

JAMES 4:1-3

Quarrels and Murder Among Us (Murder he wrote)

INTRO:

James likes to ask probing questions, such as “Who among you is wise and understanding?” (3:13) The answer we would say is JESUS.

Here is 4:1 James asks another question “**What is the source of conflicts among you?**” (HINT: NOT Jesus)

EX: Parents – have you ever asked that QUESTION? You were probably looking to see ‘who started it’ so that the offender could be dealt with. Your kids were happy to place the blame on the other person, right?

All of you were thinking that the source was something that could be pinpointed specifically – “It started when he / she took, ruined, wore, lost my _____”.

I grew up with a twin brother and three sisters who were 2, 3, and 4 years older than us. Our three other oldest siblings were pretty much gone before I had any real memories of living with them. Almost every morning from Jr Hi to High School, “the little girls” would have a conflict over clothes- shirts, sweaters, skirts- , hair brushes, shoes, make-up, etc. When they were asked how it started I don’t ever remember hearing the answer that James gives.

1 What is the source of quarrels and conflicts among you?

Is not the source your pleasures that wage war in your members? 2 You lust and do not have; *so* you commit murder. You are envious and cannot obtain; *so* you fight and quarrel. You do not have because you do not ask. 3 You ask and do not receive, because you ask with wrong motives, so that you may spend *it* on your pleasures.

(HAPPY VALENTINES DAY!!)

None of my sisters ever said, “Well, you see mom/dad, we have conflicting pleasures so we are waging war. We have conflicting lusts so we are committing murder. We are envious and can’t get what we want so we are fighting. We’d like to blame each other but the root of the problem is in our own hearts.”

I NEVER HEARD THAT – and we went to church regularly.

Have you known conflict? Silly question, right? If not, you will. We live in a world of sin.

v. 1 James is dealing with a church where it appears that conflict was a chronic condition

Andy G – Wakefield v Carter VIDEO THIS CLIP IS A BIT LONGER THAN I WOULD NORMALLY USE, but it’s Valentine’s Day so we want to deal with this issue in a deep way.

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=y4dnQ0b77n4>

Does this sound familiar?? Have you had a feud and didn’t even know why you were feuding?

In James, specific disputes were not listed, but they are not important. The occasion is NOT THE CAUSE of the conflict. James writes to identify the CAUSE.

EX: Counselor to couple – “Why are you in conflict”? “Well, he/she did, said, ____ ...”

NO, that is the occasion, NOT THE CAUSE.

From James we learn that

The Nature of Conflict is normally WORSE THAN WE THINK

We tend to minimize it and our role in it – “we just don’t get along; personality issues, wired differently.”

James insists in a closer and deeper look. He uses the language of “war and murder”. That is SERIOUS.

A quarrel begins as a fight and ends as a war and murder (no body bags, but ‘murder’ as Jesus described it.). **1 Jn 3:15 Everyone who hates his brother is a murderer; and you know that no murderer has eternal life abiding in him.**

Quarrels reveal the presence of underlying sin, typically in the areas of pride and unbelief.

EX: 1976 Beach Project – If conflict breaks out, it is because one or both are out of step with Christ. The Holy Spirit doesn’t argue with Himself. THAT GOT MY ATTENTION as a young believer

Fights reveal sin, not just against each other, but it points to sin against God – coveting is a God directed sin, even if we don’t realize it.

As we see the depth of fights, we see our need for grace.

DISCERNING THE CAUSE IS SIMPLER THAN WE THINK

Conflicts can seem so confusing and complex. James shows us there is no mystery in the cause. We don’t need therapist or divine intervention to know the cause.

The cause is simple – it is within YOU. Not outside of you.

Your pleasures are at war.

You desire and can’t have so you murder.

You covet and cannot attain, so you fight.

George McDonald

For the one principle of Hell is “I am my own. I am my own king and my own subject. I am the center from which go out my thoughts; My own glory is, and ought to be, my chief care; my ambition, to gather regards of men to the one center, myself. My pleasure is my pleasure. ... My right is — what I desire. The more I am all in all to myself, the greater I am.” ...

David P. ...

“People usually don’t see their desires and lusts.... I have yet to meet a couple locked in hostility (and the accompanying fear, self-pity, hurt, self-righteousness) who really understood and reckoned with their motives.” David Powlison

Unmet cravings undergird conflict. Those could also be seen as idols.

Cravings for all sorts of things i.e. approval, comfort, respect, a certain lifestyle, control, achievement, etc. We fight because we DON’T GET WHAT WE WANT, so we go to war; we fight; we murder.

THE WHY – there is a deeper under the surface issue – the Root

Martin Luther - "Under every behavioral sin is the sin of idolatry and under every idol is the sin of disbelief in the gospel" –

Unbelief means that at that moment we stop believing that Jesus has secured for us everything that we truly need for security, significance, and ultimate glory

Francis Schaeffer on the 10th Commandment – Thou shalt not covet (evidence of Unbelief)

I am to love God enough to be content

I am to love my neighbor enough not to envy.

EASY APPLICATION: This is free for believer and not yet believer.

Sometimes the cravings are connected to unmet expectations and they are unmet because they are never expressed.

– SPEAK THEM. No one in your family or workplace is a mind reader.

Evaluate if they are realistic before you speak them.

Ask God for eyes to see the craving under the conflict, before it escalates – TIME OUT AND do a craving check/ idol check.

EX: CHECK ENGINE light – The problem usually isn't in the dashboard, but in the engine i.e. our HEART.

v. 2-3 The SOLUTION IS EASIER THAN WE THINK

You do not have because you do not ask. 3 You ask and do not receive, because you ask with wrong motives, so that you may spend *it* on your pleasures.

Pray – James speaks to Christians who have failed to do the obvious – PRAY

Peculiar People –sketch “I think we should pray” “Is it as bad as that?” “Has it come to that?”

They are demanding from others what only God can provide. They've drifted from God and forgotten that God is the source of every good gift.

Unresolved conflict shows that we've lost sight of the goodness and grace of God, so we expect the wrong things from others.

Those who DID PRAY did so with wrong motives- trying to manipulate God

God is good and generous and He is the giver of every good gift that we need.

¹⁷ Every good thing given and every perfect gift is from above, coming down from the Father of lights, with whom there is no variation or ¹⁸shifting shadow. James 1:17

Why not ask God FIRST instead of demanding from someone else what only God can give? He delights in blessing his people with all that we need.

ACTION STEP: Learn to view the other person from God's perspective.

How does your heavenly Father and his / her heavenly Father feel about him/her right now?

“Gentle and Lowly” – Dane Ortland re: Thomas Godwin

“The sins of those who belong to God open the floodgates of his heart of compassion for us. The dam breaks. It is not our loveliness that wins his love. It is our unloveliness. We so easily live with a diminished view of the compassionate heart of God for those who are in Christ. When we sin, the very heart of Christ is drawn out to us.”

A QUESTION WE LEARNED in our mid-parenting years and tried to incorporate in conflicts is:

“Where is the gospel in this?”

That question makes us stop and remember that we are bigger sinners than we dare admit and more loved than we dare imagine in Christ. SO IS THE believer with whom you are in conflict.

Edwards #8

8. Resolved, to act, in all respects, both speaking and doing, as if nobody had been so vile as I, and as if I had committed the same sins, or had the same weaknesses or failings as others; and that I will let the knowledge of their failings promote nothing but shame in me, and prove only an occasion of my confessing my own sins and misery to God.

(Col 3:12-13)

¹² So, as those who have been chosen of God, holy and beloved, put on a heart of compassion, kindness, humility, gentleness and ¹³patience; ¹³ bearing with one another, and forgiving each other, whoever has a complaint against anyone; just as the Lord forgave you, so also should you.

*How would your marriage, your family, your work life and church life be different if you really lived out this verse?

<<Wait, I'm supposed to think like that in the midst of a conflict? That's just not me. Ain't gonna happen. You're expecting too much.>>

NO, I'm only expecting that if we claim the name of Christ, then we'll walk in the power of Christ. The Christian life is not natural. It is supernatural.

All we need to do is to humbly ask.
By God's grace, resolving conflict is simpler than we think.

Behind the invitation to ask God first, is the reality that our most serious conflict is already solved.

The hostility between a holy God and sinful man has been resolved by God sending His Son to die in our place.

There is hope for us because Christ dealt with our deepest conflict on the cross.

Conflict Resolution is SOMEONE WE MEET before it is something we practice.

That is what this table represents.
If you say you believe that, but are holding on to conflict or are nursing a grudge, then don't partake, lest you eat and drink judgement to yourself.

COME TO THE TABLE

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