

# Lockdown conflict removals

## Introduction

This is our 2<sup>nd</sup> Sunday in lockdown and 2<sup>nd</sup> message to you.

A reality you may be facing now is the stress of living more closely to your family or friends.

You may begin to notice differences in the way they do things.

You may also begin to discover strong desires for things, like chocolates, or the desire to do things you always use to do becoming more intense.

You discover that some of your desires may be frustrated by another person in home.

For me I discovered that I desire a certain amount of neatness when it comes to cooking.

Great was my surprise to discover some family members who don't mind being a messy when they cook.

A simple difference, can easily lead to a conflict if not responded to in a godly manner.

Responding sinfully to differences or frustrated desires lead quickly to conflicts.

Reading the news, I saw that there has been a sudden increase of domestic violence during the time of lockdown.

As pressure mounts, people's desires are frustrated and so they respond in anger and conflict even physical violence in some cases.

How should you as a believer respond in such situations, in which there is more pressure, more stress, more of your desires are being frustrated, and people around you do things simply different to what you would prefer?

God's Word gives you and I some helpful advice to pave the platform to respond godly to differences, frustrated desires and conflicts.

## Historical background

James writes in somewhere between 44-49BC to Jewish believers who were fleeing from persecution, possibly after Stephan's martyrdom in Acts 8:1 or more likely under King Herod Agrippa that we read about in Acts 12.

Herod had made great debt in Rome and was imprisoned by the Emperor Tiberius after making some careless comments.

He was released after Emperor Tiberias died and was made ruler over northern Israel and later added Judea and Samaria from ad 37-44BC

To shore up his shaky relationship with Rome he tried to strengthen ties with the Jews by persecuting Christian believers from Jewish background.

*<sup>1</sup> About that time Herod the king laid violent hands on some who belonged to the church. Acts 12:1 (ESV)*

In vs 2 we read Acts 12:2–3 (ESV)

*<sup>2</sup> He killed James the brother of John with the sword, <sup>3</sup> and when he saw that it pleased the Jews, he proceeded to arrest Peter also. This was during the days of Unleavened Bread.*

Many believers fled Jerusalem.

James the Brother of Jesus, the Pastor of the Jerusalem church writes to his scattered church members due to persecution. (1:1)

They had lefts homes, lost their income, were stressed and the temptation in these trials to compromise was great to and to respond sinfully.

James stresses godly behaviour, to be uncompromising and obedient to God's word ( (MacArthur 2006): and he reminds them that:

- 1:2-18 the testing of their faith produces steadfastness and Christian maturity.
- 1:19-26 to be doers of the word and not only hearers.
- 2:1-13 to love and not show partiality to one another.
- 2:14-16 that faith without works is dead.
- 3:1-12 to be careful about what comes out of their mouths- the dangers of the

tongue.

- 3:13-18 to in an attitude of humility show their works by good conduct and to demonstrate wisdom from above by being a peacemaker
- 4:1-13 reminds them of the causes for conflict, the correct attitude to resolve conflicts, the commands to obey and the danger of slander. In conflicts
- 4:13-17 to be careful of presumptuous sins and the sins of omission.
- 5:1-6 the rich be warned against sinful behaviour
- 5:7-20 he encourages godly behaviour, prayer and care for wandering believers.

Today we will look at specifically being a peacemaker in conflicts when facing trials.

## Proposition

3 steps to overcoming conflicts so that you can be a peacemaker in trials

1. Causes for conflicts
2. Correct attitude to resolve it
3. Commands to obey

## Readings James 4:1-10

### 1. Causes for conflicts

*<sup>1</sup> What causes quarrels and what causes fights among you? Is it not this, that your passions are at war within you? <sup>2</sup> You desire and do not have, so you murder. You covet and cannot obtain, so you fight and quarrel. You do not have, because you do not ask. <sup>3</sup> You ask and do not receive, because you ask wrongly, to spend it on your passions. <sup>4</sup> You adulterous people! Do you not know that friendship with the world is enmity with God? Therefore whoever wishes to be a friend of the world makes himself an enemy of God. James 4:1–4 (ESV)*

Its helpful to understand the near context of this passage. James 3:13-18 James addresses the fruit of wisdom that comes from below and the wisdom that comes from above.

Wisdom involves the knowledge and ability to direct the mind to a full understanding of human life and moral fulfillments. It's the ability to judge correctly and to follow the best course of action. Its a reflection of the character of God in our practices.

*<sup>13</sup> Who is wise and understanding among you? By his good conduct let him show his works in the meekness of wisdom. <sup>14</sup> But if you have bitter jealousy and selfish ambition in your hearts, do not boast and be false to the truth. <sup>15</sup> This is not the wisdom that comes down from above, but is earthly, unspiritual, demonic. <sup>16</sup> For where jealousy and selfish ambition exist, there will be disorder and every vile practice. <sup>17</sup> But the wisdom from above is first pure, then peaceable, gentle, open to reason, full of mercy and good fruits, impartial and sincere. <sup>18</sup> And a harvest of righteousness is sown in peace by those who make peace. James 3:13–18 (ESV)*

James describes that when you find bitter(proceeding from great hostility or animosity, attitude) jealousy(prideful or greedy longing for something that belongs to another even something intangible like a skill), and selfish ambitions(a strong drive for personal success without moral ambitions) in the heart, you find wisdom from below: that is earthly(worldly), unspiritual (natural or worldly minded), demonic (devilish).

The fruit(consequences) of this kind of wisdom(where there is jealousy and selfish ambitions) is disorder ( a state of violent group disturbance, especially in political or social conditions, you have unstable conditions, tumult/commotion, uproar) and you find vile (evil, not adhering to moral principles) practices.

In contrast the wisdom from above is always pure (Faultless, holy, innocence), and its described as:

- peaceable (being conducive to harmonious relationships, promotes a state of wholeness, wellbeing and happiness)
- gentle (Does not insist on every right, or letter of the law, yielding, courteous and tolerant)

- open to reason (Open and willing to adopt another position, belief or course of action, compliance, easiness)
- full of mercy (leniency and compassion shown towards offenders by a person or an agency of authority, kindness or concern expressed for someone in need)
- and good fruit, (morally excellent = good, fruit = the consequences of some efforts or actions)
- Impartial (not tending to cause factions or divisions in a group, non-judgmental)
- Sincere (not pretending, genuine, sincere)

So, you see how the wisdom from above is critical for being a peacemaker that results in a harvest of righteousness is sown in peace, by the peacemaker that uses God's wisdom.

Those who apply Gods wisdom produce this amazing harvest of rightness, many good works.

Those who apply wisdom from below increase the conflict.

I urge you to apply the wisdom from above towards your next conflict?

But what lies at the heart of any conflict, our passage asks that question.

***<sup>1</sup> What causes quarrels and what causes fights among you? Is it not this, that your passions are at war within you?***

4:1-11 James explains to you what is involved in being a peacemaker.

First, answers the question: what causes quarrels and fights among you?

**Quarrels** = fights or wars, or battles, a state of hostility/antagonism, *strife, conflict*.

**Fights** = *open clash between opposing parties, to do battle, strife to have disputes*

**Among you** means that the believers were fighting among themselves.

IT would appear that there were some in the church, some believers in the stressful situations were clashing with one another.

James had already in 3:14-16 spoken about jealousy (prideful or greedy longing for something that belongs to another even something intangible like a skill), and selfish ambitions (a strong drive for personal success without moral ambitions)

But here he puts his finger upon their passions.

Passions “hedone”, which refers to the feeling that accompanies an unsatisfied state, **state or condition of experiencing pleasure for any reason, pleasure, delight, enjoyment, pleasantness and includes sexual pleasures<sup>i</sup>**

It would appear that the believers were fighting and having conflict over the loss of some of their pleasures or the unsatisfied state of what they enjoyed or delighted in.

Isn't it strange how you and I constantly in these times of great trial seek out our little pleasures?

Its Asif you feel this great intense need to do, eat of feel things to try and sooth your unhappiness over the lockdowns (the trial you're in)

In James's day there was the added reality of some of his members were Zealots.

- members of the Jewish radical political party who were fanatical militant sect opposed to Roman dominion.
- Simon the Zealot was a disciple of Christ.
- The Zealots were later called Sicarii meaning dagger men or assassins.

James goes on:

***<sup>2</sup> You desire and do not have, so you murder.***

***You covet and cannot obtain, so you fight and quarrel.***

***You do not have, because you do not ask. <sup>3</sup> You ask and do not receive, because you ask wrongly, to spend it on your passions.***

So, when James stated that due to the fact that some desired and did not get, so you murder could actually mean, zealots, may have continued to resolve their conflicts with violence and murder.

Most commentators do not like the idea that in the early church that some Christians were actually killing people, but I lean to the fact that it is possible.

Desires= means to have strong affections directed towards something, to lust after something.

The principle stays true, that **frustrated desires** may lead to conflict and in extreme cases even murder.

The Jewish leaders in envy/jealousy killed Christ

*<sup>10</sup> For he perceived that it was out of envy that the chief priests had delivered him up. Mark 15:10 (ESV)*

*<sup>17</sup> But the high priest rose up, and all who were with him (that is, the party of the Sadducees), and filled with jealousy Acts 5:17 (ESV)*

Conflicts are the product of frustrated desires.

The 2<sup>nd</sup> level is when you covet and cannot obtain it.

***You covet and cannot obtain, so you fight and quarrel***

Covet=, same as jealousy, James 3:14 to have intense feelings over another's achievements or success, to be envious, to be desirous of exclusivity in a relationship.

So, a jealous heart, having this intensely feeling over a matter frustrated leads fights and quarrels.

This is a warning to you and I that if you feel extremely strong over a matter and it gets frustrated, it will lead to quarrels and fights or ungodly behaviour.

A jealous heart, will cause it.

When you covet something, your greedy and selfish

Paul describes a covetous person as an idolater

*<sup>5</sup> For you may be sure of this, that everyone who is sexually immoral or impure, or who is covetous (that is, an idolater), has no inheritance in the kingdom of Christ and God. Ephesians 5:5 (ESV)*

If you're willing to fight or quarrel over anything that you feel so intensely about, it may be indicative that you have idols in your heart.

And in this case the idol is your own selfish desires, you are worshipping you and not God.

Instead of you finding your desires met in God, instead of worshipping Christ, and walking in yieldedness to the Spirit, your pursuing your own fleshly desires.

*<sup>16</sup> But I say, walk by the Spirit, and you will not gratify the desires of the flesh  
Galatians 5:16 (ESV)*

Rom 1:21-32 depicts where people exchange the worship of God for some kind of idol in creation. Vs 28 -32 list the consequences of not acknowledging God

*<sup>28</sup> And since they did not see fit to acknowledge God, God gave them up to a debased mind to do what ought not to be done. <sup>29</sup> They were filled with all manner of unrighteousness, evil, covetousness, malice. They are full of envy, murder, strife, deceit, maliciousness. ... Romans 1:28-29 (ESV)*

Back to James Vs 3 explains why their desires were unmet.

***<sup>3</sup> You ask and do not receive, because you ask wrongly, to spend it on your passions.***

The grammar indicates they were continuously asking and not getting what they asked for.

Their prayer life was motivated by hearts pursuing selfish passions (the pursuit of pleasures, seeking their joy in the world).

Oh my brothers and sisters, how many fights do you have because you want comfort, you want your pleasures met, you are wanting to be lazy and not clean up after you, you want to be worshipped and treated like a king and everyone else is your slave.... just think about it.

James puts His finger on the issue



***4 You adulterous people! Do you not know that friendship with the world is enmity with God? Therefore, whoever wishes to be a friend of the world makes himself an enemy of God. James 4:1–4 (ESV)***

James calls these believers instead of brothers, you adulterous people.

You people who commit adultery with the world.

You have secret affairs with the world.

The prophets compared the relationship between Yahweh and his people to a marriage relationship and disobedience to God as a wife that deserts her husband.

*Isaiah 54:5–6*

Jesus called them

*<sup>39</sup> But he answered them, “An evil and adulterous generation seeks for a sign, but no sign will be given to it except the sign of the prophet Jonah. Matthew 12:39 (ESV)*

You unfaithful people to God. Why?

If you seek your joy in the world, then it's not in God

If you're a friendship of the world, you're an enemy of God

Just as any divorce due to adultery transforms a harmonious relationship between a husband and wife to a state of war, so a love of the world means you cross over into enemy territory and you join the ranks of the enemy of God.

We see this in other passages as well.

*<sup>15</sup> 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. 1 John 2:15 (ESV)*

### **Application**

At the core of conflicts is a love or friendship with the world which makes you an enemy of God.

You know that many fights happen over something you love in this world and no one should mess with your stuff.

The friendship, pursuit, love of money, possessions, fame, power or things (stuff food, tv, cell phones, games etc) in the world become so important that we become at war with God and people

Do you manipulate to get your way or something?

Do you raise your voice when someone has taken your stuff?

Do you fighting and even become violent to have your way?

Maybe it's because you are a friend with the world and not with God.

Believer if this is true of you, confess it, repent of it and choose to love God more and your neighbour more than yourself.

## **2. Correct attitude to resolve conflicts**

*5 Or do you suppose it is to no purpose that the Scripture says, "He yearns jealously over the spirit that he has made to dwell in us"? 6 But he gives more grace. Therefore it says, "God opposes the proud but gives grace to the humble." James 4:5-6 (ESV)*

God has desires.

The term yearns means strong desires.

He yearns= he has strong desires.

Jealously = here were talking about an appropriate desire for what a person has the right to.

God made you and owns you and determines your purpose

He is strongly desirous over the spirit, your soul dwelling within you.

God is highly protective of your spirit.

You and I are to worship Him alone.

There is only space for one on the throne of your life, and God is to be that.

That's why He hates idolatry and that's why God is selective in who he helps.

He is selective in giving grace to some and not to others.

***<sup>6</sup> But he gives more grace. Therefore it says, "God opposes the proud but gives grace to the humble." James 4:5–6 (ESV)***

God opposes (against, expresses opposition, arranges an army against, resist to arrange against) in an ongoing basis the proud.

*Pride is when you attribute to yourself honor, privileges, prerogatives, rights and powers due to God alone. It's at its core idolatry of self. (Mack 2005, 25-26)*

But God's grace in an ongoing basis is available night or day for the humble

*Humility is an attitude wherein we recognize our own insignificance and unworthiness before God and attribute to Him the Supreme honor, praise, prerogatives, rights privileges, worship, devotion, authority, submission and obedience He deserves. Having a servant mindset and always putting self-last. (Mack 2005, 26)*

God's divine help to resolve conflicts is given to the believer that embraces a servant mindset.

God's Grace is always bigger than our ability to hurt others (Joshua Mack)

You will not be able to resolve conflicts with a prideful attitude

## **Application**

1. Prideful attitudes are seen in the fact that you're not willing to accept any blame in a conflict
2. Its seen in the fact that you blame it on the other person
3. Its seen in the fact that you're not willing to realize at the core of your conflict is an idolatry of self
4. At the core is your own desires.

5. So, to resolve conflict begin by committing to be humble.
  - a. Consider God's greatness and your own insignificance
  - b. Consider God loves the humble and hates the proud
  - c. Consider Christ example of humility. (Phil 2)
  - d. Consider the very fact that God uses these hard situations to teach us humility, since you're in situations outside of your own control.
  - e. Conflicts are often God given opportunities God uses to allow other people to rebuke and criticize you which grows humility.
  - f. God allows misunderstandings and misrepresentations of facts to humble us.
  - g. God uses our own sins and failures to humble us.

So, once you have embraced a humble attitude, you can know that God's grace is freely available to you as believer.

### **3. Commands to obey**

*<sup>7</sup> Submit yourselves therefore to God. Resist the devil, and he will flee from you. <sup>8</sup> Draw near to God, and he will draw near to you. Cleanse your hands, you sinners, and purify your hearts, you double-minded. <sup>9</sup> Be wretched and mourn and weep. Let your laughter be turned to mourning and your joy to gloom. <sup>10</sup> Humble yourselves before the Lord, and he will exalt you. James 4:7–10 (ESV)*

IF Humility is the attitude needed for God's grace in resolving conflicts, then vs 7-10 expresses the kind of actions, or commitments God requires from a humble person.

#### **<sup>7</sup> Submit yourselves therefore to God.**

Firstly, commit yourself to do what God wants even if it is not what you want to do.

A humble person's focus is not on self but on God.

Make the decision to line yourself up under God's will and to obey Him.

Ask yourself this, do you know better than God or does God know what is best?

Submitting means to place yourself under Gods lordship a therefore commit yourself to obey Him in all things.

(1st commitment to resolve conflict means you commit to obey whatever God's word tells you to do)

### **Resist the devil, and he will flee from you.**

2<sup>ndly</sup> submitting to God means negatively refusing to bow down to the Devils authority.

The world and Satan call you to build up the self, to worship yourself, but humility calls you to pose that mindset.

The bible commands you in an ongoing basis to resist, to stand firmly against, to oppose, or to withstand Satan (one who engages in slander, the adversary.)

Eph 6 gives you a picture of what it means to resist the evil one.

1. you find your strength in the Lord.

Eph 6:10 commands believers to strengthen themselves in The Lord and in His power

2. Clothe yourself with the armour of God

6:11 commands believers to clothe themselves with the full armour of God **so that you can stand against** the schemes of the evil one.

3. recognize the nature of the battle is spiritual

12 reveals that the believer's battle is not against flesh and blood but against evil spiritual forces. Vs 14-20 then explains what the armour is.

4. understand what the armour of God is.

The believer is clothed in the armour of God when he

1. Depends upon God, walking in faith
2. Is soaked in Gods truth
3. Stands and walks in the righteousness of Christ.
4. Walks in God given peace.

5. Receives Holy spirit produced assurance of salvation for obedient believers
6. Receives the word of God

**resisting** Satan means in dependence upon God you walk in a Christ like manner: trust and obey, immersed in His truth, in a state of peace, confidently a child of God and constantly receiving the word of God to transform you in your life.

Conflict situations create opportunities for Satan to do a work in your life.

- Eph 4:26-27 unresolved anger, even righteous anger provides an opportunity for Satan to work.
- When your unwilling to forgive, know you are following a satanic plan 2 Cor 2:10–11
- The lack of being credibility is called a snare of the Devil. 1 Tim 3:7

When you resist Satan, He will flee from you.

When you make that active choice and commitment to obey God, He will flee from you.

### **<sup>8</sup> Draw near to God, and he will draw near to you.**

3rdly draw near to God does not mean to approaching God in worship as you would see in the OT. (Lev 21:21, 23, Is 29:13)

The context here means something different, since if you draw near/worship God it does not mean God will draw near and worship you.

Rather it refers to moving closer, approaching God and He will approach you.

Pride draws a person away from God to self, where as humility means you moving towards God and other people. Elevating them.

Considering them more important than yourself.

In the near context the believer is exhorted to oppose the evil one, to stand against him and now move closer towards God.

The direction of your life should be moving closer and closer towards God and what God expects you to do.

In resolving conflicts, you should choose to move closer to God and not resolve the conflict as the world expects you to.

The world calls for vengeance, but vengeance belongs to God not you.

It means following instructions like

*<sup>32</sup> Be kind to one another, tenderhearted, forgiving one another, as God in Christ forgave you. Ephesians 4:32 (ESV)*

Instead of

*“...bitterness and wrath and anger and clamor and slander ...and all malice.”  
Eph 4:31 (ESV)*

Now to approach a Holy God you need to deal with your sins.

### **Cleanse your hands, you sinners, and purify your hearts, you double-minded.**

A humble person evaluates yourself first and deals with your own sin first.

James calls the believers sinners and double minded (those whose faith are wavering) to do two things:

1. To cleanse their hands
2. To purify their hearts

To cleanse their hands, refers to outward cleansing, a reference to confronting external behaviour.

1. Confess and repent of any outward sinful actions in your life.
2. Don't blame the other person for your sins
3. Don't cover up what you did wrong
4. Don't make excuses
5. Don't pretend that what you did is not your fault
6. Let's deal with me, what's wrong with me, my motives (Joshua Mack)

To purify the heart refers to cleansing and cleaning of the inner thoughts, emotions, attitudes, and affections of the believer's hearts.

This is only possible for a true believer.

When God saves you through repentance and faith in Christ's death and resurrection, God changes your heart, your inner person.

In Dt 10:16 God commanded Israel to circumcise their hearts. (Which they could not do)

So, in Dt 30:6 God promised that He would do it.

Both in Ezek 11:19-21 and 36:26-28 we see how God promised Israel that He would give them new hearts and that He would put the HS into them to cause them to obey His commands.

So, for the believer, who already has the indwelling spirit, your heart has already been changed to have new desires, your role is now to repent of wicked thoughts, attitudes, emotions and put on Gods ways of thinking, attitudes emotions and making the decision to obey God.

You do this in absolute dependence upon the HS.

**<sup>9</sup> Be wretched and mourn and weep. Let your laughter be turned to mourning and your joy to gloom.**

The next 4 commands I clump together.

A humble person takes sin seriously, and is truly sorrowful over his or her sin

In the Ot when people repented to God, we see expressions of sorrow and mourning over their sin.

*<sup>12</sup> "Yet even now," declares the LORD, "return to me with all your heart, with fasting, with weeping, and with mourning; Joel 2:12 (ESV)*

*<sup>10</sup> For godly grief produces a repentance that leads to salvation without regret, whereas worldly grief produces death. 2 Corinthians 7:10 (ESV)*

Mourning refers to the inner repentance and sorrow over sin, where weeping refers to the outer expression of sorrow over sin.



Change your laughter to mourning refers to a change in emotions from joy to sorrow. It means you're taking your sin seriously.

If you are serious about dealing with your sin, and you come weeping outwardly and mourning inwardly over your own sin, it sets the stage to resolve conflict.

If you come to resolve a conflict, not blaming the other, just acknowledging your sin and your sorrow over it, that really provides a right environment for the other to confess their sin and to resolve the conflict in a godly manner.

**<sup>10</sup> Humble yourselves before the Lord, and he will exalt you. James 4:7–10 (ESV)**

The final command is the command that results in a promise.

The grammar indicates you are the receiver of Humility.

Conflicts grow humility within our proud hearts and we are to allow that to be the reality.

- Exposing and dealing with our sinfulness humbles us.
- Submitting to God humbles us
- Opposing the devil and the world humbles us

But being humbled is good, because God is the one that will exalt you.

You do not need to exalt yourself. He is the one to exalt you. He is the one that will lift you up.

**Application**

Means the path to exaltation is through humility

It means that the key to resolving conflicts lies in a humble heart, willing to depend upon God, to oppose Satan, to confront your sins both outwardly and inwardly and to take your sin seriously.

Then talk through the matter with the person.

## **In closing**

4 steps to overcoming conflicts so that you can be a peacemaker in trials

1. Causes for conflicts are our frustrated desires
2. Correct attitude to resolve conflicts is humility
3. Commands to obey in conflicts: submit to God, resist the Devil, move towards God, confess and repent of all know sins and as your humbled know that God will exalt you.

... “God opposes the proud but gives grace to the humble.” Which you desperately need in conflict situations especially in lockdown.

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<sup>i</sup> Arndt, W., Danker, F. W., Bauer, W., & Gingrich, F. W. (2000). [\*A Greek-English lexicon of the New Testament and other early Christian literature\*](#) (3rd ed., p. 434). Chicago: University of Chicago Press.