

Choose

Devotionals

Day 1: Read James 4: 1-3

We don't have to look far to answer the question that James asks in verse 1, "what causes the fights and quarrels among you?" The reasons come from right inside each of us. The reason we have fights with others, is because of the struggle that goes on inside of us. Every day we have choices to make: to either do things God's way, either fulfilling God's desires or fulfilling our own desires. Within our bodies there are feuding desires that cause internal war.

The first desire that causes internal struggle is our desire to control. As long as things are going our way, everything is great. As soon as someone challenges that, then there is some serious conflict. The internal conflict then spills over into every relationship that we have.

The second desire that contributes to the war is covetousness. We have within our flesh the desire to possess stuff that we can't have. Look at your own life. When you start struggling with wanting something you can't have, what is the first thing that happens? Often, you start to bicker and fight with whoever is closest to you. You start trying to blame your dissatisfaction on your spouse, or your kids, or your parents. Then the next thing a lot of us do is go and throw a spiritual temper tantrum. We demand that God make us happy by giving us whatever we want. How does God respond

to your spiritual temper tantrum? He doesn't. Anytime your prayers are meant to glorify yourself and not God, or to satisfy your own desires rather than His, He will not answer those prayers.

Take a good look at the things you want. Are you asking God for things that will glorify Him or for your own pleasure and satisfaction? Spend some time in prayer, asking God to help you get your desires in line with His.

Day 2: Read James 4: 4-5

Yesterday, we looked at how our internal struggles get played out externally. We fight with ourselves, and then we fight with each other. But there's another struggle going on as well. It's the struggle of me versus God, which basically ends us up in a battle against God. How on earth do we even get there? James says it starts with the world. When you see the phrase, "the world" or "the flesh", it is referring to anything that is contrary to God and to who God is. When we are engaged in this struggle, we are trying to develop our relationship with God and still keep one foot in the world. Realize this: God will never be drawn into a love triangle. One of the characteristics of God is that God is a jealous lover. God loves us beyond anything we can fathom. His love cost Him His only Son, who freely gave his life for our redemption. After paying so much, He is not interested in being one of several who receive our devotion. God wants us to love him only, or not at all. There are no in between. We can't keep one foot in the world and one

in our relationship with God. It's impossible. There is no middle ground with God. It's all or nothing. If we try to keep our friendship with the world, we set ourselves up against God. It's a path that is destined to lead to pain, heartache, and ultimately broken relationship with God.

Who is your first love? God, or the world? Write down three things that you think need to change in your life to sever a friendship with the world? Remember, these would be things that are contrary to God, or to who God is. For example, we know that God is Love. Are there those in your life who you are treating in unloving ways? We also know that God forgives. Are you withholding forgiveness from someone that you know you need to forgive? God is pure. Are you courting music, videos, relationships that are impure? You get the idea.

Day 3: Read James 4:6–8a

The root cause of a lot of the struggles between people is pride. We all have a tendency to want to be in charge, to want to be our own god. We want to call on God when we are stuck, and keep control in our own hands the rest of the time. It is pride that causes us to be at battle with God, within ourselves, and with other people. So what in the world can we do about it? How do we negotiate peace with God? We have good news. James tells us about three we can do if we're serious about ending the struggle and conflict in our lives.

The first thing is to submit. We need to submit to God. In this context, the word "submit" is a military term. It means to understand your proper rank. It is an organizational term. In God's plan, we all have a position on His organizational chart. We have to accept that place and submit to God. Instead of running our own lives, we have to turn them over to God. That is submission.

The second thing we can do is draw near to God. We need to relationally place ourselves next to God. You know, God has never moved; it's us who tend to drift away. We all know what would happen in our marriages or closest friendships if we drifted apart. If you quit planning time together, then you begin to feel disconnected. It's no different in our relationship with God.

How near are you to God? Write down what keeps you away from God, or from being nearer to God? Take time right now to talk to God, submitting to his leadership in your life.

Day 4: Read James 4: 8b–10

Yesterday, we talked about drawing near to God and submitting to his leadership in our lives. James gives us a third action we can take in our battle against pride, which leads to the struggles. Humility. Yep, humility; which means coming in low. If we want to end the

struggles that rage, we have to get low. Once we do, God will lift us up. The problem with most of us is that we want to be weight lifters. We try to raise ourselves up. As long as we are trying to be weight lifters, he cannot help us. We need to become humble before God. We have to get low. Joshua chapter 5 tells us how to get low. Joshua met the captain of the Lord's army. When he recognized who he was talking to, he fell face down. How much time have you spent on your face before the Lord? It certainly gives you a different perspective. It gives you a real life lesson on humility. It helps us to see who we are in relation to God. Try it!

God loves you. Note the conflicts and quarrels in your life. How will you submit to Him, come near, and humble yourself before God?

Try spending time in prayer talking to God, while laying face down on the floor before the Lord, as Joshua did. What did you experience?

