

Session 2 (The Christian, Conflict, and Working Towards Peace)

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[0 : 00] All right, guys, we're going to be on outline two there. If you're tracking along in the handouts, going to war with conflict, I promised you in the last session we'd do a closer look at James 1-10, that section of James where he's really dealing with this.

And so I'm going to make good on that promise in this session. I referenced in the interview before the seminar started that I worked for Family Life Ministries.

It was part of Campus Crusade. It was at the time the most theologically conservative arm of Campus Crusade.

And I left almost 20 years ago, so I can't speak to it knowledgeably now. But then it was very solidly reformed in its approach to the scriptures and to life.

One of their flagship events that they do all around the world, about 300 times a year when I was there, is a conference called A Weekend to Remember.

[1 : 01] It's a marriage conference that's really designed to help cast a vision for what biblical marriage is, the purpose, the plan, and the power for marriage are three of the sessions there.

But in the first session of the conference, somewhere in there, they start drawing attention to how we should view our spouse.

This is not going to be a marriage session. It's just an opening illustration. And they're well known for this phrase, my spouse is not my enemy.

And then they typically get the audience to repeat after them. My spouse is not my enemy. Turn to your spouse now and say that.

You are not my... Like, they do this over and over again. And they're... Don't turn to one another. I don't want to make this weird. But they do that because they are trying to underscore what many people came in believing wrongly.

[2 : 14] Many people who come to this marriage conference are coming with their marriage on the rocks. They know their spouse is their enemy. That's why they brought them, to get fixed.

Okay? And that's why a lot of people come to marriage counseling. They're convinced they're right. Let me just go and be a cheerleader as God works on my spouse.

Like, over and over again, this is this thought. The person I'm in conflict with is my enemy. Is the assumption we can bring. And so Family Life, in their marriage conferences, Rob, in this seminar, is here to say the person that comes to mind when you're in conflict is not your enemy.

Now, I don't know what kind of shape you showed up in here. If there's... I don't know any of you personally, really, at all. So if you have a lot of conflict in your life, if there's just one relationship, maybe you're just, you know, conflict-free, praise the Lord.

Regardless, the person we're in conflict with is not our enemy. Now, that is not to say you don't have an enemy. The enemy that you do have likes to stay as invisible as possible.

[3 : 38] And he likes to whisper in your ear so that you fight against someone who's not your enemy so you do not fight properly the one who is.

Part of relational counseling is taking people who are on opposite sides of a table looking at one another in fighting and figuratively, sometimes literally, putting them on the same side of the table fighting the enemy together.

Okay? This is largely what's in view when we get to James 4. That we... James 4 is trying to address a people who have identified the wrong enemy.

And James tries to get you to identify the right enemy. When there's conflict, we're supposed to, as Christians, go to war.

But we're not supposed to go to war with each other. We're supposed to go to a war against the devil. It's just an error we so often make that we fight against the wrong thing.

[4 : 53] And what does that result in? It results in chronic fighting. Or, eventually, cold apathy. We can't fight anymore.

We just can't. Neither of us has it in us. We clearly can't be at peace because you won't change. So we have to get to a place where we just don't act in love toward one another anymore. Married couples coexist.

Friends drift off. Family members develop blacklists. You don't get invited to Thanksgiving or to this party or to that. You know, Christmas is just really awkward.

Because of all of this apathy and unresolved conflict. Because we have fought the wrong enemy.

What does the Bible say we're supposed to do when we go to war against the right enemy?

Take a look at Ephesians 6. Put on the whole armor of God that you may be able to stand against the schemes of the devil.

[5 : 53] So right there, Paul acknowledges who the right enemy is. James gets to it eventually in James 4 when we look at that. For we do not wrestle against flesh and blood, but against rulers, against the authorities, against the cosmic powers over this present darkness, against the spiritual forces of evil in the heavenly places.

Let me encourage you. Whatever relationship seems broken or in conflict, remind yourself of this. You do not wrestle against flesh and blood.

Now in some places, that's the platform it plays out in. But that's not what's really happening. What's really happening is that we wrestle against rulers, authorities, cosmic powers, against spiritual forces of evil.

One of the main devices Satan uses to diminish the Christian witness is to get Christians fighting with one another.

If he can't get you to ruin your own life with personal sin, secret sin, those kinds of things, he tries to get you to turn on one another with sinful judgments, rash judgments, self-righteousness that causes you to think you're better than other people, to view people according to their worst attributes while you prefer to be graded by your best attributes.

[7 : 22] This imbalance, it allows us to turn against one another as enemies and then he can kind of stop. He just kind of steps back because our sinful nature will continue doing the job once he gets us fighting in the wrong direction.

Now, before I get into some of these comments that James hits in chapter four, I want to give an important qualifier. I always hope this doesn't apply to people when I'm speaking to them, but I never assume, so I want to make sure I say it.

There are sometimes those situations that happen to you where someone is really your enemy. Like, they are out to destroy you.

That happens. There are also scenarios where a path forward really is trying to figure out how can I be safe?

It's not just kind of the common relational conflict that we've had in view, but there really is an issue of safety at work. I don't want you to take away from this seminar. Let me go back to that unsafe scenario and apply these principles of grace and forgiveness.

[8 : 37] They apply, but I want to really plead with you to get counsel, get help, if needed, call the authorities. Let's get you safe before we start working on your heart.

Does that make sense? Everybody with me on that? Okay. What I have in view with these, now again, I think even in the most extreme cases, these things apply, but what I have in view with more immediate application is that broad set of conflicts that happen in most people's lives, not more of these extreme examples.

Okay, now, let's take a look at James 4. I want to read verses 1 through 10. Of course, I'm preaching off of a manuscript here and I've left my Bible in my bag.

Can I have, can I? I'll find it. I kind of know where it is. Thank you. Never go into the pulpit without your Bible friends.

It's a job hazard. All right. James 4. Here we go, 1 through 10. I'm just going to read it, follow along. What causes quarrels and what causes fights among you?

[9 : 51] Is it not this, that your passions are at war within you? You desire and do not have, so you murder. You covet and cannot obtain, so you fight and quarrel.

You do not have because you do not ask. You ask and 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 and gives grace to the humble. Submit yourselves, therefore, to God. Resist the devil and he will flee from you.

Draw near to God and he will draw near to you. Cleanse your hands, you sinners, and purify your hearts, you double-minded. Be wretched and mourn and weep.

[11 : 07] Let your laughter be turned to mourning and your joy to gloom. Humble yourselves before the Lord and he will exalt you. So what James does, thank you.

What James does here is he's highlighting three enemies that we're going to face in the course of these ten verses and I want to take a look at each one. I want to pause. Look at the verses he's using to address that enemy and how can we make sure that when we go to war in conflict, we're actually going to war with conflict and with the person who benefits most from conflict, which is the devil himself.

He's the one who sets goals for division and disagreement in the body of Christ. The first enemy I want to look at here is ourselves. I won't read it again but it's verses one through three where he's talking about those desires.

We covered it in the first session. I just read it when I read through that passage and this can be the hardest thing to recognize in conflict and I love that it's where James starts.

It's hard because it's not comfortable. It's necessary though and therefore it's good for us to start with us. Going into conflict if you knew like in your front of mind knower you like actively knew you were the first enemy in conflict you probably would behave differently.

[12 : 36] You wouldn't raise your voice you wouldn't name call you wouldn't hold offense you'd probably begin with confession. Listen I'm really upset with what you just did and I know that's because of my wicked heart. I'm going to try to communicate through this wicked heart as best I can.

I'm aware I'm the biggest problem in this right now. Like that just changes conflict. You can actually have a conversation unless that person really quickly agrees with you and says oh you are the biggest problem.

Yes thank we finally agree. James highlights what we're loving what our passions are so I asked before I want to ask again what is it that you are desiring so much even if it's good or wrong that you should or shouldn't desire it that you're willing to fight for it.

Now guys listen sometimes the things that come to mind are really obvious and clear. That we should not desire it. We're desiring something that's not good for us.

Maybe it's an unhealthy or an unbiblical relationship in our lives. Maybe we're striving for control over a situation because we don't like how God is handling it.

[13 : 56] Maybe we're in a relationship that's making demands on our selfish heart and we just don't want to let go. of the things that we're selfish over. Or maybe it's something even more obvious from scripture so clearly wrong.

We're trying to protect an extramarital affair or we're giving in to drug use or other sinful indulgences. We fight to keep them in obvious opposition to the will of God.

It's no wonder we're in conflict. The people that you're in conflict with may be the ones most trying to save you, to rescue you. You know, Galatians 6, they're coming after the person trapped in sin. There's conflict there. There you're obviously enemy, number one. You're the one creating the problems. Okay? Very few people I think would argue with that so I'm not going to spend much more time on that.

Let me move on. I want to focus on what happens when we're in conflict because we're loving good things. We're pursuing good things. Calvin summed it up when he said that the problem is not so much in that we desire the wrong things but that we desire the right things too much.

[15 : 12] This is that illustration of peace in my home with my kids that I was telling you about. It's totally appropriate for a parent to desire peace.

But when you desire something good and you're willing to sin to get it, that's a problem. That's enemy number one showing up. Okay? I've highlighted two here.

I could have picked any of a thousand, two thousand, or more good things we could desire. Let's use respect as an example.

And this could be respect from a professor, from a friend, from a parent, from a sibling, from a child, a boss, or a co-worker.

You desire to be respected. And that's good. Like, don't give that up. Being born again doesn't mean you become a doormat. It's right to desire and even work toward being respected.

[16:13] We don't want to belittle it. We don't want to dismiss it. But we don't want to worship being respected. respected. We don't want to make respect our first love.

We don't want to have a pursuit of respect that causes us to forget we're disciples. Whatever scenario, and I just laid out about ten of them, whatever scenario it is, you're striving to be respected, or you're actively being disrespected.

Let me say, as an image bearer, a child of God, that God calls those who bear his image to be respected. That's a good thing you're desiring. But are you loving it more than your Christian example in that context?

I'm not telling you you do. I'm not making judgments. I'm just asking questions. Okay? We want to track the good thing of respect, our desire for it, such that we don't fight and quarrel over it.

We don't allow it to wage war within us. Can you think of a time when you were sinned against by being disrespected, but your response was just as sinful?

[17:36] That's just a sign that enemy number one is on the scene. It doesn't condemn you to help. We're just holding a mirror up right here. It's important when we want something good that we don't allow the goodness of that to be some type of excuse for the sin we commit in wanting it.

You with me on that? Let's look at another thing. Comfort. In an ultimate sense, God loves comfort. He's built us for it.

He created a sinless context in Eden and then before He set mankind to work, which He does eventually, He gives everybody a day of rest.

That's how it started. They were made on day six. They weren't immediately put into work. They were put into rest. They were put into comfort and then commanded by God later as a result of that being the example to build comfort and rest into the rhythm of their lives.

And at the end when we come face to face with Christ and we hopefully all hear the well done good and faithful servant, what does He say? Come into my factory? Come into my work?

[18:56] No, enter into my rest. We're designed for it. But there are times we're called to work.

We're not called to worship comfort. There are in God's rhythm of life six days for work, not six days for comfort and one day for work. There is a time ultimately when we enter into an eternal rest, but that time is not now.

So we have to realize if God, even in a sinless context, it's six days of labor and one day of comfort, we have to realize that our desire for comfort each day is probably a bit out of proportion with what God has for us.

Maybe comfort here is talking about relational comfort, freedom from work or physical comfort. You know, is there going to be air conditioning in heaven or is it even going to be necessary?

Right? We love having air conditioning in where we live or heat. Maybe that'd be more appropriate looking outside right now. Heat. Heat is needed for comfort. That's a good thing to desire.

[20:07] But we can't desire relational, situational, or temporal comfort more than we desire the pleasure of the Lord, the fear of the Lord. Okay, this enemy number one, even when we ask, he says, he says, you don't have because you don't ask.

Why would we not ask the God of the universe for help? Because in that situation we're living as though we're the God of the universe or we're living as though the God of the universe doesn't exist. We're functionally atheists in that relationship or functionally atheistic in that situation.

But then he goes on to say that if you ask and do not get because you ask for the wrong reasons. Have you ever asked God to do something you know he can't do because you're asking him to sin. Lord, will you just smite that kid just a little bit just smite him. Not too much but you know and the Lord said well I'm not answering that one.

Right? You ask with the wrong motives. Maybe you're asking so that you can have your idol of comfort or your idol of respect or your idol of money or your idol of prestige.

[21 : 24] And he's like no, no, no, no, no. If I wanted you to have that stuff I already would have given it to you. I've kept it from you because it's not good for you now or you're not ready to bear up under the weight of that blessing.

Okay? We ask with the wrong motives. So I've bumped all the way down here. What he's saying here is that the enemy of self shows up with what we bring to the table.

we bring these desires these passions these sins and if we don't recognize that's the first enemy Paul calls himself the chief of sinners.

If we don't recognize that about ourselves by the time we get there we prioritize that other person as the first enemy or that scenario as the first enemy and we have failed to address what we have the most control over which is our own thoughts and our own heart and taking it before our own Savior and letting him change us from the inside out.

We've got the most influence in conflict over ourselves. So we start there James starts there with enemy number one. So let me ask you I've got a few questions down there for you.

[22 : 34] What do you desire so much you're willing to sin to get it? Be specific here on the second one. What good thing most threatens your peace and your faith?

Are you actively keeping someone else on the witness stand when your own heart deserves to be there? I don't know the answers to those questions.

I hope they serve you in sifting through this. Let's look at enemy number two. It's friendship with the world. It says beginning in verse four there 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's 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 and gives grace to the humble. It's important here to know what's not being said here before we glean what is being said.

[23 : 49] It's not talking primarily about loving the things of the world. Secular music secular television it's not talking about those things. There's probably some implications of that but that's not primarily what he's talking about.

What he's talking about here is loving the way the world thinks approaching life the way the world approaches life. He's talking about friendship with the world as an economy not so much with all these individual examples.

That friendship with the world living according to the world's economy quid pro quo things like that that kind of approach to living is actually enmity with God.

God sent Jesus to save people from that economy of thinking from that problem of sin not to save us and then send us into that economy of sin to uphold it.

Okay so if you're a friend of the world you're never really going to identify enemy number one.

There's absolutely no cause. There's very little benefit in the world's economy to call yourself the biggest problem.

[25 : 04] That's not going to help you advance. That's not going to help you prove yourself right.

That's not going to clear your reputation with the eyes of unbelievers. None of those things work so you're not going to pursue enemy number one.

Right here at enemy number two if you're loving the world you've already missed the biggest problem to address. Okay blame and responsibility for hardship and conflict they're always ascribed to others.

I don't presume any of you are these people but do you know people like that that they seem to constantly be in crisis but it's never their fault? That's just the way the world thinks.

One of the things Jesus prayed for his church in John 17 was that we would be in the world but not of it.

Well that's what James is mirroring here. we're supposed to love the world but not be friends with the world.

[26 : 07] And before I hear the haunting voice of my friend Jim Donahue here, our church's evangelist, that doesn't mean we're not supposed to be friends with people in the world. It's not that.

We're not supposed to be friends with that way of thinking, with that approach to living. So we ask ourselves, realizing we're supposed to be in the world and not of it, and that we're not supposed to have friendship with the world.

Here's a question. What shaping influences most form your perspective of the world? And that may be a question you have to ask some friends about yourself because it may be hard to see this in yourself.

What forms my worldview? Let me give you a couple common examples. Okay? The home I grew up in. That's not a bad thing necessarily.

It might be. But the home you grew up in surely has had some shaping influence on how you view the world. Your parents' values, what was valued in your home, what was valued in if you're a Christian when you were a kid, what was valued in that church.

[27 : 14] That has shaped your world either by it's made its imprint upon me, or I'm living my life to never do those things. Either has a shaping influence.

Another could be aspirations, whether they're career or educational or bucket list. You know, aspirations in life can often shape what we value.

Prior hurts. Whether it's parental or from some other authority or peer hurts. It may not be anything intensely relational like that.

It may be a number of career or academic failures. There's three different jobs here I've totally failed at. Now you've got a worldview that's being shaped.

Of course, scripture should be in there too, right? Scripture should be the thing that most forms our worldview, our perspective of the world. But let me just ask you, not out loud, but in the reflections of your own heart, what have been the most shaping influence in your life, and have they helped you shape a biblical worldview?

[28 : 30] If you surround yourselves with people who all have that worldview, you're going to think like the people that surround you. So if you're surrounded by people who all have this dysfunctional worldview, but everybody kind of shares it in common, you'll go years and years and years believing you're right, all the time being wrong.

It's one of the benefits that's built into the command to not forsake the assembling of ourselves.

Built into that command to have fellowship with one another, to encourage, correct, edify, love one another, is that we are shaped by a common worldview that's in keeping with the will of God.

So being shaped by our community, again, is not a problem. The type of community you're shaped by may be the problem, but that's part of our design. That's why God calls us to be part of a body of Christ locally, tangibly, so we can build the biblical worldview together.

Christians, by the very nature of being pilgrims, citizens of another kingdom, we are strangers. We are called to be different from this world. We've been given something the world doesn't have. we have the spirit of the living God living within us. So when we're talking about conflict, back to the topic you came to hear about, when we're talking about conflict, we've got to realize what often informs our conflict is our friendship with the world.

[30 : 07] We think like the world thinks, we do like the world does. We may do it with fewer curse words, so we feel like we're doing well. But sin that's more polished is just shinier, it's not holier.

Sinning in a Christian way is an oxymoron. Are you with me on that? We can't engage like the world engages. We're called to be different.

We're empowered to be different. We are designed to be different. Malachi 4, 5-6 says, Behold, I will send you Elijah the prophet before the great and awesome day of the Lord comes.

And listen to this. And he will turn the hearts of fathers to their children and the hearts of children to their fathers, lest I come to strike the land with a decree of utter destruction.

What's happening with the coming of Elijah is that this place where there's often enmity, this father-son relationship, this parent-child relationship, there's going to be peace.

[31 : 10] Hearts get turned toward one another. We saw it in Ephesians 2. When Christ is central, the wall gets divided. That is otherworldly.

That's not friendship with this world. So let me ask you these questions. How is the world defining your expectations for your relationships?

relationships? Let me ask that differently. Are you willing to take people as they are without making worldly demands on what they should be for you?

second, do you speak poorly about those who disagree with you? Like surely there's a group of friends or family that if you're in a conflict that this thing may come up.

When you speak about that person, are you carrying Christian ethics, which is that last call from the last session, or are you speaking about them the way the world speaks about people they disagree

with?

[32 : 20] Here's a more passive one that we've got to be careful of. Do you tolerate it when your peers talk poorly about others? Are you a listening ear for people sinning about the people they're in conflict with?

Or do you speak up for Christian ethics? Sorry, I keep air popping into that microphone. Or do you speak up for Christian ethics? These things are friendship with the world.

And when we're there, we've got to realize it's not just, oh yeah, there's still worldliness about me. James puts it in enmity with God. Now the antidote, the opposite of friendship with the world is humility.

He said, God opposes the proud, but gives grace to the humble. And so in response to our temptation to be friends with the world, we need humility to realize God knows better than we do. God's economy is better than the world's economy. That's the one we're called to live according to. So it leads to this question, do we really want the power of the gospel unleashed in our lives?

[33 : 31] If we do, we'll pursue a path of humility. We will pursue a path of faithfulness. We will pursue a path of friendship with Christ, abiding in Christ, so that the fruit that comes out of us can flow from the vine, from Christ himself.

The fruit of the spirit that we see in Galatians 5 can manifest in our lives. Friendship with the world will never manifest love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, and self-control.

They won't. Our abiding in Christ generates that. And James highlights this for us when he highlights the dangers of being a friendship with the world.

And then enemy number three. You might think it's the devil. He gets mentioned in this thing. But I think it's actually something broader than that. In number three here, verses 7 to 10, James is highlighting the danger of distance from God.

Take a look at what it says and then I'll break it down a little bit. Submit yourselves therefore to God. Resist the devil and he will flee from you. Draw near to God and he will draw near to you.

[34 : 50] Cleanse your hands, you sinners. Purify your hearts, you double-minded. Be wretched and mourn and weep. Let your laughter be turned to mourning and your joy to gloom. Humble yourselves before the Lord and he will exalt you.

So just as we look at that verse, let me make the case that it's broader than just the devil. The devil only gets one sentence in that, not even a whole verse. He shares verse 7 with submit yourselves therefore to God.

So the devil's a real enemy. We talked about that in the last session, right? He's a real enemy. That was the intro to this session. We talked about it. But his commands are resist the devil, but before that submit yourselves to God.

And after that draw near to God. you know, sometimes when I'm talking to my kids, they're all very respectful of me, but sometimes they can't help themselves.

And I'll get a random, not a frequent, Lord willing, but a random eye roll. And I'll just pause. I'll be like, please don't roll your eyes at me.

[35 : 56] And what do I hear every time? What do I hear? I wasn't rolling my eyes. All right. Then I got to take an excursus.

And I've got to say, okay, if you were not rolling your eyes, why would I tell you to stop rolling your eyes? Like, that's what's happening here. Why would you tell people to draw near to God if they were already near to God?

Why would you tell people to submit themselves to God if they were already submitting themselves to God? The command comes to address a problem.

The problem is distance from God. Now, I don't mean like eternal distance from God. I'm not talking about that. But if we are not walking closely with God, that in and of itself is an enemy to our lives. We're not going to care as much about the affections of the Lord if we are not stirring our affections for the Lord. We're not going to care about what matters to God if, functionally speaking, he is not mattering to us.

[37 : 02] And so part of this fight, this war against conflict, is we've got to eliminate the functional distance we've allowed to creep into our relationship with the Lord, to whatever degree it exists.

Again, you may just be the most faithful person in the state of Massachusetts walking with Jesus. Praise God. I'm not trying to correct everybody. I'm just holding out for us. If you find conflict or

enmity or bitterness or anger is growing in your life, this is a place to look. How is your walk with the Lord going? Because he gives us power. He gives more grace. He says if we humble ourselves, he will exalt us. He'll lift us up. We don't have to defend ourselves. He'll lift us up. When our rights are challenged, when our independence is at risk, when our comfort is in danger, when respect is lacking, we instinctively think the answer is to fight. But when our desires are not getting what they want, the Christian doesn't murder. The Christian doesn't fight. [38 : 23] The Christian doesn't contend. The Christian humbles himself. And guys, this is hard. It's hard.

Like, you may be thinking, has this guy ever been wronged? Has he ever? I'm not telling you what Rob would do. I'm just holding out the word of God to you. I'm just telling you what it says. I mean, in the most respectful way, you know, deal with it. It's what the Bible says, right? We've got to say, okay, if that's the call on us, and I'm saying it's too hard, never mind, I'm not going to do it, there's a choice there to say, I see what the Bible clearly says, I'm not going to pursue it. It's too hard. We want to go after these enemies. We want to go after the enemy of self. We want to go after the enemy of friendship with the world. We want to go after the enemy of distance from God. Now, here's the great news. This is not all up to us. It says, draw near to God, and what does it say next?

[39 : 29] He will draw near to you. Our grasp on Christ does not determine our stability and safety. It's his grasp on us. Yes, we are called to press toward Christ. We are called to pray. We are called to obey. We are called to be faithful, but ultimately, our ultimate hope is not that we maintain our faithfulness, but that he maintains his. It's important as you see these enemies, and as you see James, who has just a ton of commands in James, you could be tempted to read that book like just a five chapter to-do list. In one sense, it is. It does call us to the things we're supposed to be doing as Christians, but we've got to remember, James is in the context of the redemptive story, that when we could do nothing to save, God saved. And I said in the last session, effort, study, those things cannot deliver us in and of themselves, but only when they are done in Christ, with Christ central, in the power of Christ, and in the power of his example.

[40 : 42] I'm going to take this practical example that I have here in Romans 9 to 21. I painted it, I think, sufficiently earlier. I'm going to just respect our time here.

Let me just highlight some things from Romans 12, 9 to 21, that I didn't say last time. Let me say one thing about it first. I may end up saying the whole thing I was planning to say anyway. I really want to commend to you guys, in the next day, maybe before church, even tomorrow, just sit down and read Romans 12, all the way, 1 to 21, read it all. And when you get to Romans 9, sorry, 12, 9, and it has all of its directions for relationships, slow down. Let names and faces come into mind with each of those things. Outdo one another in showing honor. Fear the Lord. So slow down there in the beginning. Am I showing honor?

[41 : 48] What does that even mean? What would that look like in this relationship, in that relationship? And then when you get to the reactive parts, 14 to 21 that we covered earlier, what does it mean to overcome evil with good?

Okay, see, live peaceably with all, that's obvious. What would that look like in this really difficult situation? Slow down when you're reading it. Romans 12, 9 to 21 is kind of a lab experiment for everything that we're learning today. And you'll start to see some parallels in the instructions Paul gives us after 11 chapters of exalting the gospel of Christ. You'll see parallels between that and what James gives us in chapter 4, where he doesn't spend as much time exalting the gospel of Christ. You see parallels there. Allow the glorious gospel to inform how you apply these things. And just underscoring chapter 12 verse 18, a word on this.

You can't always live at peace with somebody because that requires two people.

[43 : 05] You can live peaceably toward somebody. That just requires one person. Such that your chronic posture is to desire peace with this person as soon as they're ready to move toward it.

There may be people, and again, let me share this as a caution. There may be people with whom pursuing peace requires a lot of counsel.

I don't mean the two of you going to counseling. If there's been an unsafe situation you've been in and you're thinking that's one of the relationships of applying this teaching, I think that's right and good.

get counsel because it's different than someone who forgot to bring a gift to your birthday party. It's different from someone who gathered a group of friends to go out to dinner and didn't invite you.

Those are major substantial injustices that require wisdom to step into. But let me ask you these questions to close. do you believe that the person you're in conflict with is not your enemy?

[44 : 27] Are you sufficiently suspicious of your contribution to the problem? Are you willing to see yourself as enemy number one?

will you consider how much the world shapes your perspective of conflict and of relationships? Will you take seriously the call to draw near to God?

what we learn by studying these three enemies is that there really is a whole lot we can do in these conflict situations that can avoid them, resolve them, or lessen them.

So that ultimate peace between you, you're living ready for peace, which is all you can be responsible to do. And then you trust God for him working on the other person.

Or people being ready for peace. Alright, James 4, going to war with conflict, fighting the right enemies, yourself, friendship with the world, and distance from God.