

James 4:1-10

Commentary: The Cause and Cure for Conflict (James 4:1-10)

History reveals that conflicts among God's people have existed for as long as God's people have assembled together. In the first few years of the Church there were disputes that arose between the Hebrew Jews and the Hellenistic Jews (Acts 6:1). Later, there were disputes that broke out between the Jewish believers and Gentile believers that required the leaders of the early church to convene to resolve the issues (Acts 15:6-29). Even the Apostle Paul frequently had to resolve disputes that had arisen in the Gentile churches he planted (I Corinthians 1:10-17). James' audience were no different as conflicts began to arise. Throughout James' epistle he uses the title "brothers and sisters" or "brethren" 19 times, however, in this section that title is absent. This indicates just how severe James understood the divisions within the churches to be. James had previously discussed the results of God's wisdom at work in the life of a believer; a life characterised by godly virtues that produces righteousness and peace (3:18). However, these Jewish believers were living by the world's wisdom which can only lead to 'confusion and every evil thing' (3:16b). James wasted no time identifying the root cause of conflicts and the only cure for it.

Instructions:

Carefully read through James 4:1-10 and then attempt to answer the questions which follow.

The Greek word for 'pleasure' James uses in verse 1 is hedone; from which we derive hedonism. Hedonism is simply the pleasure derived from fulfilling one's own desires.

1) What are the consequences when believers put their own desires above the needs of others within the church (v1)?

2) How does a selfish attitude affect the believer's prayer life (v2-3)?

James identifies his readers as 'adulterers and adulteresses' (v4), which emphasises that they had given themselves over to other gods; the worship of their own lusts and desires.

3) What does the resulting friendship with the world bring (v4-5)?

James has been direct in identifying the causes of conflicts, now, he identifies the cure for conflicts.

4) What one word describes the cure for worldliness (v6)?

5) What does James identify as the very first step in the process of healing the damage caused by conflict? (v7)?

6) When a believer submits to God and draws near to Him, God promises (v7-8):

1)

2)

3)

The word 'double-minded' in verse 8 refers to people whose divided commitment and questionable loyalties cause them to be spiritually unstable.

7) What must the spiritually unstable believer first address in order to become single-minded (v8-9)?

James writes 'Let your laughter be turned to mourning and your joy to gloom' (v9). James is not suggesting that Christians should dress in black clothing and walk around with a somber face; Christians should rejoice in the Lord and be thankful for the gift of salvation.

8) What is James therefore referring to?

9) What happens when we humble ourselves before God (v10)?