

October 11, 2026

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

“DEALING WITH CONFLICT: PART 1”

James 4:1–12

Conflict is inevitable. There is conflict on a global scale, personal conflict among friends, marital conflict in the home, professional conflict in the workplace, spiritual conflict in the soul, and political conflict in the culture, etc. If you live or work or associate in any way with people, you will experience conflict. Since we will experience conflict, we must learn to deal with it in a way that honors the Lord Jesus. Solomon wrote . . .

Proverbs 20:3... Keeping away from strife is an honor for a man, But any fool will quarrel.

Notice, it doesn't say you should *ignore* strife. It says you should *avoid* it. Ignoring conflict won't make the problem go away. You have to work to resolve it, before it becomes an even greater problem. Here's a truth you must grasp . . .

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

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James wrote this letter to Jewish Christians scattered abroad because of persecution. Wherever they went they planted churches. Guess what? In those churches and among those Christians there was conflict. In our text today, we’re going to examine the Spirit-anointed plan for dealing with conflict that James shared with them. First, I want you to notice . . .

1. THE REASON FOR CONFLICT (1-3)

Don’t forget. When James wrote this letter there were no chapter divisions. To get the depth of understanding we need we must consider the emphasis on wisdom that James shared in **3:13-18**. Sacred wisdom leads to a good life and healthy relationships. Secular wisdom results in disorder and every evil thing. It’s clear that James gave attention to this secular wisdom and its results in our text today.

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?

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“**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 which is opposed to God and His Word.¹ Selfish and godless hedonistic pursuits have exploded on the scene in the world today. It’s a sure sign that we are living in the last days. Paul’s prophecy is eerily relevant to our culture . . .

2 Timothy 3:2–4... For men will be lovers of self, lovers of money, boastful, arrogant, revilers, disobedient to parents, ungrateful, unholy, **3** unloving, irreconcilable, malicious gossips, without self-control, brutal, haters of good, **4**

¹ John F. MacArthur Jr., [*James*](#), MacArthur New Testament Commentary (Chicago: Moody Press, 1998), 186–87.

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treacherous, reckless, conceited, lovers of pleasure rather than lovers of God.

Unfortunately, the conflict we are witnessing in the culture has leaked into the church. James uses the language of war metaphorically. He does this to emphasize that conflict within the church is not God’s will.²

John 13:34–35... “A new commandment I give to you, that you love one another, even as I have loved you, that you also love one another. **35** “By this all men will know that you are My disciples, if you have love for one another.”

Philippians 1:27... Only conduct yourselves in a manner worthy of the gospel of Christ, so that whether I come and see you or remain absent, I will hear of you that you are standing firm in one spirit, with one mind striving together for the faith of the gospel.

² John F. MacArthur Jr., [*James*](#), MacArthur New Testament Commentary (Chicago: Moody Press, 1998), 185.

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When you put selfish sinners together in a marriage, in the church, or on a soccer team, you certainly aren't going to get perfect peace all the time. Paul confronted the believers in the Galatian church concerning the issue of conflict . . .

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

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.

James didn't pull any punches. He used strong words to declare that sinful and selfish desires are dangerous. People who are at war with themselves because of selfish desires are unhappy people. They never enjoy life. Instead of being thankful for the blessings they do have, they complain and do everything in their power to obtain the blessings they do not have (Wiersbe).

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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 their on God’s will and God’s glory, they voiced prayers that were birthed out of their will and designed for their glory and their satisfaction. I hope you can see that . . .

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

You can pray your way out of anything. However, you must pray the way Jesus taught us to pray!

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Okay, to deal with this relationship-destroying monster we must come to grips with **the reason for conflict.** Then, there is the need to comprehend:

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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.

The pressing reality is, in fact, a spiritual one. How do we get right with God and how do we stay right with him? ³

“World”— This word refers to the spiritual reality of the man-centered, Satan-directed system of this present age. It is the self-centered, godless value system of fallen mankind. The goal of the world is self-glory, self-fulfillment, self-indulgence, self-satisfaction, and every other form of self-serving, all of which amounts to hostility toward God.⁴

³ J. A. Motyer, [*The Message of James: The Tests of Faith*](#), The Bible Speaks Today (Leicester, England; Downers Grove, IL: Inter-Varsity Press, 1985), 146.

⁴ John F. MacArthur Jr., [*James*](#), MacArthur New Testament Commentary (Chicago: Moody Press, 1998), 193.

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Throughout the Old Testament, God describes His relationship with His covenant people like a marriage. When His people forsake Him, it is a picture of spiritual adultery.

Listen, the more we are conformed to the pattern of this world, living like this world and loving this world, the more we betray our Lord and cheat on Him. The pain and heartache involved in adultery are wrapped up in this imagery.⁵

Friendship with the world causes conflict with others, conflict within yourself, and ultimately conflict with God.⁶

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

⁵ David Platt, [*Exalting Jesus in James*](#) (Nashville, TN: Holman Reference, 2014), 88.

⁶ David Platt, [*Exalting Jesus in James*](#) (Nashville, TN: Holman Reference, 2014), 86.

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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”?

Jealousy, properly considered with balance, is a necessary ingredient of all true love. It is, on the one hand, a ceaseless longing for the loved one’s welfare and, on the other, a desire for a responsive love as intense and as loyal as the love bestowed.⁷

Living to please your old sin nature and to bowing your knee to the godless world system creates a blockage in your relationship with the Lord and corresponding conflict with others. . .

Romans 8:6–7... For the mind set on the flesh is death, but the mind set on the Spirit is life and peace, **7** because the mind set on the flesh is hostile toward God; for it does not subject itself to the law of God, for it is not even able *to do so*.

⁷ J. A. Motyer, [*The Message of James: The Tests of Faith*](#), The Bible Speaks Today (Leicester, England; Downers Grove, IL: Inter-Varsity Press, 1985), 149.

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1 Corinthians 3:1–3... And I, brethren, could not speak to you as to spiritual men, but as to men of flesh, as to infants in Christ. **2** I gave you milk to drink, not solid food; for you were not yet able *to receive it*. Indeed, even now you are not yet able, **3** for you are still fleshly. For since there is jealousy and strife among you, are you not fleshly, and are you not walking like mere men?

I’ve often said, *“If your relationship with the Lord is not right, no other relationship in your life will ever be right!* Get this truth firmly fixed in your mind and heart . . .

God is jealous for the affections of your heart as a follower of Christ.⁸

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.”

⁸ David Platt, [*Exalting Jesus in James*](#) (Nashville, TN: Holman Reference, 2014), 88.

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It’s not easy to resist the appeal of this world, and there are so many areas where we have subtly bought into a friendship with the world. We sometimes wonder whether we will ever conquer this temptation.

Remember this—GOD IS FAITHFUL! You can trust Him. He is merciful, gracious, loving, and He willingly supplies all we need to obey His bold commands. I love what one writer said . . .

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, he is never beaten ... His resources are never at an end, his patience is never exhausted, his initiative never stops, his

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generosity knows no limit: *he gives more grace.*⁹

I pray this truth will stick to your mind, heart, and soul like super glue . . .

DEAL WITH CONFLICT BEFORE IT DEALS WITH YOU!

Okay, to deal with this relationship-destroying monster we must come to grips with *the reason for conflict* and *the reality of conflict*. Next Sunday I’m going to share part 2 of this message. We will focus on *the resolution of conflict*.

CONCLUSION

If you have a job, if you have a spouse, if you have children, if you have neighbors, if you have friends, if you are on a sports team, if you go to church, you *will* have conflict in your life. But you don't have to live or work in a war zone. You can avoid or resolve

⁹ David Platt, [*Exalting Jesus in James*](#) (Nashville, TN: Holman Reference, 2014), 89.

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the conflict in your life by approaching it with the wisdom of God.

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Do you have conflict in your life this morning? I would advise you to carefully evaluate your relationship with the Lord and with other people.

- **Have you repented of your sin and received Jesus as your Savior and Lord?**
- **Do you have any areas of your life that are surrendered to the world and not to the Lord?**
- **Is there someone you need to forgive and to be reconciled with?**

Come to Jesus this morning and let Him have His way in your heart. Build your life on His wisdom!