

CCC HOW TO AVOID ARGUMENTS P10

Developing a Faith That Works - Part 10

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". Over the years with talking with people and couples one of the most common complaints I hear from people is "We just can't seem to get along. We argue so much. We love each other. Why is it we have major blowups over such minor issues?" I talk with parents who say, "With my kids there is constant tension. I don't understand why we're always in an argumentative mode."

James talks about that. In this passage on how to avoid arguments he gives us both the causes and the cures -- the reason for argument and the remedy.

At the very start of this message I want you to think of the person that causes the most conflict in your life. If you do this I think those who do will get the most out of this message if you think about the person who causes conflict in your life and how to avoid arguments with them.

James doesn't beat around the bush. He gets right to the point. He doesn't waste any time. 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 in your life is conflicting desires. When my wants conflict with your wants... sparks are going to fly. God's word, the Bible makes very clear here and other places in the bible that there are three basic desires we all have that cause conflict. These desires are legitimate desires for us to have

.... unless they're out of control. These desires 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 using people -- manipulating them, controlling them, moving them around to get what you want... WHY? because things have become more important in your life.

It's very easy to fall in love with things these days... The desire to have becomes number one in your life and

that creates conflict. It is not by accident that Gallup says that 56% of all marriages that end in divorce end because of money problems. Things become a battleground. If you decide to base your life on comparing it to other people, you will never be happy no matter how much you get. Just the time you catch up with the Jones' they refinance.

There's always something more. People try to fill their lives with things, the desire to have doesn't satisfy. It leaves you empty. *"You want what you don't have ... you long for what others have."* The other desire is:

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 want only what will give you pleasure"* Now don't bet me wrong... 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 – guess what, 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 feel good creates conflict.

The desire to have and the desire to feel good are two of the desires that when they are thwarted cause conflict. Why do you think people argue about sex in marriage? The desire for pleasure is strong. When it is thwarted, resentment builds up.

3. THE DESIRE TO BE - This is pride, power, prominence, popularity. I want to be number one. It's the desire for "me first". Frank Sinatra summarized it well what I am saying, "I Did It My Way". This is the "ME" decade. The "ME" generation. Get on top no matter what

the cost. Be the big. Proverbs 13:10 *"Pride leads to arguments."* Have you ever been in an argument where you knew you were wrong but you wouldn't admit it. Why did you do that..? Because of pride and pride causes arguments. This is the bottom line of all these things is this, the next time you're in an argument, stop and ask "Is it worth it?"

James tells us that pride -- when we think we can do things on our own – this attitude 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 there are 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. Number two: 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 me. 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 and argue... 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 in your life. We'd rather try to work it out ourselves. But listen prayerlessness in itself is pride. Not wanting to pray and ask God is an evidence of pride. Why don't I pray and ask God? Because, I don't think I need God. Prayerlessness in itself is an evidence of

pride. James says we'd have a lot more peace if we just prayed more. We'd have a lot less to worry about, a lot less to argue about, a lot less to fight over if we just humbles ourselves and prayed more.

In the next verses, James talks about conflict with God. He says, pride not only causes conflict with other people but it causes conflict with God. Listen to v. 6 *"God opposes the proud but gives grace to the humble."* Make sure you get what I am about to say, God declares war on selfishness. Have you noticed that God has a unique way of engineering circumstances to pop your pride? Just about the time you think, "I've got it together this time!" Pow, God puts you in your place... if you think you don't need Him. And friends this is the scariest scripture of all to me God is no respecter of people. To be in opposition to God

is a dangerous place to be. Because you're on a collision course and 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

v. 6 & 10 *"God ... gives grace to the humble. Humble yourself before the Lord, and he will lift you up."* What is grace here? Grace is God's power to change. Let me ask you a question. 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 with your marriage, your family, your co-workers? Whatever you would like to change, you need grace. Why, because 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. God doesn't give grace to those who think in their minds, "I can do it on my own." He gives it when we come and surrender our ways 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 gives four specific and very practical 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 of your life. 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. You got a battle going on inside. (Good Dog / Bad Dog) 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. You get irritable. You get upset. You want things to go just the way you want them to go and when they don't go that way, it makes you mad. 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, we try to control them and try to move them around to get what we want out of life.

Give in to God. This means you learn to say "Thy will be done" instead of saying "My will be done, Me first". That's the difference. 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 ignorant about this. *"Resist the devil, and he will flee from you."* The word "resist" is a war term. It means to be prepared, to stand against, to withstand an attack. The devil wants to

destroy your marriage. He wants to destroy your family. He wants to destroy every good relationship you have... Why? Because he loves conflict, he loves 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 probably means you're already going in the same direction that he is...

There is a great promise here. It says, "*Resist the devil and he will flee.*" You don't have to put up with him. Give in to God and get wise to Satan. He has no power over you then that which you give him. People say I don't give in to him. Yes you do by your life style your not surrendered to

God will for your life and if your not the devil can stir you up break you down anytime he wants to...

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 small group or 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, in His word, talking to Him, praising Him, whatever, the better I get along with other people. Count on it! When the argument level rises in my marriage it means Edna-Wynne or I aren't spending time with the Lord. aren't spending time in His word. It's that simple. Count on it!

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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 all the time. You need to be connected in a small group, or a Bible study, definitely Sunday morning worship, daily quiet time -- make time for these things. You say you're too busy? Then guess what... maybe you are 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. The more you spend time with the Lord the more productive, the more beneficial things will be. The more you spend time with the Lord, you'll get

along better with others, have fewer arguments, why, because you're spending time with God. "Draw closer to God, He'll keep you in perfect peace." Get up 15 minutes earlier each morning. Maybe start with the Gospel of John. Read and pray and notice the difference in your attitude and the relationships the rest of the day. I challenge you to do that.

Listen God's word can't be any clearer to you and I here... The conflict in your life is in direct proportion to the time you're spending with God.

There is a great promise here to you. When I in genuinely drawing close to God, When I am working it and what does that mean reading His word, coming Sunday's to worship Him, involved in a small group or bible study or something like that... "*He will come near to you.*" He doesn't back off. He draws close to you. When you move

toward Him, God moves toward you. So we need to 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, if you want to 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. Don't minimize what you've done. You need to take it seriously. It is a big deal when your wife's feelings are hurt. Take it seriously. It may not be a big deal to you, but it was to them. Be willing to ask forgiveness.

Now... go back to that person I asked you to think about in the beginning of this message. Would you like to

begin to resolve the conflict with that person? 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. You say something like, "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." WOW, How humbling that would be! Good why is that, 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, its also your choice, but this is necessary if 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 -- Take the first step. v. 10 *"Humble yourself before the Lord and He will lift you up."* God doesn't want to keep you down on the ground. The way to honor is humility, with your spouse, your kids, everybody.

God's word, says *Your attitude should be the same as that of Jesus Christ.*" How do you get that attitude? Let Jesus Christ live through your life. When Jesus Christ lives in me and Jesus Christ lives in you, Jesus isn't going to argue with Jesus. Let go of the ego's There is no ego there with Christ.

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.

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.'" If you've never invited Jesus Christ into your life, do it. Ask Him to come in.

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.