

James 4:1-2,11

“The Collateral damage”

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I. Intro

Many of you have come to me with comments about this section in James and how much it has personally spoken to you about your own hearts and given you guidance in how to determine which information stream you have been listening too. My answer to you has been an emphatic, **ME TOO!** We began chapter 4 by tracing James statements back to what he described as the characteristics of worldly wisdom in chapter 3 verses 14 and 16. There James said that worldly wisdom produces in the life of the person who listens to it **“bitter envy, self-seeking, confusion and every evil thing”**. Those characteristics in the life of the person who has been digesting worldly wisdom will take its toll upon our lives and create battlefields where there could be peace if we had applied Godly wisdom instead of worldly wisdom. **Those three fronts again are.**

- I. Vs. 1b **At war with OURSELVES**: Which we noticed last week!
- II. Vs. 1a, 2a, 11a **At war with OTHERS**: “Where do wars and fights come from **AMONG you?** You lust and do not have, You **murder and covet** and cannot obtain. **You fight and war.**” “Do not speak evil of **one another brethren.**”
- III. Vs. 2b-6 **At war with GOD**: “**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.**”

We will examine the second of these three **battle fronts** today and one next week before we look at the antidote to this condition in verses 7-12.

II. Vs. 2 Unwanted realities

Vs. 2 There are three “unwanted realities” of a person if they have dieted upon “worldly wisdom”:

1. **Unwanted side effects**: As already noted such a diet of the heart always carries with it the unwanted side effects described in verse 14 and 16 of chapter 3 as that causes the person to be, “*filled with bitter envy is self-seeking, confused and consumed by every evil thing*”.
2. **Unwanted consequences**: As we saw last week such a diet upon worldly wisdom **also causes us to be at war with our own self**. Such a diet and pursuit *makes us unhappy and miserable people*.
3. **Unfulfilled promises**: Finally, we will realize that such a pursuit **cannot obtain what the worldly wisdom has promised**. And we are told that such a diet will cause us adversity in **four key areas of human life (Pleasure, Passion, Potential and Prayer) all of which worldly wisdom promises to make better if we just listen to its lies**:
 - A. **Unsatisfied pleasure**: “*You lust and do not have.*” Three times in verse 2 we are told that the chief lure of worldly wisdom as James described in verse 1 as the “desires for pleasure” **goes unsatisfied**. Worldly wisdom promise that if you just apply its false truths you will get pleasure that will satisfy what you are longing for, but such a pursuit never fulfills. In fact, all it does is *create a greater frustration and addiction for what goes unsatisfied*. If we have 10 cars and we are in pursuit of worldly wisdom we will need and 11th and 12th. If we have 10 million dollars and we are listening to worldly wisdom we will be after 50 million dollars. **Whatever our pursuit of pleasure is if it really was truly satisfying as worldly wisdom promised we wouldn’t find ourselves with any desire to continue the quest**. Salomon saw such a pursuit in his life and called it vanity! **The only thing such a pursuit of pleasure seems to satisfy is our desire for more and a removal of any morality or ethics to obtain it**.
 - B. **Uncontrolled passions**: “*You murder and covet and cannot obtain.*” **It is inevitable that when our desire for pleasure is unattainable that we will up**

the ante to try to get what we are pursuing in worldly wisdoms lies. There are some who wish to retranslate the word for murder saying that it doesn't fit the passage, but it does when you look at the level that our passions will go to achieve the pleasure worldly wisdom promised. Covet here in the Greek is, *"You are envious and miss what you want and cannot acquire it, so you fight and murder to get it."* Unfortunately, both the Bible and the newspaper are full of stories that prove this to be true. David murdered Uriah because of his lust for his wife Bathsheba in 2 Samuel 11:2-17. Ahab murdered Naboth in 1 Kings 21:1-13 because he wanted his vineyard. *Murder reveals the extreme people will go when their pursuit for pleasure goes unstratified.* When we listen to worldly wisdom and allow the desire for pleasure to dominate our hearts and minds it not only becomes all we think about but soon we will begin scheming a way to obtain this ruling passion. Often this also involves eliminating those who stand in our way of reach this pleasure.

- C. *Untapped potential:* *"You fight and war. Yet you do not have because you do not ask."* This also *produces a spiritual condition that robs the person of their potential.* Instead of turning to God who is the giver of every perfect and good gift they try to get their pleasures by their own schemes and self-effort. It robs the believer of the potential maturity and spiritual growth they could have had if they would have pursued God instead of their own pleasures.
- D. *Unanswered prayer:* *"You ask and do not receive, because you ask amiss."* The *first* problem that following worldly wisdom did in our prayer life was *limit our communication* as we spend more time scheming and no time seeking God. The *second* thing it does is *limit our receiving* because we are asking God only to fulfill our pleasures.

III. Vs. 1a, 2a, 11 At war with others

Vs. 1a, 2a, 11a *At war with OTHERS:* These verses make it clear that once a person has decided to partake of worldly wisdom that the war that started in our hearts will spread to those around us as James mentions *three areas* that are *not in progression:* *Coveting is internal which will lead to speaking evil of the person we are coveting, which can if continued lead to fighting and waring and even murder as our lust for pleasure spreads.* Those who God has broken-down the things that separate us, making us all "*In Him's*" from the "*those and them's*" all a part of the "*Body of Christ*" can become at war with each other, *in competition against each other for what we have been given by*

God's grace! Instead of love and harmony working together for God's glory folks can become upset that someone took their seat or position. **Worldly wisdom appeals to our old insecurities and lack of identity, so we become combative when we think we aren't getting what is rightfully ours.** We begin to verbalize our frustrations to other Christians that this study, this position **to bless others** has been **taken from us**. So, caught up in our own war that we have started a new war with others and are so blinded by worldly wisdom's appeal to our fallen nature that we don't even realize that we are totally in the old flesh nature! People at times come to me and report: **"So N so was at a prayer group complaining to the prayer group that, so N so stole their position or ministry away from them."** Totally unaware of where worldly wisdom has taken them and how such a statement reveals where their heart is to all that are present and listening to Godly wisdom. **Ministry that started with the heart in Godly wisdom to be a blessing to others, where at one time they didn't care about a position or a title has become corrupted by worldly wisdom and serving others has become about them to be seen or so they can be in authority and others can see them as spiritual and worship them to be blessed.** When this kind of thing happens the fight and war is on and as soon as it has gone to **speaking evil of another the body has an infection.** **It's up to each of us to come alongside a person who is so blinded by worldly wisdom and loving to correct them and point out to them that worldly wisdom is what they are eating on.** We all need it, **none of us are immune to this,** the question is will we be open to hearing that we have succumbed to worldly wisdom's grasp of our heart so we can get back to Godly wisdoms blessings and peace? There is nothing new with this, throughout the gospel record we are told **no less than 3 separate times** that the disciples argued among themselves about who of them

would be the greatest. At first they seem to be unaware of what they were doing until Jesus corrects them with an illustration but later they become more secretive even after having been corrected and continue their insecurities privately hoping to avoid the correction but Jesus calls them on it and tells them that the greatest will be the least of all and the servant of all to which apparently He didn't have any takers. These insecurities feed by worldly wisdom can pop out on so many fronts and James mentions four areas in his letter:

- A. 2:1-9 **Class wars**: Here it was the rich against the poor as the wealth got more attention than did the needy. The wealthy were honored the poor disgraced. It's a disgrace when the health of a fellowship is upon class distinction instead of the common bound we have in Jesus who has loved us in spite of us not because of us.
- B. 5:1-6 **Working wars**: Though this was also wealthy verses the poor it also carried over into those that were business owner and those who were their employees. Some of the wealthy employers were not giving fair wages to the employees but today we can see that with powerful unions this can flip the other way as absolute power can corrupt absolutely!
- C. 3:1 **Church wars**: Like I mentioned above this was largely over position and authority as people wanted to be over others as to be seen as spiritual and to be waited on and compensated. They studied to teach not to learn and the result was not the building up of the body of Christ people were not edified instead things became combative and strife and arguments broke out. Each person was more concerned with getting their ideas out then hearing someone else's and selfish ambition ruled their time together instead of spiritual submission.
- D. 4:11-12 **Personal wars**: James says that folks were speaking evil of one another and judging one another instead of loving and accepting one another. They weren't speaking the "truth in love" as Paul had admonished later in his letter in Eph. 4:15. Instead of offering encouragement and support they were acting as rivals and criticizing. Even if it's truthful about another we ought not repeat it to others if it is harmful instead we should first speak to God about it before we speak to the person about it. We always must first examine our own hearts before we start on others. There are always three points of view and only one of those do know for certain is absolutely correct: **Yours, Mine and the Lords!**

There must never be leader against leader, church against church, Christian against

Christian as the world is watching these fights and ask, "***I thought Jesus said they were***

to love one another not hate one another?" In John 17:20-21 Jesus prayed for the church

saying, *“I do not pray for these alone, but also for those that will believe in Me through their word; that they ALL MAY BE ONE, as You, Father, are in Me, and I in you ; that they also may be one in us, that the world may believe that you sent Me.”* **We belong to the same family, trusted in the same Savior; are indwelt and empowered by the same Holy Spirit, yet we are fighting with each other and war?**