole-hearted love from His people, so He will punish in jealousy those who place idols above Him (Exodus 20:4-5).

So, the problem in the churches is caused by out-of-control hedonism making them disobedient to the Great Commandment to love God whole-heartedly (Matthew 22:36-38). It is humanly impossible for people to overcome any degree of hedonism to obey the Great Commandment.

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Ten Commandments for the Church ... (... continued from page #1)

Provision:

But, James says what God is doing for His Church; then he quotes a proverb from Solomon to back up his Spirit inspired solution: But He is giving more grace, therefore He is saying: "God is opposing the proud, but is giving grace to the humble" (Proverbs 3:34). James quotes the Septuagint translation word-for-word substituting "God" for "Lord." But, the point is that it is God's grace in His gift of Jesus Christ that makes what is humanly impossible attainable for all who have been saved in Jesus by grace through faith (Ephesians 2:8-10). What is the faith given by God's grace? Jesus said to be converted and enter into God's kingdom requires the humility of a little child (dependent on his parents, Matthew 18:1-4). Putting it all together, the hedonistic infighting unfaithful God-haters are proud and will be opposed by God. But all who humble themselves before God will receive all the grace from Him they need to be saved in Jesus.

James follows this gracious provision given by God with ten rapid-fire commands for the Church. It was just this morning that I realized the most Jewish of the first generation of church leaders was inspired to update what God had Moses give to Israel with what Jesus is giving to His Church. Here is James' list in "bullet" form:

- You must, therefore, submit to God.
- You must resist the devil and he will flee from you.
- You must come near to God and He will come near to you.
- You must cleanse you hands, sinners!
- You must purify your hearts, two-souled!

- You must be afflicted (with sorrowful lamenting).
- You must mourn.
- You must weep.
- Your laughter must be turned to sorrow, and joy to gloom.
- You must be humbled before God and He will exalt you.

The first commandment is a restatement of how to receive God's grace in Jesus. Submission is the expected result of humility. Next comes two commands with complementary promises. The first is to resist the accusing adversary and he will flee; and, the second is God's basic covenant desire that He will be the God of His people and they will be His people. The fourth requires sinners to clean up their works; and the fifth requires hypocrites to purify their hearts. The sixth through ninth require the followers of the Man of sorrows (Isaiah 53:3) to become sorrowful as He was sorrowful. Jesus restated commanding His disciples to follow Him in His death by taking up His Cross (Matthew 16:24; Mark 8:34; Luke 9:23). The tenth command returns to the beginning with an amazing promise to all who obey the nine preceding commands. All who allow God to humble them by grace will be exalted by Him! This means that all who obey all Ten Commandments for the Church will be like Jesus when they see Him face-to-face (1 John 3:1-3).

In conclusion, God's will for His Church is sanctification (1 Thessalonians 4:3). And, if we obey the new Ten Commandments for the Church by grace through faith, we will stand before Jesus complete in His righteousness (2 Corinthians 5:21; 2 Timothy 3:16-17). ~vv~

Sundays in July

We will have Communion on July 5 and 19.

We will also continue our series on enactment prophecies with four prophecies of Jeremiah.

Here are the details on the sermon texts and themes/titles for each of the Sunday worship services:

Sunday	Readings	Theme / Title
July 5	Jeremiah 13:1-14; Psalm 106:37-43	A destroyed waistband illustrates Judah's proud idolatry Yahweh abhors those who defile themselves with idols
July 12	Jeremiah 18:1-17; Psalm 33:13-19	Yahweh illustrates His authority over people with a potter and clay Yahweh delivers those He formed who hope in His unfailing love
July 19	Jeremiah 27:1-22; Psalm 107:10-15	Yahweh commands Judah to serve Nebuchadnezzar by putting a yoke on Jeremiah Those who cry out to Yahweh in their subjection are saved
July 26	Jeremiah 32:6-15, 30, 34-44; Psalm 126	Yahweh illustrates His restoration from exile by Jeremiah purchasing a field Those Yahweh restores from captivity will harvest joy



Missions Report

By Sally Camara

LATCOM is a ministry in Bolivia which runs Bible camps, conferences, and has planted several churches. Our main contacts are Tim and Ceci Ramsey. They have been in the ministry for 45 years now. Their main responsibilities at this time are administrative, providing oversight, and also doing special speaking engagements. Just recently they restructured the organization, renewed the Bolivian Board, implemented a new financial system, and created one- and five-year ministry plans. Their March 2026 newsletter was a celebration of their 50th wedding anniversary and also a letter of thanks for all the Lord has brought them through. The newsletter is hanging up on the back bulletin board if anyone is interested in reading it. Trust me – it is quite a testimony of all the Lord has brought them through, individually and as a couple.

Tim tells a story of a 9-year-old girl, Maria, who nearly drowned in the Zapoco River four years ago. Someone noticed her underwater and pulled her out. For over five minutes, family and friends performed CPR on her until she began to breathe on her own. On February 15th of this year, at the age of 13, she revisited the same spot only to be submerged again in the water where she almost died. In her own words, “But this time to be baptized as a public testimony of my decision of faith; to tell everyone that I died to the world and rose again in Christ into eternal life.”

Be in prayer for the camp ministries. This past Spring was exceptionally wet with heavy rains, mudslides, flooding,

and bridges washed out. Some of the camps were inaccessible for days. For various reasons, camp attendance had dropped over the past few years due to Covid, hazardous roads, political unrest, and communist government restrictions. At one point 10 years ago, they were hosting close to 6,000 campers a year. They are hoping for a banner year. The newly elected president has returned economic stability to the country while also eliminating mountains of bureaucracy and business killing labor requirements. The country is breathing a new era of hope. The initial two months brought 546 campers for four separate events. April camps were sold out. Much of August is sold out and schools are already signing up for Fall camps!

On another note ... we were able, this month, to send out checks to 11 ministries that FCC supports. Thanks to the generous gifts of parishioners, the missions committee was able to distribute above and beyond what we normally could to some of the organizations. For this we are grateful. It is such a blessing to partner with groups and individuals who have dedicated their lives to sharing the Gospel near and far. We also were able to ship off about 75 re-purposed prescription bottles to the Matthew 25 ministry. These prescription bottles will be used around the world at various clinics. Thank you FCC and CHCN members for participating!

“A generous man grows fat and prosperous, and he who refreshes others will himself be refreshed.” (Proverbs 11:25) ~V~

It Just Happens*... “Trust in God ...”

by Petros

Our world is being shaped by uncontrollable events that make me want to stop watching the news. But is that like an ostrich sticking its head underground; pretending, what I don't see won't harm me? My thought is that the media taints breaking news. Add in “fake news” and it leaves me wondering what is really going on? For example, recently there was news of the President wanting to put his face on new currency. It was reported that it was illegal as he was still alive. Later, I found out they were trying to change the law so it would be allowed! I felt hurt that someone could behave above the law, but then I felt tricked when there was more to the story. It gets worse ... only if we don't put our trust in God!

Pastor Gary preached on Deuteronomy 11:13-28. It's a hard sermon on obeying God's commandments. A Copilot search reveals ... “A commandment in the Bible is a divine directive from God, intended to guide believers in righteous living and obedience to His will. In biblical terms, a commandment refers to a rule or mandate given by God to His people, carrying both authority and obligation. The Hebrew word mitzvah and the Greek word entole are commonly used,

emphasizing the expectation of obedience and the moral authority behind the instruction.” Furthermore, a blessing will follow for obeying, or a curse for not. Continuing on, it is written that God's children (the Israel Nation) will be given “... (land) from the wilderness and Lebanon to (the Mediterranean Sea). But Israel is commanded to destroy the inhabitants (see Deuteronomy 7). According to DailyMail.com, “Donald Trump accused Benjamin Netanyahu of killing 'too many people' in Lebanon.” Both sides have valid reasons to act accordingly. It's not easy to side with the left or the right because God commanded it to be so.

Trusting in God. Holding onto His unchanging hand. Abiding in His Time. Following the leading of the Holy Spirit. These are the commandments that have helped me to have the Peace of Heaven on Earth. Perhaps, God set us apart as His Chosen and Gentiles so in the mist of war and confusion, we would turn to trust Him in all things. It is how we can follow Him in the Greatest Commandment: Love God with all your heart, mind and soul. And the second Commandment Jesus taught was to love your neighbor as you love yourself. Truly, the only two

(continued on page 4 ...)

It Just Happens...* (... continued from page #3)

commandments Jesus said will give us “expectation of obedience and the moral authority behind the instruction.” By doing so, it is easier to find the Truth amongst the fellowship of the brothers and sisters who are “blessed” by their obedience; followed by the path to the heaven on Earth Jesus brought for all who believe.

“It Just Happens*...” The Chosen, in season four, shows a couple examples of the complexity of following Jesus and how God knows our needs and only gives us what we can handle. At the end of one episode, Jesus is realizing the suffering he will endure for our atonement – the forgiveness of our sins by His blood. As Jesus is standing alone, the Roman Centurion (whose faith is the greatest) comes out of nowhere to embrace Jesus in his time of need. The other rib-sticking moment is when Jesus and his followers go to Jerusalem and proclaim he is the Son of God to the religious leaders. I imagined how difficult it is to proclaim oneself as being the Son of God; without any credentials, bells, or whistles. The result was they tried to stone Him (see John 8:59; 10:31). Perhaps the Pharisees and Sanhedrin saw the Truth in Jesus and could not accept the consequences of the lifestyle they coveted.

The Bluegrass Gospel Barn has roofing shingles! And the cupola sitting on top of the roof is waiting for a metal roof

to be installed as part of the job. It was a daunting ordeal, to say the least, to find the right roofer. But prayer was answered. When there seemed to be no good choice, I got offers from my neighbor and a longtime friend. I didn’t ask them to quote the job because I thought I wouldn’t be able to pay their going rate. It was a tough decision because both wanted to “... take care of me!” PTL for His mysterious ways. “It Just Happens*...” with the roof on the barn, the dream is becoming quite real, but the feeling is like it happened only in God’s timing. Everything that led up to this point didn’t matter because there is a time and season for all things. May God’s Will be done. Amen.

PTL!!! *“Unless the LORD builds the house, its builders labor uselessly.” Psalm 127:1*

Author’s note: This article’s title “It Just Happens*...” counters the cliché ... things just don’t happen. “It” will stand for the world view one chooses to abide in. “Just” is the character of the God who wants to be our God. He has made us in His image – righteous; by faith in God. “Happens” will be the events and experiences God uses to grow our faith. All things work for the glory of God. When we turn from our ways and we look to God and live His Word – His plan for us unfolds. ~v~



JULY 2026

SUN	MON	TUE	WED	THU	FRI	SAT
28	29	30	1	2	3 Last day of Pastor Gary's vacation (Note #1)	4 Independence Day
5 Communion Sunday (Note #2)	6	7	8 (††)	9 (**)	10	11
12 FCC Worship; Coffee Hour after Worship (Note #3)	13	14	15 (††)	16 (**)	17	18
19 Communion Sunday (Note #4)	20	21	22 (††)	23 (**)	24	25
26 FCC Worship; Coffee Hour (Note #5)	27 August "Vestry Voices" Articles Due (Note #6)	28	29 (††)	30 (**)	31	1

Calendar Notes:

- #1) 7/3 — Last day of Pastor Gary's vacation.
 #2) 7/5 — Communion Sunday: **10:27 AM**.
 #3) 7/12 — FCC Worship: **10:27 AM**. **ALSO:** Coffee Hour/Fellowship after Worship.
 #4) 7/19 — Communion Sunday: **10:27 AM**.
 #5) 7/26 — FCC Worship: **10:27 AM**. **ALSO:** Coffee Hour/Fellowship after Worship.
 #6) 7/27 — Articles are due for the August issue of "Vestry Voices" (for assembly/mail-out on July 28).
 (††) Wednesday Bible Study ("Job"): **11:00 AM (but not on 7/1)** (in FCC Parlor).
 (**) Thursday Prayer: **3:00 PM (but not on 7/2)** (in FCC Parlor).

