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Monday: The Cause of Conflict

PRAY: Ask God to speak to you from His Word.

READ: James 4:1

What causes **fights and quarrels** among you? Don't they come from your **desires that battle within you**?

UNDERSTAND: *get a deeper understanding of the key words*

- **Fights and quarrels:** At the end of chapter three, James teaches us to be peacemakers. Then he begins chapter four with an explanation of why we have conflict. Too often we deal with conflict at the surface level. It's easy to be deceived and distracted by the symptoms of a problem. James goes right to the source of all conflict which he says is a personal, internal battle.
- **Desires that battle within you:** When conflict arises the blame game begins. We always want to blame the other person without realizing or admitting to our own faults. James teaches us that conflict arises because our own desires are at war within us. This internal conflict leads to the external one (see Romans 7:21-25 and 1 Peter 2:11).

APPLY: *What is this passage calling me to do?*

What are some things that cause you to fight and argue most often?

What desires are at war within you?

How are those desires related to the conflict in your life?

PRAY: Ask God to help you identify your desires and solve the conflict within you.

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Tuesday: Ask God

PRAY: Ask God to speak to you from His Word.

READ: James 4:2-3

² You desire but **do not have, so you kill**. You **covet** but you cannot get what you want, **so you quarrel and fight**. You do not have because **you do not ask God**. ³ When you ask, you do not receive, because you **ask with wrong motives**, that you may **spend what you get on your pleasures**.

UNDERSTAND: *get a deeper understanding of the key words*

- **Do not have, so you kill:** This is violent language for division between believers. However, it should not be taken literally. James is making the point that when we are envious we become bitter and evil.
- **You covet...so you quarrel and fight:** Covet is not a word we use often. The Greek word here is *epithymeō* and can also be translated "lust." To covet or lust is to want what someone else has. The 10th Commandment in Exodus 20:17 directly condemns envy and covetousness. The point is to be content with the life God has given you and trust that His way is best.
- **You do not ask God:** James is teaching a practical lesson here. If you don't have something we should ask God rather than fighting others for what you want. If we ask God and He decides not to give us what we want, then we can be sure there are good reasons that we do not need it. Also see Matthew 7:7-11.
- **Ask with wrong motives:** The Greek *kakōs* is a strong term that is also translated to mean sick or miserable. Sometimes we don't get what we want because our motives are selfish. Apparently James is referring to asking God for financial things. This must be why he says we want more so we can **spend what you get on your pleasures**.

APPLY: *What is this passage calling me to do?*

What are the common methods you use to get what you want?

Why do we try to get what we want our own way before asking God?

What are your motives when you ask God for what you want?

PRAY: Ask God to reveal your motives behind what you want.

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Wednesday: Friends and Enemies

PRAY: Ask God to speak to you from His Word.

READ: James 4:4-6

⁴ You **adulterous people**, don't you know that **friendship with the world means enmity against God**? Therefore, anyone who chooses to be a friend of the world becomes an enemy of God. ⁵ Or do you think Scripture says without reason that **he jealously longs for the spirit he has caused to dwell in us?** ⁶ But **he gives us more grace**. That is why Scripture says: "**God opposes the proud but shows favor to the humble.**"

UNDERSTAND: *get a deeper understanding of the key words*

- **Adulterous people:** Since our faith is about having a relationship with God, He expects us to be faithful to Him. When we turn away from God to chase what the world offers, God considers that to be adulterous against Him.
- **Friendship with the world means enmity against God:** James is addressing a common problem that still exists today. Many people want God and what the world offers. James is teaching that we can't have both. We can't love God and the world. Also see Matthew 6:19-24 and 1 John 2:15-17.
- **He jealously longs for the spirit:** Every person has a spirit that will live forever in eternity. God longs for us to worship Him in spirit and in truth (John 4:23-24). Therefore, God has a right to be a jealous God since He created us.
- **He gives us more grace** (Greek: *megas charis*): This Greek phrase means "greater grace." Even though God is jealous for us He still chooses to give us grace.
- **God opposes the proud but shows favor to the humble:** Since all sin comes from pride, God resists and sends judgment to the proud. God shows favor (gives grace) to those who are humble and have not chosen to follow the ways of the world. See Proverbs 3:34 and 1 Peter 5:5.

APPLY: *What is this passage calling me to do?*

In what ways are you being a "friend of the world"?

How is this impacting your relationship with God?

PRAY: Ask God to

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Thursday: Submit and Resist

PRAY: Ask God to speak to you from His Word.

READ: James 4:7-10

⁷ **Submit yourselves**, then, **to God**. **Resist the devil**, and he will flee from you. ⁸ **Come near to God** and he will come near to you. **Wash your hands**, you sinners, and **purify your hearts**, you **double-minded**. ⁹ **Grieve, mourn and wail**. Change your laughter to mourning and your joy to gloom. ¹⁰ **Humble yourselves** before the Lord, and **he will lift you up**.

UNDERSTAND: *get a deeper understanding of the key words*

- **Submit yourselves to God:** The Greek word for submit here is *hypotassō* meaning to obey, to arrange yourself under another, to give up control.
- **Resist the devil** (Greek: *anthistēmi diabolos*): to set one's self against, to oppose. Resisting the devil is an active daily decision (Ephesians 6:13). Jesus gave us an example of how to resist the devil in Luke 4:1-13.
- **Come near to God:** The only way to effectively resist the devil is to stay near to God. This is the only way to maintain strength against temptation. The Greek term *eggizō* means to draw near and join together.
- **Wash your hands:** This refers to cleansing ourselves from sin (Psalm 51:1-12).
- **Purify your hearts:** This refers to evaluating what you really love; God or the world. This is why he uses the term **double-minded** which refers to being uncertain, doubtful, and divided.
- **Grieve, mourn, and wail:** Apparently the audience James was writing to saw their sin as something to laugh about. James is saying they should be grieving of their sin.
- **Humble yourselves...he will lift you up:** When we exalt ourselves God will humble us for our own good. When we humble ourselves God lifts us up for our good.

APPLY: *What is this passage calling me to do?*

In what areas of your life are you not submitting to God?

In what ways can you come near to God?

What do you need to change in your life in order to humble yourself?

PRAY: Ask God to lift you up as you humble yourself before Him.

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Friday: Who Are You to Judge?

PRAY: Ask God to speak to you from His Word.

READ: James 4:11-12

¹¹ Brothers and sisters, **do not slander one another**. Anyone who **speaks against** a brother or sister or **judges them speaks against the law** and judges it. When you judge the law, you are not keeping it, but sitting in judgment on it. ¹² There is **only one Lawgiver and Judge**, the one who is **able to save and destroy**. But you—**who are you to judge** your neighbor?

UNDERSTAND: *get a deeper understanding of the key words*

- **Do not slander one another:** To slander someone is to speak evil about them.
- **Speaks against:** This is related to slander but also includes speaking evil about someone and toward someone. It is slander behind their back and to their face.
- **Judges them:** To slander or speak against someone is to make yourself a judge over them. In this context, this kind of judging would be wrong and sinful (Matthew 7:1-5). There is a kind of judgment that is focused on accountability that is good for us (1 Corinthians 5:12-13).
- **Speaks against the law:** Because God's law tells us to love your neighbor as yourself, to slander someone is to say our way is better than God's way.
- **Only one Lawgiver and Judge:** Only God decided what is right or wrong. When we slander someone we are taking God's place as the judge of His creation.
- **Able to save and destroy:** God is just, merciful, and wrathful.
- **Who are you to judge:** Before we slander someone we should ask ourselves: What makes me better than anyone else? Who am I to judge when I am also sinful?

APPLY: *What is this passage calling me to do?*

What are the real reasons behind why we slander or talk about the people we are in conflict with?

How would conflicts and disagreements be different if you chose to pray for and not speak against those who have wronged you?

PRAY: Ask God to help you give grace to others the way He gives grace to you.

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Saturday: Prepare for Sunday

REVIEW: Take a few minutes to make a list of what you've learned this week.

PRAY: Ask God to use this time to help you get familiar with Sunday's scripture passage.

READ: James 4:13-17

¹³ Now listen, you who say, "Today or tomorrow we will go to this or that city, spend a year there, carry on business and make money." ¹⁴ Why, you do not even know what will happen tomorrow. What is your life? You are a mist that appears for a little while and then vanishes. ¹⁵ Instead, you ought to say, "If it is the Lord's will, we will live and do this or that." ¹⁶ As it is, you boast in your arrogant schemes. All such boasting is evil. ¹⁷ If anyone, then, knows the good they ought to do and doesn't do it, it is sin for them.

THINK: *Go ahead and underline key words and phrases.*

Start thinking about what this passage is saying.

- What stands out to you in this passage?
- What do you think is the main idea?
- What parts are confusing or hard to understand?
- How might this passage help you to follow Jesus better?

PRAY: Ask God to prepare you for tomorrow's worship service.