

A vintage brass compass is shown resting on an old, weathered map. The compass has a circular face with a star-shaped needle and is surrounded by a ring of numbers. The map features contour lines and some text, including "Cerro de San Mateo". A semi-transparent orange box is overlaid on the left side of the image, containing the text "James 4:1-3" and "Determining what guides our actions and reactions".

James 4:1-3

Determining what guides our actions and reactions

Identifying the  
sources of conflict  
among people in the  
church  
(4:1-2a)

*1 What causes quarrels and what causes fights among you?*

- James just affirmed the production of peace because of sowing righteousness.
- The fighting and strife in their midst were undeniable.
- James asks them to assess the divisions and conflicts in which they're involved.
- Justifications abound for each side's position.
- Strife in the church indicates there is something wrong somewhere.

Identifying the  
sources of conflict  
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church  
(4:1-2a)

*Is it not this, that your passions are at war within you?*

- James wants them to look at the motivations and ultimate purposes of their reactions.
- The fight is between personal satisfaction and making known the glory of God in all of life for the delight and satisfaction of all peoples.
- We can rally our own cause, or we can be rallied to the cause of others, losing sight of Jesus in the skirmish.
  - Personal passion can blind us to the biblical realities of God's glory being made know by meeting the gospel needs of others.
  - Such misguided loyalties and divisiveness are things we must all be vigilant to protect against.
    - Romans 16:17
    - Proverbs 6:16–19
- Battles for God-centered truth and righteousness are worth fighting.
- Battles for self-centered reasons are wrong.

Identifying the  
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church  
(4:1-2a)

*<sup>2</sup> You desire and do not have, so you murder.*

- Self-centeredness can become so dominating that it seeks to remove anything and anyone who stands in his or her way.
  - James speaks of the conflict in the churches using term for war in a figurative way – “*quarrels*” and “*fight*s.”
  - It is likely James references murder figuratively as well.
- Passionately pursuing one’s personal agenda, recruiting supporters, and promoting division are not insignificant matters.

*You covet and cannot obtain, so you fight and quarrel.*

- It is incredible the passion and assertiveness that can be generated by people who think what they deserve is being taken from them or what others possess should be theirs.

Identifying the reasons for an ineffective prayer life (4:2b-3)

*You do not have, because you do not ask.*

- They lack godly wisdom and productivity because they fail to seek God in prayer for it.

- James 1:5

- They have lost sight of from where all good things come.

- James 1:17

*<sup>3</sup> You ask and do not receive, because you ask wrongly, to spend it on your passions.*

- When prayers do come, they come from self-centered and worldly hearts.

- Their prayer life is fruitless because there is nothing consistently Christ-centered and others-oriented about their lives or their prayers.

- Psalm 34:14–18

## Questions to Consider

- When in conflict, how can you be more open to biblical examination of your heart and motives?
- In what ways have you seen your personal agenda blind you to the glory of God and the good of others?
- How can your prayer life be more Christ-centered and others-oriented?

A vintage brass compass is shown resting on an old, textured map. The compass face is visible, with cardinal directions (N, S, E, W) and intermediate directions (NE, SE, SW, NW) marked. The needle is pointing towards the top right. The entire scene is overlaid with a semi-transparent orange rectangular box on the left side, which contains the text. The background features faint, light blue circular lines and a dashed line pattern.

James 4:1-3

Determining what guides our actions and reactions