

## Church in Conflict

### Introduction

James is writing his letter to a church that is being persecuted. They are in Jerusalem. They have been ostracized from the Jewish Synagogue and Jewish Society because of their faith in Jesus. They are going through trials and learning who to grow in them. They are aligning their works with their faith.....but there is a problem in the First Church of Jerusalem.

They had been forced to depend upon one another to survive. They couldn't sell or buy in the market. They couldn't work. They were struggling to survive. In Acts we learn that the early believers sold all that they had and shared it with one another. They are learning that friendship with God means hostility with the world.

Often you will hear churches say... "We want to be just like the church in Acts" and I wonder if they have actually read the Scriptures about the early church. The first century church had a mixture of all kinds of people. Some were saved, some were not. Some were working some were not. Some were advancing the gospel and others were advancing themselves. Some were surrendering to the Holy Spirit in them and others were pretending to have the Holy Spirit in them.

The early church had all kinds of problems Racial issues between the Jews and Gentiles....Whether to resist the Romans or not....Whether to be circumcised or not...Lawsuits between believers...what kind of meat to eat....disunity between believers...and perversion of God's truth.

The early church was seriously messed up. Paul and others would write letters to them constantly talking about their behavior and attitudes. For example....

1 Corinthians 5:1 (ESV) 1 It is actually reported that there is sexual immorality among you, and of a kind that is not tolerated even among pagans, for a man has his father's wife.

So when I hear that we should strive to be like the first century church in Acts....I have to almost laugh. I want to tell them....we are like the first century church and that is our problem. We haven't grown in the Spirit and we look too much like the world.

Toward the end of James' letter he pulls out the whopping elephant in the room. You guys are supposed to be loving one another and yet you are fighting with each other. Look at the text.

The theme of James is that when the Spirit is allowed to be in charge all goes well and when we operate out of the flesh all goes wrong.....we take shortcuts in trials, our spiritual growth stagnates, our anger erupts, our words become hostile, our actions become sinful and our relationships crumble.

Today we are going to learn about operating in our sinful flesh in our relationships with others. Not just the world but others in the church family.

Passage

James 4:1–12 (ESV) 1 What causes quarrels and what causes fights among you? Is it not this, that your passions are at war within you? 2 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. 3 You ask and do not receive, because you ask wrongly, to spend it on your passions. 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. 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." 7 Submit yourselves therefore to God. Resist the devil, and he will flee from you. 8 Draw near to God, and he will draw near to you. Cleanse your hands, you sinners, and purify your hearts, you double-minded. 9 Be wretched and mourn and weep. Let your laughter be turned to mourning and your joy to gloom. 10 Humble yourselves before the Lord, and he will exalt you.

James 4:1 (ESV) 1 What causes quarrels and what causes fights among you?

Not with the Jewish people....Not with the Synagogue....Not with the Romans....Not with Samaritans...Or Gentile Pagans.... What, James says, causes quarrels and fights among you? Notice that he doesn't even approach this with subtlety. He doesn't say, "Is it true that there are quarrels and fights among you guys at church?"

James takes their quarreling and fighting as a given. They were not just arguing....every family does that to some degree....they were actually fighting. The word here is translated correctly as a physical brawl. This word is frequently used for physical combat in a military sense.

Among you indicates that these combative relationships were between members of the churches to whom James wrote. As will be discussed under verse 4, some of those members obviously were not saved. And because they were thereby enemies of God, they were also enemies of each other and of true believers within the churches.

Most pastors will tell you that the root cause of conflict in church leadership was that often some of the men were saved and some were not. People who have not surrendered to Christ and who do not have the Holy Spirit in them have positioned themselves in church leadership. When you ask, how could that be, just remember Judas....When church leadership has people who are void of the Holy Spirit, in such a situation, conflict is inevitable. I have experienced that personally. It took a trial to bring out the spiritual foundation or lack thereof in church leaders.

James had no way of knowing that his First Church of Jerusalem...and the world for that matter.... would be like all the churches that follow. Conflict within the church among believers is a huge problem. That is why there are so many churches on every corner. That is why most churches see a rotating door of people throughout the years.

I grew up in a church where generations stayed in the church. Grandparents, Parents, Children, Uncles, Aunts, Cousins...if they lived in the same city, they all showed up on Sundays. They had their family and their family had a church family. I really miss that. You didn't leave your church family unless they became truly heretical...which was incredibly rare....you moved away or died.

If you didn't like something you talked about it. If you didn't like someone you prayed about it. You worked it out as every family does....but you didn't leave. Every church like every family had times of conflict. How you handled the conflict determined if you were going to honor God or not.

But conflict within the church is not in God's will or design. Jesus said to the disciples

John 13:34–35 (ESV) 34 A new commandment I give to you, that you love one another: just as I have loved you, you also are to love one another. 35 By this all people will know that you are my disciples, if you have love for one another.”

1 Corinthians 1:10 (ESV) 10 I appeal to you, brothers, by the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, that all of you agree, and that there be no divisions among you, but that you be united in the same mind and the same judgment. 11 For it has been reported to me by Chloe's people that there is quarreling among you, my brothers.

There it is again. Quarreling in the church...at Corinth just like in Jerusalem.

Today we choose churches like they are a fashion of Faith. We try on the style of the day. As soon as we find something that we don't like or that is requiring too much of us..we go somewhere else. If the church leaders address a sinful issue...they just leave. In my experience, 70% of people who suddenly leave a church do so because of a revealed personal sin that they do not want to address within their church family.

Rather than working through it with people they love and who love them, they run from their problem to a new group of believers and put on their new mask. It is a shame, God gave them their church family for moments like this and He is calling them to learn and grow through confession and restoration. But instead, they never engage in the process. They don't trust God enough to grow them through that particular trial. They don't trust their church family enough love them through this trial.

I know the pain of leaving a church. Our church came out of a church split. I know very well the damage that can come from conflict that is poorly handled by church leaders. And the damage of leadership that lacked a relationship with God. We left and started Remnant after a dispute with a prior church about the importance, relevance and accuracy of Scripture. I could not stay and preach the Word so I resigned.

Short of our miscarriages, It was the most personally devastating and painful experience that Tammy and I have ever been through. We had been in that church family for 15 years. Our kids grew up there, all of our friends were there, and the attack on us was personal, unfounded and raw. Satan was having a field day and I could do nothing to stop it.

The most painful events involved my sense of failure as a pastor because I had taught for years on watching out for the wolves from within and when it occurred they didn't want to see it. I felt like I should have somehow prepared them better. I can see now how God used that conflict to do some incredible things at Remnant. But I can also see how Satan used that event shaped my children's faith in God and in the church that still

hinders them to this day. I think one day they will turn back to Jesus..I don't think they will come back to a church. It happens to a lot of pastor's kids.

I say all of that to let you know that church conflict is ugly. It leaves scars. It shapes generations. And it is closely observed by those outside the faith. We tell everyone to love one another and then we go about fighting battles amongst ourselves. It is a horrible example to those looking in on God's people.

But I love that James talks about conflict in the church as a given. He knows, they know, and all believers everyone knows...are almost always involved in some form of conflict. It was true then and it is true now.

I spoke last week about how as a Pastor we are constantly listening to the words of our church family. How the tongue is untamable and gossip and conflict spread in a church like a wild fire through the forest in a wind storm.

Our words with each other stir the conflict that can bring down a church. The reason is that our words reflect what is in our hearts. Your heart is a tattle tale. If there is conflict, anger and problems within your spiritual heart...your words will express it.....often and repeatedly.

Problems in your spiritual heart can cause problems in the church but it also causes problems within yourself. Look at James' next verse.

James 4:1–3 (ESV) 1 What causes quarrels and what causes fights among you? Is it not this, that your passions are at war within you? 2 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. 3 You ask and do not receive, because you ask wrongly, to spend it on your passions.

You desire and don't have so you murder? Murder? Does James really mean murder? The original word here means, to deprive a person of life by illegal, intentional killing....yep James meant murder. In addition, this is not the only time James warns his readers about the sin of murder; he mentions it (with this same verb) in 2:11 and 5:6. The word kill [murder] is startling and meant to startle; James sought to force his readers to realize the depth of the evil in their bitter hatred toward others."

James states plainly that the source of internal conflicts is passions. passion translates *hēdonōn*, from which "hedonist" and "hedonism" are derived. It connotes the gratification of sensual, natural, fleshly desires. In the New Testament the word is always used in a negative, ungodly sense. Hedonism is the uncontrolled personal desire to fulfill every passion and whim that promises sensual satisfaction and enjoyment. The desire to fulfill these passions comes, of course, from selfishness, which is opposed to God and the Word of God.

When people surrender to their fleshly passions or pleasures, giving themselves over to sins, they do so thinking that they are expressing personal "freedom," not realizing that, in actuality, they are slaves of their own passions. They are driven by desires over which they lose control and which eventually come to control them.

Our passions are at war within us... These are strong passions. Not simply wishful desires. .What passions....the Passion of our Flesh..our old sinful self and the Passion of

the Holy Spirit to lead us in a new way. When you, as a believer, are in conflict there is an internal battle within you... What the Spirit demands and what your flesh desires.

Think about it this way...If everyone within the church operated within the surrendered guidance of the Holy Spirit we would never have conflict amongst ourselves. If the Spirit has total control of you and me...we will always be in harmony. No two believers who are both walking in the Spirit of God towards each other can live with wars and fights among themselves.

So when there is conflict in the church amongst Spirit led people...somewhere in that conflict our flesh has risen up to try to take control. That is the battle...those are your passions at war within you. When you are in conflict with another believer you should ask yourself this revealing question.

“What personal desire am I trying to protect or to gain?”

The reason these destructive desires exist among Christians is because they do not seek God for their needs (you do not ask). James reminds us here of the great power of prayer, you may not have what you truly desire in life simply because you haven't asked for it. You have been so focused on you that you failed to focus and pray to God.

Or you pray, but your heart is wrong. You ask God for what you want, but your desires come from selfish motives. If your heart is not surrendered to God and His agenda, your prayers will be ineffective.

We must remember that the purpose of prayer is not to persuade a reluctant God to do our bidding. The purpose of prayer is to align our will with His, and in partnership with Him, to ask Him to accomplish His will on this earth

Matthew 6:10 (ESV) 10 Your kingdom come, your will be done, on earth as it is in heaven.

James does not specify examples of the desires. What he does say could refer to conflict in group relationships, such as within a church: inflexibility about issues (from a desire to have one's own way), maneuvering for position of authority (from a desire for status and admiration within the community) or criticizing others (from a desire to make oneself look good).

It is equally applicable in individual relationships, such as a marital conflict: constantly exchanging hurtful words (from a desire to get even) or carrying out sexual infidelity (from a desire for selfish pleasure or simply a desire for another spouse). All of these happen in Christian churches and Christian marriages; they are all immoral. They are driven by the passions at war within us.

You are tempted to fulfill a sinful desire because you think (or hope) that it may be satisfied, but it will never be satisfied. Let me share with you a secret truth. You will never fulfill a sinful desire...ever. That is Satan's great lie. Since you can never fulfill a sinful desire, why not just stop trying?

When we have a sinful desire, God asks that we surrender it to Him. Satan tells us to try to fulfill it. You have not now nor will ever satisfy a sinful desire. So decide in advance to let the Spirit change it. Remember, Desire, Temptation, Choice, Sin Death. God changes your desires and thus satisfies them.

God tells us that the world has a way...a way that leads to death. But the Spirit has a path that leads to Life. You can't pursue the desires of the world and at the same time pursue the desires of the Holy Spirit. Once again....James reminds us that we are either Spiritually Led or spiritually dead.

James 4:4–6 (ESV) 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.

Embracing the World causes conflict with others, conflict in the church, conflict within yourself...but most importantly conflict with God.

James uses the rebuke language of the Old Testament Prophets....You Adulterous People....Prophets often spoke from God with these words....He is talking about Spiritual Adultery.

All believers in Christ are in a covenant relationship with Jesus and have the Holy Spirit with in them. You and I are the Bride of Christ. He should receive all of our love, glory honor and worship. We are to desire what He desires. We are to surrender ourselves to Him. We are to be faithful to only Him.

When we who are married to Christ seek after outside pleasures....the desires of the world...we are committing Spiritual adultery. James uses this harsh accusation to try to wake up those who are in denial.

James say that your desires and passions are seeking out a new lover...a lover in the world. You somehow believe that the world has something to offer you that God does not. When You and I pursue the offerings of this world instead of the guarantees of the Spirit....we are committing Spiritual adultery.

Judges 2:16–18 (ESV) 17 Yet they did not listen to their judges, for they whored after other gods and bowed down to them. They soon turned aside from the way in which their fathers had walked, who had obeyed the commandments of the Lord, and they did not do so.

Ezekiel 23:37 (ESV) 37 For they have committed adultery, and blood is on their hands. With their idols they have committed adultery, and they have even offered up to them for food the children whom they had borne to me.

So when James says that they are Spiritually Adulterous People... they knew what he meant....

It is interesting that the Scriptures never accuse Gentiles in the Old Testament of being spiritual adulterers. Why? Because they never had a covenant relationship with God. In other words, the Gentiles of the Old Testament could not be adulterers because they were never married to God.

Only Israel, God's covenant people, could be the unfaithful wife. Whether they turned to pagan gods and idols or simply turned to the world as their supreme love, to do so was to be unfaithful to the Lord and commit spiritual adultery, a figurative name for apostasy.

Kosmos (world) does not refer to the physical earth or universe but rather to the spiritual reality of the man-centered, Satan-directed system of this present age, which is hostile to God and God's people. It refers to the self-centered, godless value system and mores of fallen mankind. The goal of the world is self-glory, self-fulfillment, self-indulgence, self-satisfaction, and every other form of self-serving, all of which amounts to hostility toward God.

It is doubtless true that most unbelievers do not consider themselves enemies of God. Many believe that, because they are not openly hostile to God, they actually are friendly toward Him. They may even acknowledge His existence and His goodness, truthfulness, and power. But pleasant, sentimental thoughts about a sovereign divine Being are far from a saving relationship to the true God.

Some unbelievers who masquerade as Christians have considerable knowledge of the gospel and give it lip service. But, as cited earlier, Peter says of such people that "it would be better for them not to have known the way of righteousness, than having known it, to turn away from the holy commandment handed on to them" (2 Pet. 2:21). Unbelievers may regularly participate in Christian worship services and other church activities. They may even feel bad about their sins, recognize their imperfection, and, like the governor Felix, have a certain concern about their standing before God, but they never desire to forsake their sin or confess Christ as Lord and Savior

James seems to be saying that unbelievers, who are in a permanent state of spiritual conflict with God, not only are His enemies but also reflect that hostility by not trusting or obeying His Word. They refuse to acknowledge their natural enmity with and separation from the sovereign God.

Again, regardless of what such a person may claim, it is impossible to hold Scripture in genuine high regard as God's own Word and yet not trust in Jesus Christ for salvation. The Lord Himself says of such people, "You search the Scriptures because you think that in them you have eternal life; it is these that bear witness of Me; and you are unwilling to come to Me so that you may have life" (John 5:39–40).

Whether he recognizes it in his own mind or not, a person who wishes to be a friend of the world system has chosen to make himself an enemy of God. In his heart, his desire for the world supersedes any supposed positive ideas he may have about God. He does not have a neutral relationship with God, as an impartial bystander or a distant admirer, but is in the fullest sense His enemy. And to be God's enemy is to remain in spiritual darkness, daily grow more fit for eternal death, and have the sovereign King of the universe as your foe.

Anyone who does not belong to God belongs to the world, and everyone who belongs to the world does not and cannot belong to God. Friends of the world are controlled by the spirit of the world and have no part with the Spirit of God.

James recognizes that we cannot both be friends of this world system in rebellion against God, and friends of God at the same time (Matthew 6:24). Even the desire to be a friend (wants to be a friend) of the world makes that one an enemy of God.

The strong statements James made here remind us that all was not beautiful in the early church. They had plenty of carnality and worldliness to deal with. While the New Testament church is a clear pattern for us, we should not over-romanticize the spiritual character of early Christians.

James 4:5 (ESV) 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"?

The indwelling presence of the Holy Spirit has a jealous yearning for our friendship with God. The Spirit will convict the Christian who lives in compromise.

This phrase is a little hard to accurately translate. Is it God jealously yearning for the devotion of our spirit which He put within us, or is it the Spirit within us jealously yearning for the full devotion of our heart? Either way, the sense is much the same.

'You are grieving the Holy Spirit who has come to dwell within you, who yearns with a jealous envy to possess your entire nature for Himself.

James agrees with the many passages in the Old Testament that tell us God is a jealous God

Deuteronomy 32:16 (ESV) 16 They stirred him to jealousy with strange gods; with abominations they provoked him to anger.

Deuteronomy 32:21 (ESV) 21 They have made me jealous with what is no god; they have provoked me to anger with their idols.

Exodus 20:5 (ESV) 5 You shall not bow down to them or serve them, for I the Lord your God am a jealous God,

Zechariah 8:1–2 (ESV) 1 And the word of the Lord of hosts came, saying, 2 "Thus says the Lord of hosts: I am jealous for Zion with great jealousy, and I am jealous for her with great wrath.

The idea is that God loves men with such a passion that he cannot bear any other love within the hearts of men. Think of the inner pain and torture inside the person who is betrayed by an unfaithful spouse; who must reckon with the truth, I am faithful to them, but they are not faithful to me. This is what the Spirit of God feels regarding our world-loving hearts.

Fortunately, God doesn't leave us there. We have been unfaithful but He has not given up on us. The next verse starts with a very important word....but. Yes you are guilty of adultery with the world and I am a jealous God who you have hurt deeply....BUT



James 4:5–6 (ESV) 6 But he gives more grace. Therefore it says, “God opposes the proud but gives grace to the humble.”

God offers grace. Unmerited favor. However, He doesn't give it freely....He gives it to those who are humble.

When we recognize our love affair with the world and confess that sin with humility and brokenness...His grace flows to us.

Note that contrast; How weak we are, how strong he is; how proud we are, how unassuming he is; how sinful we are, and how infallible he is; how changing we are, and how unchanging he is; how provoking we are, and how forgiving he is. Observe how in us there is only bad, and how in him there is only good. Yet our sins draws out His goodness, and still he blesses us. It is incredible.

“Sin seeks to enter, grace shuts the door; sin tries to become our master, but grace, which is stronger than sin, will not permit it. Sin gets us down at times, and puts its foot on our neck; grace comes to the rescue ... Sin comes up like Noah’s flood, but grace rides over the tops of the water in the ark.

At the same time, James reminds us that this grace only comes to the humble. Grace and pride are eternal enemies. Pride demands that God bless me in light of my incredible value whether real or imagined. But grace will not deal with me on the basis of anything in me—good or bad—but only on the basis of who God is.

It isn’t as if our humility earns the grace of God. Humility merely puts us in a position to receive the gift He freely gives.

It is important to know who we are in Christ, why we are here and why the world should have no impact on us...

John 17:13–16 (ESV) 14 I have given them your word, and the world has hated them because they are not of the world, just as I am not of the world.

While we live in the world, we have been chosen out of it.

John 15:19 (ESV) 19 If you were of the world, the world would love you as its own; but because you are not of the world, but I chose you out of the world, therefore the world hates you.

While in the world we are not to be conformed to it.

Romans 12:2 (ESV) 2 Do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewal of your mind, that by testing you may discern what is the will of God, what is good and acceptable and perfect.

We are on a mission having been sent into the world by Jesus.

John 17:17–18 (ESV) 17 Sanctify them in the truth; your word is truth. 18 As you sent me into the world, so I have sent them into the world.

Why? So that they can provide moral light in spiritual darkness.

Matthew 5:15–16 (ESV) 15 Nor do people light a lamp and put it under a basket, but on a stand, and it gives light to all in the house. 16 In the same way, let your light shine before others, so that they may see your good works and give glory to your Father who is in heaven.

We have crucified the world...Killed our flesh on the cross.

Galatians 6:14 (ESV) 14 But far be it from me to boast except in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ, by which the world has been crucified to me, and I to the world.

We have already obtained victory over this world.

1 John 5:4–5 (ESV) 4 For everyone who has been born of God overcomes the world. And this is the victory that has overcome the world—our faith. 5 Who is it that overcomes the world except the one who believes that Jesus is the Son of God?

And we have remained unstained from this world.

James 1:27 (ESV) 27 Religion that is pure and undefiled before God the Father is this: to visit orphans and widows in their affliction, and to keep oneself unstained from the world.

So to be a friend of this world while at the same time claiming to be a Spirit filled saved Christian is the ultimate in selfish deception.

When we wake up from that delusion and turn from the sinful ways of the world and humble ourselves before God He floods us with His grace.

So there is only one thing Spirit Filled Christians need to do when they are in conflict with one another....

James 4:6–8 (ESV) 7 Submit yourselves therefore to God. Resist the devil, and he will flee from you. 8 Draw near to God, and he will draw near to you. Cleanse your hands, you sinners, and purify your

hearts, you double-minded. 9 Be wretched and mourn and weep. Let your laughter be turned to mourning and your joy to gloom. 10 Humble yourselves before the Lord, and he will exalt you.

So when we find ourselves in conflict with one another....what are we to do? How do we glorify God and bring resolution to the situation. How do we use this conflict to clean out the flesh desires that still remain within us.

1. Submit yourselves.....Surrender your flesh and its worldly desires....Where do those desires come from? Satan.

If you are in conflict with someone in the church...the one thing you must admit is that Satan is involved in the situation and may be influencing you. We always think the problem is with the other person, but Satan usually has both under his control.

We can't always see our role in conflict. It becomes very difficult to admit that we have sinned. So the first thing we must do is to submit ourselves to the Lord.

Lord I am here and now surrendered to whatever truth that you need to show me. We submit we place ourselves under His authority to show us what we cannot see.

2. Resist the Devil and he will flee from you.

Notice something critical here. I hear believers often take this verse out of context saying, "Resist the Devil and He will flee" As if you have the power in your flesh to resist him. You can't quote this verse without what precedes it. Submit yourselves to God.

In other words...draw near to the Lord....submit totally to the Spirit...Once you have the Spirit of God fully engaged on your behalf...then resist the devil. And when the Devil see the Spirit....rather than just you...He will flee.

If you do not submit to God you never will resist the devil, and you will remain constantly under his influence and power. In conflict, you must first choose your master. Is it God or Satan? No man is without a master. We are either fully surrender to God or we are not. There is no middle ground.

Note here that James does not tell us to go find someone who can cast out demons. He simply challenges believers to act in the power of the Holy Spirit that they possess. We are to deal with Satan as a conquered enemy who can and must be resisted by the Spirit within us.

Resist comes from two Greek words: stand and against. James tells us to stand against the devil. The devil can wrestle against the Christian, but he cannot pin him, Resisting Satan is not something that comes only with Spiritual maturity. Once the Holy Spirit is in you...even if you are a baby in the faith...you can successfully resist Satan in the power of Holy Spirit in you.

3. Draw Near to God and He will draw near to you.

The call to draw near to God is both an invitation and a promise. It is no good to submit to God's authority and to resist the devil's attack and then fail to draw near to God. We have it as a promise: God will draw near to us as we draw near to Him.

Once Satan flees we are to lean into God. Satan has been keeping us from God and now obstacle removed and our relationship can be enjoyed. As we are drawing near to Him, He is drawing near to us.

What does it mean to draw near to God? We abide in Him. We pray, read scriptures, and worship Him. We seek His counsel and we enjoy our renewed relationship with Him. We allow Him to teach us about the conflict we were in and to help us grow through it.

Note the promise here. If you draw near to Him He will draw near to you. What God is promising here is restored and refreshed relationship. Remember the reason the conflict started in the first place is that you and someone else in the church resisted what God desired. You were influenced by Satan and now it is time to reinvest in your relationship with God .

4. Cleanse your hands you sinners.

Cleanse your hands like the priests who washed their hands prior to making a sacrifice to God.

Notice James calls us sinners. He is addressing both those who are in the Spirit and not obeying God and calling those who do not know God to repent and be saved.

"Holy hands" represent a spiritually and morally pure life, apart from which God cannot be approached. It is sin that separates depraved man from the holy God.

But although we can resist sin, temptation, and the devil, it is not in any person's power—even the power of a believer—to cleanse himself spiritually. That is why our gracious Lord promises that,

1 John 1:8–10 (ESV) 9 If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness. 10 If we say we have not sinned, we make him a liar, and his word is not in us.

We cleanse our hands by submitting to God and confessing our sins...our role in the conflict.

5. Purify your hearts you double minded.

Once your sins are confessed and your hands are clean a transformation occurs in your heart. The two go together. Clean hands and a pure heart. God accomplished both when we surrender to Him and confess our sins.

Like David, James associates the outward sins of the hands with the inner sins of the heart. "Who may ascend into the hill of the Lord?" David asks. "And who may stand in His holy

place? He who has clean hands and a pure heart, who has not lifted up his soul to falsehood and has not sworn deceitfully" (Ps. 24:3–4; cf. 51:10).

#### 6. Be Miserable

It carries the idea of being broken and feeling wretched because of one's sins—in this case, that of being sinful, lost, and separated from God.

The misery James is speaking of here has nothing to do with being sad about bad circumstances in life and wanting God to help you have better ones. Nor does it relate to religious asceticism, or extreme self-denial and sacrifice that is supposed to make a person humble and more worthy in God's sight.

This misery has to do with the brokenness over one's sin and violation of God's holy law and the fear of judgment.

#### 7. Mourn what was lost.

Along with becoming miserable, the contrite sinner is to mourn over his sin. The idea is that of deep grief and remorse, a complete despair that laments over sin the way someone mourns the death of a family member or close friend.

#### 8. Weep

To weep is the outward manifestation of the previously mentioned misery and sorrow

#### 9. Laughter to Mourning Joy to Gloom

James is not condemning legitimate laughter or joy but rather the flippant, trivial, worldly, self-centered, sensual kinds that unbelievers revel in, despite, and often because of, their sinful pleasures.

To sum this up, you should feel like someone who has deeply hurt your spouse through adultery. You should be broken, miserable, tearful, full of gloom and despair. That is what confession and repentance looks and feel like

When you get to that point there is only one response left...

#### 10. Humble yourself.

To know what you have done. To know what you deserve and to throw yourself at their mercy. In this case God's mercy. You have committed adultery against God.....you know you are guilty...and you know what you deserve. So you humble yourself.

God has always honored those who are spiritually humble. Jesus said it this way.

Matthew 23:12 (ESV) 12 Whoever exalts himself will be humbled, and whoever humbles himself will be exalted.

The prodigal is the perfect example of contrite humility. When he came to his senses in the far country, he said to himself, "I will get up and go to my father, and will say to him, 'Father, I have sinned against heaven, and in your sight; I am no longer worthy to be called your son; make me as one of your hired men' " (Luke 15:18–19). When he returned home and expressed that sincere contrition, "the father said to his slaves, 'Quickly bring out the best robe and put it on him, and put a ring on his hand and sandals on his feet; and bring the fattened calf, kill it, and let us eat and celebrate; for this son of mine was dead and has come to life again; he was lost and has been found' " (Luke 15:22–24).

That is the image of one who surrenders to the Father and is restored.

Ten commandments to resolve conflict...conflict with each other and conflict in all of our relationships with believers.

We will have conflict in the church. You will be involved in conflict in this church. It is inevitable and it will happen one day. Until we are all fully surrendered to the Holy Spirit, we have opened a door for Satan to influence us. The important thing is not that we find ourselves in conflict but what we do with that reality.

If you are in conflict with someone in the church, you are probably responsible for part of that conflict. The first lie of Satan is that you are right and they are wrong. It doesn't matter what the other person did or did not do....you must be responsible for you. The answer is not to run to another church and put on a mask. You will eventually create the same circumstance in another church with another person. The problem is not your church...it is not necessarily the other person or persons in your conflict...the problem is in your heart...and the solution begins when you submit your heart to the Lord for His evaluation and more importantly His solution.

We don't have a lot of written policies and procedures at Remnant. However, the one policy that we have in writing and use often is our conflict resolution policy.

At Remnant we recognize that conflict is inevitable with our families and within our church family. We acknowledge that conflict is neither inherently destructive nor constructive. Conflict handled inappropriately becomes a tool of the enemy to reap discord and disunity; but conflict handled biblically becomes an instrument in the hands of almighty God to bring about peace, harmony and unity in the Spirit.

We value confronting conflict biblically in accordance with Matthew 18:15-17. Withdrawal, denial and fighting are unacceptable responses to conflict. We will manage conflict with an attitude of forbearance, forgiveness and love (Ephesians 4:2 and Colossians 3:13) We will confront conflict in a timely matter (Ephesians 4:26) We will pursue the goal of reconciliation and restoration resulting in peace and unity within the family (Romans 14:19) We will examine ourselves first in order to discern which offenses can be covered by forbearance and forgiveness and which offenses get rooted in our spirit and must be addressed. We will resist the temptation to listen when someone discusses a conflict he or she is having with another person in the church, and we will redirect that person to honor Matthew 18:15-17 by talking to the offending party directly. If we are unable to resolve the conflict between the two parties involved, we commit to seeking the advice and counsel of a mutually trusted RCS Elder

who can guide us toward reconciliation and restoration. We will keep the matter confidential and will not go to our friends either directly or through prayer requests in an effort to drum up support for our position or concerns.

Conflict is an opportunity...a trial...that allows us to grow as we surrender to the Spirit. Conflict handled biblically becomes an instrument in the hands of almighty God to bring about peace, harmony and unity in the Spirit.