

**Conflict: Who's on the Throne? (James 4:1-10)**

Summit Church

Pastor Chris Green

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Please turn to James 4 in your bibles.

Just consider this a hidden bonus track in our *From the Beginning Series*, (which will return next week). James always intrigues me because he was Jesus' little brother!

I'm sure James & his siblings **struggled** with the fact their big brother was God. They probably **wrestled** with this more than anyone else BECAUSE of their close proximity to Jesus. NEVERTHELESS, they had to come to KNOW HIM as Savior & worship him as Lord just like many of us.

*\*quick caveat: I give you a warning – Some of us, just like James & his siblings, might have grown up with Godly parents, experienced God's grace, attended the church events, sang the songs, and prayed over our meals – but it's my prayer that you walk away worshipping Jesus as Lord, and not assuming you KNOW him, because you were merely AROUND him. Even if you study the Word of God, it's my*

*prayer that you know the God of the Word.*

But, what would it take to convince you that your sibling was God? Some of yall are like, Pastor Chris - what would it take to convince YOU that my sibling is NOT the Devil?

My big brother did some crazy stuff yall! If you are the older sibling, you know. (ex. Story of Koolaid, booger)

For the most part, my brother & I got along, but I have NEVER seen a family that was absent of conflict. Because we live in a fallen world, conflict is unavoidable – so how are we to deal with it? But before we deal with any conflict, it's always helpful to know what is the **root** of the conflict – right?

I got some good news and some bad news today!

**Bad news** = Conflict arises when the wrong person is on the throne. (*the throne represents what rules your life or who is at the center.*)

**Good news:** The Right Person on the throne - cures our conflicts.

So let's jump in on James 4 and let's observe how James addresses the Problem of Conflicts and later gives a solution – Here are **2 Questions from the text: What Causes Conflict in our Lives & How Should we Deal with Conflicts in our Lives?**

### 1. **What Causes Conflict in Our Lives?**

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

- Immediately, James answers our first question. **The fights among us are a result of what's in us.** The greek word for passions or desires is where we get the word *hedonism* - which is the philosophy that views our pleasures (or self-gratification) as the chief goal in life...the phrase *YOLO* (you only live once) is birthed from this type of thinking – I Live My Life to Please Myself.
- So James is saying - you fight because of your self-interests have become the number one priority.

YOU ARE INDEED THE WRONG PERSON ON THE THRONE. I AM THE WRONG DUDE TO BE HAVE ABSOLUTE RULE IN MY LIFE. That pretty much never works and if it does “work” – it’s never a harmonious situation. Think about it. What if you told your team: **“I will never put your needs before my own.”**- your spouse, your family, your co-workers, your roommates, classmates, and here - your church family... Some of us have never said that – but our lives preach it!

James continues to breakdown the sin behind our sin, let's keep reading!

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

In these 2 verses, NOTICE how our selfish priorities negatively impact 3 crucial areas in our Lives:

**Anger, Community, & Our Prayer Life**

- **Anger** = It's amazing how angry we become when we don't get our way. (*Some of yall are good Christians until you get on the highway. I'm still waiting for somebody to start a Highway and Biway ministry to help us with road rage.*)
- Now, anger is not the problem. Anger is a natural emotion that God allows, BUT it becomes an issue when it leads us to sin. (Eph. 4:26) While most of us haven't murdered anyone, we have surely murdered people with our lips and it further manifests in how we treat them. Point blank - **Selfish desires cause us to have murderous hearts.**<sup>iii\*</sup> (**Jesus – Matt. 5**)
- **Community** = When we covet/crave what others have, and we don't get it – our hearts are filled with jealousy, discontentment, & strife – Pride destroys your community – ME ISSUES ALWAYS BECOMES WE ISSUES. What's in you, will come out of you, and what comes out of you impacts those around you.
  - **Ex. Family Scenario** : There is 6 of us...the sun is blazing, so we have the AC on

blast, we are listening to some good music in the car - we are in route to our destination...I'm sipping on my lemonade, kids are eating ice cream- I look at my wife, she is looking at me - we wink- Life is good...then it happens. Yep, that smell - of old sour socks, bad milk, rotten eggs and it just grab your nostrils & everybody frantically roles their windows down ...and the next question that comes out of everybody's mouth is what? - Who farted? Isn't it amazing how farts destroy even the most harmonious settings... it is the cause of so much conflict and quarrels in my vehicles.

**See, what's in you, will come out of you, and what comes out of you impacts everyone around you.**

In the same manner - This is why we go deeper into the gospel - if the gospel goes in you, it must come out of you, and it should positively impact everyone around you. Amen.

**Prayer Life** = Our prayers are hindered because of our

selfish motivations. We have not, because we ask wrongly. The goal of prayer is not for our will to be done, but for God's will to be done. Here are a few measuring sticks for selfish prayer?

- If all your prayers were answered today – other than you, who would be impacted? Who would be saved?
- If you really forgave that person – let me hear you pray God's will over their life.
- Do you pray the scripture?

The goal of prayer is not for our will to be done, but that God's will is done....we are not trying to change his mind or persuade a reluctant God - we pray, but we don't receive because God is not answering prayers outside of his will...period.

Listen to how James explains the greater issue around our conflict.

[4] You adulterous people!<sup>iii</sup> 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<sup>iv</sup>

James goes for the shock factor here – He's compares his congregation to that of a cheating spouse - have you ever seen the show Cheaters? Maury Povich? Jerry Springer? The worst thing that could happen is for one of those representatives from any of those type of shows to SIMPLY call you – if they just Call you - that means - that its about to go down! – well Pastor James is on the line and he is calling us out!

Our greatest issue as adulterous people (cheaters) is NOT that we have conflict with others, that's a smokescreen – it's much bigger, much deeper – our conflict is with God.

Our temporary pleasures vs. his eternal promises.

Our immediate answer vs. his everlasting comfort.

Our finite minds vs. his infinite existence.

Our unforgiveness vs. his desire that no man should perish, but have everlasting life.

Our conditional contractual love vs. his unconditional covenantal love.

Our will vs. His will.

He makes it clear that our comraderie with the World, the system - **not the people**, but the system of evil controlled by satan - puts you in direct odds with our Creator.

I didn't believe that growing up - I didn't feel like I was God's enemy...that was a little too strong. Come on, I went church every week, I sang the songs...I behaved - BUT I didn't trust him with my ALL...God, do you really want my eyes?... Do I have to devote this portion of my day to you? Why do you want my money? Sharing my faith? That's for the gifted people, not me. Baptism?

**What parts of your life does God NOT have?**

Brothers, the throne of your eyes - does he have it? Sisters, is he the Lord of your Lips? Graduates, did your education put you on the throne or are you honoring him with your education? If you surrendered to the Savior, then let him rule as Lord in every area of your life.

Here's why - Look a verse 5.

[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"?

God has a jealous desire to protect us from destroying ourselves and those around us - this type of jealousy is healthy - I have 3 daughters and I'm jealous FOR them...not jealous OF them. My jealousy is to protect them from external and internal harm, but my limited ability and my love - pails in comparison to his love for us. <sup>v</sup>

**Parents** - we often spend more time trying to protect our kids from the harms of the outside world and forsake equipping them with the GOSPEL to protect themselves from their own hearts – their selfish desires and passions - their struggle to be on the THRONE.

In this fallen world, we make attempts to protect God's children from the "bad" outside influences– but only the gospel can protect them from something much worse - being an enemy of God.

That's why we see his jealousy in vs. 5.

God is jealous over the spirit he gave us and will not tolerate any competition for his affection. Why should he have to compete? Who compares, really? What greater love have we found? What other way is there to be reconciled to God? We cheat on a perfect mate with a worthless mistress – the world –because we don't realize that he has ALWAYS had our best interest in mind.

**Recap: So we have learned that our desire to be on the throne in our lives, causes Conflict and these selfish desires impact us personally, spiritually, & will always destroy our communities.**

In the second half of this passage, James answers our second question:

## 2. How Should we Deal with our Conflicts?

Let's read:

[6] But he gives more **grace**. Therefore it says, "God opposes the proud, but gives grace to the humble."

James points his readers back to the foundation of their faith! GRACE: (God's Riches at Christ's Expense)

Grace means - Jesus took our place, instead of **crushing** his enemies, he allowed God to **crush** him – because Jesus loved his enemies - us. We were his enemies, objects of his wrath, because we loved this world more than him, but God so loved the world, that he **graciously** gave his only son, and whoever believes in him will not die, but live forever. That's what was saved us!

We are saved by grace through faith. **James is not teaching us anything new, he is REMINDING US:**

- **The same grace that saved you , provides you with the confidence to overcome any conflict in your life** – Grace saves us, it sanctifies us and it sustains us.

When Jesus is on the throne, he actively gives more grace to those who have humbled themselves.

So what is humility?

Humility is not you thinking lowly of yourself, it's you thinking accurately of yourself.

- It reminds you that you are first a sinner, then sinned against. It allows you to see YOUR sins, NOT just others.
- So quickly, let's look at what humility produces. I remind you that Humility is what drew Jesus affections towards us while we were yet sinners, **it empowered him to FACE any and every conflict he encountered.**

Let's finish reading this passage.

[7] **Submit** yourselves therefore to God. **Resist** the devil, and he will flee from you. [8] **Draw** near to God, and he will draw near to you. **Cleanse** your hands, you sinners, and **purify** your hearts, you double-minded. [9] Be **wretched** and **mourn** and **weep**. Let your laughter be turned to mourning and your joy to gloom. <sup>vi</sup> [10] **Humble** yourselves before the Lord, and he will exalt you.

James is commanding the church to submit to God, to resist the devil, to worship God with their entire lives,

and to repent—Why? **Because Jesus did it.** James is simply saying, be more like Jesus, he will give you more grace to be more like him. He did that – now we can do this.

- Let's look at what happens when we allow Jesus to be on the throne. The goal here is NOT to reduce the conflict in your life (although that's good), the goal is to remind you that you have the power to persevere despite the level of conflict your face.

4 Ways Humility Empowers Us to Deal with Conflict:

### 1. By Submitting to God

- 99.9% of our problems/conflicts exist because we don't submit to the Lordship of God. Does he have the final say?

Can I live with my boyfriend? Is Jesus on the throne? Do I have to forgive them? Who's on the throne? Do I have to apologize, serve them, love them, share my faith with them? Are you the Right Person is on the throne?



I am so glad that **Jesus** submitted to God – As he prayed & cried and blood filled his tears the night before his crucifixion – He asked God, if it's possible let the trial he faced to be lifted, **but he humbled himself and said** - not my will but yours be done. <sup>vii</sup>

Even in that seemingly unbearable moment, we see Jesus strengthened by God (given more grace to overcome) because of his humility.

## 2. By Resisting Satan

- This seems like a no-brainer. Resist the devil and he will flee. But, what are you resisting the Devil with? I think we still are in conflict with one another because we think we resisted Satan, and he is still chillin' right beside us. (*If you good, I'm good.*)
- In Matthew 4, **Jesus** was tempted directly by Satan, and every time he humbled himself and resisted the Devil with the GOSPEL - God's word...and I don't think he had a backpack of scrolls to whip out in the moment – the word was in his heart.

## 3. Through Worship

- vs. 8 says – Draw Near to God and he will draw near to you. That is worship! When we humble ourselves, it allows us to go deeper into the gospel and the more saturated every area of our lives become immersed with his joy!
- **Worship is not a segment of our life, it's our entire life.**

For some of you, if you could let that settle for a moment, if you would just stop and do inventory right here - God could save you. You were created to worship - it's how you are wired - so we all are worshipping something, it takes up our time, we spend our money on it, we would be devastated if we LOST it. Listen, Jesus is the only person that you can worship and he will never waste your time, never take advantage of you, never leave you, and you will never LOSE him – because he is faithful, he can't lie, and he wants to be your SAVIOR & KING forever.

- **Jesus** entire life was worship to God, nothing is more comforting in the midst of conflict than



having access to the Presence of God.<sup>1</sup>

#### 4 . Through Repentance

- In vs. 8-9 - the terms **cleanse, purify, be wretched, mourn, weep** all point us to repentance.
- James calls us sinners here... Saints are identity, but we are reminded by Pastor James of our current activity - sin.
- True repentance cures conflict. Our sins separate us from God – repentance – turning from our sins – allow us to be in right standing with God – that’s why **Jesus** repented on our behalf – fulfilling all righteousness<sup>viii</sup> through his death and resurrection.

RECAP: It's not **natural** for us, to submit to God, to resist the devil, to worship God with our entire lives, and to repent – but God will give you more grace

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<sup>1</sup> Salvation was means by which he saved us, but it Worship was always the Goal.<sup>1</sup> There is coming a day where Salvation will no longer be needed - God will reign his final judgment - and guess what we will be able to do without distraction, without sickness, without any brokenness - WORSHIP HIM.  
Salvation is the means, but worship is the goal.

**supernaturally** by his Spirit – if you humble yourself – accurately think of who you are – first as a sinner – and now an overcomer...any man that is in Christ is a new creation – the old is gone and the new has come.  
**The final verse in this passage reads like this:**

**[10] Humble yourselves before the Lord, and he will exalt you.**

- In most of our conflicts, we struggle because **we want to be right** or we want to be “**on top**” or exalted above our spouse, our sibling, our co-worker, you name it – This is typical when the wrong person is on the throne. When we humble ourselves, as Jesus did – God will exalt us in his time.

Listen:

You are a sinner. I am a sinner. We are all sinners. There is nobody that you will meet on this planet that is not a sinner. There will be Conflict. Conflict is inevitable, but God will give us the grace we need just as he did for Jesus, when we humble ourselves.

## Conclusion – (Vamp)

Pastor James wrote this letter while the church was in major conflict – they were being persecuted because of their faith by those outside the church, but James spends most of his letter calling them to evaluate the **oppression that came from within the church** because of their selfish pride.

Church is a family, and the family has an Enemy – Yes, Satan is our Enemy, but the enemy that destroyed Satan is also trying to destroy us - **PRIDE**. (God opposes the proud, and gives grace to the humble.) If we forget that, we will ALWAYS choose walk in a way that's worldly and not godly AND WE put ourselves against God – NO ONE HAS won that battle yet!

Let me remind you that Pastor James was MURDERED because he wouldn't stop worshipping his brother as God - if he were alive today, he would ask us the same rhetorical question he suggests throughout this entire Book:

**If Jesus is worth believing in, is he worth living**

for?

**DOES MY LIFE REFLECT HOW MUCH I LOVE GOD, EACH OTHER, AND MY WORLD?**

**So, If we believe the Good News, Our world should experience our Good Deeds. Why? The Presence of Good Deeds, should reflect the Presence of an even Greater God who is on the Throne.**

**Let's pray. (you heard this earlier in our service, as you bow your heads, we will let this be our prayer from Philippians 2:3-11 – LET'S PRAY THE SCRIPTURE)**

[3] Do nothing from selfish ambition or conceit, but in humility count others more significant than yourselves. [4] Let each of you look not only to his own interests, but also to the interests of others. [5] Have this mind among yourselves, which is yours in Christ Jesus, [6] who, though he was in the form of God, did not count equality with God a thing to be grasped, [7] but emptied himself, by taking the form of a servant, being born in the likeness of men. [8] And being found in human form, he humbled himself by becoming obedient to the point of death, even

death on a cross. [9] Therefore God has highly exalted him and bestowed on him the name that is above every name, [10] so that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, in heaven and on earth and under the earth, [11] and every tongue confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father.

Lord we surrender, you are indeed Lord - Amen.

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Bullpen:

The jealousy of God requires us to be zealous for God.<sup>ix</sup>

Bishop J.C. Ryle (Practical Religion, 1959 ed..pg. 130) - "He burns for one thing; an that one thing is to please God, and to advance God's glory....If he cannot preach, work, and give money, he will cry, and sigh, and pray...If he is cut off from working himself, he will give the Lord no rest till help is raised up from another quarter, and the work is done. This is what I mean when I speak of zeal in religion."

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<sup>i</sup> Matthew 5:21-25

<sup>ii</sup> in James 3 - we see an vivid account of people who taught murder was a satisfactory means of attaining justice and redistribution of wealth (Dr. Craig S. Keener, The IVP Background Bible Commentary: NT Intervarsity Press pg. 698)

<sup>iii</sup> Matthew 12:39

<sup>iv</sup> (John 15:1-21).

<sup>v</sup> (Ex. 20:5, Deut. 32:21, Joel 2:18)

<sup>vi</sup> Luke 6:25

<sup>vii</sup> Luke 22:39-46

<sup>viii</sup> Matthew 3:13-17

<sup>ix</sup> (J.I Packer, Knowing God, pg. 173)