

Resolving Conflict by Waging War

Epistle of James

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Please turn with me in your Bibles to the fourth chapter of James, James 4. We began looking at this fourth chapter last Sunday and we titled the message last Sunday "Resolving Conflicts," and we noted that conflicts, one of the things that James points out, especially when you read it in context of chapter 3 right into chapter 4, is that how incredibly disheartening or alarming it ought to be that we have conflicts; that the church should be a place of peace. You're reading out of chapter 3, peace, those who make peace, sow peace. Where are the wars and battles among you? Where do they come from? So James is challenging us to be a people who are peacemakers who resolve our conflicts and so it's ironic that what we see as we begin to unpack what he says in this chapter is something that is counterintuitive but is absolutely correct, and the title of the message this morning, you'll see what I'm talking about, "Resolving Conflicts By Making War." That's the title. Resolving conflicts by making war. We're going to see that the only way that we can resolve conflicts and really not have conflicts dominate our lives is by making war not with one another but with our own hearts, with the desires that rule our own hearts, we must make war with them, we must make war with us. I must make war with myself if I am to be at peace with you.

The sad irony of being a believer born again in a fallen world, still with an old nature, a sin nature, that harbors the lusts of the flesh, and there will be no peace unless we make war but our problem is we tend to point our guns the wrong way. We're a little bit like World War II history, you know, the movie "Darkest Hour" that is out, it's about one of the people that I have enjoyed reading a lot about, Winston Churchill, and World War II history, something that I find fascinating. But one of the sad things about World War II is the way that the incredibly impressive Maginot Line in France was completely worthless. They spent millions of dollars after World War I to defend themselves against a future war and they fortified the border of France and Germany with this incredible array of weaponry, state-of-the-art weaponry. Well, Germany when they attacked in World War II just went around the Maginot Line and the guns were pointed in the wrong direction. Actually came back through France and took all of France and the guns were not made so that you could turn them or move them. It was basically just kind of like a monument. It's kind of like a lot of things in France, it's a monument to former glory.

Well, our problem is we aim our guns the wrong way. We aim them at others. We think that they are our problem, but James is going to tell us that, no, our problem is our own sinful heart that must be made to submit to the rule of Christ through the glorious Gospel. We must take our hearts to the cross continually and make war on our own desires if we are to have peace. That's the priority that James really has on his heart as he writes this pastoral epistle, as it were. I mean, it's a pastoral letter. It's not the pastoral epistles, those are the letters Paul writes to pastors, 1 & 2 Timothy and Titus, but James writes as a pastor to Christians whom he wants to experience life as God intended and he's concerned about the level of conflict that he sees in the lives of believers. So he spent chapter 3 talking about the tongue in the first 12 verses and how our tongues, with our words we can do such great damage to the unity that ought to be ours in the body of Christ. And in 3:13 to 18, the last six verses of chapter 3 dealt with attitudes. So from our words to our attitudes, and then in chapter 4 he turns to the heart. Desires. Passions. Lust. These are the things he says, "These are the problems." So he's kind of going from the outside in and he's working, and he shows how the Scripture is so relevant to every aspect of our need. It shows us how to deal with everything that we need to honor Christ.

Conflict has no place among the people of God. If we have peace with God, we ought to have peace with each other, and if we walked in meekness, that's what he was saying in 3:13 to 18, if we walked in meekness as he describes here, peace is the inevitable fruit of meekness and meekness is the inevitable fruit of true heavenly wisdom, the wisdom which comes from above. When you really know how to apply the word of God to your life, you'll be meek, that means you have wisdom, and wisdom leads to meekness and meekness leads to peace. And this is what it ought to be for all of us if we realize what we are up against, which is part of what wisdom tells you in the first place and why you ought to be meek is because we have these unruly wicked desires that must be crucified.

You can't have peace unless you are willing to go to war. It's useless to yell, "Peace, peace," or to proclaim, "Peace, peace," when there is no peace, as Jeremiah said to the false prophets of his day. And one of the realities about World War II was that Neville Chamberlain was one of those guys who proclaimed peace when there was no peace. He thought peace could be made through appeasement and so he tried to appease Hitler but you can't appease a tyrant and Churchill understood that. He knew Hitler because he had read Hitler's book, "Mein Kampf," and he knew what Hitler wanted and he had a little better understanding of the nature, the fallen nature of man. Chamberlain was like many in our day who have a glamorized view of mankind. Fallen man is conceived in sin, brought forth in iniquity. The desires of our hearts apart from grace are always to turn away from God and to do that which is evil.

So you cannot have peace without war, that's the theme of the message. Resolving conflict by waging war. We're going to focus on the first three verses this morning of this chapter 4, verses 1 to 10 really are dealing with this issue but let's look at the first three verses. James 4:1, "What is the source of quarrels and conflicts among you?" We said that we could translate that word, what is the source, I'm going to change it now. I'm reading in the NASB but I'm going to change "quarrels" to "wars" and "conflicts" to "battles," like we talked about last week.

1 What is the source of wars and battles 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 battle and make war. 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.

Let's pray together.

Our Father, we ask now that you would grant us wisdom, that you would grant us the spirit of wisdom to work in our minds and our hearts to illuminate your precious word, to give us eyes to see and ears to hear, and to obey. To believe and obey for the glory of your Son, our Savior. We pray in his name. Amen.

On December 8, 1941, Franklin Delano Roosevelt gave a speech that was very effective. There are not a lot of things I liked about FDR myself looking back in history, but this speech was really good and I want to read it to you because it illustrates an important point, our first point in the message today, which is essentially the point that you're going to see, that we have to declare war. That's our first point. And we have to declare war because declaring war is realizing that you already are at war. Listen to FDR's speech, December 8, 1941.

Mr. Vice President, and Mr. Speaker, and Members of the Senate and House of Representatives:

YESTERDAY, December 7, 1941 a date which will live in infamy the United States of America was suddenly and deliberately attacked by naval and air forces of the Empire of Japan.

The United States was at peace with that Nation and, at the solicitation of Japan, was still in conversation with its Government and its Emperor looking toward the maintenance of peace in the Pacific. Indeed, one hour after Japanese air squadrons had commenced bombing in the American Island of Oahu, the Japanese Ambassador to the United States and his colleague delivered to our Secretary of State a formal reply to a recent American message. And while this reply stated that it seemed useless to continue the existing diplomatic negotiations, [that communication] contained no threat or hint of war or of armed attack.

It will be recorded that the distance of Hawaii from Japan makes it obvious that the attack was deliberately planned many days or even weeks ago. During the intervening time the Japanese Government has deliberately sought to deceive the United States by false statements and expressions of hope for continued peace.

The attack yesterday on the Hawaiian Islands has caused severe damage to American naval and military forces. I regret to tell you that very many American lives have been lost. In addition American ships have been reported torpedoed on the high seas between San Francisco and Honolulu.

Yesterday the Japanese Government also launched an attack against Malaya. Last night Japanese forces attacked Hong Kong: Last night Japanese forces attacked Guam. Last night Japanese forces attacked the Philippine Islands. Last night the Japanese attacked Wake Island. And this morning the Japanese attacked Midway Island.

Japan has, therefore, undertaken a surprise offensive extending throughout the Pacific area. The facts of yesterday and today speak for themselves. The people of the United States have already formed their opinions and well understand the implications to the very life and safety of our Nation.

As Commander in Chief of the Army and Navy I have directed that all measures be taken for our defense.

But always will our whole Nation remember the character of the onslaught against us.

No matter how long it may take us to overcome this premeditated invasion, the American people in their righteous might will win through to absolute victory.

I believe that I interpret the will of the Congress and of the people when I assert that we will not only defend ourselves to the uttermost but will make it very certain that this form of treachery shall never again endanger us.

Hostilities exist. There is no blinking at the fact that our people, our territory, and our interests are in grave danger.

With confidence in our armed forces with the unbounding determination of our people we will gain the inevitable triumph so help us God.

I ask that the Congress declare that since the unprovoked and dastardly attack by Japan on Sunday, December 7, 1941, a state of war has existed between the United States and the Japanese Empire.

That was the speech that Congress, of course, quickly ratified, a declaration of war. Now it was basically acknowledged one already existed. It would have been laughable to have said, "I think Japan made a mistake yesterday and we're trying to work out an agreement." I mean, you heard how many places they attacked. They attacked. They

attacked. They attacked. They attacked. They had lied. We were at war. It would have been foolishness to act like we weren't.

Now, that's the way it is for you and me. The Scripture says that whether you want to or not, if you belong to Jesus Christ, you are in a state of war. You may wish that it weren't so. Of course, nobody likes to be at war but if Jesus Christ is your Lord and Savior, if you have repented and placed your faith in him, if you have been born again, then you now have the principle of new life living inside of you and that new life is in direct conflict with the old sin nature and with the spirit of this world and with the spirit that is now at work in the sons of disobedience, the enemy of our soul, Satan. So we are at war and our problem is we know it theoretically but we forget to remember it on a daily basis. So there are two points this morning, two main points. The first point is for us to resolve conflict, you must, you and I must declare war. We must declare war. You are at war.

Let me just show you a few verses that confirm this. In James if you turn over a couple of pages, just actually one page in my Bible, toward the back, you find 1 Peter 2:11. The same word that James uses in chapter 1, "your pleasures that wage war in your members," the same word is in chapter 2 of 1 Peter in verse 11, "Beloved, I urge you as aliens and strangers to abstain from fleshly lusts which wage war against the soul." The lust of the flesh wars against the soul so he's saying, "Resist that. Stand firm against that." The same word is used in 2 Corinthians 10:4, "for the weapons of our warfare are not fleshly," or carnal. Our warfare is a spiritual warfare but we are at war. 1 Timothy 1:18, the same word is used by Paul when he says to Timothy, "I urge you to fight the good fight," war the good war. You've got to fight.

So back to James now, looking at verses 1 and 2 particularly, "Is not the source your pleasures that wage war in your members?" The word "pleasures," to declare, what we have to understand, one of the things, there is like one subpoint under this main point, and there are two subpoints, well, there are a whole bunch of subpoints under the second one, there are like 12. But there are three main things about declaring war, okay, and one of them under this point is you have to identify your enemy. To declare war, you must identify your enemy. You must know who you are fighting and he says you need to know who you are fighting because they are already fighting you. Your pleasures are waging war against you. Hostilities already exist. If you just look honestly at it, you see that you are at a state of war and it's your pleasures.

The Greek word, "hedone," we get our word "hedonism" from that. It means "sensual fulfillment; pleasure." The hedonist is the person who believes that life is about fulfilling pleasures and about seeking pleasure, that that's the ultimate good. So James uses this word twice, once in verse 1 and also in verse 3, "that you may spend it on your pleasures," that's the word "hedone" again. Sensual fulfillment. You've had these desires for fulfillment in your heart and these desires for fulfillment are warring against your soul and they are creating conflict and making you at war with other people who love the Lord around you. In fact, the word "wage war," translated "wage war" by the NASB in verse 1, "Is not the source your pleasures that wage war in your members?" It's the Greek verb strateuo, you see the word "strategy" in there. Our English word "strategy" is a

transliteration from that root idea. It means "to fight as a soldier." It's your pleasures and they fight as a soldier. Now, think about that. He could have just said they fight, they are fighting against you, but he uses the word fight as a soldier. They soldier against you. That's an important thing to consider.

Maybe you've had the misfortune of seeing people that get in a fight at a ballgame or something. We were at a ballgame last year and some guys got in a fight. We didn't see it, we just heard the commotion and somebody said that it had happened and apparently nobody left bloody from what we could tell, so a lot of times a fight like that happens because somebody is drunk and they are often not that good a fighter and then being drunk, they don't really hit each other that well anyway so there is not really a lot of damage done, it's just a lot of noise. Think about the difference between fighting with someone who doesn't know how to punch. Somebody gets really mad and they just have never thrown a punch in their life and they're just like, you know, sort of like that, and it's not even going to hurt even if it hits. I mean, it's going to hurt a little bit but if you think about a boxer who knows how to stand and who has been trained and who leans in and gets close enough so that when his punch is actually extending through your face like that, that is going to hurt a lot more than when you just barely get hit because somebody is kind of flailing.

Now, a soldier that has been trained in mortal combat and hand-to-hand combat and knows how to kill you 20 different ways from Sunday and knows how to do it quickly and silently, think about that. That's what your pleasures are. They are skilled in destroying you and those that you love around you. They are soldiering. They have been trained. Your whole life, they have been training in how to rule over you. So you're not fighting against someone that's unskilled and just kind of moody, you're fighting against an armed force that wants to destroy you and has the capability to do that.

To make this point, he repeats the idea. He says, first of all, is not the source your pleasures that wage war in your members, and then he gives two more statements in verse 2 that are kind of like parallels of this same thing to help intensify it. So he basically says the same thing three times. Your pleasures wage war, and then he says in verse 2, "You lust and do not have." This verb "lust" sometimes translated "desire," ESV, NIV, it's a word which pictures "setting the mind upon something; an intense focus and desire; to long after something." You long after something and you do not have so you murder. In fact, it's interesting the tenses that James uses in this section. He uses the Greek present over and over and over again with an occasional deviation from that. Remember, the Greek present tense is not about the time of action as much as it is about the kind of action, and the present tense in Greek, the kind of action that it describes is ongoing and continuous action. That's the emphasis more than the time. Present for us means present time in English, pastime, future time. In Greek, it has that element but also it has the idea of ongoing kind of action, continuous. So it really has the force of here you are lusting, you are longing after. Do you see how I'm making it a continued, it's not just you lust, it is you are lusting. It's not just you long after, you are longing after and you are not having. You're in a state of longing for and also of not having what you're longing for. You're longing for it and you're not having it and you are murdering. All three present

tense. The longing for and not having and murdering are all going on at the same time. This connection between, and he says this is how your pleasures are waging war.

The same thing in the next phrase when he says, the next clause, "You are envious and cannot obtain." The idea here again is a present tense verb which means "to desire with envy; to be jealous for." You are envying and you are not being able. You are continually envying and you are continually not being able to obtain. "Obtain" actually is an aorist tense, not the present. The obtaining is like grabbing a hold of, but the present tense is in not being able. You are envying continually and you are continually not being able to obtain.

So the envying and the not being able are ongoing so then you are battling and warring. This is where battles and wars come from. These desires have such power in us that if we leave it alone, the enemy that we have within us. John Owen in one of his writings says that, he says, you think about Samson, remember how Samson and Delilah, that amazing story about how he kept telling her or acting like he was telling her the secret of his strength. She would say, "Samson, please tell me the secret of your strength. If you really loved me, you would tell me the secret of your strength." How stupid was that whole thing and it shows how Samson really had a lot of issues. He kept telling her things that were not true. "If you bind my hair and you turn it in a certain way, braid it, or whatever, I won't have any strength." So then right after that, Samson is asleep. He wakes up to Delilah saying, "Samson, the Philistines," now she has braided his hair, done exactly what he said would end his strength, "Samson, the Philistines are upon you!" He jumps up and kills all the Philistines and then she says later that night or whatever, "I wish you would tell me the secret of your strength, if you really loved me." And he tells her another lie. He didn't get the message, I don't think she's on your side. Finally he tells her the truth, "If you cut my hair," and that's what happens. The Philistines are able to bind him and he's just like any man. The Spirit of the Lord had left him. Owen says, think about how it was for Samson. Imagine you're asleep and you wake up, "Samson, your enemies are upon you!" Waking up out of sleep, how bad that is to now be surrounded by your enemies. That's what we're fighting. We're surrounded by the world. The devil is a present reality in our world, in our lives, but Owen says it's worse than that. Not only are your enemies upon you, they are within you. The sin nature, and James is saying we must understand who our enemy is and we must be declaring war on our enemy.

We must identify the enemy. You must declare war on it, which means you must identify it. The second main point this morning, to have peace you must not only declare war on your enemy, identify him, you must secondly, the second main point, you must wage war. You don't just declare it, you must now fight. Let me hit, I mentioned there were like three main subpoints, one last time and two this time, and then I'm going to get to a whole bunch of extra subpoints for no extra charge. The two next subpoints, if declaring war means identifying your enemy, waging war means understanding the power of your enemy and, secondly, understanding the tactics of your enemy, how he is fighting against you. You have to understand the power so that you are motivated that he has the power to do great harm and great destruction to you, and James is basically making that case with the whole tongue issue. Look what you can do with your tongue. By not bridling your

heart, out of the fullness of the heart, the mouth speaks, look what damage you do with your words. You can be like one word can do the damage that a small spark does in setting ablaze a great forest fire.

So you need to understand the power of the enemy, now you need to understand the tactics of the enemy. How is it that pleasures become murder? That these desires turn into murderous intent? How is it that me wanting something then leads to me saying to someone I love, "You fool! Are you stupid?" Jesus said that's murder, right, Matthew 5, to call your brother an empty head or a fool, Raca. It's to murder them in your heart. To have a tone of voice, a harsh tone that asserts power over someone, tries to make them do our will. We are exerting, we are being violent with our words. How is it that violence comes out of the heart, the desire to violence? What is this progression?

This is what I'm talking about with the tactics of the enemy and it's helpful in this chapter of Scripture, there are some very helpful observations in recent years by people studying this passage. I'm going to mention a couple of chapters in books that you might want to read. Chapter 5 in the "The Peacemaker" by Ken Sande, "Conflict starts in the heart." And it's basically an explication of James 4, and he is saying the reason we have conflicts, and the book is "The Peacemaker," to make peace you have to understand how conflict starts and then you can stop making so many conflicts and then you can also know how to clean up the mess. Conflict starts in the heart and he talks about the progression that happens in the heart in that chapter 5.

Another very helpful chapter is from the book "Instruments in the Redeemers Hands" by Paul David Tripp. Both of these I think we have in our bookstore, by the way. It's also chapter 5. It's about the progression of an idol in the heart, ruling desires. How desires that start off as basically fairly innocent looking desires, most of the time desires for good things that are appropriate, yet rule the heart and make us murderers. So these desires because of our sin nature are able to war against us and then lead to us being at war with people that we love.

You must wage war by understanding the tactics of the enemy and here we get to some extra subpoints. This is kind of, I'm putting together a little bit of a blend of what I've read from these other authors so check them out and see what they say, but I've tried to look at the text and think through this. But anyway, I want to suggest five steps from desire to this kind of murderous intent, and it starts with, "I desire." Five statements, "I" and then a verb.

First is, I desire. I want something and a lot of times I'm not even in touch with what I want. I find myself in a conflict and I don't know why I'm in a conflict really. I sort of do, it's because you've done something. That's what I think, right? Isn't that always what we think? It's your fault that I'm in a conflict. That's how we feel but James says, no it's not, you're not in a conflict, you're not having a hostility, you're not doing something, speaking harsh words or unkind words because of something they did, the reason behind it is all in your own heart because you could be godly even with someone sinning against you, you can be godly, you don't have to be unkind, you don't have to be at war with

them. In fact, if you're thinking biblically, you won't be because they are not the enemy. Your guns are facing the wrong direction. If you were applying wisdom, you would have your guns facing the right direction.

So the problem is in our own hearts. I desire. A legitimate desire. You know, "I desire peace and quiet tonight." After a hard day at work, a hard day with the kids, a hard day wherever, it's okay to desire peace and quiet. It would be nice to have a nice evening at home. We eat, everybody's happy. It's just harmony and peace. Is that too much to ask? It's not too much to desire but it is too much to demand. This is what Sande says, "I desire quickly becomes I demand, and that is where the battle is lost." We think we have a right to it. "I mean, I work hard. I have a right to peace and quiet. I provide for this family. I have a right when I come home to have them treat me with respect."

Now, you understand that I'm saying this is what we all think but this is all ungodly thinking. This is our desires asserting the intent to rule over us and, "I demand this. I haven't had this all week and I demand it right now." I demand, becomes then, I submit, the third step in the process. I desire becomes I demand, becomes I submit. I submit. What we're doing as Christians is we are actively submitting to the rule of sin. We are actively submitting to the rule of this desire. That's why Paul tells us in Romans 6, "Do not go on letting sin reign over you." Sin wants to reign over you and he says, "Stop letting it reign. You have to fight and resist the reign. It's going to keep trying to reign over you and if you're not fighting it, you are being reigned over." Desires become demands and become sin reigning. I submit. That's what's happening and I really am submitting myself to sin, to this desire. Now, it was a desire for a good thing at first, remember? "I just want some peace and quiet." But what's wrong is I want peace and quiet more than I want to worship and serve the living God. I want to run my own life, you see. I don't want to submit to him. I want what I want.

I desire. I demand. I submit. I serve. This desire has become a functional God. What I want is my peace and quiet, and I want it badly, and I'm committed to it, and I'm serving it, and I'm now yelling at you because I'm trying to force you to cooperate with my agenda. I'm trying to force you, in reality, to worship my God, this idol that I have over here which is my peace and quiet. And I'm yelling at my child because I want my child to worship my God, which is not his peace and quiet because I'm not giving him peace and quiet, I want my peace and quiet. It's idolatry. It's wicked. It's ugly when you look at it as it really is. I serve whatever the desire is. It can be, "I want my wife to be faithful to me." That's a reasonable desire, is it not? "I want my husband to be faithful to me." That's a reasonable desire but you cannot let it rule your hearts. You cannot want that more than you want to please the Lord because if you do, then you will start sinning.

I serve, that's number four, and number five is, I destroy. I desire. I demand. I submit. I serve. I destroy. I destroy anyone who gets in the way of me and my desire. This is why we are murdering. This is why we are warring and battling. James says it's your desire that has gone to seed and this is awful. This is spiritual adultery. This is something God hates.

Listen to this, Ken Sande in his chapter, this chapter I mentioned, chapter 5, "Conflict starts in the heart," he just lets us into his life and listen to him. "All I wanted was a little peace and quiet when I came home from a long day at the office but I was not getting it. My children, Megan and Jeff, had been trying to control each other all week and their constant friction had exhausted their mother's patience. Instead of resolving their quarrels with her usual calm, Corlette, found herself resorting to sharp words and threats of, 'Wait until your father comes home!' So instead of walking through the door and finding smiling children and a serene affectionate wife, I found nothing but sullen faces, irritable voices, and a general sense that I had walked into a war zone. Welcome home, dad.

"Each evening, Corlette and I worked to break the cycle of conflicts." It's happening all week now, you see. "But it would start again in a day or two. By Sunday morning, I was feeling frustrated and resentful toward my children. Corlette had gone to church early that morning to meet with some other women and I followed 30 minutes later with the kids. As we approached the car, a new contest began. 'It's my turn to sit in the front seat!' 'No, you got to yesterday!' 'Well, you shouldn't sit there anyway, you're so small the airbag could kill you!' 'I don't care, I'm not sitting in the backseat!' Then a new voice entered the exchange, 'Be quiet!' I shouted. Then pointing to each child in turn, 'You get in the backseat right now. You get in the front seat. I don't want to hear another word out of either of you.' Climbing into the car myself, I gave vent to the anger that had been building in me all week. I even adjusted the rearview mirror so I could glare at Megan as I lectured her in the backseat. Among other things, I told them I was very angry at the way they had behaved all week and that I was now going to make things miserable for them.

"When I finally paused to take a breath, Jeffrey, my youngest, saw his opening. 'Daddy,' he said meekly, 'do you think you should pray to Jesus and ask him if its rightful anger?' His words must have been guided by the Holy Spirit because they instantly cut me to the core. I saw an empty parking lot and I pulled in. Before I even turned off the engine, I knew what I needed to say. Turning to my children I went to the heart of our conflict. My behavior that morning as well as my family's behavior that week, is described with painful accuracy in James 4:1-3. 'What causes fights and quarrels among you? Don't they come from your desires that battle within you? You want something but don't get it. You kill and covet but you cannot have what you want. You quarrel and fight. You do not have because you do not ask God.'" James is making specific application, Sande writes, to the fundamental principle that Jesus taught in Matthew 15:19, "Out of the heart come evil thoughts, murders, adultery, sexual immorality, theft, false testimonies, slander." It's out of our hearts.

So this is what we're up against. We take even good things and we turn them into idols. John Calvin said the heart of man is a factory of idols. You don't have to have a little metal image that you bow down to, we bow down to things of our own making. We bow down to things like the esteem and approval of others. Our comfort. Our pleasure. Being honored.

So we must recognize that that's the enemy. The enemy is our pleasures that war within us and we need to understand the tactics of the enemy, that I desire becomes I demand, becomes I submit, becomes I serve, becomes I destroy, how do we fight it? Well, James gives us so much help in this whole passage. We're going to see it keeps on dealing with different aspects of it but I want you to see one thing in verse 2 today that is the key to turning that around.

He says, "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." On the first reading of that, as you read through it, it doesn't, it seems almost like, you know, he's just kind of like Paul does sometimes, he's talking about something and then he seems to go over here for a minute. Under the inspiration of the Holy Spirit clearly, right, God is putting what he wants in the word but we find places where Paul will do that, he will go somewhere and then he comes back around to what he was saying a minute ago and you go, "Oh, these last eight verses have been actually like a big parenthesis. Now he's back to what he was saying here." The parenthesis is all valuable and exactly what God wanted but it shows the personality of the author. Well, James has a unique personality. We've seen he's very confrontive. He doesn't mince words. He doesn't pull punches. He lets you have it. Somebody was saying the other day he hits you with a two by four and then it's like now that he's got your attention, he picks up the concrete block and hits you with it. And it's true.

So maybe this is him doing that but actually this is exactly relevant to the point at hand and it fits right into that progression of an idol. I desire. I demand. I submit. I serve. I destroy. How do you not let your desires control you? Listen, here's the progression. I want to suggest another progression of five things that turns it around. You start with "I desire" because desires in themselves are not sinful if they are for good things. It's okay to want peace and quiet.

I desire, number one. Number two, I request. Instead of "I demand," I'm the one making it happen. I'm demanding that you cooperate. I request. I pray. This is where the hinge that turns to victory is, right there, it's in the hand of God. I'm wanting something. Who is the source of everything? God.

Isn't it interesting, remember the wisdom from above versus the wisdom from below? Remember we talked about wisdom, the Hebrew understanding of wisdom, the biblical understanding of wisdom? There are two things about it, one is it is intensely practical, not just theoretical. Godly wisdom really applies to your life. It's not just theoretical. But the most important thing about wisdom, the second thing that differentiates godly wisdom from worldly wisdom is it begins with the fear of God. The fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom. Remembering the presence of God, remembering the will of God, remembering the person of God, and so I go to him.

So here I am wanting something and my desire is getting, something is in the way of that desire, my desire is not happening. I mean, here I am driving home expecting a great night and sometimes you go home and things are pretty good, right? So maybe it's been

one of those days and when you go home and like he experienced, Corlette's been saying all day, "When dad gets home, you're going to get it," and she's ready for you to come in. You're the reinforcements. You're the cavalry. And you just wanted to go home and rest. You open that door, you see that happen and what do you do? You pray and it can start off with, "Lord, I really wanted...you know how tired I am. It's been an incredible day." This is the kind of thing we should say in our hearts to God, expressed just like the psalmist does, tell him how you feel. "I don't have the strength to deal with this, Lord." But do you see how different that is than, "I don't have the strength to deal with this and I want to just let you have it. I don't have the strength to deal with this, Lord." A million miles separates those two attitudes and responses, doesn't it? "Lord, I really would like some peace and quiet. I would like to have a spouse who is faithful to me. I would like," whatever, you name the blessing, but you realize, "It's in your hands, God. I can't make it happen. Requesting means that you're the only one that can make it happen and I'm going to stop trying to make my world work. I'm going to ask you to do your will in my life."

One of the things about prayer and the better we get at prayer and really understanding what prayer is, God wants us to need things and to pray. He says in Luke 18:1, remember that story he tells about, Jesus tells about the woman who has been dealt with unjustly and she goes to an unjust judge and the unjust judge doesn't give her justice and so she goes to him day after day after day after day after day, and finally this unjust judge determines, "This lady is going to wear me out. I'm just finally going to give her justice." It's so interesting, Jesus says, "Pray like that." Wait a minute, we're not dealing with an unjust judge. We're dealing with a God who knows everything. Why should we pray like that? "Because I want you to pray like that. I want you to be so dependent upon me that you pray without ceasing, that you pray continually, that you never stop praying." A man ought always to pray and not to lose heart. That's what he says about that story. This is why he taught that. We ought always to pray.

Our lives are to be lived in the presence of God so one of the beauties of our desires not getting met is it's a regular reminder that we tend to, like our default, you know? It goes back to living on the horizontal but you run into a desire that is frustrating, oh, here I am. "Lord," it takes you back to the vertical. It's God loving us and giving us opportunity to remember what really matters.

I desire. I request. You don't have because you don't ask. And you ask and don't receive because you ask with wrong motives. So he says, "Listen, the purpose of prayer, this requesting is not just to say, 'Hey, God, you see how bad it is for me. I want this. I deserve this. So just let them have it.'" It's praying like John when he said, "Hey, you want us to call fire down upon those Samaritans?" Remember? That's the disciple that later would be known as the apostle of love. Jesus changed him. It's not that we come to him, "Lord, I want," it's that we come to him knowing who he is. We look at him, we look at Christ, we look at the cross, "I need you. Here I am again wanting things too much. Help me not want things too much. I do really need. You know how tired I am. I don't think I have the strength. If I'm going to have to deal with this situation, I need your grace. I don't think I have the energy to sit down and work through this issue, but if you called me to it, you're going to give me the grace. And you have called me to it, so

obviously you're going to give me the grace. I'm looking for you to give me strength now."

So I desire, I request, becomes I submit. Just like the other. The second and the fifth subpoint are different from the previous five. Remember, I desire, I demand, I submit, I serve, I destroy. That's the progression of an idol that leads to destruction. This is, I desire, I request, I submit, I serve, and I edify. I request becomes I serve. I submit. I request becomes I submit to the Lord. "Lord, I really like peace and quiet but I'm going to submit to your plan. You obviously didn't have it for me to have this today."

Paul Tripp in his book talks about he was planning, he had this great idea at work. He's a guy who likes to cook a lot and so he had this idea of this dish he wanted to make, some Cuban dish. His wife is from Cuba and he thought, "I'm going to go and I'm going to get all this stuff for it." And he got all the stuff together and he goes home, he's got in his mind he's going to go home, fix the meal, they're going to sit around maybe spend some time together, watch a movie, and just time him and his wife. I forget his wife's name. But anyway, so they are going to do that. He drives into, he goes to the store, does the shopping, gets all the ingredients. I mean, just think how his desire is building. He gets home and he is met, before he gets out of the car, one of his children runs to the door and says, "Dad, you've got to take me downtown. I've got to be downtown in 30 minutes." I don't know where he lived at this point, maybe it was Philadelphia. So he's got to change what he's doing and now, okay, I've got to go 30 minutes. Oh, this is not really working out. So he's already getting a little grumpy. Doesn't really say much. Doesn't talk all the way down. Drives down, drops him off, drives back. Now it's been, you know, it took longer to get back than it did to go in, downtown in the evening, so it's like an hour and a half later he gets home and another situation has to be dealt with one of his kids and his wife has had it and so he orders pizza.

And he realized that what had happened was his desire had become a demand and he was grumpy, he was angry, he was complaining because he wanted it more than he should. What should have happened is, "This is a great idea, Lord. I'm going to put this together." It's not that you need to call ahead and make it work better. I mean, that's not a bad idea. Maybe you should call and check, "How are things going? How are we looking tonight? Okay, I've got a better assessment. Now go and buy the Cuban stuff for dinner." It might be wise but that's not going to solve it because even when you do that, that's not going to fix it. It ultimately comes down to, "Does God want me to have this tonight or does he not?"

So the desire that becomes a request that becomes submitting to Christ. "You are my Lord and Master," and the way we submit to him is we go to the cross. "Lord, you died so that you could put to death these desires controlling me, and by the Spirit, I want to put to death the deeds of the body. And I wanted this but I lay it down because of what Christ has done for me. I have no rights. I'm a slave. I'm a servant of Christ. You set the agenda and I'm going to cooperate with your agenda. Your agenda is not to have a Cuban meal tonight. Your agenda is for me to serve my child by driving him down there and then to deal with this other issue. Your agenda is for me," like it was for Ken Sande, "to deal

with the conflict that was going on in the home." And it really was some sin going on and there needs to be stern words, there needs to be discipline, but it's radically different tone and effect when we are not angry because you're getting in the way of my idol. We've surrendered that. We are serving our Lord and Savior. We've submitted to him.

Then we are serving, that's the fourth thing. I desire. I request. I submit. In fact, he brings it out in verse 7, "Submit therefore to God." Submit to God. That's the way you overcome this. Submit. Then I serve the Lord. So, "I'm your servant, Lord. I'm here for you. You're going to have to give me grace and strength but how can I minister for your glory right now in this situation?" And when you have that determination, the fifth one, I edify. Rather than I destroy, now I'm building up. I'm an agent of peace and blessing.

But you see where the battle was, the battle was where desire became demand. Winning at that point, that's the key. A lot of times we just deal with kind of like cleaning up our fruit. "I shouldn't be so harsh in the way I speak." Well, yeah, you shouldn't but what is it that's driving that? Why are you angry? I only have to mention one thing. For those of you that might be new to Providence, the Bible study that James was mentioning earlier when he says it's not happening on Saturday and don't be angry, remember when he said that? Some of you knew that the book is called "Uprooting Anger" they are working through. So anyway, that was the inside joke. But we have to uproot anger. That's the whole idea of that book too. I get angry because I'm wanting something and I'm not getting it and if I don't get in touch with what I'm wanting that I'm not getting, I can't really deal with anger. It's like cutting the weeds with a lawnmower; it will look better for a little while but if you want to really make it look right, you've got to pull the weeds up by the roots. That's what James is saying. Conflict starts in the heart. We must fight where the real enemy is, it's in our hearts. It's these desires that need to be submitted to Christ.

I desire becomes I request, becomes I submit, becomes I serve, becomes I edify, and it becomes a picture, we become peacemakers. We become people who, and it's so beautiful. The wonderful thing about it is, remember I said last week we talked about this, remember this in context of this, that if I love my life, I lose it. I mean, think about that, if Paul Tripp when he comes home, "I want to have a great Cuban meal with my family and we're going to have a great time together watching a movie afterwards. We're all going to have a great time." He made that happen by saying, "I don't care what you have downtown. We're not taking you. Stop that nonsense! Shut up! Get up to your room and wait until I tell you to come down for dinner! Come down for dinner and be happy." And the other child, "I don't care what you want. I don't care about how your day was, honey. We're going to have a great time together!" Nobody is having a great time together. But when you surrender and you say, "Lord, you didn't have this for me." And at first it's hard. It's dying. That's why we die daily. We are dying to what we want through the power of the cross and it hurts, but once we die, then the power of God begins to minister through us and then we find something more wonderful than what we wanted in the first place. "He who loves his life loses it, he who loses his life for my sake finds it." That's the glorious way of God. The meek inherit the earth.

Let's pray together.

Our Father, we thank you that, Lord, you have given us everything we need for life and godliness. You have given us a Savior who has delivered us from the domain of darkness by dying in our place. And we thank you for those that are here today that have repented and placed their faith in him. We can rejoice that we are at peace with you and we truly have the power now to be at peace with one another as we walk in truth; as we learn to die daily to the sin nature; as we learn to make war on sin in our flesh, in our members. We pray that you would help us be, Lord, more committed warriors, realizing the stakes are so great and, Father, realizing that the power that we have is so much greater than the power of sin. It's the power that raised Jesus Christ from the dead and exalted him at the right hand of the Majesty on high. That's the power in us.

Father, we pray for those that are here today who have not yet repented and placed their faith in Christ, that don't have the power of peace in their lives because they haven't made peace with you. We pray that you would grant them grace to reach out to Christ, to call out to him for salvation today; to stop living for themselves; to surrender to his Lordship; to place all of their trust in his finished work at Calvary; that his blood pays for their sins; that his resurrection proves that he is the Son of God, able and mighty to save. And Lord, take them to yourself and make them new creations in him and set them on the road to becoming more and more like Jesus. Father, we pray that you would have your way in our lives, that you would help us to repent where we need to repent, to make right where we need to make right, to stop warring with each other and to war where we need to work, with our own hearts and our own sin. We pray this for your glory in Jesus' name. Amen.