

CONFLICT[ED]

CLARITY ABOUT CONFLICT

What causes fights and quarrels among you?

James 4:1

- Constructive Conflict – Collaborative
- Destructive Conflict – Divisive
- Conflict Reclaimed – Transformative

THE ROOT OF CONFLICT

What causes fights and quarrels among you?

Don't they come from your desires that battle within you?

You want something but don't get it.

You kill and covet, but you cannot have what you want.

You quarrel and fight.

James 4:1-2a

Conflict is inside us all. This internal battle between who God created us to be and the image we are attempting to create will routinely spill over into our relationships with others, with damaging effects.

THE BATTLE WITHIN*

FALSE SELF – CLINGING TO BE
Security and significance achieved
by what we have, what we can do,
and what others think of us

Happiness sought in autonomy from
God and in attachments

Identity is our idealized self
(who we want others to think we are)

Achieved by means of pretense
and practice

Maintained by effort and control

Embraces illusion as a means of
attempting to become a god

TRUE SELF – CREATED TO BE
Security and significance achieved by
being deeply loved by God

Fulfillment found in surrender to God
and living our vocation

Identity is who we are –
and are becoming – in Christ

Received as a gift with gratitude
and surrender

Maintained by grace

Embraces reality as the place of
meeting and being transformed by God

**Table adapted from The Gift of Being Yourself by David G. Benner*

BRINGING GOD INTO THE FIGHT

You do not have, because you do not ask God.

When you ask, you do not receive,

because you ask with wrong motives,

that you may spend what you get on your pleasures.

You adulterous people,

don't you know that friendship with the world is hatred toward God?

Anyone who chooses to be a friend of the world

becomes an enemy of God.

James 4:2b-4

The previous table summarizes our spiritual, emotional, and mental needs. God desires to enter into our life by meeting our needs. However, the false self and true self can have nothing to do with each other. When we attempt to fit God into our pursuit of our false self, destructive conflict ensues. Instead of transformation, we experience:

- Religious effort without change
- Self-centered prayer life
- Regular disappointment in relationships
- Manipulation of others

TRANSFORMED THROUGH CONFLICT

Or do you think Scripture says without reason
that the spirit he caused to live in us envies intensely?

But he gives us more grace.

That is why Scripture says:

'God opposes the proud but gives grace to the humble.'

Submit yourselves, then, to God.

Resist the devil, and he will flee from you.

Come near to God and he will come near to you.

Wash your hands, you sinners, and purify your hearts,
you double-minded.

James 4:5-8

Transformation can occur through conflict when we have first surrendered the fight before Christ. True reflection, meditation, and honest dialogue with God will reveal the parts of the false self that are involved in the conflict. Through humility and submission, God can transform conflict into something that breathes new life into our spirit, and begins to loosen the grip of the false self we're all clinging to be.

NEXT STEPS

For further study and reflection:

Scripture – Romans 7:14-8:17; James 3-4

The Gift of Being Yourself – David G. Benner

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