

Women's Bible Study

Submit Yourselves to God

April 17, 2019

James 4:1-5

Last month we studied James 3: 15-18 and compared earthly wisdom (full of envy, selfish ambition and disorder) to heavenly wisdom (pure, peace-loving and full of mercy and good fruit). Today we will begin the study in James 4 which takes a look at conflict with self.

James 4:1 What causes fights and quarrels among you? Don't they come from your desires that battle within you?

The Greek dictionary from Strong's Concordance defines desire (hedone) as sinful pleasures. The word hedonism comes from the Greek word hedone. Merriam-Webster defines hedonism as the doctrine that pleasure or happiness is the sole or chief good in life.

"James points out three things that cause conflict internally in people; uncontrolled desire, unfulfilled desire and selfish desire. What he is saying here is the wars and fighting, the external conflict, is rising out of an internal conflict. All external conflict in the world rises out of people's tremendous uncontrollable desire. We see it all around us on a daily basis: suicide, drunkenness and drugs, all try to alleviate tremendous internal conflict, so that you have conflict on the outside only as a manifestation of the tremendous war going on in the inside. What's that war? People battling to fulfill their desires and lusts and ambitions and being thwarted in the process are frustrated internally. That ultimately translates itself into external hostility against people who stand in their way or even against themselves in their own inability to bring to pass the things they want." *John MacArthur*

[Ephesians 2:3](#) All of us also lived among them at one time, gratifying the cravings of our flesh and following its desires and thoughts.

[Titus 3: 9](#) But avoid foolish controversies, genealogies, dissensions, and quarrels about the law, for they are unprofitable and worthless.

[Romans 7: 23](#) but I see another law at work in me, waging war against the law of my mind and making me a prisoner of the law of sin at work within me.

[2 Timothy 2:23](#) But reject foolish and ignorant speculation, for you know that it breeds quarreling.

[1 Peter 2: 11](#) Beloved, I urge you as foreigners and exiles, to abstain from the desires of the flesh, which war against our soul.

[2 Timothy 3: 4-5](#) treacherous, reckless, swollen with conceit, lovers of pleasure rather than lovers of God, having the appearance of godliness, but denying its power. Avoid such people.

Q-Earthly wisdom causes disorder, but heavenly wisdom leads to peace. So why don't we have peace in our homes, jobs, and churches? What causes us to fight and quarrel?

“Marital conflict, family conflict, job conflict, associational conflict, national conflict, it all comes out of friendship with the world, and friendship with the world creates conflict with others, conflict with self, because it is constantly generating uncontrolled desire or passion. *John MacArthur*

“Man is a creature abounding in wants, and ever restless and hence his heart is full of desires. Man is comparable to the sea anemone, with its multitude of tentacles which are always hunting in the water for food; or like certain plants which send out tendrils, seeking after the means of climbing. This fact applies both to the worst and the best of men. In bad men desires corrupt into lusts; they long after that which is selfish, sensual, and consequently evil. In gracious men there are desires also. Their desires are after the best things- things pure and peaceable, praiseworthy and elevating. They desire God's glory, and hence their desires spring from higher motives than those which inflame the unrenewed mind.” *C.H. Spurgeon*

Question – What are some helpful ways to examine our own hearts when a conflict arises?

Ask God to show you yourself as you really are.

James 4:2 You desire but do not have, so you kill. You covet but you cannot get what you want, so you quarrel and fight. You do not have because you do not ask God.

Strong's Concordance Greek Dictionary defines covet (Epithumeo) as to desire earnestly- stresses the inward impulse rather than the object desired.

According to the accounts given by Josephus, the Jews, under pretense of defending their religion, and procuring that liberty to which they believed themselves entitled, caused rebellion in Judea against the Romans, which caused much bloodshed and misery to their nation. They were led to these outrages by the opinion that they were bound by their law to eradicate idolatry, and to kill all those who would not convert to Judaism. The factions also, into which the Jews were split, had violent contentions among themselves, in which they massacred and plundered each other. The Jews made war against the heathens in Alexandria and other parts of Egypt and Syria where they killed many, and were massacred in return. These are probably the wars and fighting to which James alludes and which they undertook rather from a principle of covetousness than from any sincere desire to convert the heathen. *Clarke's Commentary*

[1John 2:15,16](#) Do not love the world or anything in the world. If anyone loves the world, love for the Father is not in them. For everything in the world—the lust of the flesh, the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life—comes not from the Father but from the world.

[1John 3:15](#) Anyone who hates a brother or sister is a murderer, and you know that no murderer has eternal life residing in him.

The “you kill” could refer to a killing hate, thoughts of murder or destructive behavior. You are so driven by an uncontrolled passion that if need be, you kill, if you’re thwarted. *John MacArthur*

“All quarrels and fighting come from the corruptions of our own hearts. Sinful desires and affections stop prayer and the working of our desires toward God. If we seek the things of this world, it is just in God to deny them.” *Matthew Henry’s Commentary*

James 4: 3 When you ask, you do not receive, because you ask with wrong motives, that you may spend what you get on your pleasures.

“James is not saying that the pleasures of this life war against each other as though man’s main problem consisted in making a choice between higher and lower kinds of pleasure, but rather they battle within us, against our will to put aside selfishness and serve others.” *Life Changes Series of James*

“Are you seeking great things for yourself? Not seeking to be a great one, but seeking great things from God for yourself. God wants you in a closer relationship to Himself than receiving His gifts, He wants you to get to know Him. A great thing is accidental, it comes and goes. God never gives you anything accidental. There is nothing easier than getting into a right relationship with God except when it is not God whom you want but only what He gives.” *Oswald Chambers/My Upmost For His Highest*

Q- When we ask God for things, why do we often not get what we want?

[Psalm 34:15](#) The eyes of the Lord are on the righteous, and his ears are attentive to their cry;

[Psalm 145](#): The Lord is near to all who call on him, to all who call on him in truth.

[John 15:7](#) If you remain in me and my words remain in you, ask whatever you wish, and it will be done for you.

[Matthew 7:7](#) Ask and it will be given to you; seek and you will find; knock and the door will be opened to you.

[Psalm 66:18](#) If I had cherished sin in my heart, the Lord would not have listened;

[1John 3:22](#) and receive from him anything we ask, because we keep his commands and do what pleases him.

[1John 5:14](#) This is the confidence we have in approaching God: that is we ask anything according to his will, he hears us.

James 4:4 You adulterous people, don't you know that friendship with the world means enmity against God? Therefore anyone who chooses to be a friend of the world becomes an enemy of God.

When James speaks about **adulterous people** he is talking about spiritual infidelity. *NIV notes*

Merriam-Webster defines **enmity** as animosity, bitterness, hostility.

[Isaiah 54:5](#) For your Maker is your husband-the Lord Almighty is his name-the Holy One of Israel is your Redeemer; He is called the God of all the earth.

In the Old Testament God often describes Himself as the Husband of His people. The New Testament calls the church the Bride of Christ. Thus, to pursue the world's pleasures is to commit adultery against our Husband. *Life Change Series for James*

[Jeremiah 31:32](#) It will not be like the covenant I made with their ancestors when I took them by the hand to lead them out of Egypt, because they broke my covenant, though I was a husband to them, declares the Lord.

[Revelation 19:7](#) Let us rejoice and be glad and give him glory! For the wedding of the Lamb has come, and his bride has made herself ready. (The imagery of a wedding to express the intimate relationship between God and his people- *NIV notes*)

[Revelation 21:2](#) I saw the Holy City, the new Jerusalem, coming down out of heaven from God, prepared as bride beautifully dressed for her husband.

[Luke 16:13](#) No man can serve two masters. Either you will hate the one and love the other, or you will be devoted to the one and despise the other. You cannot serve both God and money.

[Ephesians 5:25-32](#) Husbands, love your wives, just as Christ loved the church and gave himself up for her to make her holy, cleansing her by the washing with water through the word, and to present her to himself as a radiant church, without stain or wrinkle or any other blemish, but holy and blameless. In this same way, husbands ought to love their wives as their own bodies. He who loves his wife loves himself. After all, no one ever hated their own body, but they feed and care for their body, just as Christ does the church-for we are member of his body. For this reason a man will leave his father and mother and be united to his wife, and the two will become one flesh. This is a profound mystery-but I am talking about Christ and the church. (The Lord Jesus died not only to bring forgiveness, but also to effect a new life of holiness in the church, which is his bride. The profound truth of the union of Christ and His "bride," the church, is beyond unaided human understanding. It is not that the relationship of husband and wife provides an illustration of the union of Christ and the church, but that the basic reality is the latter, with marriage a human echo of the relationship. *NIV notes*)

[Romans 8:5-8](#) Those who live according to the flesh have their minds set on what the flesh desires; but those who live in accordance with the Spirit have their minds set on what the Spirit desires. The mind governed by the flesh is death, but the mind governed by the Spirit is life and

peace. The mind governed by the flesh is hostile to God; it does not submit to God's law, nor can it do so. Those who are in the realm of the flesh cannot please God.

[1John 2:15-17](#) Do not love the world or anything in the world. If anyone loves the world, love for the Father is not in them. For everything in the world—the lust of the flesh, the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life—comes not from the Father but from the world. The world and its desires pass away, but whoever does the will of God lives forever.

Q- How does it affect you to know that God considers your pursuit of selfish goals to be adultery?

James 4:5 Or do you think Scripture says without reason that the spirit he caused to live in us envies intensely?

The Greek Dictionary in Strong's Concordance defines **envy** (zelos) as the feeling of displeasure produced by witnessing or hearing of the advantage or prosperity of others; unfavorable sense.

The passage James had in mind is not known. The words "the spirit he has caused to live in us," refer to God's creation of man. (Gen 2:7) Because of the fall, man's spirit "envies intensely," but God's grace (v.6) is able to overcome man's envy. Regarding the two alternative translations, the meaning of the first is that God jealously longs for our faithfulness and our love. In this case the Scripture referred to may be Ex 20:5 "You shall not bow down to them or worship them; for I, the Lord your God, am a jealous God," The second capitalizes "Spirit." It is the Holy Spirit who longs jealously for our full devotion. If this is the correct translation, it is the only clear reference to the Holy Spirit in James' letter. *NIV Notes*

[1Corinthians 6:19](#) Do you not know that your body is a temple of the Holy Spirit, who is in you, whom you have received from God? You are not your own;

What does "you are not your own" mean? 1 Corinthians 6:20 "you were bought for a price." The Christian should value his body as a sacred place where God dwells and should realize that by the Spirit's presence and power he can be helped against such sins as sexual immorality (Romans 8:9 says You, however, are not in the realm of the flesh but are in the realm of the Spirit, if indeed the Spirit of God lives in You. And if anyone does not have the Spirit of Christ, they do not belong to Christ. *NIV Notes*