“How To Avoid Arguments”, Developing a Faith That Works, Part 10 of 15 – March 10, 2013 at SBC

 James 4:1-10

Today, we're going to look at, what James has to say, . . on “How to Avoid Arguments”. Over the years, as I’ve talked with couples, one of the most common complaints, I hear, 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, arguing."

James talks about that. In this passage, in James chapter 4, . . . on how to avoid arguments, he gives us both, the causes, . . . and, . . . the cures -- the reason, . . . for argument, . . . and, the remedy.

\*\*\* At the very beginning, of this message, I want you to think of the person, . . . that, causes the most conflict, . . . in your life. You're going to 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. James 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, . . . is conflicting desires. When my wants, conflict, with your wants, . . . the sparks, are going to fly.

Conflict, starts early, in life, . . . even, before you could talk. Have you noticed, that a baby, . . . if his needs, are not instantly gratified, . . . he lets you know. You can argue, even if, . . . you don't know how to talk.

Marriage, has built in conditions, for conflict. Think about the things, you expected of your spouse, . . . before, you got married -- how idealistic, and unrealistic you were, . . . about marriage. What a rude awakening, that was, . . . the day you, woke up!

All marriages, go through, three stages: Stage one, happy honeymoon; . . Stage two, the party's over; . . Stage three, . . . let's make, a deal. At Stage three, you have to learn how, to handle arguments, . . . because, it's going, to happen. There are going to be, . . . conflicting desires. Frustrated feelings, . . . cause fights.

What desires? The Bible, makes very clear, . . here and other places, in Scripture, . . that, there are, **three basic desires**, . . . we have, . . . that cause conflict. These desires, are legitimate desires, unless, they're out of control. They 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. James 4:2 – *"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 use people -- manipulating them, controlling them, moving them around, to get what you want, . . . because things, become more important, . . . in your life.

It's very easy, to fall in love, with things, these days, with all the TV commercials. 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.

We, as Americans, think the constitution says, "Life, liberty and the **purchase,** of happiness." Someone asked Howard Hughes, one time, "How much does it take, to make a man happy?" He said, "Just, a little bit, . . . more." The thrill, wears off, very quickly. We've got to learn, to deal with, . . . the desire to have.

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.

**2. THE DESIRE, . . . TO FEEL**. I want to, . . feel good. I want to, . . . be comfortable. I want to, have my senses, satisfied. James 4:3 – *"You want, only, what will give you pleasure."* 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 -- 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. 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 this desire, in a song, "I Did It, My Way". The "ME", . . . generation. Get on top. Be the big shots. Strive, for success. We walk around saying,

 . . . "Watch me".

Little kids say, "Watch me, daddy", . . . we say "Watch me, everybody", . . . but, we say it in subtle ways -- Watch me, by the way I dress. Watch me, by the kind of clothes, I buy. Watch me, by the kind of car, I drive. Watch me, by the kind of things, I stock my house with.” It's a desire, to impress. It's the desire, to be full of pride, . . . to be number one, to impress.

Proverbs 13:10 – *"Pride leads, to arguments."* That's, so simple. That should be the first verse, every married couple, should memorize, . . when they get married: *"Only by pride, comes contention".* Why? I'm too proud, to compromise, . . . and, that, causes conflict.

A game kids play, when they wrestle together -- "Cry Uncle" -- they wrestle, until one pins the other, and forces him, to say "uncle!". One brother, could nearly kill the other one, . . . before, he'd cry "uncle". Why? Because, . . . of pride. We don't want, . . . to give in.

Have you ever been, in an argument, where you knew, you were wrong, . . . but, you wouldn't admit it. Why? Because, of pride. Pride, causes arguments. This is the bottom line, of all these things. 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 – causes, two problems. James 4:2-3 – *"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 **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. He says, "I'll meet your needs, . . . just, pray."

And, two, 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. 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, . . . than, pray. We'd rather argue, about something, . . . than, 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's the problem. We look to others, instead of looking to God, . . . and, that, causes conflict. We'd rather, try to work it out, ourselves. Prayerlessness in itself, . . is an evidence, of pride. Why don't I pray? I don't think, I need God. If I really thought, I was more dependent upon God, . . . and, I needed Him more, . . . I'd pray, more.

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, prayed more. The old song, "Oh what peace, we often forfeit, Oh what needless pain, we bear, . . . All because, we do not carry, . . . Everything to God, . . . in prayer."

In the next verses, James talks about, . . . **conflict, with God**. Pride, not only causes conflict, with other people, but, it causes conflict, with God. James 4:6 – *"God opposes the proud, but gives grace, to the humble."*

God declares war, on selfishness. Have you noticed, that God has a unique way, of engineering circumstances, to pop, our pride? Just, about the time, you think, "I've got it, together!" He puts you, in your place, . . . if you think, . . . you don't need Him. To be in opposition to God, . . . is a dangerous place, . . . to be. You're on, a collision course. 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?

**\*\*\* THE CURE FOR ARGUMENTS, . . . IS HUMILITY**

James 4:6 & 10 – *"God . . . gives grace, to the humble. Humble yourself, before the Lord, and He will, lift you up."* What is grace? Grace is God's power, to change. 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, your marriage, your family? Whatever you would like to change, you need grace. 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, and think, . . . "I can do it, on my own." He gives it, when we come 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 is, so practical. He gives four specific 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**. James 4:7 – *"Submit yourself, then to God."*  Let God, . . . be God, in your life. Give Him, control. 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. 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, try to control them, and try to move them around, . . . to get what we want, . . . out of life.

\*\*\* In the early years, of marriage, . . . many couples, have tremendous conflict. They fight, over everything. They may be in love, with each other. They may feel, God has brought them together, . . . but, they just don't, get along. They fight, . . . over everything.

It can, sometimes, be terrible. They just, don't get along. Why? Because, the desire to have, the desire to feel, and, the desire to be, . . . is clashing. In every marriage, there is some kind, of power struggle. It's just, we use, . . . different tools.

You can try everything, to make it work, and yet, you just, don't get along. The turning point, for many, is the day, . . . **you give up**. Just give it, to God, and say, "Only You, can save, this marriage. We can't do it, . . . on our own. Do whatever, you have to do, in our lives, . . . to make this thing work."

You stop praying, "Lord, change my partner", . . . and, start praying, "Lord, change me." You work on you, . . . and, watch what happens. The starting point, of getting along with others, . . . to avoid arguments, . . .

 is get peace, . . . in your heart, . . . through, the rule of Christ.

Give in, to God. This means, you learn to say, "Thy will be done", . . . instead, of saying, "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 dumb. Don't, be ignorant. *"Resist the devil, and he will flee, from you."*

The word "resist", is a war term. It means, to be prepared. To stand, against. Withstand, an attack. The devil wants to, . . . destroy your marriage. He wants to destroy, every other, . . . good relationship. Why? Because, he loves conflict, and 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 in, to 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 means, you're already going, . . . in the same direction.

2 Corinthians 2:11 – *"In order, that Satan might not, outwit us, we are not unaware, of his schemes."* Paul says, . . . wise up! Recognize, . . . his tactics. Know how, . . . he operates.

How does, the devil, . . . operate? He doesn't stand around, with a pitchfork, and a red suit, . . . like, on a can of deviled ham. How does, the devil operate? He plays, . . . on our **pride**. Particularly, . . wounded pride. He tells us, what we want to hear. He whispers, in our ear. He gives us, . . . little thoughts, suggestions, ideas.

When you're in the middle of an argument, he starts whispering in your ear, things like "You don't have to, take this kind of stuff. Retaliate. Who do they think, . . . they are? Get even. Assert yourself. Don't put up, with this, kind of stuff. Show 'em, who's boss." He tells you, all the things, . . . your pride, would love to hear. You need to say, . . . "Satan, I know, . . . that's you." Resist, him.

How do you, resist the devil? Same way, . . . Jesus did it. He quoted, Scripture. Memorize Proverbs 13:10 – *"Pride leads, to arguments."*  The next time, you get into an argument, . . . that verse, can be brought to mind, by the Lord, and you stop and think, "How am I, being prideful, here. What am I, not willing, to admit? Why am I, not willing, to compromise? Where am I, only thinking of myself, . . . and, not the other person's needs, and desires."

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.

**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 Bible study -- all of these kinds of things, . . . help you, grow closer, to God. The more time, we spend alone, with God, . . . the better, we get along, . . . with other people. Count on it!

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. Bible study, Sunday morning, daily quiet time – make time, for these things. You say, . . . you're too busy? Then maybe, . . . you're, 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. It will be, more productive, more beneficial. You'll get along better, with others, have fewer arguments, because, you're spending time, with God. "Draw closer to God, . . . He'll keep you, . . in perfect peace."

The conflict, in your life, . . . is in direct proportion, . . . to the time, you're spending with God. There is a great promise, here too. When we, in genuineness, . . . draw close, to God, *"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.

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, avoid arguments, learn to ask forgiveness, from God, . . . and, from those, you hurt. James 4:8 – *"Wash your hands, . . . purify, your hearts, . . ."* Our hands, represent our conduct, . . . and, hearts, represent attitudes.

He's saying, . . . clean up your act. James 4:9 (LB) – *"Let there be tears, . . . for the wrong, you've done."* Don't minimize, what's happened. Take it, seriously. Be sorry, for your self-centeredness. It is a big deal, . . . when your wife's feelings, are hurt. Take it, seriously. If someone says, you've hurt them, . . you've hurt them. 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, . . . at 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.

"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." How humbling, that would be! Because, God gives grace, to the humble!

If you want to change, . . the only way you're going to do it, is to be humble, . . and, the only way to be humble, is to go, and ask forgiveness. It's hard, . . . but, 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, . . that, just maybe, you were 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 -- Joyce Landoff calls that, an irregular person -- those heavenly sandpapers, . . . that irritate you. Take, . . . the first step.

James 4:10 – *"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.

A lot of guys think, . . . that, is a sign of weakness, to admit that we are wrong, to our wives, or even our kids. No, what that takes, . . . is a real man. It shouldn’t be a surprise, when you find out, . . . that they already know, . . . you’re not perfect.

Philippians 2:3-5 – *"Do nothing, out of selfish ambition, or vain conceit, but in humility, consider others, better than yourselves. Each of you, should look not only to your own interest, but also, the interest of others."* He doesn't say, . . . don't look about, your own interest -- you've got needs. He's not saying, to lay down, . . . and, be a doormat. But, look out also, . . . for the interest, of others

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

Which of these desires, cause the most conflict, in your life? Maybe, it's the desire to have, and you're so busy, making a living, that you forget to make a life, hustling, day in and day out, to make a buck, so much, that your relationships, are falling apart. The desire to have, is greater than your relationships. It means, that the kids suffer, your wife suffers, your husband suffers, your friends suffer, because, the desire to have, has taken preeminence, in your life. That causes, conflict. Kids don't want things, as much as they want our time.

Maybe, it's the desire, to feel good. "I have, my rights!" That's something, the devil likes to say, an awful lot. That's the exact opposite, of what the Scriptures, are saying, "Think about other people, not just yourself. What are, . . . their needs?"

How about, the desire, to be? Do you find it difficult, to admit, you're wrong? Do you find it difficult, to back down, in an argument, when you've been, . . . in error? It's going, to cause conflict. Do you find your schedule, pushing out time, for the Lord? Then re-evaluate, your schedule. Make time for the things, that are important.

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.

“How To Avoid Arguments”, Developing a Faith That Works - Part 10 of 15

James 4:1-10

**\*\*\* THE CAUSE OF ARGUMENTS:\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_**

*"What causes fights and quarrels among you? Don't they come from your desires that battle within you?"* (v. 1)

**THREE DESIRES:**

1. The Desire \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ (Possessions)

 *"You want what you don't have ... you long for what others have ..."* (vs. 2)

2. The Desire \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ (Pleasure)

 *"... you want only what will give you pleasure"* (vs. 3b)

3. The Desire \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ (Pride & Power)

 Proverbs 13:10 – “*Pride leads to arguments.”*

Why aren't our desires fulfilled? (vs. 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."*

\*\* Conflict with God (vs. 4-6)

 *"God opposes the proud but gives grace to the humble."* (vs. 6)

**\*\*\* THE CURE FOR ARGUMENTS: \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_**

*"God ... gives grace to the humble. Humble yourself before the Lord, and He will lift you up."* (vs. 6 & 10)

**Steps to Defusing Conflict:**

1. \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

 *"Submit yourselves then to God ..."* (vs. 7a)

 Colossians 3:15 – “*Let the peace of Christ rule in your heart.”*

2. \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

 *"Resist the devil, and he will flee from you."* (vs.7b)

 2 Corinthians 2:11 – “*In order that Satan might not outwit us, we are not unaware of his schemes.”*

3. \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

 *"Come near to God and He will come near to you."* (vs. 8a)

Isaiah 26:3 – “*He will keep in perfect peace all those who trust in Him, whose thoughts turn often to the Lord.”*

4. \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

 *"Wash your hands ... purify your hearts ..."* (vs. 8b)

 *"Let there be tears for the wrong you've done."* (vs. 9)

Philippians 2:3-5 – “*Do nothing out of selfish ambition or vain conceit, but in humility, consider others better than yourselves. Each of you should look not only to your own interests, but also the interests of others. Your attitude should be the same as that of Jesus Christ.”*