

Session 5 - The Pressure of Conflict | James 4:1-10 | 9/29/13

- Today we are going to talk about conflict; we are going to see where the true source of conflict comes from as well as some solutions as to how we can avoid it.
- **What type of conflict do we sometimes find ourselves in?**
- **The Source of conflict | James 4:1-5**
 - **Read James 4:1-5**
 - So James was writing to the early church because well they were having conflict and James provided them some Godly advice on how to deal with this.
 - So let me ask you as being the church body, what type of conflict do you see that can come up in the church?
 - Disagreement between leaders?
 - Disagreement between church members regarding a building project?
 - Disagreement on what color to paint the walls or what curriculum to teach?
 - How about our relationships?
 - Color of paint on the walls?
 - What's for dinner?
 - So we are going to find out what the root cause is of these conflicts, and it's strangely familiar to our previous discussion we had on temptation.
 - So when we talked about temptation we saw that people tend to put the blame on other things other than themselves, so a person might think well it's the particular sin or the devil's temptation fault as to why I gave in or our friends who pressured us, because well it wasn't my fault.
 - But we saw that from scripture that the true source of temptations power was actually from the evil desire "within us". This gave the temptation or sin power.
 - Well in the case of conflict where do people tend to put the blame? Ok where does Blue put the blame? PINK and where does PINK put the blame? BLUE
 - We tend to want to put the blame for conflict on others as well.
 - But in reality the true problem actually resides within us much like where the power for temptation come from.
 - If we look back at our examples of church conflict is there anything similar between them that stands out to you?
 - It's selfishness or self-centeredness. As James says it's your cravings, your desires and your covertness.
 - This is the root cause and source of conflict it is our selfish desire to want what we want and to put it above all else.
 - Bummer ☹ it's easier to blame others.
 - Selfish actions that cause conflict.
 - Cravings/desire

- Desire isn't necessarily bad as God gives us desires but as with anything it depends on how you act on that desire.
- Have you ever desired something so much that you would do anything for it, you would you know sell your soul?
- Has that desire ever led you to perhaps act in a way that might cause conflict?
- We do this perhaps without thinking because even with good intentions like in Church where there is conflict over the type of music, your personal preference or desire to have the more modern music is so strong that you don't really care what others might think. Then conflict occurs.
 - "Well if those other people would just see it my way then we wouldn't be in this mess! Obviously my choice of music is what is best for the church."
- **Should Christians handle conflict differently than "the world"?**
- **Question #2 "What cravings most often lead you into conflict?"**
- Covetousness
 - Is to be moved with envy perhaps using evil means to get what we want.
 - We set our desire on an earthly object and pursue it at all costs even if we hurt others along the way.
 - If you are acting in this way will that cause conflict? You bet!
 - Probably a reason this is one of the 10 commandments.
 - Exodus 20:17
 - "Do not covet your neighbor's house. Do not covet your neighbor's wife, his male or female slave, his ox or donkey, or anything that belongs to your neighbor."
 - 1 it's a sin and 2 God knows us better than we do, he knows that to covet can among many things cause conflict.
- Inappropriate prayer
 - **James 4:2b-3**
 - "You do not have because you do not ask. You ask and don't receive because you ask with wrong motives, so that you may spend it on your evil desires."
 - James speaking to their desires he gives them a solution as to how they can handle them.
 - James makes an interesting statement that "You do not have because you do not ask".
 - Perhaps the people James is speaking to say HEY we DO pray!
 - Perhaps they heard Jesus say in John 14:14
 - John 14:14
 - "If you ask Me anything in My name, I will do it"
 - Jesus didn't mean to use him as a "genie" that literally anything they ask even our sinful desires he would fulfill. This certainly isn't what Jesus intended.
 - Wrong motives are linked to our evil desires.
 - What motives does a prayer from a football player that says:
 - "Lord please allow us to obliterate the opposing team, allow us to bask in the glory of victory! Let their shoe laces be loose and their vision blurred, may they cry in their utter annihilation. Amen!"
 - Coach I apologize if that's a prayer you have before games ☹️
 - If wrong motives are really just evil desires then how could we possibly think that God would answer a prayer like that?
 - Our motives must be to glorify God.

- If we read the Bible more than just a verse at a time then it's pretty easy to understand what Jesus meant by John 14:14 "If you ask Me anything in My name, I will do it"
 - Let's read John 14:13-14
 - "Whatever you ask in My name, I will do it so that the Father may be glorified in the Son. If you ask Me anything in My name, I will do it."
 - So if God is to be glorified by our prayer request don't you think that that request must in some way allow God to be glorified?
 - Is God glorified with our sin? No of course not.
 - Christ should be honored in our prayers and desires that we ask for should be in obedience to God so of course anything that we ask for should allow God to be glorified.
 - **Somehow Lord please give me a boat may be hard to justify to God that it will be for his glory, although we may very well try 😊**
 - Friendship with the world brings us in conflict with God.
 - **Read James 4:4**
 - "Adulteresses! Don't you know that friendship with the world is hostility towards God? So whoever wants to be the world's friend becomes God's enemy."
 - An adulteress is used figuratively to mean "spiritual infidelity" as opposed to the traditional meaning.
 - James is addressing the church and warning them that they being caught up in their conflict were showing hostility towards God and were committing spiritual infidelity.
 - **We have seen the root cause of conflict which is the evil desires within us, so when we are involved in conflict and are acting on our evil desires we are spiritually not with God.**
 - We are sinning and our actions are reflective of the devil and not God. Hence the infidelity.
 - James tells us that the behavior that they were showing was of the world which when the world is referenced in scriptures it is usually referred to as not of God and the worldly actions are sin.
 - "1 John 2:15
 - Do not love the world or the things in the world. If anyone loves the world, the love of the father is not in him."
 - The world tells us to be self-centered.
 - The world tells us to act in a way that opposes God.
 - The world says put yourself first and get what you deserve.
 - So if all of us in this room had that attitude do you think there would be conflict?
 - What if we all wanted that chair that Shane is in?
 - So bottom line is that when we as Christians engage in conflict amongst ourselves we are disobeying God because we are acting on our sinful desires and we are not behaving righteously as God would want us to.
 - We end up in conflict with God and others when we love the world.
 - Full Circle-Conflicts rooted in evil desires.
 - **"James wanted the church to realize that the conflicts they were experiencing were rooted in their evil desires"**
 - **Question #3: How do motives relate to conflict?**
- Methods to resolve conflict | James 4:6-10 | PG. 54-55
 - **Read James 4:6-10**
 - There are several things we can glean from James that we can use to overcome the pressure of conflict.
 - Humble yourself

- James is referencing Proverbs 3:34 & Psalms 138:6 in verse 6
- God wants to give us grace and it is given to those that are humble and not proud.
 - God’s grace is the favor and blessings of God, something we should all want.
 - The proud often fail to acknowledge the gifts that God has given them and are very self-centered.
 - Which we know as the match that lights conflict.
 - The proud cannot receive grace because they are so self-centered they don’t think they need anything.
 - They are not teachable because they are not open to taking instruction.
 - The humble are those who are a direct opposite of the proud, the humble are anything but self-centered.
 - They put others before themselves, spiritually submissive and they solve conflicts.
 - God looks favorably on a humble person.
 - Isaiah 66:2
 - “My hand made all these things, and so they all came into being. This is the Lord’s declaration. I will look favorably on this kind of person: one who is humble, submissive in spirit, and trembles at My word.”
 - So by being humble we automatically are not activating sinful desires within that initiate conflict.
- If we keep ourselves in check by being humble we will then NOT be proud and self-centered which will keep us from conflict and sin.
- **Do you believe that being humble would keep you from conflict with God and our relationships within the church and our family?**
- Submit to God
 - James says in verse 8 to draw near to God and He will draw near to you, so the opposite of this would be to keep ourselves from God and to draw near to our sinful desires.
 - We know that conflict originates internally from our evil desires, but we have a decision to make before we give in to them.
 - We can choose to give into those desires and let them rule us, by acting out of selfishness.
 - Or we can choose to submit ourselves to God instead.
 - If we put God in the driver seat he isn’t going to lead us astray, he will put us on the path of righteousness.
 - We need to put God in charge of our actions, if we give it over to him and truly submit ourselves we will act in a way that is desirable by God.
 - **Submitting to God may not necessarily remove the conflict** we are experiencing but it certainly can remove the pressure because we are choosing to submit to God and to let our actions be of God.
 - Who is in control? You and your flesh of self-centeredness? Or God?
- Resist the Devil.
 - The devil has it out for us.
 - 1 Peter 5:8
 - “Be serious! Be alert! Your adversary the Devil is prowling around like a roaring lion, looking for anyone he can devour.”
 - He is always looking to tempt us and he preys on our weaknesses.

- But we are not alone.
 - 1 Peter 5:9
 - “Resist him and be firm in the faith, knowing that the same sufferings are being experienced by your fellow believers throughout the world.”
 - We can take comfort in knowing that we are not alone and that we as Christians must stand and fight this together.
- Christians must engage in spiritual warfare to free ourselves from the devil.
 - Ephesians 6:10-13
 - “Finally, be strengthened by the Lord and by His vast strength. Put on the full armor of god so that you can stand against the tactics of the Devil. For our battle is not against flesh and blood, but against the rulers, against the authorities, against the world powers of this darkness, against the spiritual forces of evil in the heavens. This is why you must take up the full armor of god, so that you may be able to resist in the evil day, and having prepared everything, to take your stand.
 - It requires the **FULL** armor of God.
 - Truth, righteousness, peace, faith, salvation, God’s word
 - If we engage in these tactics that Paul has given us...then the devil will flee.
- **Question #4: What is involved with resisting the Devil?**
- Draw near to God.
 - Prayer
 - Reading the Bible
 - Worship
 - **Question#5: What helps you draw near to Christ and humble yourself before Him?**
- Get rid of your sins.
 - James tells us to cleanse our hands and to purify our hearts.
 - We do this with repentance.
 - If we truly go to God in repentance we will be sorrowful and we will weep.
 - To disobey God and to KNOW that you have done so does in fact generate an emotional response.
 - You will be miserable in acknowledging what you have done.
 - You must truly be humble for it to be real.
 - We must not be double-minded
 - You cannot love God and the world.
 - Get off of the fence.