

HOW TO AVOID ARGUMENTS
Developing a Faith That Works - Part 10 of 15
James 4:1-10
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We're going to be looking at what James has to say on "How to Avoid Arguments". As I talk with couples one of the most common complaints I hear from people is "We just can't seem to get along. I have clip from the small Group DVD Love and Respect. I pray what I am about to show connects with you. We will be in James 4 today.

Long before modern psychology came along he had some profound insights on the cause of conflict. 4:1 *"What causes fights and quarrels among you. Don't they come from your desires that battle within you?"* James says that the cause of arguments is conflicting desires. When my wants conflict with your wants the sparks are going to fly. What desires? The Bible makes very clear here and other places in Scripture that there are three basic desires we have that cause conflict. These desires are legitimate desires unless they're out of control. They are God-given desires. But when you put them above other people, when they become number one in your life, they will cause conflict. What are they?

1. THE DESIRE TO HAVE

We want to have things. Materialism. Possessions. v. 2 "*You want what you*

don't have ... you long for what others have." God created things to be used

and to enjoy. That's what they're there for. We use things and love people.

The problem is when we start loving things. When we start loving

things we get the equation backwards. We start loving things and use

people -- manipulating them, controlling them, moving them around to get

what you want because things become more important in your life.

Our wise and fearless leaders in Washing passed a 700 billion bailout-Did

you see all the partisan bickering this week? Why? 700 Billion-the desire

to get reelected and the materialism that goes with it!

Wall Street has been bitter for awhile-why? The desire to have major

bonuses by making loans to bad risks showing temporarily a profit that

became a bust.

Consequently, we have had more strident arguments on how to pay our

mortgage-when we have used our credit cards to afford the gas that has

gone through the roof and we have less and less toys the tone becomes

bitter! ECC we must accept and live the truth: *You're too greedy if God is not*

enough for you.

2. THE DESIRE TO FEEL

I want to feel good. I want to be comfortable. I want to have my senses satisfied. v. 3 *"You wantonly what will give you pleasure"* It's not wrong to enjoy life. 1 Timothy 6:17 *"God made everything for our enjoyment."* But when pleasure becomes the number one goal in your life -- if it feels good, do it -- you're asking for conflict. It's going to cause problems in your life. When my pleasure takes the place over what is needful, then we're in trouble. The fact is, I'm more interested in my comfort than I am in yours and all I think about is what makes me feel good. The desire to feelgood creates conflict.

3. THE DESIRE TO BE

Little kids say, "Watch me, daddy", we say "Watch me, everybody" but we say it in subtle ways --Watch me by the way I dress. Watch me by the kind of clothes I buy. Watch me by the kind of car I drive. Watch me by the kind of things I stock my house with." It's a desire to impress. It's the desire to be full of pride, to be number one, to impress. Proverbs 13:10 *"Pride leads to arguments."* That's so simple.

James tells us that pride -- when we think we can do things on our own --

causes two problems. v. 2-3

"You do not have, because you do not ask God. When you ask, you do not receive, because you ask with wrong motives." Here James tells us two reasons why our desires aren't fulfilled. Number one: We don't pray. We don't ask God. We look to the wrong source. We look to people to fulfill our needs instead of looking to God. He says, "I'll meet your needs, just pray." And when we do pray, we usually pray with the wrong motive. We ask things in a selfish way. The Bible has said that everything I need God has promised to provide. He'll meet my desires to have, to be, to feel -- not just luxury but all my needs. Philippians 4:19 *"My God shall supply all your needs according to His riches in glory by Christ Jesus"* if we'll ask in prayer. But we'd rather fight than pray. We'd rather argue about something than go look to the Lord for the answer. When I'm upset with my wife, the last thing on my mind is prayer. We're not thinking about that. But James says, that that's the problem. We look to others instead of looking to God and that causes conflict. We'd rather try to work it out ourselves. Prayerlessness in itself is an evidence of pride. Why don't I pray? I don't think I need God. If I really thought I was more dependent upon God and I needed Him

more I'd pray more.

In the next verses, James talks about conflict with God. Pride not only causes conflict with other people but it causes conflict with God. v. 6 "*God opposes the proud but gives grace to the humble.*" God declares war on selfishness. Have you noticed that God has a unique way of engineering circumstances to burst our bubble of pride? Just about the time you think, "I've got it together!" He puts you in your place if you think you don't need Him. To be in opposition to God is a dangerous place to be. You're on a Collision course. There's no way you're going to win.

If pride is the cause of arguments -- and that's the case James is making "I'm going to have my way when I want it, my time, my place" -- What's the cure?

II. THE CURE FOR ARGUMENTS IS HUMILITY

vs. 6 & 10 "*God ... gives grace to the humble. Humble yourself before the Lord, and he will lift you up.*" What is grace? Grace is God's power to change.

What would you like to change about yourself? Whatever it is, you need grace to do it. What do you want to change about your relationships, your marriage, your family? Whatever you would like to change, you need

grace. You can't change it on your own. You need God's power and that's called grace. Grace is the power to change, and there is only one way you get grace. You humble yourself. God doesn't give grace to people who are full of pride and think "I can do it on my own." He gives it when we come and say, "God, I need your help." And that's where we get the power to make the changes we'd like to see.

In the next few verses, James gives several short sentences. He is so practical. He gives four specific actions that need to be taken in order to stop the fighting. Here's how you diffuse a conflict, whether it's between you and a kid, you and your wife, you and someone at work. You do four things to diffuse a conflict:

1. GIVE IN TO GOD

"Submit yourself then to God." v. 7. Let God be God in your life. Give Him control. Put Him in charge. Yield yourself to Him. This is the starting point. Quit trying to run your own life. In v. 1 it says *"...your desires that battle within you..."* James says that conflict that happens with other people happens because you have conflict on the inside. You don't get along with other people because you've got a civil war in your life. This is the real

issue. The starting point is getting peace inside before you can have peace outside. Find peace of mind, find peace in your heart. The real conflict is inside of you-- who's in charge of my life. If you're in charge, then anytime somebody comes along that doesn't go the way you want to go, then you get uptight. But if God's in charge of your life, it doesn't irritate you as much. Colossians 3:15 *"Let the peace of Christ rule in your heart."* When we have the peace of Christ in our heart then we'll be at peace with other people. If we don't have this in our life -- God's peace in our hearts -- then we try to manipulate others, try to control them and try to move them around to get what we want out of life. The starting point of getting along with others, to avoid arguments, is get peace in your heart through the rule of Christ. Give in to God. When you can say "Lord, whatever You want that's what I want" then the peace process starts.

2. GET WISE TO SATAN

Be aware, be alert. Realize what he's doing. Realize where the conflict comes from and that he's the source behind it. Don't be dumb. Don't be ignorant. *"Resist the devil, and he will flee from you."* The word "resist" is a war term. It means to be prepared. To stand against. Withstand an attack.

The devil wants to destroy your marriage. He wants to destroy every other good relationship. Why? Because he loves conflict, arguments. He wants to cause confusion, arguments, stress, hurt feelings, disappointment, anger, chaos. He loves to do it. James says you've got to give into God, let Him have control. Then you've got to do some defensive action. You've got to resist the devil and realize what he's doing. If you get up in the morning and you don't run into the devil, head on, it means you're already going in the same direction. Give in to God and get wise to Satan.

3. GROW CLOSER TO GOD

How does this affect arguments? First, how do you grow closer? By reading the Bible, by going to church, by getting involved in a Bible study – - all of these kinds of things help you grow closer to God. I have made an amazing discovery that the more time I spend alone with God, the better I get along with other people. Count on it! When the argument level rises in our marriage it means somebody is not spending time with the Lord. It's that simple. Grow closer to God.

Isaiah 26:3 "He will keep him in perfect peace all those who trust in Him, whose

thoughts turn often to the Lord." When you spend time with the Lord, you turn your thoughts to Him, then you get along better with others because He keeps perfect peace in your heart and you're not as irritable. Have you noticed some people only draw close to God when they're in trouble? They only pray when they have a need. You need to spend time with Him. Bible study, Sunday morning, daily quiet time – make time for these things. You say you're too busy? Then maybe you're too busy. Maybe you need to cut some things out of your schedule to make more time to spend time with the Lord. The more you spend time with the Lord, the more you're going to enjoy the rest of your time. It will be more productive, more beneficial. You'll get along better with others, have fewer arguments, because you're spending time with God. You give in to God, get wise to Satan, draw close to God and then...

4. BE WILLING TO ASK FORGIVENESS

If you want to stop the conflicts in your life, if you want to get along with other people, avoid arguments, learn to ask forgiveness from God and from those you hurt. v. 8 *"Wash your hands ... purify your hearts..."* Our hands represent our conduct and hearts represent attitudes. He's saying,

clean up your act. v. 9 (LB) *"Let there be tears for the wrong you've done."*

Don't minimize what's happened.

Take it seriously. Be sorry for your self-centeredness. It is a big deal when your wife's feelings are hurt. Take it seriously. If someone says you've hurt them, you've hurt them. It may not be a big deal to you, but it was to them.

Be willing to ask forgiveness.

How do you do it? Are you willing to go and apologize for your part?

Maybe they are 95% wrong and you're only 5% at fault, but you take care of your 5% and let God handle the other 95% in their life. Their response is their response. "I know we've had our differences and I know I haven't always been thoughtful. A lot of times I've thought more about myself than your needs." How humbling that would be! Right! Because God gives grace to the humble! If you want to change, the only way you're going to change is to be humble, and the only way to be humble is to go and ask forgiveness. It's hard but do you want to change? Do you want to reduce the conflict? Maybe the way you do it is by cracking the door open by you taking the first step even if they are primarily at fault. Admit what you've

brought into the relationship that was wrong. It's humbling, sure, but God gives grace to the humble. Maybe this week you need to write a letter, make a call, make some restitution even to that person who's irritated you .

Conclusion: In the first three verses of this chapter, four times it says you're unsatisfied -- "you want but you don't get", "you strive for but you can't have". You're unsatisfied. Many people in life are unsatisfied with the way they are living. The secret of satisfaction is in Jesus Christ. Give yourself to Him and find your needs met in Him rather than in other people. He will never let you down. Would you come up front right now, to either place your membership at ECC or Give you life to Jesus!

Prayer:

Would you pray this prayer in your heart right now? "Lord, would you help me to think of others and not just my own desires? Help me to be willing to admit when I am wrong." Maybe you need to go to somebody today and apologize. Say, "I've been selfish and I'm sorry." The Bible says, *"God opposes the proud but He gives grace to the humble."* God will give you the power to change and become the person you've always wanted to be.

The Bible says He lifts you up, before honor is humility. Then would you pray, "God, today I want to give in to You. I give You my life, my marriage, my career. I submit it all to You. I ask You to put the peace of Christ in my heart to rule. Help me to get wise to Satan, to realize he plays on my pride and tells me things I want to hear but really only make matters worse.

Father, help me to grow closer to You, to make time in my schedule for time with You. Father, I admit that many times I've put me first and I ask You to forgive me. Help me to become like Jesus, to have the attitude that He had, to not only look after my own interest but also the interest of those around me. Teach me to say, 'Thy will be done' instead of 'Me first'."

Lord, thank You for Your word. It's practical and it helps us in the very areas that we need it the most. Use this message today in our lives this week so we can have more peaceful relationships, less conflict, less strife, less arguing and more love, joy, and peace. In Jesus' name we pray.
Amen.