

HOW TO DEAL WITH PERSONAL CONFLICT, PART 2

James 4:1-10

The Bible does not say that pleasure in and of itself is _____

- God pursues His own pleasure
 - Psalm 149:4 - ...*the Lord takes pleasure in His people.*
- God gives legitimate pleasures to man
 - Psalm 37:4 - *Delight yourself in the Lord; and He will give you the desires of your heart.*
- God has filled our world with things in which we can find legitimate pleasure
 - Example: food and feasting
 - 1 Timothy 6:17 - *God...richly supplies us with all things to enjoy* (referring to food in 6:8 - *If we have food...we shall be content*)
 - Examples: Marriage, family, children, friendship
- Heaven will be a place of perfect pleasure where we will find our ultimate pleasure in God
 - Psalm 16:11 - *In your presence is fullness of joy; in Your right hand there are pleasures forever.*

Screwtape (an older, experienced demon) to Wormwood (his younger apprentice) in “The Screwtape Letters” by C.S. Lewis:

“Never forget that when we are dealing with any pleasure in its healthy and normal and satisfying form, we are, in a sense, on the Enemy's ground. I know we've won many a soul through pleasure. All the same, it is His invention, not ours. He made the pleasures; all our research so far has not enabled us to produce one. All we can do is to encourage the humans to take the pleasures which our Enemy has produced, at times, or in ways, or in degrees, which He has forbidden. Hence, we always try to work away from the natural condition of any pleasure to that which is least natural. An ever-increasing craving for an ever-diminishing pleasure is the formula.”

Augustine (paraphrase) - *When we enjoy the things around us, we are to always enjoy them with an eye to God's glory. If we enjoy those things without an eye to God's glory, then those things have become idols to us.*

- Augustine's point: We are to seek our ultimate pleasure in God
- Implication: When God is our ultimate pleasure, His blessings can be enjoyed as they were _____ to be

Just as there are legitimate pleasures that God has given us as good gifts to enjoy, there are also sinful pleasures.

Q: When is pleasure sinful?

A1: When a God-given pleasure becomes more _____ to us than God

A2: When a God-given pleasure is pursued in _____

A3: When Scripture _____ a pleasure

2 Tim. 3:4-
*Men will be
lovers of
pleasure
rather than
lovers of God.*

Generally, sin often brings _____ - _____ pleasure

- Hebrews 11:25 - *Moses...chose to endure ill-treatment with the people of God than to enjoy the passing pleasures of sin.*

But it never really, ultimately _____

- Samuel Johnson - *"Of all that hath tried the selfish experiment, let one come forth and say that he has succeeded. He that hath made gold his idol, has it satisfied him? He that has toiled in the fields of ambition, has he been repaid? He that has ransacked every theatre of sensual enjoyment, is he content? And any answer in the affirmative, not one!"*
- John MacMurray - *"The best cure for hedonism is the attempt to practice it."*
- John Blanchard - *"Even when a man does everything he pleases, he still is not satisfied."*
- The experience of _____ (Ecclesiastes 2:1-11)

Living to satisfy our cravings as a goal of life (hedonism), not only is rebellion against God, but Scripture says we are a _____.

- Titus 3:3 - [unbelievers are] *enslaved to various lusts and pleasures*
- A Jewish rabbi - *"The evil impulse (a sinful desire) is first a wanderer who passes by; then a guest; and finally master of the house, who gives orders."*

Sinful pleasures are what James is referring to in 4:1-3.

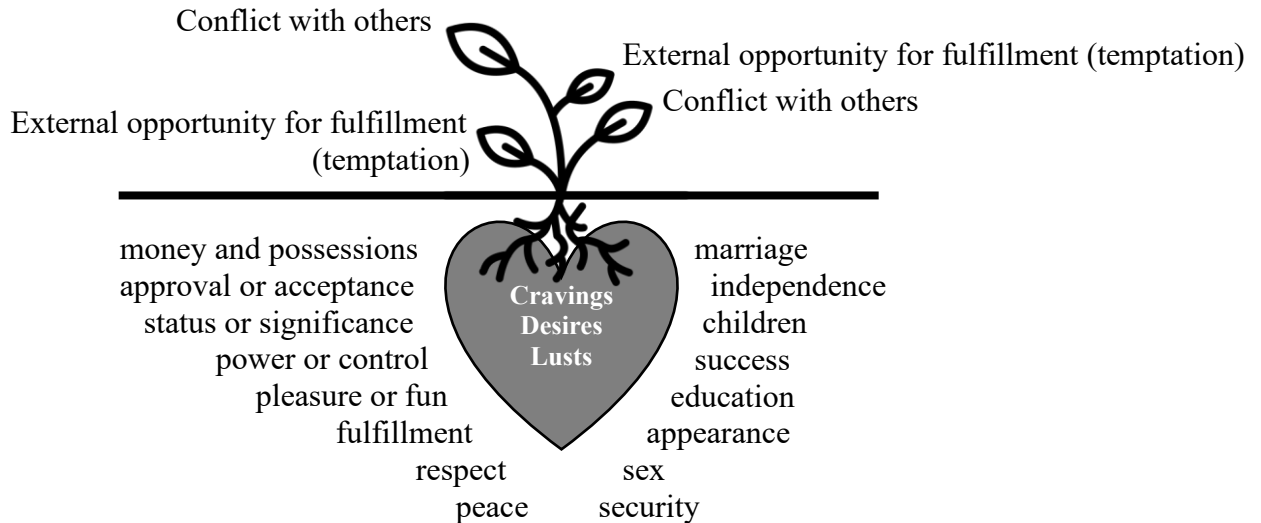
James 4:1-10 - ¹*What is the source of quarrels and conflicts among you? Is not the source your pleasures that wage war in your members?* ²*You lust and do not have; so you commit murder. You are envious and cannot obtain; so you fight and quarrel. You do not have because you do not ask.* ³*You ask and do not receive, because you ask with wrong motives, so that you may spend it on your pleasures.* ⁴*You adulteresses, do you not know that friendship with the world is hostility toward God? Therefore whoever wishes to be a friend of the world makes himself an enemy of God.* ⁵*Or do you think that the Scripture speaks to no purpose: "He jealously desires the Spirit which He has made to dwell in us"?* ⁶*But He gives a greater grace. Therefore it says, "GOD IS OPPOSED TO THE PROUD, BUT GIVES GRACE TO THE HUMBLE."* ⁷*Submit therefore to God. Resist the devil and he will flee from you.* ⁸*Draw near to God and He will draw near to you. Cleanse your hands, you sinners; and purify your hearts, you double-minded.* ⁹*Be miserable and mourn and weep; let your laughter be turned into mourning and your joy to gloom.* ¹⁰*Humble yourselves in the presence of the Lord, and He will exalt you.*

The theme: _____

Step ①: Identify the true _____ of conflict (vv. 1-3)

v. 1 - *What is the source of quarrels and conflicts among you? Is not the source your pleasures that wage war in your members?*

- *pleasures*
 - hēdonē (Greek) = hedonism (English)
 - a desire to experience all of the senses
 - the desire to please self (to satisfy whatever craving of the heart we have)



Normal, permitted, good, God-give desires are warped and perverted by our flesh into sinful desires for self, because...

- we grow to love them more than God
- we want them in excess
- we want them in a way that is forbidden

According to James 1:14, these desires lead us into _____

- Our internal desire is attracted by some external opportunity & craves to be fulfilled by it

According to James 4:1, these desires lie behind every sinful _____

- When we are involved in a conflict, the true source is not...
 - the _____ we are arguing about
 - the other _____ we are arguing with
- The problem is _____ (specifically, the sinful _____ within us)

Every time we find ourselves in quarrel or conflict, we need to ask ourselves this question:
"What self-centered desire am I trying to _____ by engaging in this argument?"

v. 1 - *What is the source of quarrels and conflicts among you? Is not the source your pleasures that wage war in your members?*

Our sinful desires lie behind every quarrel and conflict

v. 2 - *You lust and do not have; so you commit murder. You are envious and cannot obtain; so you fight and quarrel. You do not have because you do not ask.*

v. 3 - *You ask and do not receive, because you ask with wrong motives, so that you may spend it on your pleasures.*

Two illustrations of _____ our desires produce quarrels and conflicts

Illustration ①

4:1b - *Is not the source your pleasures that wage war in your members?*

4:2a - *You lust and do not have...*

“to crave”

“to have a strong desire”

“to set your heart on something”

Q: What is the relationship between lust and pleasure?

A: Lust is a desire _____ and pleasure is a desire _____

- God, in His great love and mercy, usually does not allow all of lusts to be fulfilled
- Even when our lusts are fulfilled, they never _____ satisfy
- Each sinful desire we have promises to bring satisfaction, but instead, it only creates a greater appetite for more

4:2a - *You lust and do not have; so you commit murder*

- James wants us to realize how evil our desires, and the conflicts they create, really are. We are tempted to dismiss conflict as unimportant.
 - CJ Mahaney - “*We have a sinful tendency to minimize our role and responsibility. We are quite comfortable describing conflict with non-biblical language:*
 - *We just have different temperaments*
 - *Our personalities clash*
 - *We aren’t wired the same*
 - *We have issues”*
- James warns us of where our sinful desires can lead us if we allow them to go unrestrained.
 - John Blanchard - “*What James is doing is warning his readers that unbridled, selfish, passion knows no limits; it will do anything to achieve its ends. Never underestimate the power of human desire.*”

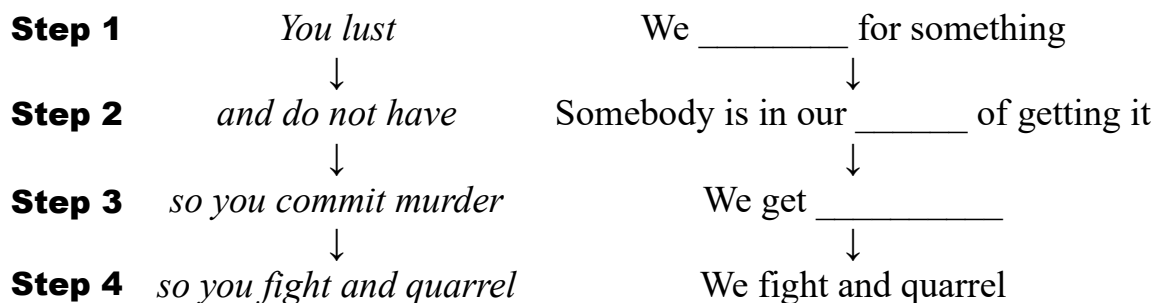
- Biblical illustrations
 - David's lust for sexual pleasure led to a manipulative plot to have Uriah killed in battle (2 Samuel 11)
 - Absalom so lusted to rule Israel that he was willing even to kill his father to achieve it (2 Samuel 15-18)
 - Rich King Ahab and Jezabel, who lusted for one small vineyard, started false accusations against innocent Nathan which led to his death by stoning (1 Kings 21)
 - The Pharisees, who lusted for the personal satisfaction of having a virtuous reputation and a position of power, had Jesus murdered
 - Ahithophel's was so frustrated that Absalom did not take his counsel that he murdered himself by strangulation (2 Samuel 15-17)

Lesson: Never underestimate the power of lust that lives in our heart.
There is no limit to where they will go to satisfy themselves.

- "Murder" is probably being used metaphorically by James
 - Matthew 5:21-22 - ²¹"You have heard that the ancients were told, 'YOU SHALL NOT COMMIT MURDER' and 'Whoever commits murder shall be liable to the court.' ²²"But I say to you that everyone who is angry with his brother shall be guilty before the court; and whoever says to his brother, 'You good-for-nothing,' shall be guilty before the supreme court; and whoever says, 'You fool,' shall be guilty enough to go into the fiery hell.
 - Summary: Anger, derogatory name calling, and hatred in the heart are the moral _____ of murder in God's eyes.
 - 1 John 3:15 - *Everyone who hates his brother is a murderer*
- **The point:** When we lust and we cannot have, our hearts become filled with sinful anger for the person who stands in our way. That anger comes from the same _____ that murder comes from. And given enough time and opportunity, murder is the _____ to which our anger would go if left unchecked.

Illustration (2)

v. 2b - *You are envious and cannot obtain; so you fight and quarrel.*



The big picture:

All human conflict (verbal, physical, war) can be traced back to one common source:
_____ desires

Q: Why are our desires unfulfilled?

A1: We don't ask (_____)

v. 2c - *You do not have because you do not ask*

- Edmund Hiebert - *"Instead of turning to God as the Giver of every good and perfect gift (1:17), we attempt to satisfy our gnawing wants through our own efforts."*
- James 1:5 - *If any of you lacks wisdom, let him ask of God*
- Matthew 7:7 - *Ask, and it will be given to you; seek, and you will find; knock, and it will be opened to you.*
 - Context: How to respond to conflict with believers (7:1-5) and unbelievers (7:6)
 - Solution: Respond _____

A2: We don't ask with the right motives (_____)

v. 3a - *You ask and do not receive, because you ask with wrong motives*

Greek: "You ask badly" ←

Why?

v. 3b - *so that you may spend it on your pleasures*

↓
dapanaō = "to spend selfishly"

Luke 15:14 - *He (the prodigal son) spent (dapanaō) everything*

- John Blanchard - *"God's promise is to supply our need, not our greed. Prayer is not asking God for what we want. It's asking God for what He wants."*

Conclusion:

- If our desires are what lie behind both our temptations and our conflicts in life, then our greatest need is that our desires would be _____. And that first and foremost we would desire God.
- Psalms 86:11 - *Give me an undivided heart, that I may fear your name.*
- Jeremiah 2:9-13 - ⁹*"Therefore I will yet contend with you," declares the LORD, "And with your sons' sons I will contend. ¹⁰For cross to the coastlands of Kittim and see, and send to Kedar and observe closely and see if there has been such a thing as this! ¹¹Has a nation changed gods When they were not gods? But My people have changed their glory for that which does not profit. ¹²Be appalled, O heavens, at this, and shudder, be very desolate," declares the LORD. ¹³"For My people have committed two evils: They have forsaken Me, the fountain of living waters, to hew for themselves cisterns, Broken cisterns that can hold no water."*

Is there anything that gives you more pleasure than God?