



SERIES: FEBRUARY – MARCH FAITH IN REAL LIFE

SPEAKER: NAT CRAWFORD

Monday, 03/14/2022

Scripture: James 4:1-3

TITLE: Winning the Inner War

Envy and fighting are the norms in the life of a child. A kid sees a toy they want, so they take it. The other child pushes the kid, grabs the toy, and runs away. We see it over toys, food, smartphones, and the list just goes on.

But if we're honest, it's not just a kid problem. It's an "us" problem too. What am I talking about? Let's keep putting faith in real life by turning back to James 4:1-3 (CSB). James writes this:

What is the source of wars and fights among you? Don't they come from your passions that wage war within you? You desire and do not have. You murder and covet and cannot obtain. You fight and wage war. You do not have because you do not ask. You ask and don't receive because you ask with wrong motives, so that you may spend it on your pleasures.

In case you missed last week or forgot what Jacob covered, James has been discussing the power of our words, wise living, and the danger of envy and selfish ambition.

So James is continuing that thought here. He says, "What is the source of wars and fighting among you?" Fighting and conflict are everywhere – even in the Christian community. But where do they come from? James asks a rhetorical question: aren't they driven by your own passions within you?

We need to remember that at the core of virtually all sins is pride and selfishness. Adam and Eve sinned because of the inner sin of pride. They desired to be like God. They were not content with what God had provided, so they rebelled. Pride, envy, and selfishness waged war within them. The same battle is ours today.

James continues by saying, "You desire and you do not have. You murder and covet and cannot obtain." There is a lot of debate whether people were engaging in physical violence and murder because of these passions and desires. Christians are not incapable of such behavior, but regardless of physical, verbal, or emotional attacks, they are all wrong.

So what is James' solution? He says, "you do not have because you do not ask." Now, there is some debate as to what he means. I think, at a minimum, James' point goes back to what James wrote in chapter 1, verse 5. James said, "Now if any of you lacks wisdom, he should ask God—who gives to all generously and ungrudgingly—and it will be given to him."

I think this interpretation makes the most amount of sense. Because God is not a genie in a bottle. Yes, He is a good Father who provides our needs and many of our righteous wants, but He always knows what's best. So rather than struggle with pride, envy, and selfish ambition, we need to call out to God for wisdom and reformation of the heart.

So here's my challenge for you today: how are you struggling with envy and pride? Admit to God and ask Him for wisdom on how to change your thinking. Ask Him for help reforming your heart. Desiring things is not a sin, but coveting and stirring up conflict because of it is. So today, ask God for wisdom, and he will give it generously.

When we live with godly wisdom, we will win the day.