

I. Introduction: Why can't we all get along? Acts 6:1 Phil. 4:2 I Co. 1:11 3:3-4 Ga. 5:15

II. The course of conflict – Murder in the church! v. 1-3

A. The symptoms: quarrels (wars), conflicts, and murder. v. 1a

1. James raises an important question – Why do you fight? v. 1a II Ti. 2:23f Ti. 3:9
2. Such conflicts are contrary to the Lord's design for His people. John 17:21
13:34-35 Eph. 2:1ff Phil. 1:27

B. The pathology report – You fight because you want something. v. 1b

1. Your own desires for power, prestige, pleasure, possessions, and position are waging war within you. v. 1b Luke 8:14 Titus 3:3
2. You want to blame others for our conflicts, rather than admitting the problem is your own heart. Mark 7:18ff I Co. 10:13
3. You have replaced the desire for God's kingdom with the desire for your own worldly kingdom, which amounts to idolatry. v. 1b,4

C. Your idolatry of your desires affects your relationships with others. v. 2ab

1. You selfishly view the people in your life either as either obstacles or vehicles to fulfil your cravings. v. 2a
2. When you don't get what you want, you "murder". v. 2a Mt. 5:21-22 I Jo. 3:15
Eph. 4:29 Gal. 5:15 II Co. 12:20 Gen. 4:3-8,23
3. You hatefully envy those who have that for which you long. v. 2b 3:14,16

D. Your idolatry of your desires also impacts your relationship with God. v. 2c-3

1. You do not turn to God to get your needs met. v. 2c
2. For what should you be asking? v. 2c,8 1:5ff Mt. 6:33 7:7-8
3. When you do pray, your asking springs from evil motives – promoting your agenda, not God's. v. 3 Luke 15:14 III John 1:9
4. Today's churches are infected with such hedonistic prayers -- trying to use God as a vehicle for getting what they want from the world.
5. The Lord rejects such godless petitions. 1:6-8 Isa. 1:15 Ps. 66:18 Micah 3
6. God answers prayers that are humbly offered in accord with His will. Mt. 6:10
I Jo. 5:14 3:22 Luke 18:7 John 14:14-15 Eph. 3:20-21 Ps. 145:18

III. The cause of conflict – Adultery in the church?! v. 4-6

A. The diagnosis – your conflicts are caused by your unfaithfulness to God. v. 4

1. God's relationship with His people is likened to marriage. Isa. 54:4-6 57:2-3,8
Jer. 3:20 Eze. 23:45 Hos 2:5-7 Mt. 12:39 16:4 Eph. 5:22ff II Co. 11:2 Rev. 19:7ff
2. The worldly desires which control you are adulterous. Rom. 1:25 II Tim. 4:10
3. You cannot be friends (in love) with both God and the world. 2:23 Mt. 6:19-24
I John 2:15-17 II Tim. 3:4 Phil. 3:19 Rom. 12:1-2 II Co. 6:14ff
4. Worldliness (spiritual adultery) makes us fight (war) for what the world offers:
power, pleasure, prestige, possessions.
5. Is spiritual adultery a problem in our day?
6. The issue of worldliness is not a list of 'do's and don'ts', but rather it is a heart
problem, looking away from God for satisfaction. He. 11:25

B. God is a jealous God. v. 5

1. This verse is extremely difficult to translate and interpret.

- a. To what Scripture does James refer?
 - b. Is James speaking of the indwelling Holy Spirit or of our human spirit?
 - c. Who is the subject of the sentence?
2. Modern versions translate the second half of this verse in different ways.
 - a. *He (God) jealously desires the Spirit which He has made to dwell in us* (NASB). *He yearns jealously over the spirit He has made to dwell in us* (ESV).
 - b. This fits the context which portrays God as husband, and the many Old Testament references to God's holy jealousy. Ex. 20:5 34:14 Zech. 8:2.
 - c. *The spirit he caused to dwell in us envies intensely* (NIV). *The spirit that dwelleth in us lusteth to envy* (KJV).
 - d. This would refer to our human spirit which God created, and fits the usual portrayal of jealousy as negative. 2:26 Gen. 2:2
 3. The context already affirms what each translation would imply.
 - a. Our flirtations with the world invite God's holy jealousy. 4:4
 - b. Our sinful desires make us envy those who have what we want. 4:4 3:14,16
- C. The cure introduced – humble yourself before God. v. 6 Prov. 3:34 29:23 I Pe. 5:5
1. God opposes the proud, who ruthlessly pursue worldly things (power, prestige, possessions, position) instead of Him. Pr. 16:4-5 6:16-17 16:18 Dan. 4:34 Ps. 2
 2. God gives grace to the humble – who submit to Him. v. 7-10 Pr. 22:4 51:17 Is. 57:15 Mt. 5:3,5 18:3-4 Luke 18:9-14
 3. God's grace can overcome our spiritual unfaithfulness. Rom. 5:20 I Tim. 1:15 Isa. 55:6-7 Mt. 19:26 John 1:16 Heb. 4:16 Hosea 2:14,19-20,23 14:4ff

IV. Concluding applications: Whose kingdom do you crave?

- A. How does this passage point us to Christ?
1. Jesus did not pursue His own desire, but served the Father and His people. Phil. 2:5-8 Mt. 22:15 26:39?
 2. Jesus was killed because jealous men wanted Him out of their way. v. 2a Mk. 15:10
 3. God's redeeming and reconciling grace comes to adulterous people through Christ. v. 6a John 1:16 Heb. 4:16
- B. Because we are united to Christ in the gospel:
1. We have turned our back on the world to follow Christ. Gal. 6:14 Col. 1:13-14
 2. We have been set free to follow in His steps, pursuing God's will in our lives as we lovingly serve Him and others. 1:18,22 Phil. 2:3ff I Co. 13:4 Titus 2:11-12
 3. We find our greatest pleasure in God Himself. Ps. 34:8 42:1-2 Isa. 55:1
 4. We ask God for what matters most. 1:5ff Mt. 6:9-13 7:7-8 Eph. 1:15ff 3:14f
 5. We are God's friends and Christ's holy bride. 2:25 John 15:14

Discussion questions

1. Why do people have conflict?
When you are in a conflict ask yourself, "What do I want?"
2. In what sense do Christians commit murder?
3. Are all desires wrong? If not, what desires are good?
5. How do those who live for pleasure view the people in their lives?
5. How do those who live for worldly pleasure view God?
6. About what kind of adultery is James speaking?
7. Evaluate this statement: We worship what we truly believe will make us happy.
8. In what sense should we love the world? And in what sense should we hate the world?
9. What is the connection between spiritual adultery, pride, and conflict?
10. What hope is there for spiritual adulterers?