

THE HEART OF CONFLICT

James 4:1-12

What causes fights and quarrels among you? Don't they come from your desires that battle within you? You want something but don't get it. You kill and covet, but you cannot have what you want. You quarrel and fight. You do not have, because you do not ask God. When you ask, you do not receive, because you ask with wrong motives, that you may spend what you get on your pleasures. (James 4:1-3)

I. THE PROGRESSION OF CONFLICT

I Desire

"your desires ... battle within you ... you want something"

I Demand

You want something but don't get it. You kill and covet, but you cannot have what you want. (v.2)

"I wish I could have this" evolves into "I must have this!"

"X-ray" questions:

- What am I preoccupied with? What is the first thing on my mind in the morning and the last thing on my mind at night?
- How would I complete this statement: "If only _____, then I would be happy, fulfilled, and secure"?
- What do I want to preserve or avoid?
- Where do I put my trust?
- What do I fear?
- When a certain desire is not met, do I feel frustration, anxiety, resentment, bitterness, anger, or depression?
- Is there something I desire so much that I am willing to disappoint or hurt others in order to have it?

I Judge

Anyone who speaks against his brother or judges him speaks against the law and judges it. When you judge the law, you are not keeping it, but sitting in judgment on it. There is only one Lawgiver and Judge, the one who is able to save and destroy. But you-who are you to judge your neighbor? (v.11-12)

"When we judge others and condemn them in our hearts for not meeting our desires ... We have doubled our idolatry problem: Not only have we let an idolatrous desire rule our hearts, but we have also set ourselves up as judging minigods. This is a formula for excruciating conflict." - Ken Sande

I Punish

You want something but don't get it. You kill and covet (v.2)

"Idols always demand sacrifices. When others fail to satisfy our demands and expectations, our idols demand that they should suffer. Whether deliberately or unconsciously, we will find ways to hurt or punish people so they will give in to our desires." - Ken Sande

II. THE CURE FOR IDOLATRY (the first step of conflict resolution)

A. See the Seriousness of the problem and repent

You adulterous people, don't you know that friendship with the world is hatred toward God? Anyone who chooses to be a friend of the world becomes an enemy of God. (V.4)

Wash your hands, you sinners, and purify your hearts, you double-minded. Grieve, mourn and wail. Change your laughter to mourning and your joy to gloom.(v.8)

But he gives us more grace. That is why Scripture says: "God opposes the proud but gives grace to the humble." (V.6)

B. Find Your Satisfaction in God.

"Sin is what you do when you are not fully satisfied in God." -- John Piper

*What your heart needs more than anything is God himself!

Q: How does God come to matter more and matter most? How does desire for him increase?

By believing the gospel.

Come near to God and he will come near to you. (v.8)

Humble yourselves before the Lord (v.10)

and he will lift you up