

Is The Fuss Worth The Fight

James 4:1-10

Intro: Some other words for this exercise are debate vigorously, stir up about, dispute, wrangle about, contend with, bicker, quibble over, or squabble. It seems that one of the things humans and often times many Christians do best is argue.

How many fights have you picked in your lifetime? (physical fights, emotional fights w/your parents, w/spouse, w/children, a co-worker, another Christian? Since I know that there is no family here that has not had an argument of some sort, what are some of the things you argue over at your house?

In this passage James talks about how to avoid arguments as he gives us both the causes and the cures. In other words, the reason for arguments and the remedy. "Although James specifically had in mind the conflict that leads to battered congregations and split churches, his words apply equally well to abusive families and broken homes.

We will each get the most out of this message if we think about the person who causes a lot of conflict in our life and how to avoid arguments with them. Did you ever stop to think however that, that someone may actually be you.

Notice that James gets right to the point. He had some profound insights on the cause of conflict. 4:1 *"What causes fights and quarrels among you. Don't they come from your desires that battle within you?"*

James says that the cause of arguments is conflicting desires. When my wants, conflict with your wants, the sparks are probably going to fly. Marriage for example has built in conditions for argument. I read where all marriages go through three stages: **Stage one**, happy honeymoons; **Stage two**, the party's over; **Stage three**, let's make a deal.

It is at Stage three that we have to learn how to handle arguments because that's where they are going to happen. There are going to be conflicting desires. Said another way: Frustrated feelings cause fantastic fights.

Did you hear about the two ministers who got into a fight about what they considered to be an important doctrinal matter. They settled the fight when the first minister told the second: *"Look, what are we fighting over? We're both striving to do the Lord's work. You do it **your way** and I'll do it **His way!**"*

Any couple, family, pastor or other Christian worker, had a good argument lately? To help us avoid as many as we can in the future lets begin by looking at

I. Desires

There are three basic desires we have that cause conflict. These desires are legitimate desires, unless of course, they're out of control. They are God given desires but when they become number one in our life, they will cause conflict. What are they? First is

1. THE DESIRE TO HAVE

We want to have things. V 2 says *"You want what you don't have ... In other words, you long for what others have."*

God created things to be used and to enjoy. It works very well when we use things and love people. The problem is we get the equation backwards. We start loving things and use people. We start manipulating them, trying to control them, moving them around to get what we want because somewhere along the line, things become more important than people in your life.

And this results in arguments. Things become a battle ground. We, as Americans, think the constitution says, "Life, liberty and the purchase of happiness." Someone asked Howard Hughes one time, "How much does it take to make a man happy?" He said, "Just a little bit more."

If we decide to base our life on comparing it to other people, we will never be happy no matter how much we get. Just about the time we catch up with the Jones' they refinance. There's always the desire for something more and this desire is fertile ground for an argument if we are not careful. How many here

have ever argued over things? The next question is: In the long run, was the arguing worth the thing you argued about?

The second thing that can cause arguing is

2. THE DESIRE TO FEEL

I want to feel good. I want to be comfortable. I want to have my senses satisfied. V 3 in the NLT says *"You want only what will give you pleasure"* Notice that it's not wrong to enjoy life. I Tim. 6:17 actually says *"God made everything for our enjoyment."*

The problem is, when pleasure becomes the number one goal in our life we're asking for conflict and a very probable argument. When our pleasure takes the place over what is needful, then we're in trouble in a relationship. The fact becomes, I'm more interested in my comfort than I am in yours and all I think about is what makes me feel good. So that desire to feel good often creates conflict.

The desire to have and the desire to feel good are two of the desires that, when they are hampered or not allowed to be quickly filled, cause conflict. Do you think this is correct so far? Has this ever played out in your life?

A third thing that promotes a wonderful opportunity for an argument is

3. THE DESIRE TO BE

This is pride, power, prominence, popularity. I want to be number one. Prov. 13:10 reminds us that *"Pride or presuming we are something special leads to arguments."* I'm too proud to compromise and that causes conflict.

We get too proud to "Cry Uncle" We don't want to give in. Have you ever been in an argument where you knew you were wrong but you wouldn't admit it. This is the bottom line of all these things. So the next time you're in an argument, stop and ask "Is it really worth it?"

James tells us that pride causes two problems. V 2-3 *"You do not have, because you do not ask God. When you ask, you do not receive, because you ask with wrong motives."*

First we don't pray. Instead we seem to look to people to fulfill our needs instead of looking to God for that. Secondly, We ask things in a selfish way.

Phil. 4:19 reminds us though that *"My God shall supply all your needs according to His riches in glory by Christ Jesus"* if we'll ask in prayer. We'd rather argue about something, or try and get it our own way, than go look to the Lord for the answer. When we are upset, with one another and we are arguing and trying to get our way, prayer is the last thing on our minds isn't it?

The old hymn says , *"Oh what peace we often forfeit, Oh what needless pain we bear, All because we do not carry, everything to God in prayer."* We forfeit that peace because we can't have peace if we are in the midst of an argument, can we?

Next, James talks about conflict with God.

Pride not only causes conflict with other people but it causes conflict with God. Notice V 6 *"God opposes the proud but gives grace to the humble."* If pride is the cause of arguments with other people, it can also get us in trouble with God and that's the case James is making here, in other words "I'm going to have my way when I want it, in my time, in my place and How I want it done.

If that is the case, and I believe it usually is, then, What's the cure? Lets notice secondly,

II. THE CURE FOR ARGUMENTS IS HUMILITY

V 6 and 10 *"God ... gives grace to the humble. Humble yourself before the Lord, and he will lift you up."* What is grace? Grace is God's power to change a situation. And there is only one way you get grace. You humble yourself. God doesn't give grace to people who are full of pride and think to themselves, like "I can do it on my own."

He gives it when we come and say, "God, I need your help." And that's where we get the power to make the changes we'd like to see. We usually ask God to change the other person or the situation but more often, it is us that He changes isn't it? Wouldn't you say that grace can accomplish in a moment of time what all the arguments of a whole weekend cannot get done?

James now gives us four specific actions that need to be taken in order to stop the fighting. Here's how you diffuse a conflict, whether it's between you and a child, you and your mate, you and someone at work, you and somebody in the neighborhood, or even you and somebody at church. First and probably the most difficult is

A. GIVE IN TO GOD

V 7 says "Submit yourself then to God." Put Him in charge and yield yourself to Him. We have to quit trying to run our own life. Remember in V 1 it says *"...your desires that battle within you..."*

We can't get along with other people when we've got a civil war in our life. This is the real issue. The starting point is getting peace inside, before we can have peace outside.

If we're in charge, then anytime somebody comes along that doesn't go the way you want to go, or do things the way we think they should be done then we get uptight and irritable. We want things to go just the way we want them to go and when they don't go that way, it makes us mad. And if we are mad, then the next logical step is an argument to try and prove that we are right and they are wrong for not going along with us. But if God's in charge of our life, it doesn't irritate us as much.

Col. 3:15 "Let the peace of Christ rule in your heart." When we have the peace of Christ in our heart then we'll be at peace with other people. And if we are at peace with others, then there is nothing to argue about is there?

So the starting point of getting along with others, and to avoiding arguments, is get peace in your heart through the rule of Christ. When we can say "Lord,

whatever You want, that's what I want" then the peace process starts between me and other people.

B. GET WISE TO SATAN

Be aware, be alert and realize where the conflict comes from, and that he's the source behind it.

Notice V 7 where we read *"Resist the devil, and he will flee from you."*

The word "resist" is a war term. It means to be prepared. To stand against. Our enemy wants to destroy every good relationship because he loves conflict, and arguments. He wants to cause confusion, arguments, stress, hurt feelings, disappointment, anger, chaos. He loves to see it happen.

So offensively, we've got to give into God and let Him have control. Then defensively we've got to resist the devil and realize what he's doing. 2 Cor. 2:11 *"In order that Satan might not outwit us, we are not unaware of his schemes."* Paul says, wise up! Recognize his tactics. Know how he operates.

How does the devil operate? He plays on our pride and especially if our pride has been wounded. He tells us what we want to hear. He whispers in our ear. He gives us little thoughts, suggestions, ideas.

Let me illustrate it this way: Have you ever had this happen in an argument. Right when you're in the middle of an argument, he starts whispering in your ear, things like "You don't have to take this kind of stuff. Retaliate. Who do they think they are? Get even. Assert yourself. Don't put up with this kind of stuff. Show 'em who's boss."

Ever heard or felt any of those things? He tells us all the things our pride loves to hear. So how do we resist the devil when this comes to mind? The same way Jesus did it. He quoted Scripture. Memorize Prov. 13:10 *"Pride leads to arguments."*

The next time we get into an argument, that can be brought to mind by the Lord and when He does, we need to stop and think, "How am I being prideful here.

What am I not willing to admit? Why am I not willing to compromise? Where am I only thinking of myself and not the other person's needs, desires, attitudes."

There is a great promise here if we will do it. It says, "*Resist the devil and he will flee.*" You don't have to put up with him. Give in to God and get wise to Satan, he will have to take a hike and we can then quit the arguing.

C. GROW CLOSER TO GOD

How does this affect arguments? When the argument level rises between two people it means somebody is not spending time with the Lord. Do you think that's a possibility?

Question: How many of you feel close to the Lord when you are in a hot argument with another person? Yet Isa. 26:3 says "*He will keep him in perfect peace all those who trust in Him, whose thoughts turn often to the Lord.*"

When we spend time with the Lord, the more we're going to enjoy the rest of our time. It will be more productive, more beneficial. We'll get along better with others, and have fewer arguments, because we're spending time with God.

Remember, conflict with people in our life is in direct proportion to the time we're spending with God.

When we move toward God, God moves toward us. And if two people are moving towards God, the chance of an argument or quarrel diminishes doesn't it. When was the last time you had a good old, hot, argument with another person? Do you think you would have acted that way if Jesus had been standing there? *The surprise is, HE WAS!!* So to get victory over arguing with one another, we need to give in to God, get wise to Satan, draw close to God.

Next we need to

D. BE WILLING TO ASK FORGIVENESS

If we want to stop the conflicts in our life, to get along with other people and avoid arguments, then we need to learn to ask forgiveness from God and from those we hurt.

Notice V 8 *"Wash your hands ... purify your hearts..."* Our hands represent our conduct and hearts represent attitudes. He's saying, we need to clean up our act. V 9 in the (LB) says *"Let there be tears for the wrong you've done."* If someone says we've hurt them, then we've hurt them.

It may not be a big deal to us, but it was to them. So be willing to ask forgiveness. We often feel bad about being hurt in life but the truth is, we usually hurt others just as much, and sometimes more, than we are hurt. It is just that we don't think we hurt others, and that is because we are so short sighted.

This will take humility. But notice V 10 where we read *"Humble yourself before the Lord and He will lift you up."*

Phil. 2:3-5 reminds *"Do nothing out of selfish ambition or vain conceit but in humility consider others better than yourselves. Each of you should look not only to your own interest but also the interest of others." Your attitude should be the same as that of Jesus Christ."*

In closing: Which of these desires cause the most conflict with others in your life?

Maybe it's the desire to have and you're so busy out there making a living that you forget to make a life. Maybe it's the desire to feel good. "I have my rights!" But that's the exact opposite what the Scriptures are saying, The Scripture teaches "Think about other people, not just yourself.

Maybe its the desire for my feelings, my comfort, or my safety only, that causes conflict. **Remember:** conflict is the internal battlefield for an external argument?

Or maybe its the desire to be right? **Question:** Do you find it difficult to admit it when you're wrong? Do you find it difficult to back down in an argument when you've been in error?

If you do, sooner or later, it's going to cause conflict. In the first three verses of this chapter, four times it says you're unsatisfied, "you want but you don't get", "you strive for but you can't have". You're unsatisfied.

You know what, many people in life are secretly unsatisfied with the way they are living. The secret of satisfaction is in Jesus Christ. Give yourself to Him and find your needs met in Him rather than in other people. He will never let you down. When we let Jesus satisfy us we won't have to argue with people who we get upset with because they can't meet our needs.

Well, the next time you are about to get into an argument about something why not stop and think about the pride that is egging this thing on. And then think about the humility that it will take to stop it. Try the humble approach and see if that really does stop the argument.

There is an old Spanish proverb that says, it takes two to quarrel, but only one to stop it. Will you be the one taking the lead the next time you are about to get into a spat with someone?