



“Relationships” James 3:18-4:12

Relationships don't put us in conflict with each other as much as they put us in conflict with our own sinful nature. If you will not fight or flight but face the inevitability of conflict in relationships, you will find them to be wonderful opportunities to grow in greater levels of maturity and intimacy with God and others. Just as our words are a window into our heart, how we relate and treat others is a window into the quality of our relationship with God (1John 4:7-8).

The Importance of Healthy Relationships

- There is no way you will be able to grow spiritually apart from deep involvement in a healthy community of other believers. V18 (Heb3:12-13, 10:24-25)
- The beauty and depth of our love for one another is the strongest argument God has given us to show the world who He is. (John 13:34-35, 17:21)
- If we fail to create and be a part of a healthy Christian community, either by indifference or by fighting, it's hating God. vv1, 4

The Barriers to Healthy Relationships

V1 “passions” = Gr. (hedone) Hedonism, pleasure or desires for pleasure.
V2 “desire” = Gr. (epithymeo) over desire, good things into ultimate things.

- Self-absorption—You live your life to please yourself. Your comfort, your convenience, your control is more important than anybody else's. Your needs, your wants, your desires are more important than anyone else.
- The Cause is Pride and the solution is Humility. vv6, 10-12
 - ✓ Pride is more aware of other's faults. Humility is far more aware of your own faults than others.
 - ✓ Pride speaks of other's faults with an air of contempt and disdain. Humility only when necessary speaks of other's faults with grief and mercy.
 - ✓ Pride quickly separates from people (cold to them or avoid them) who you've criticized or who criticized you. Humility sticks with people even through difficult relationships because you don't give up on them.
 - ✓ Pride is dogmatic and sure about every point of belief. Proud people cannot distinguish between major and minor points of belief because everything they believe is major (they are always fighting with people because they can't stand to be contradicted). Humility seeks unity in the essentials, liberty in non-essentials but in all things love.

- ✓ Pride either loves to confront because they like winning or refuses to confront because they don't want criticism and controversy. Humility confronts when it is necessary with loads of gentleness and love.
- ✓ Pride is often unhappy and full of self-pity because it is sure of how life ought to go and is convinced it deserves a life better than it is getting. Humility realizes how little it deserves and how much it has received from God trusting Him to always do what is in your best interests.
- ✓ Pride feels it deserves admiration either because of success (boasting/superiority) or suffering (self-pity/inferiority). Humility is not thinking less of yourself but thinking of yourself less (Not self-absorbed).

How to Break Through the Barriers

Vv7-10 Repent and Believe (Turn from sin to the Savior)

- Submit yourselves therefore to God. v7a
- Resist the devil, and he will flee from you. V7b
- Draw near to God, and he will draw near to you. V8 (vv4-5)

Growing Notes

- 1) Why do you think relationships can be so difficult? What does it mean that relationships put us in conflict more with our sinful nature than with one another? Why do you think that if we don't fight or flight but face the inevitability of conflict in relationships, we will find them to be wonderful opportunities to grow in greater levels of maturity and intimacy with God and others? Explain.
- 2) Read James 3:18-4:12. What stands out to you from this text? What is the root cause of quarrels and fights (vv1-3)? What does James call them for fighting (v4)? Who does God appose and who does He give grace to (v6)? What does James say we should do about our fighting (vv7-12)?
- 3) How important are healthy relationships for growing spiritually (v18; Heb3:12-13, 10:24-25)? What is our strongest argument to show the world who God is (John 13:34-35, 17:21)? What are we saying to God if we fail to create and be a part of a healthy Christian community (vv1, 4)?
- 4) What are the barriers to healthy relationships? How would you define self-absorption? How is self-absorption the essence of sin? Take some time to review the contrast between pride and humility. Which one(s) are most convicting to you?
- 5) How do you break through the barriers? How would you define humility? Take a few moments and walk through the three steps to breakthrough and humility: Submit...Resist...Draw Near. How often should we do this? What is the most important thing you are learning from this study? What are your next steps to healthier and happier relationships for God's glory? Pray.