

Relationships will always experience conflict and squabbles from time to time. Some, however, seem more generally plagued with argument and hostility. James deals with the source of this kind of conflict, and how it can best be overcome in today's Templates of Truth.

James opens the fourth chapter of his epistle with this question: *What is the source of quarrels and conflicts among you?* (4:1). These two words are combat terms referring to a military campaign and the individual battles waged in that campaign. Unfortunately, many environments where Christians spend time, whether it is the home, church, or workplace, are more commonly characterized as combat zones. There seems to always be a *fight* or *quarrel* going on between people, and since this kind of interaction is often destructive to persons and relationships, James declares, *You commit murder!* (4:2). Before you can deal with the problem, however, you must first identify the *source* of the problem. In this chapter, James reveals a number of sources for relational conflict.

He first mentions our *lust* and the *pleasures that wage war in (our) members* (4:2). James is referring to the evil, sinful nature within each of us that aggressively pursues gratification and fulfillment to the self-serving desires, compulsions and demands of our mind and body. That pursuit causes us to develop *wrong motives* (4:3), even in our prayer life. The things we *ask* for are meant only for our personal satisfaction and not for another's benefit or the benefit of God's Kingdom.

Another sure source of conflict is *friendship with the world* (4:4). When we allow the values, convictions and behaviors of the world to characterize our life, that activity conflicts with the principles and precepts God's Word calls us to otherwise live by. We are sure to get into conflict with others over the compromises we allow in our behavior.

A person who constantly expresses a judgmental attitude will always live in conflict with those around them. The question James challenges such a person with is, *Who are you who judge your neighbor?* (4:12). Some people are unhealthily legalistic. They live according to a rigid set of rules & regulations, about which they become obsessive, inflexible and demanding. As a result, they tend to gravitate toward negative extremes, and measure everyone & everything against their decided standard of perfection and expectation. When something goes wrong in life, they believe it is only because someone broke a rule or did something wrong, and that person must be identified, blamed and pay for his offense with some form of punishment. Such a person usually manifests an alienating inconsistency in their life because they fail to hold themselves to the same standard by which they judge & condemn everyone else. This person is sure to live in constant conflict in the relationships of their life.

At the heart of all fighting and quarreling is *arrogance* and pride (4:16). Conflict always involves a person who demands his own way, wants everyone to see things the way she sees them, and becomes angry, bitter and resentful toward anyone who does not comply with his or her expectations and wishes. This kind of person is puffed up with an arrogant view of

themselves and their opinions. They see themselves as superior to others, and their ideas, solutions and suggestions are better than anyone else. They resent the fact that folks just don't do things their way. This attitude robs them of intimate and fulfilling relationships.

James provides the solution to these issues. Its not rocket science. It's a simple act of bringing yourself down a few notches: *God is opposed to the proud, but gives grace to the humble. Submit therefore to God. Resist the devil and he will flee from you. Draw near to God and He will draw near to you. Cleanse your hands, you sinners; and purify your hearts, you double-minded...humble yourself in the presence of the Lord, and He will exalt you. Do not speak against one another* (4:6-11). It seems to me that James is helping us to understand that we need first and foremost to concentrate on living our own life in such a way as being surrendered and obedient to God and His will, and cease minding that business in everyone else's life. When our relationship with God is healthy and productive, it will be amazing how much better we will get along with everyone around us. A greater presence of God's power in our life will eliminate much of the conflict and quarreling that seems to characterize us now.

What is the source of conflict in your life? You may be looking toward everyone and everything to peg as the problem, but have you ever stopped to consider that the problem is YOU? You have tried judging, ruling, condemning, arguing, and nothing has changed. James suggests that you try humility, submission, obedience, confession, repentance, respect and a true demonstration of love that sees others as more important than you see yourself. You might be amazed at how much your life will improve.

That's today's Templates of Truth. This is your Bible teacher, Rick Smith, reminding you to attend church this Sunday for Bible study and worship, pray for one another, and always strive to abide. Until next time, have a blessed and glorious day in Christ Jesus.