

Conflict Inside Out

4 Causes Of Conflict James 4:1-5

Introduction: Isaiah 59:14-15; Jeremiah 7:28

1. Inner Warring Passions (1)

¹ What causes quarrels and what causes fights among you? Is it not this, that your passions are at war within you?

2. Covetous Discontent (2)

² You desire and do not have, so you murder. You covet and cannot obtain, so you fight and quarrel. You do not have, because you do not ask.

3. Misspent Prayers (3; cf. Psalm 66:18; Isaiah 59:2; John 16:23-24)

³ You ask and do not receive, because you ask wrongly, to spend it on your passions.

4. Hostile Idolatry (4-5; cf. 1 John 2:15)

⁴ You adulterous people! Do you not know that friendship with the world is enmity with God? Therefore whoever wishes to be a friend of the world makes himself an enemy of God. ⁵ Or do you suppose it is to no purpose that the Scripture says, "He yearns jealously over the spirit that he has made to dwell in us"?

Conclusion:

- Own your personal responsibility in a conflict. Admit your frustration. Confess your idol.
- Pray repentantly until we conform to God's will.
- Find contentment in God and our salvation in Christ.

Discussion:

- Which of these 4 causes of conflict your biggest struggle?
- What makes owning our responsibility so difficult when in a conflict with someone else? What do I have to change in myself to overcome society's injustice and prejudice?
- How does our discontent lead to frustration which boils into conflict? What is the best way to approach conflict in our relationships, church and nation?
- How is God's love and Christ's salvation the ultimate solution to our conflicts?

Conflict Inside Out

4 Causes Of Conflict

James 4:1-5

James 4:1-5 What causes quarrels and what causes fights among you? Is it not this, that your passions are at war within you? ²You desire and do not have, so you murder. You covet and cannot obtain, so you fight and quarrel. You do not have, because you do not ask. ³You ask and do not receive, because you ask wrongly, to spend it on your passions. ⁴You adulterous people! Do you not know that friendship with the world is enmity with God? Therefore whoever wishes to be a friend of the world makes himself an enemy of God. ⁵Or do you suppose it is to no purpose that the Scripture says, "He yearns jealously over the spirit that he has made to dwell in us"?

Introduction:

1. Ie/ A boy asked his father how wars are started. His father replies that in World War I the Germans invaded Belgium. Mom, who was listening while washing the dishes, interrupted and said, "Why don't you tell him the truth, the war started because somebody got murdered." The father reacted to the mother's interruption and said "Who's answering the question, you or me?" The mother reacted angrily, slamming the dishes into the sink, slamming the kitchen door behind her. There was an awkward silence between the father and son. The son then said "Never mind dad, I think I know how war is started."
2. We are a country divided. We want justice without knowing what is truly just. We want civility without grace. We want to blame others instead of taking personal responsibility. We want our politicians to fix only what we can fix by submitting ourselves to God!

Isaiah 59:14-15 ¹⁴ **Justice** is turned back, and **righteousness** stands far away; for truth has stumbled in the public squares, and **uprightness** cannot enter. ¹⁵ **Truth** is lacking, and he who departs from evil makes himself a prey. The Lord saw it, and it displeased him that there was no justice.

- Sin repeals justice, reverses righteousness, abandons truth and denies equity with self.
- The postmodern movement of making truth relative means that man can determine their own standard of justice, righteousness and truth.

Jeremiah 7:28 And you shall say to them, 'This is the nation that did not obey the voice of the Lord their God, and did not accept discipline; **truth has perished**; it is cut off from their lips.

- Our country has abandoned God – we've abandoned His truth.
- Historically, the church has also failed. Racism and slavery was big in the South and the **Southern Baptist Church** denomination – the largest in the U.S. barely blinked an eye. In 1995, they made a formal resolution to repudiate and ask forgiveness from the African-American community.
<http://www.sbc.net/resolutions/amResolution.asp?ID=899>
- Southern Seminary (Southern Baptist) reports on their history of their faculty in the 1800's having been slave holders and sadly give their arguments justifying slavery.

- **Tony Evans: "We can't fix the White House unless we fix the Church House."**
<https://video.foxnews.com/v/6162397644001>

James identifies 4 causes of conflict that have destroyed marriages, churches and countries.

4 Causes Of Conflict

1. Inner Warring Passions (1)

¹What causes quarrels and what causes fights among you? Is it not this, that your passions are at war within you?

- The battles externally are caused by the battles internally
- A marital fight begins with a struggle from the struggle of one's heart
- "**quarrels**" = *polemoi* = state of hostility
 - Used of an armed conflict, warring between two powers
 - The church is in a state of hostility
- "**fights**" = *machai* = the physical manifestation of the inner hostility
 - Unarmed conflict
- "**among you**" – James was referring to quarrels within the church, not international wars
- Resolving conflict can be a means from division or a means for growth
- Most of what we do at church is confronting problems – it's all a battle

Think of what a Church does

Spiritual Battles Are Inner Conflicts

- Conquering sin
 - Forsaking idols
 - Countering false teaching
 - Counseling emotional struggles
 - Resolving interpersonal conflicts
 - Healing personal wounds
 - Restoring wayward souls
 - Evangelizing lost sinners
 - Reshaping bad habits
 - Confronting societal ills
- We struggle with these issues on the inside, we may not submit to the Lord
 - What struggle goes on in the heart of a **police** officer who ignores cries of a dying man? It's not all police officers, it's the ones who struggle inwardly.

- What struggle goes on in the heart of a **looter** who takes advantage of a peaceful protest who hurt and steal from small business owners? It's not all protestors, it's the ones who struggle inwardly.
 - Who rips apart a **marriage**? One who selfishly wants something outside of God's gift of marriage.
 - Who rips apart a **church**? One who struggles spiritually on the inside and lashes out at other.
- When we don't like how the church is dealing with issues we're struggling with, we can strike out
 - If we don't submit to the Lord and His Word, it's easy to lash out against others
 - ***passions are at war within you***
 - "**passions**" = *hedone* – word for pleasure
 - "**war**" = *strateuomenon* – raging battle
 - A lot of times, those who fight in **church** are fighting in their homes because they're fighting in themselves
 - People who are battling sexual **purity** can find it easy to point out faults of others at church
 - When we have the perpetually **grumpy guy** at church, we also feel sorry for that person's family and know they are struggling internally too.
 - It's easy to blame shift our personal struggles on others – our family and church family.
 - When there is a conflict brewing, who is the first one examine? **Ourselves!!**
 - It's so easy to look at someone else as the problem.
 - **Pride looks for "Who's Right"**
 - **Reality looks at "What's Right"**
 - Prejudice is not a Republican or Democrat problem. It's not even the perspective of a white or black. It's what is right to God.
 - There will be no justice until we know what is just.
 - And our emotions and passions that are devoid of God's truth causes deeper divides.
 - Ie/ In **marriage**, if a husband wins an argument both spouses lose. The goal is not to defeat your wife or husband. We are **One Flesh**. To win is to both understand what is right. Not to gloat over who is right.
 - In a **church**, we must center on what is right.
 - Our hope for our **country** is to center on God's truth, humble ourselves to His Lordship and respect each other as created in the image of God.

Ie/ Peter Marshall, who once served as Chaplain of the U.S. Senate, once said: "We are too Christian to enjoy sinning, and too fond of sinning really to enjoy Christianity. Most of us know perfectly well what we ought to do; our trouble is that we do not want to do it."

2. Covetous Discontent (2)

² You desire and do not have, so you murder. You covet and cannot obtain, so you fight and quarrel. You do not have, because you do not ask.

- Unfulfilled desires leads to murder
- Covetous leads to quarrels
- Our taste is for the wisdom of the world, not the the wisdom of God.
- **Frustration** mounts like a pressure bomb.
- Frustration can explode and the collateral damage is our family or our church family.
- The attitude of: "If I can't get what I want, then no one else is going to get what they want either."
 - Ie/ When we see the "murder suicide" on the news, I always think why did the perpetrator have to take it out on others. But a frustrated person wants others to hurt like them.
 - Some looters will justify their actions because they aren't being heard. The frustration is reasonable, sin is not.
- "**murder**" – *phoneuete* – probably related to Jesus likening anger and hatred to murder in Mt 5:21-22

Matthew 5:21-22 ²¹ "You have heard that it was said to those of old, 'You shall not murder; and whoever murders will be liable to judgment.' ²² But I say to you that everyone who is angry with his brother will be liable to judgment; whoever insults his brother will be liable to the council; and whoever says, 'You fool!' will be liable to the hell of fire.

- **We emotionally kill others with our hate**

Church Wars: Weapons and strategies used in church fights and quarrels.

Missiles	Attacking church members from long range
Guerilla tactics	Ambushing the unsuspecting
Snipers	Well-aimed criticisms
Terrorism	No one is immune from being hurt
Mines	Ensuring that others will fail in their efforts to serve God
Espionage	Using friendships to get potentially damaging information about others
Propaganda	Using gossip to spread damaging information about others
Cold War	Freezing out an opponent by withdrawing or refusing to talk to him or her
Nuclear Attack	Being willing to sacrifice the church if the goals of my group are not met

James tells us the exact location of the manufacturing plants for all these weapons.

The trouble is in ourselves.

(Life Application Bible Commentary: James, p. 92)

- **Frustration** is a symptom of **Discontent**.
 - **Martin Luther's** frustration in trying to reach the Jewish people for Christ gave him an anger towards them that set a tone of Antisemitism in the Lutheran Church
 - Ie/ What caused the nation of **Germany** to rally behind the Nazi movement and Adolph Hitler – they were spiritually disillusioned after WWI (the church believed the

WWI cause and people stopped going to church when Germany lost), they were economically struggling and felt they needed to exalt their pride and their race to a place of superiority. A whole nation struggled because of a collective frustration that was selfishly.

- **Discontent = Not recognizing the goodness of God in your life leading to the belief that you lack something in life**
 - **Greed is behind slavery.** Working with integrity was not sufficient. Using and demeaning those created in the image of God was cast aside.
- Jerry Bridges makes us question how we handle circumstances beyond our ability to change:
 - An unfulfilling or low-paying job
 - Singleness well into midlife or beyond
 - Inability to bear children
 - An unhappy marriage
 - Physical disabilities
 - Continual poor health

1 Timothy 6:5-6 ⁵and constant friction between men of corrupt mind, who have been robbed of the truth and who think that godliness is a means to financial gain. ⁶But godliness with **contentment** is great gain.

- If we're **discontent in our marriage**, we will be frustrated with and hurtful to our spouse. If our contentment is in Christ and we bring that into our marriage, we are free to be a servant to our spouse. We have put the expectation of being defined by our marriage by being defined by Christ.
- We can be **frustrated at church** – church isn't fulfilling. It is not designed to be. Christ is the one who fulfills us. I have disappointed several individuals because I cannot be Christ to them. But the truth is we need God.
- We can be frustrated and angry at **systemic racism**.
- **Tony Evans: "Racism isn't a bad habit. It isn't a mistake. It is sin. The answer is not sociology, it's theology."** (Instagram, 6/8/20)
- Change can't be a **sociological band-aid**.
- We can't have justice if we don't agree on **what is just**.
- Only God is ultimately just so we must derive our justice from Him.



3. Misspent Prayers (3)

³*You ask and do not receive, because you ask wrongly, to spend it on your passions.*

- We ask for the wrong things and we get worked up because we're jealous
- Selfish praying

Psalms 66:18 If I had cherished iniquity in my heart, the Lord would not have listened.

- “regard” = *rasah*, approve, show respect
- God won’t listen to sinful prayer

Isaiah 59:2 but your iniquities have made a separation between you and your God, and your sins have hidden his face from you so that he does not hear.

- God wants to answer our prayers, but it must be in subjection to God’s will, not our selfish will

John 16:23-24 “And in that day you will ask Me nothing. Most assuredly, I say to you, whatever you ask the Father in My name He will give you. Until now you have asked nothing in My name. Ask, and you will receive, that your joy may be full.”

- Our prayer is not about how we can change God to get what we want, but how we change ourselves.

Mark 14:33-40 - Jesus knew the answer is “NO” that there would be an alternative to the cross

- who wants to suffer
- nevertheless, “not My will but Thine”

ie/ Thomas Aquinas (13th century theologian) said “Our prayer is not designed to change God’s plan; the purpose of prayer is to obtain what God has already planned.”

ie/ A.W. Tozer “It is only when we introduce our own will into our relation to God that we get into trouble. When we weave into the pattern of our lives threads of our own selfish desires we instantly become subject to hindrances from the outside. If I mingle some pet religious enterprise of mine with the will of God and come to think of them as one, I can be hindered in my religious life.”

- **Pray repentantly until we submit to God’s will.**

4. Hostile Idolatry (4-5)

4 You adulterous people! Do you not know that friendship with the world is enmity with God? Therefore whoever wishes to be a friend of the world makes himself an enemy of God. 5 Or do you suppose it is to no purpose that the Scripture says, “He yearns jealously over the spirit that he has made to dwell in us”?

- “adulterous people” – spiritually adultery to God, the bride of Christ loved other idols
- “friendship with the world”
 - *Cosmos* – 86x in John, 27x in John’s other writings, 15x in Synoptic Gospels
 - W. E. Vine describes *cosmos* as “order, arrangement, ornament, adornment”
 - The opposite of *cosmos* is *kaos* (chaos)
 - Frequent synonyms are *aion* (“age”) and *oikoumene* (“inhabited earth”)

- The word *kosmos* (κοσμος) is used to refer to the **world system, wicked and alienated from God yet cultured, educated, powerful, outwardly moral at times**, the system of which Satan is the head, the fallen angels and the demons are his servants, and all mankind other than the saved, are his subjects. This includes those people, pursuits, pleasures, purposes, and places where God is not wanted (Mt. 4:8; John 12:31; I John 2:15, 16, being examples). It refers also to the human race, fallen, totally depraved (John 3:16).” (Kenneth Wuest, *Wuest's Word Studies from the Greek New Testament*)

1 John 2:15 Do not love the world or the things in the world. If anyone loves the world, the love of the Father is not in him

- “The world spirit, the value systems of a fallen creation, may be distinguished from the flesh and the Devil but not separated from them. The flesh is part of the fallen world and the Devil is the prince of this world...**Wherever we live and move in this world, we are still engaged in combat. There is no demilitarized zone. The whole planet is fallen. The whole creation groans in travail waiting for redemption.**” (R.C. Sproul, *Pleasing God*, p. 57)
- **Forsake Idols!!** Success, Power, Pride, Convenience, Comfort. Even Peace and Human Rights can become idols if they are placed ahead of God.
- **Stop Loving The World!**
- **God is the only One who loves you perfectly – why are going elsewhere?**
- **V. 5** – “Scripture says”
 - There is no O.T. passage that matches this quote verbatim, but the phrase “Scripture says” summarizes the O.T. teaching.
- **“He yearns jealously over the spirit that he has made to dwell in us”?**
 - God is jealous
 - Possibilities:
 - God is jealous over the human spirit
 - God is jealous over the Holy Spirit
 - Most likely: God is jealous through the Holy Spirit
 - The Holy Spirit grieves (Eph 4:30)

Nahum 1:2a ^{2a} God is jealous, and the Lord avenges;

- John M. Frame: “Wrath differs from jealousy and hatred, in that jealousy is more focused on the specific sin of idolatry; while wrath opposes our sin in general. Also, jealousy and hatred are motives for wrath, while wrath actually executes punishments.” (*The Doctrine Of God*, p. 464)
- Some people think that jealousy is always sinful, but it is not.
 - A spouse should be jealous of the other spouse’s infidelity because jealousy is a natural emotion that wants to protect what is right

- A parent should be jealous for the safety and protection of their child's welfare
 - God is jealous for the people that He loves – that they would keep His standard and experience their Creator
- **God's jealousy displays how much He loves us and yearns for us to be right.**

Conclusion:

- **Own your personal responsibility in a conflict. Admit your frustration. Confess your idol.**
 - Out of control passions
 - Misappropriated prayers
 - Covetous heart
 - Idolatrous devotions
 - Divisive hearts
- **Pray repentantly until we conform to God's will.**
- **Find contentment in God and our salvation in Christ.**

Discussion:

- Which of these 4 causes of conflict your biggest struggle?
- What makes owning our responsibility so difficult when in a conflict with someone else? What do I have to change in myself to overcome society's injustice and prejudice?
- How does our discontent lead to frustration which boils into conflict? What is the best way to approach conflict in our relationships, church and nation?
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