

VIVA!

Conflict



JAMES 4:1-12

OBJECTIVE

Viva! Conflict explores why conflict happens and what we are called to as Christ followers in the midst of our differences.

This first discussion focuses in on why conflicts even happen to begin with.

WHAT YOU'LL NEED

Bibles

ACTIVITY

NOTE: This week you will have your group discuss conflicts they have had in their lives. If there are active or recent conflicts that anyone in your group has had with someone else in your group, or that is known of others in your group, you may need to be sensitive about how you introduce this activity. If you need, specifically instruct your group to think about conflicts they have had that don't involve anyone in your group.

For this week, have everyone get into pairs and ask everyone to take a few minutes to share with their partner stories of some of the biggest conflicts they have had in their lives. Have them talk about who (can be general, doesn't have to be specific) they were with, what happened and what it was like to have the conflict. After everyone has had enough time to share in their pairs, bring the group together and dive into the following questions: Generally, how do you feel about conflict? Do you avoid it? Embrace it? Why?

Do you believe conflict is good or bad? Why?

Do you believe that conflict is inevitable within relationships? Why or why not?

Think about the stories you shared and that your partner shared: what do you think is the source of conflicts?

DISCUSSION

A little background on this text: In this part of his letter, James quickly gets to the heart of the matter when it comes to conflicts. He bluntly asks why they happen and directly points out that they happen because of our desires (aka passions, pleasures, lusts). More specifically, he talks about who it's not just that we have desires, but because we have desires that are not being met. In those situations, we kill, covet, quarrel, fight and ask with the wrong motivations. Because of this, James calls his readers "adulterous people". Typically describing a sexual relationship out of wedlock, James uses this term as a description of our relationship with God and how the actions typically behind conflicts are contrary to the way we should be living as people of God. Therefore, our

actions break the covenant relationship we have with God as we live “out” of relationship, thus being adulterous people. James then goes on in verses 7-11 to remind his readers how they should be living and interacting with one another.

Have your group look up James 4:1-6 and ask for a volunteer to read the passage.

Were there any words or lines that jumped out at you in the text? Why?

James very quickly answers his own question and says that fights and quarrels “come from [our] desires” and more so because we do not have the things we want. Do you agree or disagree with this conclusion? Why?

Does not having something lead you to kill?

Jesus taught in the Sermon on the Mount (Matthew 5:21-22): “You have heard that it was said to the people long ago, ‘You shall not murder, and anyone who murders will be subject to judgment.’ But I tell you that anyone who is angry with a brother or sister will be subject to judgment. Again, anyone who says to a brother or sister, ‘Raca,’ [an Aramaic term of contempt] is answerable to the court. And anyone who says, ‘You fool!’ will be in danger of the fire of hell.” How does what Jesus taught impact how we think about this line of desiring, not having and so we kill?

What does James mean when he says, “you do not have because you do not ask God”? Does this mean that we can ask God for whatever we want, and that God will automatically give it to us? Why or why not?

What does James mean when he writes that “when we ask, you don’t receive, because you ask with wrong motives”? Does this make getting something from God simply about getting to the correct motives so we can get whatever we want?

What is the difference between correct motives versus wrong motives? How do you know which your motivations are when there is something you want?

Why does James call his readers “adulterous people”?

What does it mean to have a “friendship with the world”?

NOTE: This is quite a debated phrase in the New Testament. Consider this observation from the *NIV First Century Study Bible* by Kent Dobson:

It seems unlikely that James was renouncing participating in the ordinary affairs of life. For James, faith meant action in this world. He may have been alluding again to Abraham, who was a friend of God (see 2:23; 2Ch 20:7; Isa 41:8). It’s possible that the kosmos refers to the broken world’s enmity toward God. One can either be a friend to a world of quarrels and fights (Jas 4:2), loose tongues (3:3–12), pride, envy and selfish ambition (3:13–16) or be a friend to the world of God’s kingdom of peace, mercy and righteousness (3:17–18).

What do our fights and quarrels have to do with making God jealous? (verse 5)

Do you believe that “God...shows favor to the humble”? Why or why not?