

Wednesday Night BIBLE STUDY

Wednesday, August 31, 2016 – First Baptist Church Buda
Midweek Prayer Meeting & Bible Study

GETTING PRACTICAL WITH YOUR FAITH A STUDY OF THE BOOK OF JAMES “How Fights Are Started and Stopped” *James 4:1-12, Various*

“The way to resolve conflict with others is not to win the war with others. Rather, it is to wage war against those powerful forces that are waging war in your soul! Judge your selfish motives, daily put self on the cross, and you will move in the direction of peace in your relationships.”
– Stephen J. Cole

A recent issue of NATIONAL GEOGRAPHIC included a photograph of the fossil remains of two saber-tooth cats locked in combat. To quote the article: “One had bitten deep into the leg bone of the other, a thrust that trapped both in a common fate. The cause of the death of the two cats is as clear as the causes of the extinction of their species are obvious.

When Christians fight each other, everybody loses. As Paul put it in Galatians 5:15, *“¹⁵ But if you bite and devour one another, beware lest you be consumed by one another!”*

This inquiry, in James 4:1-10, is dedicated to those who would rather fight than surrender; those who find it difficult to say, “Lord, I really surrender to You.” By nature, man is a fighter. We prefer to battle rather than give in. This is not to say there aren’t things worth fighting for, or situations in which fighting is not the appropriate course to take.

The chapter break between James 3:18 and James 4:1 is an unfortunate one, since James neither changes the subject nor shifts his emphasis. In fact, his comments regarding the destructive nature of the tongue build to a great crescendo in the beginning of the fourth chapter as he deals with open conflicts among Christians. James sets forth in this text the reasons why believers fight among themselves, as well as the damaging results of those skirmishes. But James also leaves us with answers as to how to stop these conflicts that have taken their toll within the rank of the Christian faith.

A Canadian pastor told a true story of how a new denomination got started in that country. It all started the night that a Mr. Horner was enthusiastically preaching when his tie became wrapped around his hand. He concluded that the devil was trying to bind him in his preaching. So he tore off his tie, threw it on the ground, stomped on it, and said that ties were from the devil.

From then on he taught that Christians ought never to wear ties, because they bound them in their Christian lives. Others disagreed, which led to quarrels, which led to division. Today in Canada, there is a tie-less group called the “Hornerites.” While I would sign a petition to ban neckties... I call them “strangulation devices”... I find it tragic that Christians would quarrel over such a trivial matter. Sometimes, when serious doctrinal issues are at stake, division among professing Christians is demanded. If we compromise the gospel, we are no longer Christian in any meaningful sense of the word. But, sadly, all too often our divisions and quarrels are over petty matters, not essentials

Sometimes we idealize the early church. We think, “It must have been great to be a part of the first century church! It was so dynamic and powerful. They had such sweet fellowship!” But the reality is, the early church was made up of people, and people haven’t changed over the centuries! Many (if not all!) first century churches wrestled with conflicts between the members. The Corinthian church had divided into factions. The Philippian church had two women who couldn’t get along, and the conflict was severe enough that Paul singled them out by name in his letter. The Galatian believers were biting and devouring one another (Gal. 5:15). Paul began the practical section of Ephesians with an appeal to unity, tolerance, and love between the members (Eph. 4:1-16). On a personal level, even Paul and Barnabas had a serious disagreement that led to a parting of ways (Acts 15:36-40).

So it was not a unique situation when James addressed the problem of quarrels and conflicts among the believers to whom he wrote. The section here runs through 4:12, and it applies to all of our relational conflicts, whether in the church or at home. Here is the flow of the entire section.

The overall idea of James 4:1-12 may be summed up: To resolve conflicts, confess and repent of sinful selfishness and humble yourself before God.

There are four sections:

1. To resolve conflicts, judge your selfish motives (4:1-3).
2. To resolve conflicts, turn away from the world, give total allegiance to God, and humbly seek His grace (4:4-6).
3. To resolve conflicts, submit to God, resist the devil, and in God’s presence repent of all your sins (4:7-10).
4. To resolve conflicts, stop judging others and submit to God’s Word (4:11-12).

INITIAL FACTS (James 4:1)

James calls attention to the heart of the problem in James 4:1 when He says, “Where do wars and fights come from among you? Do they not come from your desires for pleasure that war in your members?” Notice that James asks a couple of probing questions, but he also provide some answers to these questions.

2 Fight Proposed Questions from James:

1. **Who is fighting?** - The words “among you” refers to the believers living in James’ day. So these fights or battles are between people in the church, not internal conflict in individuals.

2. **What are the battles?** – He named two kinds of fights or battles in verse 1: (1) **“wars”** (NIV, fights, NASB, quarrels; NLT, quarrels) and (2) **“fights”** (NIV, quarrels; NASB, conflicts; NLT, fights). The word translated there as “war” speaks of conflicts in general, while the word translated as “fights” speak of specific manifestation of the war.

Dr. John McArthur says, “Discord (conflict and fights) in the church is not by God’s design, but the results from the mix of tares (false believers) and wheat (the truly redeemed, saved Christians) that make up the church.”

8 Strong Biblical Admonitions to Believers Concerning Divisiveness:

1. **That we demonstrate our devotion to Him by how we treat one another** - John 13:34-35, *“³⁴ A new commandment I give to you, that you love one another; as I have loved you, that you also love one another. ³⁵ By this all will know that you are My disciples, if you have love for one another.”*
2. **That that may be a unity and oneness of believer and never division** - John 17:20- 21, *“²⁰ I do not pray for these alone, but also for those who will believe in Me through their word; ²¹ that they all may be one, as You, Father, are in Me, and I in You; that they also may be one in Us, that the world may believe that You sent Me.”*
3. **That there be no divisions among believers but that we be perfectly joined** - 1 Corinthians 1:10-11, *“¹⁰ Now I plead with you, brethren, by the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, that you all speak the same thing, and that there be no divisions among you, but that you be perfectly joined together in the same mind and in the same judgment. ¹¹ For it has been declared to me concerning you, my brethren, by those of Chloe’s household, that there are contentions among you.”*
4. **That everything we do is for building up and not tearing down** - 2 Corinthians 12:19-20, *“¹⁹ Again, do you think that we excuse ourselves to you? We speak before God in Christ. But we do all things, beloved, for your edification. ²⁰ For I fear lest, when I come, I shall not find you such as I wish, and that I shall be found by you such as you do not wish; lest there be contentions, jealousies, outbursts of wrath, selfish ambitions, backbitings, whisperings, conceits, tumults;”*
5. **That as believers we have fruit of the Spirit that builds and edifies the body of Christ and not fruit of the flesh that divides** - Galatians 5:16-26, *“¹⁶ I say then: Walk in the Spirit, and you shall not fulfill the lust of the flesh. ¹⁷ For the flesh lusts against the Spirit, and the Spirit against the flesh; and these are contrary to one another, so that you do not do the things that you wish. ¹⁸ But if you are led by the Spirit, you are not under the law. ¹⁹ Now the works of the flesh are evident, which are: adultery, fornication, uncleanness, lewdness, ²⁰ idolatry, sorcery, hatred, contentions, jealousies, outbursts of wrath, selfish ambitions, dissensions, heresies, ²¹ envy, murders, drunkenness, revelries, and the like; of which I tell you beforehand, just as I also told you in time past, that those who practice such things will not inherit the kingdom of God. ²² But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, longsuffering, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, ²³ gentleness, self-control. Against such there is no law. ²⁴ And those who are Christ’s have crucified the flesh with its passions and desires. ²⁵ If we live in the Spirit, let us also walk in the Spirit. ²⁶ Let us not become conceited, provoking one another, envying one another.”*
6. **That as believers we are striving together and not striving against each other** - Philippians 1:27, *“²⁷ Only let your conduct be worthy of the gospel of Christ, so that whether I*

come and see you or am absent, I may hear of your affairs, that you stand fast in one spirit, with one mind striving together for the faith of the gospel.”

7. **That as believers we “avoid” foolish and ignorant disputes, and quarrels and are gentle with others** - 2 Timothy 2:23-26, *“²³ But avoid foolish and ignorant disputes, knowing that they generate strife. ²⁴ And a servant of the Lord must not quarrel but be gentle to all, able to teach, patient, ²⁵ in humility correcting those who are in opposition, if God perhaps will grant them repentance, so that they may know the truth, ²⁶ and that they may come to their senses and escape the snare of the devil, having been taken captive by him to do his will.”*
8. **That as believers we refuse to be divisive ourselves and reject those who are** - Titus 3:9-11, *“⁹ But avoid foolish disputes, genealogies, contentions, and strivings about the law; for they are unprofitable and useless. ¹⁰ Reject a divisive man after the first and second admonition, ¹¹ knowing that such a person is warped and sinning, being self-condemned.”*

ANALYSIS OF THE PROBLEM (James 4:1-4)

James talks about the origin of these fights and skirmishes, presenting two causes and numerous effects.

“¹ Where do wars and fights come from among you? Do they not come from your desires for pleasure that war in your members? ² You lust and do not have. You murder and covet and cannot obtain. You fight and war. Yet you do not have because you do not ask. ³ You ask and do not receive, because you ask amiss, that you may spend it on your pleasures. ⁴ Adulterers and adulteresses! Do you not know that friendship with the world is enmity with God? Whoever therefore wants to be a friend of the world makes himself an enemy of God.” –James 4:1-4

2 Causes of the Fights and Quarrels Among Us:

1. **Inner Desires (vv.1-3)** – The Greek term “lust” refers to “desire” or “passion.” Though we tend to attach a negative connotation to it, this term is basically neutral.. it is always important to note the context in which it is used. The point is that our desires may be perfectly legitimate (i.e. health, friendship, family, job, home, education, freedom from oppressions), but the rub occurs when these desires become frustrated and cannot be readily expressed or realized. When God, someone, or something stop us en route to fulfillment, our nature is to fight until we get our way. The old carnal muscle inside us tightens and says, “Fight your way out! Don’t give in!”

4 Effects of Unchecked Desire:

- (1) **Murderous thoughts, words and actions (v.2)** – Verse 2 says, *“... you murder and covet and cannot obtain...”* James mentions the ultimate result of thwarted desire, *“murder.”* James had in mind actual murder, and the gamut of sins (hate, anger, bitterness) leading up to it. The picture is of unbelievers so driven by their uncontrollable desires that they will fight to the death to fulfill them, no matter who they destroy along the way or how many may be destroyed along the way.
- (2) **Arguments (v.2)** – Verse 2 says, *“... you fight and war...”*
- (3) **Failure to pray (v.2)** – Verse 2 says it like this, *“... you do not have because you do not ask.”* True joy, peace, happiness, meaning, hope are fulfillment in life come only from God. Unbelievers, however, are unwilling to ask for them on His terms... they refuse to submit to God or acknowledge their dependence on Him.

(4) **Prayer accompanied by wrong motives (v.3)** - Verse 3 says, “³ You ask and do not receive, because you ask *amiss*, that you may spend it on your pleasures.” The word “amiss” refers to asking in an evil manner, motivated by personal gratification and selfish desire. Unbelievers seek things for their own pleasure, not to honor and glorify God.

2. **“Cosmos” Motivation (v.4)** – James asked in verse 4, “⁴ Adulterers and adulteresses! Do you not know that friendship with the *world* is enmity with God? Whoever therefore wants to be a friend of the world makes himself an enemy of God.” The “world” (cosmos) system is built around man’s ability to help himself. Man bucks God when he can’t get his way and, in essence, tells God to step aside. If man can’t get God to cooperate with him, then he runs to the world for its help and support. That’s called being a “friend with the world,” and James that one “*makes himself an enemy of God*”... meaning not that God sees you as an enemy or counts you as one, but that you yourself have declared an alliance with what is contrary to God and thereby set yourself at odds and on the outs with God. By the way, that is a very dangerous place to be!

2 Effects of Uncontrolled “Cosmos” Motivation:

(1) **Anger toward God** –

(2) **Worldliness** - Basically, this is adopting the world’s philosophy and living by it. It’s our way of telling the Lord that He is inadequate and that we will work things out for ourselves.

SYNOPSIS OF THE SOLUTION (James 4:5-6)

In helping his readers come to terms with the problem James calls attention to the Christian’s source of power and to an indispensable principle.

“⁵ Or do you think that the Scripture says in vain, ‘The Spirit who dwells in us yearns jealously’? ⁶ But He gives more grace. Therefore He says: ‘God resists the proud, But gives grace to the humble.’” – James 4:5-6

The Power and Principle Solution:

1. **THE POWER: The Holy Spirit (v.5)** – James wrote, “⁵ Or do you think that the Scripture says in vain, ‘The Spirit who dwells in us yearns jealously’?” The first part of the solution is the power of the Holy Spirit. When the Christian divides his allegiance, he loses everything. Only when man switches from divided to single allegiance will God take control and the carnal nature relax. At this point the power of God’s Spirit is unhindered.
2. **THE PRINCIPLE: God give greater grace to the humble (v.6)** – Why “greater”? Because it takes a greater grace for man to be able to submit. Humility draws God to our side, where as pride makes Him our opponent... it causes us to set ourselves up against and over God.

PRACTICAL ADVICE (James 4:7-10)

James used the word “humble” to form brackets around these verses. At the end of verse 6, “...God resists the proud, but gives grace to the *humble*.” and verse 10, “*Humble yourselves in the sight of the Lord, and He will lift you up.*” The words thus enclosed talk about what it means to be truly humbled and submitted to God so that “... He will lift you up.” James’ counsel is as follows:

Practical Help from James on Getting Our Lives in the Place It Should Be to Deal with

1. **Submit to God** – We're to cease fighting and begin surrendering.
2. **Resist the devil** – We're to reject his plans, because they encourage our self-assertiveness.
3. **Draw near to God** – We're to stay close to Him and develop companionship with Him.
 1. **Cleanse hands and purify hearts** – We're to actively deal with anything in us that creates enmity with God.