



Before the Sun Goes Down Part 3

What causes Fights and Quarrels
Shay Robbins

We are continuing our series Before the Sun Goes down. And this week, we are going to talk about what causes fights and quarrels. We are really going to go deeper following off of what Ted did last week when he talked about forgiving each other.

We are going to look at James 4: verses 1 and 2. We are going to look at two potent verses. I'm not totally convinced why I was selected from the teaching team to teach this. I actually don't think it's because of my expertise in conflict, but probably because of my experience. I do have some experience in conflict.

So, 60 years ago, a couple of Branson legions, Sherman and Shirley Henry... Sherman was a long-time professor at school of the Ozarks and then College of the Ozarks. He taught engineering and then Miss Shirley was a teacher and administrator at the Presbyterian preschool for decades.

Sixty years ago, they bought a little plot of land east of town and they cleared that property on their own and then they got on the Sears and Robuck catalogue and they ordered themselves a house. Back in the day, 60 years ago, the semi pulls into the land that they cleared and it drops off everything to build that house. All the equipment, every screw, every nail, and they handed Shermon the plans. With his own ingenuity, hard work and skill, he built that house himself.

Fifty years later, a less skilled, more blocked headed, but equally ambitious young man named Shay Robbins purchased that property

He remodeled it with the help of You Tube and some good friends, and now that house is 155050 square feet. There are eight people that live in it – six females and two brave men. The atmosphere is chocked full of estrogen. I mean we are all the same mistral cycle. We are all synced up in there I'm telling you. People will walk into our house and if it's their first time in, they will stop in shock. They'll "say "What's that feeling? it feels like static electricity" and I will say, "it's all the feminine energy in here. Stick close to me and you are going to be okay.

We've got teens, we've got a lot of puberty going on, we're going through adolescence. Of our little rectangle house, we've got rooms on either side, we all meet in the middle for food and good times. We order groceries once a week and the snacks for the entire week are consumed in two hours. So, we are high on the hog for two hours and then we just struggle for the rest of the week. But I'm okay with that. let your kids struggle, that's what I say.

Our little house is a hot bed for conflict; I'm going to be honest with you. but at the end of the day, we come back to one of our family values – Robbins stick together. It isn't always pretty, we certainly don't have it altogether, but we are on the journey with the Lord and he is showing us how to run this household as best we can.

We are actually going to look at this passage. What's so cool about James 4, verse 1 and 2 is if you are asking yourself how does my family stick together, how does my marriage stick together, how does my staff stick together, how does my school administration stick together, how do we do life well together,

Well, James 4: 1 and 2 is going to give us really important instructions to pull that off. You guys have probably all watched the type of movie where there is an unlikely hero that is stuck in a situation where they are the one that have to disarm the bomb. They are on the phone with some Jack Bauer type and he's giving them instruction on how to take the case off and then you have to pull out the wiring and it's like a rats nest of wiring and, of course, the clock is ticking down right in front of their face, the pressure is building, they clip the green wire and then you have to find the yellow wire and clip it and then you have to clip the orange wires and then there are two wires left and the phone dies, cell service dies. And so, it's three, two, one and you just pick one, clip it, and we all live to fight another day.

So it is with families, and so it is with James, 4: 1 and 2. He's going to tell us the wires to clip to get us out of this pickle that we are in. interestingly, this passage is

one of the most penetrating diagnosis of human conflict in all the scripture. So, rather than blaming external circumstances or the other party, James points to the internal condition of the heart.

Let's go to the scripture and I will read it to you

.
What causes fights and quarrels among you? Don't they come from your desires that battle within you? You desire, but you do not have, so you kill. You covet, but you cannot get what you want so you quarrel and you fight. You do not have because you do not ask. This passage opens up. He says ***what are the cause of these quarrels and these conflicts you are experiencing?*** He follows up with that question and he says one word eight times. You, you, you, you you you you. isn't that interesting? Typically, when we are in a fight or quarrel, what are we saying? We are pointing the finger. Instead of it coming back at us, we are trying to figure out how we could win this argument or all the reasons why our opponent is wrong and I am right. That's our human nature.

James is saying, Hey, pump the brakes here, we are going to turn this back on yourself and the wire that needs clipped is actually starts with you. It's the wiring of your heart.

So, what we are going to do is I have five points that are going to spin out of this concise chunk of scripture... And they all start with verbs. So, how many of you would love to walk out of here knowing what to do?

We are going to know what to do today. we've got five points, all starting with a verb and the first one is this:

The first one is **Recognize the real battlefield**. So, James continues after he ask the question and the first thing he point out, he says, "What is the cause of the quarrels and the conflicts among you?" He asks this question and he goes on and he says, "Don't they come from your desires that battle within you?" Well, this word *desire*, in the Greek, is hedona. Which is the word that we derive hedonism from. Hedonism refers to self-centered cravings. In this case, it's actually not necessarily sinful objects, but it's desires that have become ruling desires. A lot of times, we will think of idol worship in the ten commandments and in exodus when you read through the ten commandments, it says you shall have no other God before. you should have no other idol, no other object of worship other than God himself. It's really simple.

So, we might look at other religions or false gospels or false religions and say, “Oh, I don’t have a problem with idols.” When the reality is that a lot of the fair emotions and feelings that you have, that you encounter on a daily basis can become objects of worship.

Here are some examples: I want respect. I want comfort, I want recognition, I want control, I want success, I want my spouse to change, I want my kids to behave. Again, not inherently wrong, but they become dangerous when they become demands instead of desires.

So, as we work out our faith, what we are doing, as believers, is we are making daily decisions to either walk by the Spirit or to walk by the flesh.

Here’s what the flesh says: The flesh is proud, insecure, entitled, that’s a recipe for conflict. But when we walk by the Spirit, we choose humility. We choose to be secure in who we are and we choose to be content with what we have. So, James is saying, “Hey, there is all kinds of tension in this life. There are all kinds of things to fight over, but, as a Christian, your fight is not against flesh and blood. In fact, you’ve been called to a higher battle, a battle that’s beyond the veil of your senses, it’s a Spiritual battle that’s being waged in heavenly places. You’ve been called up. And when we give into those desires and they become dormant in our life, they become objects of worship. unhealthy things spin out. So, just candidly, in studying this, God has really been exposing the idol of comfort for me. I’ve got all kinds of goals and things that I am striving for to try to get in order in my life and the reason I am working so hard at all these things is because I want to be comfortable.

I train kids during the summer, three days a week, in the afternoons. We have a bunch of teenage kids and we do athletic training. We’ve got the acronym that kind of sets the stage, the theme of our time together and the word is GRIT. The G stands for get comfortable being uncomfortable. So, I’m helping kids understand the more you become uncomfortable in the gym, the more your body will respond and the stronger you will get and the more your endurance will build.

How hypocritical of me to be pursuing comfort. We obsess with the pursuit of comfort when, in fact, sometimes God doesn’t actually want me to be comfortable. He might be trying to strengthen me or trying to give me endurance. That’s what a loving father would do.

So, step number one is to recognize the real battlefield. It's not with the person across from you. As a Christian, you've been called higher.

The second one – **examine what conflict reveals.** He says, ***Don't they come from your desires that battle within you?***

let me ask you a couple of questions. How do you respond when there is a lack of respect, comfort, approval, control, success, peace. How do you respond? Where does your mind go? How do you feel? How do you speak or interact. What happens to your patience? What happens to your anger?

Tim Keller says this: The thing that controls your heart will eventually control you behavior.

As part of our Christian faith... and again, as we are growing and maturing, a big part of growing up in our faith is being introspective. To look into the mirror and say, *okay, God, where is the next area that I need to grow up in?*

examine what conflict reveals. Psalms 139 says... David is writing it in Verses 23 and 24 .

He says, ***search god, and know me, try me and know my anxious ways. See if there be any hurtful way in me and lead me in the way everlasting.*** That's a very humble request to God. It's the kind of request that says You know what Lord, I might not like what you turn up, but I am willing to lean into it because I want to grow up.

Jeremiah says it this way in Lamentations: Verse 3 – and this is even more pointed. He says, ***Who is any living mortal or any man or woman to offer a complaint in view of their own sins.*** He says, ***Let us examine and probe our ways, let us return to the Lord.***

As we walk through this examination process, a lot of times... conflict is one of those things that we really look down on or frankly sometimes try and run away from or avoid. But really what conflict can be for a believer is it can be a yellow flag to say hey, there is a flag waving over here and there is this area in your life that needs addressed. There is space in your life where you need to be healed up and strengthened and mature.

So, we recognize the real battlefield.

Number two, **we examine what conflict reveals.**

And then Number three, **we confront destructive desires.** Now, watch this: James' language is very blunt. He says, You desire and do not have so you kill.

You might read that and initially say, well, hey, come on now, like I haven't killed anybody, nor do I plan on it. But this is hyperbolic language. He's saying that he's really harkening to what Jesus had taught us in the beatitudes when Jesus was calling believers higher, he is saying You know that it is wrong to commit murder, it's wrong to kill, it's a sin, but I say to you, the one who calls his brother Rocka... in other words, You Moron! You idiot, the one that says that has hatred in their heart. And we know that out of that hatred and resentment and bitterness, that's where the seeds come from for murder.

His point is when this stirs up and there is a yellow flag waving, you need to deal with it because sin begets destruction. A lot of times, we try and hide our sin, minimize our sin, cover up our sin, run from our sin. The problem is sin is just like an infection. If it isn't treated and isn't healed, that infection will continue to fester and grow and consume and destroy.

So, James is saying, hey, you need to lean into this, you need to confront the destructive desires in your heart.

Paul said, in Romans 12: 18: *As far as it depends on you, be at peace with all men.* So, when we choose to confront those destructive desires, what's really cool is our response doesn't depend on us. religion would say, I need to get my act together, I need to clean this up. I need to stop doing this, I need to suppress this.

That's a works-based religion. But, instead, when we find this yellow flag that's been waving, we decide I'm going to confront this, I'm going to lean into this space in my life.

Where we start with that is we start by going to the Lord and saying, God, forgive me. Would you forgive me for this desire that has turned sour in my heart and will you give me the strength to overcome it. Isn't that awesome? It's not all on you. Certainly, there are some verbs here where we have personal responsibility, but, ultimately, It's God who sets us free and changes our heart.

Number four – **reject the trap of comparison.** The scripture goes on and he says, *You covet and cannot obtain so you fight and you quarrel.*

Coveting says I cannot be content until I possess what someone else has.

What can coveting be? It can be someone else's influence, it can be a marriage, you can covet ministry, covet money, success, health, appearance, body, opportunities. And we say it all the time in this congregation. Comparison is the thief of joy.

So there's really a warning, with all of the scrolling that we do. I'm not saying scrolling is inherently wrong, but most certainly, when we scroll, what we are doing is we are taking in all the best versions of what the world has to offer and, invariably, we are comparing ourselves to everything that flashes before our eyes.

And if you are not careful, all that scrolling is literally just putting more fuel in the fire of coveting. And as believers, we need to recognize that and say, hey, you know what? I'm going to choose the Spirit over the flesh.

Because the flesh, in that case, is going to be unsatisfied, where the Spirit is going to be grateful. It's going to take your eyes off what others have instead, it's going to look upon all that God has give you and you'll look at that and you will say, I'm grateful. That changes me, that lifts my countenance because I recognize God is loving, he is watching over me, he's providing for all needs, and, frankly, he is spoiling me in a hundred different ways. I'm blessed.

So, we reject the trap of comparison.

Number 5 – We replace striving with surrender. He finishes, he says, you do not have because you do not ask.

Years ago, I moved to Branson for the real-estate business. I was a realtor in town at REMAX. My REMAX offices were right where the Chick-fil-A-building is now in downtown Branson. I knew that land was holy. They mowed down our office and built a Chick-fil-A

I picked this client early in my career that was an entertainer from Las Vegas. Who, At the time, was kind of a big deal. We entered into a deal. We found a house that he was really excited about and it.

he was purchasing this home from what I would call like an old school, Ozark grown, tough, gruff, extremely successful guy.

At some point, our real-estate deal goes sideways, and these two titans were going back and forth and they were getting litigious, like threatening, suing each other. And here I am, Little ole Shay Robbins in the middle of these two guys. Your Las Vegas big wig and your homegrown I ain't going to take no crap from anybody guy.

I'm thinking, if these guys go to court, the only loser in this is going to be me. The other agent that was representing the local guy was playing hardball too. She was super tough. I just wanted to mediate the situation and get of it for all parties. But we were having a heck of a time doing it. It got to the point where it was starting to get really messy and I'm starting to get desperate. I was getting no help from the other agent, so, in an act of desperation, I decide I'm just going to get the release agreement and I'm going to go to his office and I'm going to walk in there and ask him to sign it.

So, I was driving across Branson and the whole time, I was scared to be honest and I'm thinking how this is going to go.

I walk into his office and he's sitting there and he's all gruff and I don't think he even knew who I was when I walked in because we had never met face to face. But I introduced myself, he then immediately knows who I am, the guard goes up and I put that agreement down on his desk and and I make my case for him to sign it.

That day, he begrudgingly signed that document and I walked out of there and I'm like, *Oh, my gosh, praise God, I dodged a bullet there.* I would have never had that, had I not just asked. I think, like in our faith, a lot of times we get so hyper focused on trying to get what we want that we forget that we have, a father in Heaven who want's to give us good things.

When I'm on that grind and I'm trying to get what I want, I am anxious, out of control, I am super moody, it affects all of my relationships. When all along, there is a God in Heaven who loves me and he wants to take care of me.

That day, I happened to walk out of there with exactly what I wanted. There have been plenty of times that I have sought the Lord and he had an answer, but it just wasn't the one I was expecting or perhaps the one that I wanted. But I know enough to say I trust in God's character that his provision and his answer to my request is best

I look back on that story and I'm just reminded that God loves me, that he sees me, and that he is going to provide a way, and he will do the same for you.

So, if we look at just the progression of conflict, we go from desire to coveting. From coveting to frustration, from frustration to conflict, and finally, from conflict to division. And a lot of times, we can get stuck in our ways. I want to tell you a comical story to just process this together. We will lighten the mood a little bit.

Probably 10 or 12 years ago, there was a big hubbub down around the Landing. And Parnel drive. Ya'll know down in the south end of the Branson Landing where all of the geese and the ducks and the pigeons are down there and people love to go feed them.

10 or 12 years ago, there was a goose that had an arrow sticking out of it's rear, and it was this big ordeal. All of the tourists were watching it, they are panicking. All of the RV folks were very concerned. That was a big deal. The folks in Parnel drive were seeing it and so the whole community, including our game warden and DNR were banding together to try and capture this goose and pull this arrow out of it's rear.

The timing was really interesting in that it happened at the end of may and geese will go through a process called molting from the end of May through June. They drop all of their flying wings and then they will regrow them; that way, when winter comes, they have a healthy set of wings to fly south for the winter.

It just so happened the arrow was stuck in that goose's rear so he couldn't fly away, nor could all of his buddies. So, all of the community was rallying together... I used to run down there a lot. I would run down along the landing and at the time, I lived on the east side of Tanney Como. When I heard about this, I was super engaged. I wanted to be a part of that. I had been looking for this goose and I never saw him. And then I 'm hearing all these reports that all of these elaborate schemes are failing to catch this goose. Well, three weeks had gone by and this goose had evaded every attempt to set it free. We had a big gully washer; a big storm comes at night . I woke up early the next morning at 6:am and went down to Tanney Como to see if it had flooded. I go down there and I was right along a little creek that flows into Tanney Como. At a little inlet in this creek there were a bunch of geese and sure enough, there was the goose with the arrow in it's caboose. I think to myself, *this is my chance*.

I take my phone out of my pocket and I go running down to this little inlet, wading inlet and I dive after it and I miss it by 15 feet, it was an embarrassment. So, I come up out of the water and the goose is swimming toward land. I get out and it starts running in the yard. So, I start chasing after this goose. It turns out that I'm actually faster than a Canadian goose which is pretty awesome.

The problem was the goose is way more athletic than I am. It was like chasing Barry Sanders. The grass is super saturated and every time I got close to it, it would like to juke me I would try and turn and just wipe out. Finally, the goose realized that I was not going to give up. It starts running towards Tanney Como for freedom and it was kind of like landlocked so this is my opportunity to catch up to it. So I cranked it up in fifth gear. I was going all of like 9 miles an hour. The goose gets right to the edge to jump into Tanney Como and it jumps up and it's flapping it's wings and there is a bunch of brush and stuff. The goose kind of gets caught up in it. But it gets down in the water and I just send it. I send it off that edge and go splashing into Taneycomo it's like total darkness. and I felt feathers on my hands and I just grabbed whatever I could. I come up out of the water and I'm holding the arrow. But the goose was still on the end of the arrow and it's like losing it's mind, flapping it's wings and I'm holding this thing and I just pull out the arrow and it flies off and swims off, set free. It was awesome

there was this ring of crust on that arrow, like it had become seeded in that thing

I come walking out of there from the greatest athletic achievement of my life and I look around to find that no one witnessed it. I'm there all by myself, just me and the Lord at 6:am

Here is my point. There are a lot of silly geese out there that think *I'm too old to change. This is just who I am. Everybody else can see the arrow in my hind end, but as long as I don't look it's fine.* But the reality is at the end of that molting season, there would be a point where all of those goose's buddies were going to leave him behind. And I think there are a lot of times in our life where we will have an arrow sticking out of our rear and we will ignore it or minimize it, but the problem is that always creates division. It separates. And it's just like Jesus said, he said, "Why do you point out the splinter in your buddy's rear when there is an arrow stuck in your own. I think, frankly, there needs to be urgency, so I talk about that division. This is an incredible thing. If you read about the end times in scripture, many of us look forward to that with hope. I love my life, but I'll be good when it's over.

If you look at how broken and crummy this world is... I just keep telling people this world is just Dag gum hard, it just is. It's full of highs and it's full of lows all at the same time. How does this world keep from tearing itself apart? Paul says that there is a restraining force that is preventing evil from taking over. Do you know what that restraining force is? It is the Spirit of God in the people of God. It is the church. And it won't be until that factor is removed that this thing will in fact spin out of control and Jesus will come back and make it all right again. But until then, we have the ability and, frankly, the role to be a restrainer from that division. In fact, a believers job, when you walk by the Spirit, is to help hold this together. That might seem like a really big thing, like how can I play a part in that? but the reality is that it's quite simple. The marriages that practice these things, the families that practice these things, the work environments that are exposed to these things, even the relationships you have with broken, sinful, sour, crummy people are influenced by these things. your calling is higher than your rinkydinky little spat that you are in. you've been called to be at peace with all men as far as it depends on you.

Let me sum it up this way: we recognize the real battlefield, we examine what conflict reveals, we confront destructive desires, we reject the trap of comparison And, finally, we replace striving with surrender.

You know I described my home and how dysfunctional and how all these personalities can clash together, but, ultimately, Robbins stick together. And the church can be the same way. The church is made up of a bunch of sinners. But when we walk by the Spirit, the church of Jesus Christ sticks together.

Let 'stand up and pray for God's help. I want to bless you.

Father, we come to you and I just want to rejoice in the power of your Word. The Word is like a two-edged sword, able to judge the thoughts and intentions of the heart. I pray that it would pierce our hearts today, pray that it would carve off the callous and the hardness of our heart and leave us tender hearted. I want to pray Jesus for reconciliation or relationships and then in humility we would take ownership of our part every time. By your grace, it is in Jesus's name we pray Amen