

Cravings and Conflicts

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Date: 21 March 2021

- [0 : 00] I'm going to begin this morning by asking you a couple questions. I know the answers to the questions. So there is no need for you to respond.
- Have you ever had a craving for something you know you should not have? Don't answer that.
- Look straight ahead. That's right. Look straight ahead. Have you ever been involved in a conflict that you initiated?
- You started the conflict. Now I can say without fear of contradiction or successful contradiction that we have all been involved in conflicts and we've all had cravings.
- In the passage we come to today, James warns us against conflicts and cravings.
- [1 : 23] Let us pray. Father, in this moment, we need your help. Lord, to make plain these words that we come to in Scripture so that we might be edified.
- And all of us, Lord, we need your help in this regard. Make it plain, Lord. Cause it, O Lord, to reveal to us those things that we ought to adjust.
- Cause us to grow as a result. In the name of Jesus, we pray. And all God's people say, All God's people say, Amen.
- Amen. We are continuing our series in the book of James. And I'm going to invite you to turn in your Bibles to James chapter 4. Where we will read verses 1 through 6.
- James chapter 4, verses 1 through 6. James writes, Because you do not ask.
- [3 : 04] You ask and you do not receive. Because you ask wrongly to spend it on your passions. 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.
- 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?
- But he gives more grace. Therefore, it says, God opposes the proud, but gives grace to the humble. I believe these verses James is saying to us.
- Cravings and conflicts, which are products of the heart, not only color our relationship with one another, with each other, they reveal our true relationship with God.
- [4 : 18] James is saying to us, that cravings and conflicts not only have an impact on our horizontal relationships, but they also color, they also reveal our relationship with God.
- I think that there are three significant points that James is asking us to pay attention to in these verses that we have read. The first is, James is helping us to see the source of cravings and conflicts.
- The source of cravings and conflicts. The second thing he is helping us to see is the outcome of cravings and conflicts.
- And then thirdly, James points us to the cure for cravings and conflicts. Now this is not just lets you think otherwise.

These words of James are not only about what goes on in the local church. Yes, James writes these words to the church, but it's not only about what goes on in the local church.

[5 : 45] We don't turn our hearts or operate under different principles when we move away from gathering. Like a good physician, James opens the wounds to reveal the issues that you and I have in life.

You know, when you go to a doctor and you say, Doctor, there's something under my skin that's bothering me. The doctor first, he has to cut it open to reveal and then to remove that thing that should not be there.

But he doesn't leave it that way. Binds it up. That's precisely what James does. James, in his own very direct way, reveals the issues that we confront.

But thanks be to God, he does not leave us that way. So I want us now to consider point number one, the source of cravings and conflicts.

The source of cravings and conflicts. There's one thing that we can say about our brother James. Is that he does not beat around the bush.

[7 : 07] He gets right to the point. We've seen that throughout this book. James gets right to the point. One might have expected the words that James begins this chapter with.

To have been written to anyone but the church. Listen to how he opens chapter 4. James says, What causes quarrels and what causes fights among you?

Words written to the church. Not to unbelievers but to the church. Words written to you and to me. James says, What causes quarrels and conflicts among you?

And perhaps immediately some of you are saying, But we don't have quarrels and we don't have conflicts in kingdom life. And perhaps to some degree you're right.

But again, remember that James is not only speaking to us about what goes on in our local church. Because you can't turn this thing on and off.

[8 : 14] These words, they were written to Christians. To believers. And if you and I are honest. We would acknowledge that cravings and conflicts are not unusual in our relationships.

Whether those are relationships with our spouses. Or with our children. With our neighbors. With our co-workers. With a driver on the street perhaps.

A sibling. Or even a classmate. You name it. None of us is immune. And none of our relationships is insulated.

From the issue. That James refers to here. But James not only asks the question. He answers it as well.

Perhaps one might have expected James to answer something like this. Having asked the question. What causes quarrels? And conflicts among you.

[9 : 22] Perhaps. You might have thought that James would say. Maybe it's lack of respect for authority. Maybe it's an unruly. Child.

Or an unruly person. Maybe it's shrunkness. Yes. And so on. And so on. And to some degree. If he says those things. He would be right.

But James has a different agenda here. He wants to get to the source. He wants to get to the root of the problem. What is the source of it?

What's truly behind the issue? You know often. You and I. What we do is. When we have. When we confront something. When we're dealing with an issue.

We tend to look at its symptoms. Or its manifestations. And not the source of the thing. James asks a rhetorical question. In response to his first question.

[10 : 22] James says. Is it not this? That your passions. Are at war. Within you. James says.

What's causing the issues at work? What's causing the issues with your spouse? What's causing the issues with your classmate? What's causing the issues in your local church?

Is it not? Caused by the fact that your passions are at war. Burning within you. What does this mean?

James explains what he means. By passion using two words. Desire. And covet. Of course James could have produced a laundry list.

Of ungodly passions in us. But he uses those too. Now it is important I believe for us. To bear in mind that.

[11 : 23] Passion. And desire. As we typically use those terms. Desire. Are morally neutral. And do not necessarily denote sinfulness.

Indeed our lives would be dull and mundane. Without desire. And without passion. However. As Douglas J.

Moo points out. In the scriptures. Desire. Often has. The connotation. Or the meaning. Of a sinful.

Self-indulgent pleasure. It consistently has. A negative meaning. In the New Testament. And indeed. If we read just in the verses.

That we are considering. This morning. We get a sense. A very clear sense. That the desire. That James has in view here. Is indeed negative.

[12 : 23] It is indeed. Self-centered. Desiring something. That we do not have. James writes. In these verses.

Leads. To murder. He writes in verse 2. You desire and do not have. So you murder. Is James really suggesting.

That. Some people in the church. Were murdering other. Others in the church. I strongly doubt that.

I think James is making the point. The ultimate point. That desires can lead. Can cause us to do the. The worst thing imaginable.

James is saying. Listen. If you don't control. These passions. These passions. And desires. Within you. They can lead. To the worst act. That a human. Can possibly.

[13 : 21] Commit. Our passions. Can lead. To the most. Awful. Thing. Imaginable.

People. Now. I know. You would all agree. With me. That that is indeed. The case. And then James.

Writes further. James. Writes. That you covet. And cannot obtain. So you fight. And quarrel. You desire things.

That. Others have. So you fight. And quarrel. Remember this book.

As we said already. Is written to Christians. Yet James says. That they manifest. These behaviors. Between. Themselves. Because. Of these attitudes.

[14 : 21] It's more than just a conflict. Though. It's more than just a craving. It's more than just a conflict. That James is writing about. James is writing about us. Reading our hearts.

It's a reading of our hearts. James is saying that. These things reveal. What's truly going on. In our hearts. James is telling us. To check ourselves.

When we get involved. In conflicts. When we're doing things. James is saying to us. Listen. Stop. And think about it. Think about the origin.

What's really. Genuinely. Causing. This action. What's. What's behind. The action. James is helping us. To see. What we're truly.

Fighting. And warring. Against. God. If you're like me. That no doubt. You wish that passions.

[15 : 22] Sometimes. Within you. Are like. Were like commodities. That you could discard. Simply. By wishing them away.

And thereafter. Be perfect. It. That. But that's not the case. That's not the way. We are. What's really behind.

The conflict. That I have with my spouse. For example. One might ask. Is it a desire to. Is it a desire to control. Is it a desire to manipulate.

If we're genuinely. Seeking the best interest. Of each other. Or for each other. Why the fuss.

What's really behind it. What's really. Truly behind. The conflicts. That we are having. James warns us.

[16 : 23] That left unchecked. Our cravings. Lead. To many. Sinful. Things. Things. James says.

A lot more than that. To us. James helps us. To see. That not only. Might our relationships. Be impacted.

By conflicts. And cravings. But our relationship. With God as well. Which leads me. To our second point.

The outcome. The outcome. Of cravings. Of cravings. And conflicts. In verse. In verses 2b.

Through 3. Through verse 3. We find these. Words. James writes. You do not. You do not have. Because you do not. You do not have. Because you do not ask.

[17 : 23] You ask. And you do not receive. Because you ask wrongly. Here James warns us. That selfishness. Affects. Even our prayers.

Even our desire. To pray. James says. We. We come to a point. In our lives. Where we don't even. Want to ask God. We don't even want to approach God.

For things. And he says. That we. We don't have. Because we don't ask. And then when we do ask. James says. We don't get.

We don't receive. And why? Because. We want to feed. Our. Self. Interest. One's motives. Are wrong. And as a result. One does not receive. Conflicts.

[18 : 22] Cravings. Reveal our true relationship. With God. In chapter one.

Verse two. Of the book of James. James referred. To. The readers of. This book.

As my brothers. In James one. Verse 19. He calls them. My beloved. Brothers.

And up to this point. In chapter four. James uses those. Two terms. My. Brothers. And my beloved.

Brothers. Six times. Referring to. The readers. Of. This book. My brothers.

[19 : 23] And my. Beloved brothers. Brothers. But in a. Striking. And a. Star divergence. In verse four. Of. This chapter. He refers to them.

Not as my brothers. Or my beloved brothers. But rather. As. Adulterous people. James refers to. The readers. Of this text.

He says. Adulterous. You. Adulterous. People. Adultery.

As we know. Occurs. When a married person. Has relations. With someone. Other than his. Or her spouse. The marriage.

Does not cease. But the. Unfaithful spouse. Is referred to. As. An adulterer. Having made the point. That his readers.

- [20 : 23] Were being led. By worldliness. Which is sinful. James. In his. Very direct style. Says. That their actions.
- Are the same. As an unfaithful. Spouse. Hence. Hence. He refers to them.
- As adulterous. These are. Stop. And these are strong words. That James uses. James says.
- You. Adulterer. Adulterous. In the sense. That. They have betrayed. Their. Vows. To Christ.
- James opens. The wound. He opens it. He exposes. The problem. That you and I. Have. James.
- [21 : 24] Does not. Accuse. His. Readers. Of verbally. Denouncing Christ. He doesn't. Accuse them. Of being. Non-Christian. Rather. He says. That their passions.
- Which led. To. Conflicts. And cravings. Were at. Variance. With. Scripture's. Call. For them. To be holy. James.
- Says. That these passions. These conflicts. That we have. With our. Co-workers. With. Our. Church members. With. Our spouse.
- With our neighbors. And. It says. They are unholy. And. They are. As it were.
- An adulterer. In the face of God. James. Goes on to ask. Do you not know.
- [22 : 23] That. Friendship. With the world. Is enmity. With God. God. God. James.
- Makes clear. As. J. A. Mottier. Writes. There is the. Reality. Of. Two.
- Irreconcilables. Friendship. And enmity. He calls upon us.
- To choose. And not believe. As some do. That we can have. Both. James. Makes it plain to us.
- That there is. The reality. Of two. Irreconcilable truths. Two. Irreconcilables. Friendship.
- [23 : 19] With God. Being his enemy. James says. You can't be both of them. He calls upon us.
- To choose. Calls upon us. To choose. Like. This physician. A great physician.
- That James is. James does not. Leave this wound. Exposed. How many of you know. That if he did. We would leave here.
- Feeling guilty. And wondering. Wondering. Whether we are indeed. Saved.
- Whether God is indeed. A gracious God. James. Pens. These words. In the concluding.
- [24 : 19] Verses. That we are considering. This morning. James writes. Yes.
- Or do you suppose it is no purpose that the Scripture says he earns jealousy over the Spirit that he is made to dwell in us?
- And listen to these words in verse 6. James says, but he gives more grace.
- But he gives more grace. But he gives more grace. Therefore, it says, God opposes the proud but gives grace to the humble.
- Final point is, grace. Grace for cravings and conflicts.
- [25 : 18] The cure for cravings and conflict. But he gives more grace, James writes. But he gives more grace.
- Those words are music to the believer's ears. But he gives more grace. James could have said only that he gives grace.
- But James uses a determiner. He says more. Wordly. He says, yes, you're wordly. But he gives more grace.

He says, you are an adulteress. An adulterer. But he gives more grace. You're an enemy of God when you do these things.

But he gives more grace. The grace James speaks of. It's grace to forgive.

[26 : 19] We don't lose our salvation. He gives more grace. Grace to overcome. Not mere outward conformity.

But passions rage on within us. He gives us grace to overcome. So that it's just not mere outward conformity.

But he silences the passions within us. When we take our needs to the Lord. Grace to overcome.

He gives us more grace. It doesn't mean that he just gives us a little bit more. Because of this issue. He gives us more. That is more in the sense that it's more than what we are dealing with.

It is overwhelming. God's response is not to divorce us. Or to destroy us. But to overwhelm our shortcomings with grace.

[27 : 24] And to enable us to be overcomers. Despite our shortcomings. J.A. Mottier.

In his commentary. The message of James writes. What comfort there is in this verse. It tells us that God is tirelessly on our side.

He never falters in respect of our needs. He always has more grace. At hand for us.

He is never less than sufficient. He always has more. And yet more to give. Whatever we may forfeit.

When we put self first. We cannot forfeit our salvation. For there is always more grace. No matter what we do to him.

[28 : 29] He is never beaten. His resources are never at an end. His patience is never exhausted. His initiative never stops.

His generosity knows no limit. He gives more grace. He gives more grace. Thank God for grace.

Who could stand if it were not for grace? You and I could not stand. We are not for grace. Not the best of us could stand. The end of the believer's story.

The end and the beginning and the middle and all throughout. Is the story of grace. Amazing grace.

His triumphs are peppered. The believers' triumphs are peppered with grace. Grace. Grace. Marvelous grace.

[29 : 39] Grace. The hymn writer penned these words about grace. Marvelous grace of our loving Lord.

Grace that exceeds our sin and our guilt. Yonder on Calvary's mount outpoured.

There where the blood of the lamb was spilt. then the chorus says grace grace god's grace grace that will pardon and cleanse within grace grace god's grace grace that is greater than all our sin sin and despair like the sea waves cold threaten the soul with infinite loss grace that is that is greater yes grace untold points to the refuge the mighty cross marvelous infinite matchless grace freely bestowed on all who believe all who are longing to see his face will you this moment will you this moment his grace receive grace grace god's grace grace that will pardon and cleanse within grace grace god's grace grace that is greater than all our sins aren't you glad today that the story does not end with your sinfulness but it ends with god's grace james ends verse six with these words therefore it says god opposes the proud but gives grace to the humble with these words he introduces a list of things which believers should do we'll come to those in next week's message grace though is sufficient but we must pursue holiness and that is the point of next week's message perhaps you're walking through a period of peace and harmony in which there are no major passions burning on the inside perhaps that's true about you in this moment maybe it wasn't true last year but perhaps it's true today now praise god for that praise god for that but perhaps there are others who are experiencing the kinds of conflicts and cravings that james writes about in these few verses know that you're not condemned know that there is more grace to forgive and to overcome your trials grace made possible because of the death of jesus christ let us pray father we thank you lord for grace oh lord we realize that we could not see your face were it not for grace lord we realize that we could not be called sons and daughters were it not for grace lord james opens these the wounds to reveal our sinfulness to reveal our shortcomings and lord we acknowledge how ashamed we are when we consider lord the passions when we consider the desires the cravings that are in us lord we pray we come to you and we ask that you would do a work in our hearts like only you can do

lord cause these things to be bitter cause these desires that are ungodly to be bitter to us not only you can do that we surrender ourselves to you we bow to you in humility lord cause it to be true cause us oh lord to have relationships that reflect humility that reflect the grace that you bestow upon us that reflect the forgiveness that you freely give to us father we pray lord that just as you over and over and over forgive us lord that we would not tire of forgiving others we would not tire to forgive others lord help us in these areas in the name of jesus we pray and all god's people say amen so