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CFBC... “James: Real Faith for a Real World”

“DEALING WITH CONFLICT: PART 2”

James 4:7–12

On Labor Day I got up early, read my Bible and prayed, and then decided to take a walk. Near the end of that walk, I fell. I looked down at my hands and noticed that I had a nice little wound on my right hand. What would have happened if I had merely placed a large bandage over the laceration without cleaning it and taking care of it properly? Obviously, it could have gotten infected. Listen . . .

Ignored conflict and the related wounds rarely heal on their own.

That’s true whether you’ve been wounded because of church conflict, marriage conflict, work conflict, or parental conflict. You can blow it off and say, “It’s nothing when it’s something.”

- **You can smile in public while resentment grows in private.**
- **You can avoid talking about it because you don't want things to become uncomfortable.**

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However, the pain remains and the wound grows over time. Open your Bible to James 4. Remember, the text we’re studying today was written to churches planted by persecuted Jewish Christians. It addresses a problem every church will face and every Christian will face—**CONFLICT**.

I want you to lock onto some biblical instructions for addressing conflict rather than allowing it to fester. Here’s a truth you must take seriously . . .

DEAL WITH CONFLICT BEFORE IT DEALS WITH YOU!

Last week we addressed this subject by diving into James 4:1-6. We discovered . . .

1. THE REASON FOR CONFLICT (1-3)

The emphasis on wisdom in **James 3:13-18** flows seamlessly into chapter 4. Remember that sacred wisdom leads to a good life and healthy relationships. Secular wisdom results in disorder and every evil thing.

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James 4:1... What is the source of quarrels and conflicts among you? Is not the source your pleasures that wage war in your members?

“Pleasures”— We get our word *hedonism* from this Greek word.

Hedonism is the personal desire to fulfill every passion and whim that promises sensual satisfaction and enjoyment.

The desire to fulfill these pleasures comes from sheer selfishness. Paul addressed conflict in the churches of Galatia . . .

Galatians 5:15... But if you bite and devour one another, take care that you are not consumed by one another.

The Lord Jesus has raised the standards for all who profess Him to be their Savior and Lord. **Unresolved conflict is unacceptable in the church, in the home, in the workplace, etc.**

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James 4:2... You lust and do not have; so you commit murder. You are envious and cannot obtain; so you fight and quarrel. You do not have because you do not ask.

Sinful and selfish desires are dangerous. These desires produce people who are never happy, who never enjoy life, and are never thankful for the blessings God has given them. They focus on the blessings they do not have.

James 4:3... You ask and do not receive, because you ask with wrong motives, so that you may spend it on your pleasures.

Even the prayers of these believers were self-centered. Instead of focusing on God's will and God's glory, they voiced designer prayers that were constructed for their glory and their satisfaction.

These kinds of selfish, hedonistic attitudes and actions create a cesspool of conflict with people and with God Himself.

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Here’s the sticky truth that radiates from this text:

DEAL WITH CONFLICT BEFORE IT DEALS WITH YOU!

Okay, to deal with conflict we must come to grips with the reason for conflict. Then, there is the need to comprehend . . .

2. THE REALITY OF CONFLICT (4-6)

James 4:4... **You adulteresses, do you not know that friendship with the world is hostility toward God? Therefore whoever wishes to be a friend of the world makes himself an enemy of God.**

If our relationship with God is not right, no other relationship in our life will be right!

“**World**”— The goal of the world system is self-glory, self-fulfillment, self-indulgence, self-satisfaction which amounts to hostility toward God.¹ This is

¹ John F. MacArthur Jr., [James](#), MacArthur New Testament Commentary (Chicago: Moody Press, 1998), 193.

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repeatedly referred to as spiritual adultery in the Old Testament. The more we are conformed to the pattern of this world the more we betray our Lord and *cheat on Him*.

Buying into the world system causes conflict within yourself, conflict with others, and ultimately conflict with God.²

James expands on this truth by emphasizing one of God’s attributes . . .

James 4:5... Or do you think that the Scripture speaks to no purpose: “He jealously desires the Spirit which He has made to dwell in us”?

Get this truth firmly fixed in your mind and heart . . .

God is jealous for the affections of your heart as a follower of Christ.³

² David Platt, [*Exalting Jesus in James*](#) (Nashville, TN: Holman Reference, 2014), 86.

³ David Platt, [*Exalting Jesus in James*](#) (Nashville, TN: Holman Reference, 2014), 88.

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This leads us to a marvelous, mind-blowing truth.

James 4:6... But He gives a greater grace. Therefore *it* says, "GOD IS OPPOSED TO THE PROUD, BUT GIVES GRACE TO THE HUMBLE."

David Platt wrote . . .

What comfort there is in this verse! It tells us that God is tirelessly on our side. He never falters in respect of our needs, he always has *more grace* at hand for us. He is never less than sufficient, he always has more and yet more to give. Whatever we may forfeit when we put self first, we cannot forfeit our salvation, for there is always *more grace*. No matter what we do to him His resources are never at an end, his patience is never exhausted, his initiative never stops, his generosity knows no limit: *he gives more grace*.

Here's the vital truth we've got to focus on . . .

**DEAL WITH CONFLICT
BEFORE IT DEALS WITH YOU!**

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Last Sunday in Part 1, we examined the reason for conflict and the reality of conflict. Today, in Part 2 we will spend the rest of our time on . . .

3. THE RESOLUTION OF CONFLICT (7-12)

James lists 10 commands that reveal how we can resolve conflict. Piecing them together, I want you to grasp 7 keys to resolving conflict . . .

James 4:7... Submit therefore to God. Resist the devil and he will flee from you.

(1) Submit to God. This is a military term that means *“get into your proper rank.”* Have you surrendered to the Lordship of Jesus in your career, your marriage, your children, your finances, your time, your tongue, your hobbies, etc? Any area that you’ve not surrendered to Him is fertile ground for potential conflict. Submit to God!

(2) Resist the devil. This is a military metaphor which means *“to stand against.”* Those who have submitted themselves to God are commanded to stand firm against the devil.

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- **Stop resisting God and start resisting the devil!**
- **Start believing God and stop believing the devil!**
- **Start trusting God and stop trusting the devil!**

Look at the promise. Resist the devil, and he will flee from you. Therefore . . .

- **When you are tempted to go to that porn site on your phone, resist him.**
- **When you are tempted to act selfishly and to speak harshly to your spouse, resist him.**
- **When you are tempted to speak critically about a church member or a friend, resist him.**
- **When you are tempted to harbor bitterness and unforgiveness, resist him.**
- **When you are tempted to disobey your parents, resist him.**

James 4:8... Draw near to God and He will draw near to you.

(3) Seek God’s presence. Here’s a major part of dealing with conflict!

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- **Read your Bible.**
- **Spend time in prayer.**
- **Be faithful in your worship attendance.**
- **Hang out with positive, Spirit-filled believers.**

You cannot drift into this close relationship with the Lord. You must practice spiritual discipline! Look at the promise—*He will draw near to you.* Nearness to the Lord will keep you from becoming a spiritual adulterer.

James 4:8b... Cleanse your hands, you sinners; and purify your hearts, you double-minded.

(4) Pursue radical holiness. By God’s grace we are to be clean internally and externally. This is the work of the Spirit-filled believer (**James 1:21**).

Logic might suggest that we must clean up our lives and then draw near to God. However, it is only when we experience the reality of His presence and come under His holy influence that we are in a position to come face to face with our sinfulness and His holiness.

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James 4:9... Be miserable and mourn and weep; let your laughter be turned into mourning and your joy to gloom.

(5) Treat sin seriously. D. Martyn Lloyd-Jones has noted how the awareness of sin and the desire for holiness grew in times of revival . . .

Go and read the history of revivals again. Watch the individuals at the beginning. This is invariably the first thing that happens to them. They begin to see what a terrible, appalling thing sin is in the sight of God. (Lloyd-Jones, *Revival*, 157)⁴

Sin is no laughing matter! Hear the Word of the Lord . . .

Psalm 51:17... The sacrifices of God are a broken spirit; A broken and a contrite heart, O God, You will not despise.

⁴ David Platt, [*Exalting Jesus in James*](#) (Nashville, TN: Holman Reference, 2014), 90–91.

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Isaiah 66:2... “For My hand made all these things, Thus all these things came into being,” declares the LORD. “But to this one I will look, To him who is humble and contrite of spirit, and who trembles at My word.

James 4:10... Humble yourselves in the presence of the Lord, and He will exalt you.

(6) Practice biblical humility. The call for humility is a thread that is woven throughout the pages of the Bible. One preacher said that humility can be very costly in the present. You need to know that the price for dealing with pride never goes down; it only goes up. Humility is characterized by:

- **openly acknowledging your shortcomings**
- **doing things others wouldn’t consider doing**
- **serving without expecting praise or reward**
- **running the risk of others looking down on you**

You can exalt yourself or you can exalt the Lord Jesus, but you can’t do both. Be humble and let the Lord exalt you at the proper time!

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James 4:11... ***Do not speak** against one another, brethren. He who speaks against a brother or judges his brother, speaks against the law and judges the law; but if you judge the law, you are not a doer of the law but a judge of it.*

(7) Watch your mouth. Prideful speech manifests itself in criticism that ultimately discourages people. It is self-centered rather than God centered. Your words can destroy the unity God desires in relationships . . .

Proverbs 6:16–19... There are six things which the LORD hates, Yes, seven which are an abomination to Him: **17** Haughty eyes, a lying tongue, And hands that shed innocent blood, **18** A heart that devises wicked plans, Feet that run rapidly to evil, **19** A false witness *who* utters lies, And one who spreads strife among brothers.

James 4:12... ***There is only one Lawgiver and Judge, the One who is able to save and to destroy; but who are you who judge your neighbor?***

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“Don’t play god” over other people’s lives. There is a proper and loving way to judge others. It holds up under the scrutiny of *“the royal law of love.”*

Matthew 7:1–5... “Do not judge so that you will not be judged. **2** “For in the way you judge, you will be judged; and by your standard of measure, it will be measured to you. **3** “Why do you look at the speck that is in your brother’s eye, but do not notice the log that is in your own eye? **4** “Or how can you say to your brother, ‘Let me take the speck out of your eye,’ and behold, the log is in your own eye? **5** “You hypocrite, first take the log out of your own eye, and then you will see clearly to take the speck out of your brother’s eye.

Worldly speech discourages people and dishonors God.

Godly speech encourages people and honors God. This is the kind of speech that ought to characterize believers.

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CONCLUSION

Face it. Conflict is a part of life. How you respond to conflict reveals the condition of your heart. You may not be able to control what people say or how they treat you, but with God's help, you can control how you respond.

Romans 12:18... If possible, so far as it depends on you, be at peace with all men.

Are you experiencing conflict in your home, your workplace, your school, or here at church? This morning I'm challenging you to . . .

DEAL WITH CONFLICT BEFORE IT DEALS WITH YOU!

James laid out 7 keys to conflict resolution. Apply these to your life this morning . . .

1. **Submit to God**
2. **Resist the devil**
3. **Seek God's presence**
4. **Pursue radical holiness**

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5. Treat sin seriously

6. Practice biblical humility

7. Watch your mouth

The most serious conflict you will ever face is the conflict that exists between you and God. By His grace, He has a plan to resolve that conflict.

Romans 5:8... But God demonstrates His own love toward us, in that while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us.

Romans 6:23... For the wages of sin is death, but the free gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord.

Will you turn from your sin and receive Jesus as your Savior and Lord by faith?