



LEADER'S NOTES

For use with the discussion guides drawing on the Sunday messages.

April 24, 2005
James 3:14-4:3

OVERVIEW

James is honest . . . brutally honest at times. But that honesty can be healthy. When you go to a doctor with aches and pains; you don't want the doctor to dance around the real issues. For your health's sake, you want him to tell you the truth and what steps you need to take. James has been doing that for us . . . telling us the truth about trials, about our tongues, about real wisdom. And this week he continues by telling us the truth about "the source of quarrels and conflicts."

DISCUSSION

Begin by sharing the "Toddler's Property Laws."

1. If I like it, it's mine.
2. If it's in my hand, it's mine.
3. If I can take it from you, it's mine.
4. If I had it a little while ago, it's mine.
5. If it's mine, it must never appear to be yours in any way.
6. If I'm doing or building something, all of the pieces are mine.
7. If it looks like mine, it's mine.
8. If I saw it first, it's mine.
9. If you are playing with something and you put it down, it becomes mine.
10. If it's broken, it's yours.
11. If I give it to you and change my mind, it's mine.
12. If I have one and you have one and I lose mine... yours is mine.

Spend a little time reflecting on/evaluating these "laws" . . . try and illustrate them!

When you move into the passage, you need to transition from how toddlers do life to what James says is the way we all do life! Sadly, many people never really "grow up;" we still do life along the same lines, we just "mask it" better. Notice how clearly James makes his point as you read James 3:18-4:3.

One thing that will help you get a handle on what James is driving at is to pick up on the ideas that he repeats. Notice that he writes repeatedly in the space of these few verses about selfishness, jealousy, envy and not having our way! Sounds a lot like a little more advanced version of the Toddler's Property Laws. We want life on our terms, in our timing, in the way we think it should go. And James comes right out and tells us that the source of our arguments and fights is found right there: It's us! It is our selfish living that gives rise to such problems. (And all the while we kept thinking that the problem was that *other* selfish, obstinate person we were arguing with!)

Now this is not all that could be said about communication and conflict. But what James tells us here is critical. We often think that the problems and fights we have are someone else's fault. We think someone "made us" angry or caused us to respond in a less-than-gracious way. But James is honest. We have to look inside . . . that's where faith and wisdom need to make a difference.

BIG IDEA

If I'm in an argument, the chances are good I'm there because of what's in ME!

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DISCUSSION GUIDE

A small group resource for the church drawing on the Sunday messages.

April 24, 2005
James 3:14-4:3

A weekly discussion guide designed to aid you to hear the Word, understand what you hear, and take it to heart.

Where have you seen the following "Toddler's Property Laws" lived out?

1. If I like it, it's mine.
2. If it's in my hand, it's mine.
3. If I can take it from you, it's mine.
4. If I had it a little while ago, it's mine.
5. If it's mine, it must never appear to be yours in any way.
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Although you are no longer a toddler, when do you feel yourself being tugged to do life along those lines?

Read James 3:14-4:3. What does James tell us about the root cause of lack of peace and quarrelling?

How do you feel about James' assessment? Is he fairly representing how life really happens?

We often want to blame others for the conflict we experience and the fights we have with others. What would James say to us about that?

James' honesty about the real root cause of such problems is good but hard truth. What do you want to do about his insights?

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