

11. The context of James 4:1–2 is referring to the actions of believers who are in reversionism, have lived in a soul of darkness for extended periods of time, and in doing so have desperately sought happiness for all the wrong reasons.
12. The translators note from the NET Bible gives an excellent synopsis of this condition of soul. All things are not all “vanity.” But all things sought for all the wrong reasons are best described by Solomon by the phrase, “All is vanity.”
13. The Hebrew noun, **הֶבֶל** (*hevel*), is translated into English Bibles by the noun “vanity,” which is fine, but the NET Bible selects the adjective, “futile.” The two words are noted together in the *Merriam-Webster’s Collegiate Dictionary* (11th ed.) as follows:

**Vain implies simple failure to achieve a desired result. Futile may connote completeness of failure or unwisdom of undertaking.**
14. The futility experienced by the believers in this verse was caused by their prolonged existence in the cosmic systems. Those who live in darkness are incapable of producing the desired effects of their souls’ imaginings.
15. The final sentence of verse 2 illustrates this. It indicates that even if these people decided to get out of the darkness through rebound, began a serious effort to rebuild their inventory of biblical ideas, and even achieve the level of the sophisticated spiritual life, they, even then, they would not receive divine blessings because they would not ask.

### PRINCIPLES:

1. Reversionists who function in the advanced stages of reversionism never acquire any divine blessings because they are never in fellowship. Yet the desire to assuage their lust patterns is never accomplished resulting in frustration and bewilderment.
2. The lust may be for authority, but never able to acquire it and if they do, they do not know how to lead and often become tyrants.
3. The objective may be for romance, yet even if discovered it results in disaster for all involved.
4. These disappointments, frustrations, and failures occasionally result in the realization that nothing sought for is ever realized. This can sometimes inspire reversion recovery.
5. There is really nothing that can prevent a recovery from reversionism except the retrogression of the individual. If he continues to pursue truth, then the doctrinal advance will gradually restore order.



6. The result is that blessings accrue for the subject and all he has to do is ask for them.
7. In reversionism, all sorts of objectives were pursued, but to no avail. Even if some are attained, it does not result in the anticipated happiness.
8. What can have interesting after affects is when a reversionist recovers he expects those things he pursues will occur. Some do, but there are phenomenal blessings available that only requires him to pray for them.
9. So the question arises, how then does a believer offer a prayer with confidence it will be answered? It has to do with the status of the person's soul when the prayer is offered. This brings us to our next verse:

**James 4:3** You ask and you do not receive, because you ask with wrong motivations, so that you may spend it on your pleasures. (NASB)

1. This verse begins with the same verb that ended verse 2. Verse 2's last sentence reads, "You do not have because you do not ask: μή (*mē*): "not" and the present middle infinitive of the verb, αἰτέω (*aitéō*): "ask."
2. If this believer were in fellowship, he might ask for a blessing from God but since he does not petition the Father for it, then because of that oversight he does not receive anything.
3. James 4:3 begins with this same verb, "to ask": the present active indicative of αἰτέω (*aitéō*). Here the person does ask but he, too, is in reversionism. The present tense is iterative indicating that this is an event that *repeatedly* happens.
4. This person may pray until he grows hoarse, but there is no response from God. This is indicated by the present active indicative of the verb λαμβάνω (*lambánō*): "to receive." This is a customary present which is used to signal either an action that *regularly occurs* or an *ongoing state*.<sup>2</sup>
5. This person is living in habitual reversionism. The mature believer at the end of verse 2 does not receive anything from God because he does not ask God for it.
6. The conjunction that links the petition with the negative response is διότι (*dióti*): "because; for this reason."
7. The reversionist in verse 3 does pray for a blessing, but did not receive it because he asked, "with wrong motives." This is indicated by the word κακῶς (*kakōs*).

<sup>2</sup> Daniel B. Wallace, "Customary Present," in *Greek Grammar: Beyond the Basics* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1996), 521.

8. However, the verse confirms that this prayer will not be answered because it was offered with wrong motivation. This is identified by the clause, “so you may spend it on your pleasures.”
9. Well, the “pleasures” are multiple and vary with the individual. It doesn’t really matter what pleasures are involved because no matter which ones are cited, they result in confirming there will be no divine response.
10. In short, the person’s prayer is an appeal to God to make it possible for him to pursue his pleasures with divine approval. The request is of course not going to be answered because the motive is to “spend” it, the aorist active subjunctive of **δαπανάω (dapanáō)**: “to squander.”
11. The active voice means that the reversionistic believer produces the action of squandering his efforts for pleasures during a frantic search for happiness.
12. The working objects of this man’s desire is the plural, instrumental of means, **ἡδονή (hēdonḗ)**, a variety of perverted, sensual pleasures and various sources of personal gratification, physical pleasures, and appetites.
13. This verse describes a believer not only in reversionism, but one also engaged in a wide variety of behaviors that are clearly prohibited in Scripture from multiple references. He has the audacity to actually offer a fruitless prayer for God in order to facilitate his hedonistic desires.

**James 4:2** You keep on habitually lusting, but you continuously do not have that for which you lust; so you habitually commit homicide. You are in an ongoing state of envy, but consistently are unable to acquire; so you quarrel and engage in donnybrooks. Mature believers do not have because they do not ask.

**v. 3** You keep on asking, but you consistently do not receive, because you ask with wrong motives so that you may squander it on a variety of perverted sensual pleasures. (EXT)

**James 4:4** You adulteresses, do you not know that friendship with the world is hostility toward God? Therefore whoever wishes to be a friend of the world makes himself an enemy of God. (NASB)

1. Verses 2 and 3 end with the divine analysis of those reversionists whose lust patterns have not been mollified to their satisfaction resulting in murder, jealousy, quarrels, donnybrooks, and perverted sensual pleasures.

