

## James 4:1-3

### “The war in your members”

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#### I. Intro

In James in 3:18 James gave his readers the results of Godly wisdom at work in believers when he said, “*The fruit of righteousness is sown in peace by those who make peace.*”

Here in this section he will introduce his readers to the by-product of the wisdom of the world that has *produced the fruit of envy, self-seeking, confusion and every evil thing* in our lives. To do this James uses a literary technique of asking questions then answering them before the reader can. The first question is, “*Where do wars and fights come from among you?*” We need to remember the context of this question is addressed in the words “among you” which makes it abundantly clear that James is writing to the church, to believers and followers of Christ, when he asks, “*where do wars and fights come from.*” This fact ought to surprise us that as “new creations in Christ” in which “old things have passed away” that we would be addressing just such a reality. Chuck Colson wrote of a true incident in his book “*The body*” describing a brawl that broke out by the communion table at Emmanuel Baptist Church of Newton, Massachusetts. The fight by the communion table was between Pastor Waite and the head deacon Ray Bryson and went on over two minutes until Ray caught the Pastor on the chin with a right hook knocking him out. The irony of the location was it was there at this very spot where many of those who soon were trading punches with their fellow servants of Christ had made their commitments to Jesus. The worship director threw a hymnal that missed its target

landing in the baptistry. Another person took the beautiful flower arrangement by the altar and threw it at Ray giving all around the baptism by sparkling instead of full immersion. When the fighting members of the church were hauled into court they appeared before a Judge who was Jewish and a member of Temple Beth Shalom (The Temple of the House of Peace). He took mercy upon the combatants issuing only a stern warning that said, ***"I issue no charges at this point and I urge you to work this out within your own church. Your Jesus Christ may allow this sort of thing in His followers, but the Commonwealth of Massachusetts will not permit fistfights as a regular order of church service."*** These kind of things are far too common in the church that is there to glorify Christ. ***The number one reason people don't have any interest in coming to church is Christians and our inability to behave like Jesus.*** Throughout this section we will discover that ***if followers of Christ continue in worldly wisdom*** we can count on the fact that we will be ***at war on three fronts as our life's spin-out of control.***

- I. Vs. 1b ***At war with OURSELVES:*** *"Do they not come from **YOUR desires for pleasure that war in YOUR members?**"*
- II. Vs. 2a ***At war with OTHERS:*** *"You lust and do not have, You **murder and covet** and cannot obtain. ***You fight and war.***"*
- III. Vs. 2b-6 ***At war with GOD:*** *"Yet you do not have because you do not ask. You ask and do not receive, because you ask amiss, that you may spend it on your pleasures. Adulterers and adulterers! **Do you not know that friendship with the world is enmity with God? Whoever therefore wants to be a friend of the world makes himself an enemy of God.** Or do you think that the Scripture says in vain, "The Spirit who dwells in us yearns jealously"? But He gives more grace. Therefore, He says, "God resists the proud, But gives grace to the humble."*

We will examine each of these ***three battle fronts*** that become conflicts in our lives if we continue down the road of applying worldly wisdom that makes us ***envious, self-seeking, confusion and every other evil thing.*** Then at a later time we will look at the antidote to this condition and how to once again get back to peace on all three fronts in verses 7-12.

## II. Vs. 1 At war with ourselves

Vs. 1b **At war with ourselves**: “*Do they not come from **YOUR desires** for pleasure **that war in YOUR members?**” Before James would allow the reader to answer the question he answers for them that if they continue to digest worldly wisdom by being envious, self-seeking, confusion and every other evil thing, we will find ourselves **at war with ourselves!** Some scholars have translated “*among you*” as “*in you*” as they insist that the war **isn’t between people** as much as it is **a battle within a person** who continues in applying worldly wisdom. The reality is that you cannot separate these two truths as a war between people is a symptom of an ongoing battle internally in our members. **A person who is not at peace within themselves will never come to peace with others!** James views this the opposite of most psychologists that say that our problems of not achieving peace within ourselves comes from without a person either it is “heredity” or “environmental” whereas James says that, **if we stop applying worldly wisdom** we will have peace within ourselves and also begin to see peace with others. **James says that mainly our problems don’t come from without they come from within and then affect others which makes those engaged in the consumption of worldly wisdom both perpetrators as well as victims.** The effect of a continual diet upon worldly wisdom is that it gives an unbalanced “**diet for desires of pleasures.**” The Greek word for “*pleasures*” is “*hedone*” in which we get our English word “hedonism” which is defined as **the pursuit of pleasure and self-indulgence.** It has **produced a philosophical theory that pleasure (in the sense of the satisfaction of desires) is the highest good and proper aim of human life.** Such a worldly philosophy adversely affects people as it makes them narcissistic believing that everything is about them and their happiness and pleasure. People becoming equally*

unhappy in such a pursuit for pleasures in a life that is all about them as *them will be never satisfied even if they are able to temporarily capture the pleasure* in their pursuit *or unhappy because they aren't able to do so*. The Bible predicted such unhappiness when our lives become effected by worldly wisdom to the level where we have made it all about *the pursuit of pleasure and self-indulgence*. In Luke 8:14 Jesus speaking the parable of the sower said of one of the seeds sown “*fell among thorns are those who, when they have heard, go out and are choked with cares, riches, and pleasures of life, and bring no fruit to maturity.*” The writer of Hebrews in 11:24-25 speaking of Moses said that he learned the true value of not following worldly wisdom when he wrote, “*By faith Moses, when he became of age, refused to be called the son of Pharaoh's daughter, choosing rather to suffer affliction with the people of God than to enjoy the passing pleasures of sin.*” Moses realized that all the pursuit of the pleasures of sin was passing and would never grant him true happiness. Solomon wrote of this in Eccl 2:1-2 saying, “*I said in my heart, “Come now, I will test you with mirth; therefore, enjoy pleasure”; but surely, **this also was vanity.** I said of laughter—“Madness!”; and of mirth, “What does it accomplish?”” The war in our own hearts is what is causing the wars with our fellow humans. The essence of every sin is selfishness and self-centeredness. Eve disobeyed God because she believed the lie of satan that she would become like God and in less need of Him, thus pride was behind the fall. Abraham lied about his wife being his sister because he was worried about saving his own life. Self-centeredness leads to wrong actions but also to wrong praying according to verses 2-3. Selfish hearts lead to self-centered prayers and that will cause the war on the inside to spread to a war on*

the outside. Saint's, *every crime ever committed in the world has come about from a desire which was first a feeling in our heart from a worldly wisdom nourished along long enough until it became an action.*

### III. Vs. 2-3 Twofold consequence

Vs. 2-3 Such a heart condition has caused a twofold consequence in our heart as it relates to prayer according to verses 2b-3.

- A. Vs. 2b *“They do not have because they do not ask”*: Instead of turning to God as the giver of every *“good and perfect gift”*, *they try to get what they want by their own schemes and self-effort.* And in this practice *they further erode not only their own dependence and need for Jesus. There is no greater way to ruin our prayer life than to make every prayer about us instead of about God’s glory.* The quest for things that *“make us happy”* causes us to lose the sensitivity to the things that are on God’s heart and we become more and more people after our own heart instead of people after God’s heart. The prayer life that continues to ask God for things that are the pursuit of our pleasure will go unanswered which we will blame God for and stop communicating with Him all together. So, the first consequence is *“No receiving because there has been no asking.”*
- B. Vs. 3 *“They ask and do not receive, because they ask amiss, that they may spend it on their pleasures.”* The second consequence of broken communication is that, *“There is no receiving because the asking was done with wrong motives!”* When our praying is wrong, our whole Christian life is wrong! *“The purpose of prayer is not to get men will done in heaven, but to get God’s will done on earth!”* People who are at war with themselves are the most unhappy people and will never become happier by the pursuit of pleasure. The prayers ought to be directed at thanking and praising God for what He has blessed us with instead of complaining about the blessings we don’t have. Our prayer life reveals the envious nature for what God in His grace has blessed others with. Worldly wisdom leads people to unhappiness and the pursuit of pleasure as the sole means of fulfilling what is missing and what is missing can only be fixed by the One person they have rejected at that moment, Jesus.

The common excuse comes against Godly wisdom is ironically, *“I’ll pray about it!”* Far too often the prayers of the pursuer of pleasure who has listened worldly wisdom is to *“Tell God what He is supposed to do and then get angry at Him if*

**He doesn't obey our command.**” Allow me to give you a fivefold checklist that can guide your communication and prayers to God so that you don't fall into the above to consequences.

1. James 1:6 **When we pray ask in faith:**
2. John 16:24 **When we pray do so in Jesus authority and will and not our own.**
3. 1 John 5:14 **When we pray do so in “God's will” not ours.**
4. 1 Peter 3:7 **When we pray we must first make certain that we are in right relationships to others.**
5. Psalm 66:18 **When we pray we are to have first taken our own heart to God and confessed our sin before we ask anything.**

Next week we will continue this study with the look at the other two battlefields (other and God) that are the consequences of following worldly wisdom. This will be followed later by the antidote to this. You won't to miss James words on this as it will change your life and fill you with joy.