

"Underlying Desires"

James 4:1–3

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Background

James begins chapter four with this question: "What causes fights and quarrels among you?" As he addresses in-fighting among Jesus followers of his day, we are invited to heed his words as we, too, navigate times of harsh disagreements and unlove. What do we know of our own hearts? What causes so much of our conflict? We are encouraged to look within, so that we can love well. Join us this Sunday as we return to our study of the book of James!

Sermon Text *James 4:1–3*

What causes fights and quarrels among you? Don't they come from your desires that battle within you? ²You desire but do not have, so you kill. You covet but you cannot get what you want, so you quarrel and fight. You do not have because you do not ask God. ³When you ask, you do not receive, because you ask with wrong motives, that you may spend what you get on your pleasures.

Discussion Questions

1. Preparation

- What is one thing you hoped to talk about today/tonight?
- What question(s) did you come away with from the sermon?

- What is the best thing you heard on Sunday?

2. Sunday Questions:

1. The "Why" Behind the "What"

The sermon suggests that our external conflicts (arguments, sharp words, resentment) are often just "leaks" from a battle happening inside us. When you find yourself in a "quarrel" or "fight," how often do you stop to ask, "**What unmet desire in me is driving this reaction?**" rather than focusing on what the other person did wrong?

2. Identifying "Disordered Attachments"

Hae-Rin references Ignatius of Loyola's concept of "disordered attachments"—good things like security, recognition, or power that become harmful when they take the place of God.

- Which of these "abstract" attachments (being right, being impressive, being in control) do you find most difficult to surrender?
- How does that specific attachment affect your closest relationships?

3. The Discipline of Self-Knowledge

The sermon makes a bold claim: "**Knowing ourselves is an essential Christian discipline**". Many people are trained to know the Bible but not their own hearts.

- Why do you think the church sometimes neglects the "why" of our behavior in favor of just "behavior management"?
- How might your faith change if you viewed self-reflection (through counseling, journaling, or prayer) as a way to invite Jesus to set you free?

4. Fear vs. Generosity

James 4:2 says, "You do not have because you do not ask God". Hae-Rin suggests we often don't ask because we secretly fear God won't be "as good as we need Him to be" or won't care enough to satisfy our deepest needs.

- In what areas of your life are you still operating out of a "scarcity mindset" (taking matters into your own hands) rather than trusting in God's generosity?

5. The Goal of Peace-Making

James contrasts worldly wisdom (envy/ambition) with heavenly wisdom (peace-loving/considerate). Hae-Rin mentions seeing church members "praying before an interaction" and "listening to understand instead of to win".

- Think of a current tension in your life. What would it look like to "check your heart" and "determine to listen well" in that specific situation this week?