

James

It Is All About Relationships

March 18, 2012

I. Introduction

A. **James 4:1-10** . . . What is the source of quarrels and conflicts among you? Is not the source your pleasures that wage war in your members? [2] You lust and do not have; so you commit murder. You are envious 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 with wrong motives, so that you may spend it on your pleasures. [4] You adulteresses, do you not know that friendship with the world is hostility toward God? Therefore whoever wishes to be a friend of the world makes himself an enemy of God. [5] Or do you think that the Scripture speaks to no purpose: "He jealously desires the Spirit which He has made to dwell in us"? [6] But He gives a greater grace. Therefore it says, "God is opposed to the proud, but gives grace to the humble." [7] Submit 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 miserable and mourn and weep; let your laughter be turned into mourning and your joy to gloom. [10] Humble yourselves in the presence of the Lord, and He will exalt you.

B. Prayer

II. It is all about relationships – between God and us, and between us and others

A. **James 4:4-6** . . . You adulteresses, do you not know that friendship with the world is hostility toward God? Therefore whoever wishes to be a friend of the world makes himself an enemy of God. [5] Or do you think that the Scripture speaks to no purpose: "He jealously desires the Spirit which He has made to dwell in us"? [6] But He gives a greater grace. Therefore it says, "God is opposed to the proud, but gives grace to the humble."

1. We have looked at a number of important truths and issues related to conflict, and related to our relationship with God in dealing with the first four verses of **James 4**. The past two Sundays I have done the best I know how to communicate to you the importance of seeing that the way we think, speak, and behave has an effect on God and on our relationship with God. My goal has been to encourage us to **want to love God** with all our being, and to **take the necessary steps** to one day arrive at loving Him supremely.

2. Today, I want us to see that underlying this whole section on conflict is a focus on the value of relationships – the value of our relationship with God and the value of relationships between us and anyone with whom we ought to have a relationship of mutual respect, or love and trust. You see, God places a very high value on relationships, and He invites us, *but He also expects us*, to do the same.
3. To help us keep today's teaching in perspective, let me break God's relationships with humanity into two groups – the general or universal group and the family group.
 - a. For example, God values relationships in general. He makes the sun shine and the rain fall on righteous and unrighteous alike. He longs for every single human being who has ever lived or will live to come to repentance so that no one is doomed to eternal separation from Him. He takes no pleasure in the death of the wicked – a death which brings an end to the possibility of an eternal relationship with them. And the Holy Spirit is constantly at work convicting the world of sin and righteousness and a coming judgment, in order to bring unbelievers to repentance and conversion – which in turn leads to reconciliation with God and an eternal relationship of mutual love and trust with God.
 - b. On the other hand, we see from **James 4:5**, and other supporting scriptures, that God highly values the relationship He has with His children, or His spouse – the bride of Christ.
 - (1) In fact, He values that relationship so much, He does not want to share us with anyone or anything else, just like a husband who loves his wife does not want to share her with another man or become less important to her than some possession or position she might gain.
 - (2) And so we see that God has gone a great distance in creating a relationship of mutual love and trust with us, in healing and restoring that relationship after we damaged it, in maintain the relationship once we repent and are reconciled to Him – through such means as patience, compassion, and forgiveness, and in keeping it active on through eternity.
 - c. And it is this very same valuing and thinking about and treasuring and working at that God wants us to have when it comes to relationships of mutual respect or mutual love and trust. And this is especially the case when conflict enters in and does its best to damage or destroy our relationships with others.

B. To help us see the value God places on relationships, I want us to look at six truths from the scriptures – truths that reveal the value God places on relationships and the distance He has gone to communicate this to us.

1. Based on God's self-revelation, the OT law, and the NT writings, we can rightly say that His ultimate purpose is the establishment and preservation of relationships built on mutual love and trust between Him and us, and between us and others.
 - a. **Mark 12:30-31** . . . 'You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, and with all your soul, and with all your mind, and with all your strength.' [31] The second is this, 'You shall love your neighbor as yourself.' There is no other commandment greater than these.
 - b. **I Corinthians 13:13** . . . But now faith, hope, love, abide these three; but the greatest of these is love.
 - c. **Romans 13:8-10** . . . Owe nothing to anyone except to love one another; for he who loves his neighbor has fulfilled the law. [9] For this, "You shall not commit adultery, you shall not murder, you shall not steal, you shall not covet," and if there is any other commandment, it is summed up in this saying, "You shall love your neighbor as yourself." [10] Love does no wrong to a neighbor; therefore love is the fulfillment of the law.
 - d. **I Timothy 1:5** [5] But the goal of our instruction is love from a pure heart and a good conscience and a sincere faith.
2. From Creation to Salvation and on into Eternity, God promotes, pursues, and preserves mutual relationships of love and trust.
 - a. **Genesis 2:18** . . . Then the LORD God said, "It is not good for the man to be alone; I will **make him a helper** suitable for him."
 - b. **Genesis 3:8a** . . . They heard the sound of the LORD God **walking in the garden** in the cool of the day . . .
 - c. **Exodus 6:6-7** . . . "Say, therefore, to the sons of Israel, 'I am the LORD, and I will bring you out from under the burdens of the Egyptians, and I will deliver you from their bondage. I will also redeem you with an outstretched arm and with great judgments. [7] **'Then I will take you for My people, and I will be your God;** and you shall know that I am the LORD your God, who brought you out from under the burdens of the Egyptians.
 - d. **Titus 2:14** . . . Who gave Himself for us to redeem us from every lawless deed, and to purify for Himself **a people for His own possession**, zealous for good deeds.

- e. **II Corinthians 5:18-19** . . . Now all these things are from God, who reconciled us to Himself through Christ and gave us the ministry of reconciliation, [19] namely, that **God was in Christ reconciling the world to Himself**, not counting their trespasses against them, and He has committed to us the word of reconciliation.
- f. Two more truths:
 - (1) God does not want any to perish, that is, to spend eternity apart from Him.
 - (2) And though God made us to have a beginning (physical birth), He made us to live forever.
- 3. God instructs us to pursue good, mutually satisfying relationships.
 - a. God's instruction concerning the behavior of husbands and wives, parents and children, employers and employees, and Church members shows He intends for us to value and protect relationships from the most basic kind to the most intimate kind.
 - b. **Ephesians 4:1-3, 5:21-32, 6:1-4, and 6:5-9**, as well as Colossians, and I Peter, have very clear statements about the marriage relationship, parent-child relationships, work relationships, and relationships within the Body of Christ at large and in the local church.
- 4. God promotes forgiveness among us. He teaches us to forgive others for the sake of restoring, healing, and maintaining good relationships.
 - a. But He goes a step further. He reinforces the importance of forgiveness on our part by conditioning His forgiveness of us on our forgiveness of those who sin against us (**Matthew 6:14-15, 18:21-35**).
 - b. And though many use forgiveness as a tool to regain their own emotional well-being and preserve their mental health, it is a vital ingredient for the healing and restoration of any damaged relationship, including our relationship with God (**Colossians 3:12-14, I John 1:9**).
- 5. God says that the healing and restoration of damaged or broken relationships is to come before worship. In our day, the church has placed a high value on worship – as we ought. But notice, God, the very One we worship, places a higher value on maintaining healthy relationships.
 - a. **Matthew 5:23-24** . . . Therefore if you are presenting your offering at the altar, and there remember that your brother has something against you, [24] leave your offering there before the

altar and go; first be reconciled to your brother, and then come and present your offering.

- b. Given the fact that we spend half our time together each Sunday in a time of worship, this scripture about the value God places on healthy relationships ought to capture our attention and compel us to ask if we value what God values in the same order He values it?
6. God says His people are to avoid **adversarial methods** of conflict resolution with each other. And in relation to going to court, God gives us two ways to apply this truth.
- a. **First**, Christians are to work out their differences with unbelievers before the situation gets brought before a judge – thus potentially preserving the relationship. We read in **Matthew 5:25-26** . . . Make friends quickly with your opponent at law while you are with him on the way, so that your opponent may not hand you over to the judge, and the judge to the officer, and you be thrown into prison. [26] Truly I say to you, you will not come out of there until you have paid up the last cent.
 - b. **Second**, Christians are not to take each other to court, but rather are to use other believers to help them resolve their differences – thus healing and restoring the health of the relationship between them. Paul writes in **I Corinthians 6:1-8** . . . Does any one of you, when he has a case against his neighbor, dare to go to law before the unrighteous and not before the saints? [2] Or do you not know that the saints will judge the world? If the world is judged by you, are you not competent to constitute the smallest law courts? [3] Do you not know that we will judge angels? How much more matters of this life? [4] So if you have law courts dealing with matters of this life, do you appoint them as judges who are of no account in the church? [5] I say this to your shame. Is it so, that there is not among you one wise man who will be able to decide between his brethren, [6] but brother goes to law with brother, and that before unbelievers? [7] Actually, then, **it is already a defeat for you**, that you have lawsuits with one another. Why not rather be wronged? Why not rather be defrauded? [8] On the contrary, you yourselves wrong and defraud. You do this even to your brethren.
7. My goal in showing you these six truths from scripture about the value God places on relationships is to encourage you to follow God's example and word in valuing them this way yourself.

- C. Once again, this portion of James that is speaking to us about dealing with conflict has, as a foundational theme, the value of relationships between God and us, and between us and others.
 - 1. You might start examining the value you place on relationships by examining:
 - a. how you generally deal with conflict,
 - b. how you have dealt with a few major, really big conflicts over the years,
 - c. and if you are part of any unresolved or ignored conflicts with someone near and dear, why?
 - 2. When it comes to conflict, how we deal with conflict – either righteously (*loving God and man, using godly wisdom*) or unrighteously (*selfishness, fleshly desires, worldly wisdom*) is a clear statement of the value we place on relationships – from our relationship with God to our relationships with those around us.

III. Conclusion

- A. Here in James 4, we see that dealing with conflict in an ungodly way sparks God's jealousy and devalues relationships. May we love God enough and value relationships with others enough to make it our aim to use godly wisdom and godly methods for dealing with conflict, resolving differences, and restoring relationships to a healthy condition.