

The Cause and Cure for Relationship Problems

James 4:1-11

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^{NIV} **James 4:1** What causes fights and quarrels among you? Don't they come from your desires that battle within you?

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.

James 4:1-11

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."

James 4:1-11

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.

James 4:1-11

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.

The Source of Trouble

Question 1 - *“What causes fights (wars) and quarrels (battles) among you?”*

- Figuratively, James is painting the picture of war within the Jewish congregations of the Dispersion.
- This can apply to **any** human relationship.

Answer: “Do they not come from **desires** that battle within you?”

The Source of Trouble

- “**Desires**” – Grk. *hedone* from which we derive the English words **hedonism** – the belief that pleasing self is the chief good in life.
- This is the reason for all conflict in the Church.
- This is the reason for conflict in any relationship.
- **People are seeking to please themselves – have their own way – promote their views and goals.**
- How radically different this is than “the mind of Christ” spoken of in Philippians chapter 2.

The Mind of Christ

^{NIV} **Philippians 2:2-6** “make my joy complete by being like-minded, having the same love, being one in spirit and of one mind.”

³ Do nothing out of selfish ambition or vain conceit. Rather, in humility value others above yourselves,

⁴ not looking to your own interests but each of you to the interests of the others.

⁵ In your relationships with one another, have the same mindset as Christ Jesus:

⁶ Who, being in very nature God, did not consider equality with God something to be used to his own advantage;

The Analysis of Trouble

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.

- ***“You kill and covet...”*** – A figurative understanding of “killing,” as doing people harm verbally or socially, may be a better understanding rather than a literal view.
- Jesus used the concept of “murder” in the figurative sense of being unjustifiably angry with someone (Matt. 5:21, 22)

The Analysis of Trouble

- It is the thought of self-advantage, in some form or other that lies at the root of our sins.
- Why do people lie and steal? They think that “self” will be protected or advantaged.
- Why do people quarrel with others? Because the “self” has been crossed.
- Why are people envious? Because they are afraid that someone will get ahead of the “self”.
- The problem of victorious living centers, then, in one thing chiefly: **self surrender**.

The Analysis of Trouble

³ When you ask, you do not receive, because you ask with wrong motives, that you may spend what you get on your pleasures.

- Their self-centered, self-seeking produced divisions, quarrels, fighting, that was tearing the churches apart.
- God does not answer self-centered, self-promoting prayers.

The Anger of God

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.

- To pursue self-centered, self-promoting goals is to abandon loyalty to God and align oneself with the Kingdom of Darkness.
- James labels such behavior as spiritual adultery.
- To act like the world is to be a “friend” of the world.

The Anger of God

- A comparison of **1 John 2:15-17** and **James 4:1-4** indicates that, for both James and John, the “world” is that place characterized by the pursuit of desires that are contrary to God’s ways.
- Thus, any activity, even prayer, that is motivated by self-centeredness rather than God-centeredness is worldly and constitutes a relationship of “friendship” with the world.

The Jealousy of God

NIV ⁵ Or do you think Scripture says without reason that he jealously longs for the spirit he has caused to dwell in us?

NLT ⁵ What do you think the Scriptures mean when they say that the Holy Spirit, whom God has placed within us, jealously longs for us to be faithful?

- The Holy Spirit is jealous for our affection and devotion and will tolerate no rivals for our love.
- His love and desire is depicted in terms of “jealousy”

The Remedy for Trouble

The Promise of a Remedy 4:6

⁶ But he gives us more grace. That is why Scripture says: "God opposes the proud but shows favor to the humble."

The Process Required to Receive the Remedy

1. 4:6 – stop allowing pride in your life.
2. 4:6b-7 – humble yourself by submitting to God.
 - ⁷ Submit yourselves, then, to God. Resist the devil, and he will flee from you.
3. 4:7b – resist the devil & he will flee from you.

The Remedy for Trouble

The Process Required to Receive the Remedy

⁸ Come near to God and he will come near to you. Wash your hands, you sinners, and purify your hearts, you double-minded.

4. 4:8 – “come (draw) near to God”
5. 4:8 – “wash your hands, you sinners” – make your conduct pure.
6. 4:8 – “purify your hearts, you double-minded” – insists on purity of thought and motives.

The Remedy for Trouble

The Process Required to Receive the Remedy

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.

7. 4:9 – “grieve, mourn, wail” - get serious about minding God and being all He wants you to be.
8. 4:10 – “humble yourselves before the Lord” - do not think more highly of yourself, your family, your (anything) than you ought to think!

The Remedy for Trouble

The Assurance of Forgiveness and Restoration

¹⁰ Humble yourselves before the Lord, and **he will lift you up.**

- There is a cure for interpersonal problems.
- God can help you stop all self-seeking.

The Remedy for Trouble

The Proof of Humbling yourself and True Repentance: Stop the Slander!

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.

- **Slander** – to speak in a way about another person that causes others to think less of that person.

Slander

- **Slander** is also called “backbiting” – Romans 1:30.
- **Slander** is against the Law of God – Lev. 19:16 – “Do not go about spreading slander (talebearer) among your people.”
- **Psalms 15:1-3** – teaches that a person in close relationship with God does not slander with the tongue.
- **Proverbs 10:18** says “whoever spreads slander is a fool.”

Summary

- **The Cause** of relationship problems is self-centered self-seeking - promoting our own ideas.
- We think we know best how things should be, and we promote our views in a way that hurts others and causes divisions.
- Instead of soaking our views and opinions in much prayer, and allowing the Holy Spirit to work, we try in our own fleshly way to bring about change.
- Only God can show us our need to change the way we seek to promote “His” cause.

Summary

Change in relationships comes only by:

1. Being willing to humble ourselves.
2. Submitting to God's Word in everything.
3. Stop allowing pride in our life.
4. Resisting the devil.
5. Making sure our conduct is pure.
6. Making sure our thoughts and motives are pure.
7. Getting serious about minding God and being all He wants us to be.
8. Stop all slander toward others.

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