

Corrupt Desires
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There's an old story you've probably heard. A man owned two dogs that were always fighting each other. One day a friend asked the man, "Which dog usually wins the fight?" The man answered, "The dog I feed the most."

That's the way it is with the battle inside each of us between the sinful nature every human inherited from Adam, and the the new Spiritual nature that comes when we're saved. We'll fight that battle until we get to Heaven. The question is: Which dog will we feed?

James 4:1–6 (ESV)

What causes quarrels and what causes fights among you? Is it not this, that your passions are at war within you? 2 You desire and do not have, so you murder. You covet and cannot obtain, so you fight and quarrel. You do not have, because you do not ask. 3 You ask and do not receive, because you ask wrongly, to spend it on your passions. 4 You adulterous people! Do you not know that friendship with the world is enmity with God? Therefore whoever wishes to be a friend of the world makes himself an enemy of God. 5 Or do you suppose it is to no purpose that the Scripture says, "He yearns jealously over the spirit that he has made to dwell in us"? 6 But he gives more grace. Therefore it says, "God opposes the proud, but gives grace to the humble."

Verse one, James again begins with a rhetorical question: "*What causes quarrels and fights among you?*" **What do the words "among you" say about who was fighting?**

As I mentioned last week, sadly, church quarrels too often erupt, and have for a long time. Paul wrote to fighting churches in Corinthians; Galatians; Ephesians; and Philipians. (1 Cor. 6:1–8; 14:23–40; Gal. 5:15; Eph. 4:1–16; Phil. 4:1–3)

- **In verse one what does James say causes church people to fight? What does it mean?**

Pastor Johnny: "*...the source of visible trouble in the church is invisible trouble in the heart.*"

- **Look at the first two sentences of verse two. What do they describe in a troubled heart?**
- **Ever known a truly self-centered person? What are they like? Grateful? Content? What does a self-centered person usually complain about? What are they always searching for? How do they get along with others? What's their real problem?**
- Generally, a truly self-centered, person seems to have a war going on inside themselves.
- James says it's their passions or desires at war within them.
- That war usually spills out into a fight with other people.
- Self-centered people always seem to be in a fight with someone over what they want.
- The problem is they are going to the wrong source to try to meet their needs.

Pastor Johnny: "*When our minds, bodies, and souls are not yielded to God, life remains one vicious cycle of seeking but never becoming satisfied. (The) sinful heart wants what others have...and, when we don't receive it, we lash out in anger.*"

- The Apostle Paul wrote about it in Galatians 5:15-17:

Galatians 5:15–17 (ESV)

15 But if you bite and devour one another, watch out that you are not consumed by one another.

16 But I say, walk by the Spirit, and you will not gratify the desires of the flesh. 17 For the desires of the flesh are against the Spirit, and the desires of the Spirit are against the flesh, for these are opposed to each other, to keep you from doing the things you want to do.

- The end of verse two: **What’s missing in the lives of these unhappy people?**
- A selfish, unhappy person may say: “I pray but nothing happens!” **What does James say?**
- **Does this mean Christians should never desire pleasure? What does Ps. 37:4 say?**

The Life Application Study Bible says:

“There is nothing wrong with wanting a pleasurable life. God gives us good gifts he wants us to enjoy. But having friendship with the world involves seeking pleasure at others expense or at the expense of obeying God. Pleasure that keeps us from pleasing God a sinful; pleasure from God’s rich bounty is good.”

- Based on verses two and three, **how do we deal with a war of selfish desires inside us?**
- Quarrels and fights among believers are not only a sign of prayer problem. It’s deeper!
- When someone is starting fights with other Christians, they’re really at war with God Himself.
- Wiersbe: *“The root cause of every war, internal and external, is rebellion against God.”*
- Soldiers are ordered never to FRATERNIZE with the enemy. **What does that mean?**
- **How does verse four say a believer switches sides and declares war against God?**
- At the beginning of verse 4 James calls people like this “adulterous.” **What does that mean?**
- That ties into verse five. **Any idea what verse five means by: “He yearns jealously over the spirit that he has made to dwell in us”?**

So, What’s the Takeaway?

- Why do we fight and quarrel? Fighting with others is a reflection of a battle inside ourselves.
- Instead of going to our Heavenly Father for what we NEED, we covet what we WANT.
- Even if we half-heartedly pray, it’s more about our desires than God’s BEST for us.
- It’s really a rebellion against God. We’re giving “aid and comfort” to His enemies.
- If we are to stay true to God and not give “comfort” to His enemies, we have to KNOW the enemies we’re fighting against.

Wiersbe’s Commentary says...

- James names three enemies of God that we must avoid: The world, the flesh, and the devil.
- The world - He just told us to avoid “the world” in verse four. (1 John 2:15)
- The flesh - is the sinful nature we all inherit from Adam that James talks about that back in verses one through three. (Gal 5:16-17) (Rom. 8:7)
- Behind all of this is our battle with the devil. Verse six says it’s really a battle with PRIDE.

Wiersbe writes:

“Pride is Satan’s great sin, and it is one of his chief weapons in his warfare against the saint and the Saviour. God wants us to be humble; Satan wants us to be proud. God wants us to depend on His grace (“But He giveth more grace”), while the devil wants us to depend on ourselves.”

- Verse six gives us our homework for this week.
- If we find ourselves filled with restless, selfish desires that spill over into fights and quarrels, we need to overcome our pride and come to God in humility.

- With the right motives, we need to ask for HIS BEST for us, not our idea of what's best.
- His promise: *"He gives more grace. God opposes the proud, but gives grace to the humble."*
- The question: Will I be humble enough this week to receive the grace I need?