



The Conflict Inside the Conflict

James 4:1-10 | Bob Wade

UNDERSTANDING THE PASSAGE

- 1. Conflict starts within us (vv. 1-2)** James traces fights and quarrels to conflicting interests (desires that battle within us) and not to other people or circumstances. Where do you most often see those desires appear in your life (you want control, you want to be right, desire for success or approval, etc.)?
- 2. Prayer can fail because motives can be wrong (v. 3)** Not receiving the answer you want is sometimes connected to asking for self-serving ends (“to spend it on your passions”). What are some subtle ways selfish motives can hide inside our spiritual-sounding prayers?
- 3. “Friendship with the world” is spiritual unfaithfulness (v. 4).** James uses strong covenant language (“adulterous people”) to show the seriousness of divided loyalty-when the world's values become our chosen alignment, it puts us at odds with God. What are some of the “success metrics” our culture pressures us to adopt and contrast them with Christ’s teaching on humility, forgiveness and love.
- 4. God is not indifferent, He wants wholehearted devotion (v. 4-5).** James says that friendship with the world is actually enmity with God and Pastor Bob said enmity means no middle ground. As a practical matter, how do you understand having no middle ground relative to God and the world?
- 5. A clear response is commanded: submit, resist and draw near (vv. 7-8).** James gives a sequence: submit to God → resist the devil → draw near to God → wash your hands (outward behavior) → purify your heart (inner attitude). Which of these has been the most difficult for you to obey?

APPLYING THE MESSAGE – For personal use outside of the group.

James 4:1–10 invites us to look beneath our conflicts and cravings and to return to God with humility. Our outward battles often reveal inward desires; our prayers can be shaped by self-interest; and loyalty to “the world” leads us away from God. The good news is that God gives more grace: as we humble ourselves, submit to him, resist temptation, and draw near, he promises restored closeness and his lifting up in due time.

- **Identify:** What desire is the “loudest” in me right now (control, power, recognition, being right, etc.)?
- **Confess:** Where have I pursued that desire in a way that dishonors God or harms others?
- **Realign:** What would it look like today for me to choose God over “friendship with the world” in one concrete decision?
- **Submit:** What is one clear act of obedience I’ve been resisting?
- **Draw near:** When will I set aside 10 minutes today to pray, repent, and ask for God’s grace with honest motives?

LIVING ON MISSION

1. Think of a friend, neighbor or relative who is often depressed, stressed or even angry. What gentle question(s) could you ask to help them identify what they’re wanting most without sounding preachy?
2. Is there a brief personal example you could share with the person in question 1 above of a time you chased something you couldn’t get and how Christ met you there?
3. How can you share the gospel in a way that starts with humility (“I’m not better than you, I need mercy every day, too”)?
4. Identify one unbeliever you see regularly. What is one specific way you could love them this week (listen, serve, encourage, etc.) and how could you connect that love to Jesus?