

## Read James 4:1-10 – Leader’s Guide

1. Canadian philosopher, James K. A. Smith, describes humans as existential sharks. Sharks are always moving through the water to breathe. As existential sharks, we are always "on the move" in life in search of meaning and purpose. What are some of the things that "move" us in our lives in Toronto?

*Citizens of Toronto are often moved by the pleasures of life: fame, wealth, happiness, success, novelty of experiences, connections, bodily pleasures, etc. Our passions, while real and good, are often dislocated and we seek ultimate satisfaction from good things that can never fill the void.*

2. Read verses 1-2: James brings up the themes of the Genesis story of Cain, who murdered his younger brother, Abel, out of jealousy. What pulls us from within ourselves to fight, to quarrel, and to wage war?

*The dislocated passions within ourselves rage in all of us, desiring to be satisfied and to be quenched. The raging of our inward passions boil over in human evil. We become jealous, angry, restless, fearful, hateful, greedy, etc. and we are pulled away by our passions to commit harm to ourselves, our world, and others. The restlessness of our inward souls manifest in acts and words of violence against everything.*

3. Read verses 2-4: Carnality insists that the natural world is all that there is. What pulls us from outside ourselves to be prayerless and to be ulterior in our prayers?

*Our dislocated passions interpret the world around us as ultimate. We look to creation as an end in itself, neglecting to look to our Creator for our final fulfillment. This is the pull of carnality: we do not depend on God and so we do not pray. But when we reach the limits of human reason and resources, we turn to God out of desperation, treating Him as our last resort. Carnality makes us into God-deniers and God-users.*

4. Read verses 5-6: God's passion over us is stronger than our dislocated passions for self and the world. He gives us more grace. How does God's grace and passion over us transform the way we live out our lives in Toronto?

*Knowing and believing that God has an intense and jealous passion over us should transform the way we live and navigate through the ups and downs of life. Having constant assurance that your lover loves you intensely, with incredible singular passion for you, changes your relationship with them, and it affects your mood, your behaviour, your walk and talk through your days. Having solid assurance that God loves you so intensely, so passionately, so jealously, we are freed and released to do more good works, to try our constant best, to become better, to risk and sacrifice more, to be more obedient to His commands.*

5. Read verses 7-10: God's grace works out in our lives through this series of commands. How does each of these ten commands work out in our personal and communal lives as Christians in Toronto?

*These ten commands relate to our political and spiritual life on earth. Submitting to God and resisting the devil are political acts: they play out in our political values - how we place ourselves, align with, or fight against the values of our culture, city, nation, and the globe. These commands are about personal and communal piety. Holiness is serious work - God reserved us for specific Gospel work and purposes. We must be morally pure and innocent. We should be broken over what breaks God's heart. In the end, submitting to God means to become humble like Jesus Christ. Jesus humbled Himself to the point of being dehumanised on the cross. But He was raised up to the highest level. Exaltation is promised to those who are humble before God.*