

12. Learning the Source of Conflicts

In our last topic, we saw that there is a great difference between worldly wisdom and godly wisdom. We saw that godly wisdom will equip our children to help others learn how to have peace with God. They will also experience the peace of God in their own lives. In addition, God says that He will cause their lives to become fruitful. We also saw that worldly wisdom is very destructive. In our topic today, we will see why worldly wisdom is actually the source of conflicts that people experience between themselves and other people in their lives.

James 4:1 says, “Where do wars and fights *come* from among you? Do *they* not *come* from your *desires for* pleasure that war in your members?” The word that is translated “wars” speaks of battles and fights that were going on between people in the churches. The word that is translated “fights” speaks of quarrels and arguments that were going on between individuals in the churches. Paul spoke of this same thing, in 1 Corinthians 3:1-3, when he said, “And I, brethren, could not speak to you as to spiritual *people* but as to carnal, as to babes in Christ. I fed you with milk and not with solid food; for until now you were not able *to receive it*, and even now you are still not able; for you are still carnal. For where *there are* envy, strife, and divisions among you, are you not carnal and behaving like *mere* men?” Here, we see that Christians who have these kinds of conflicts have not matured in their spiritual lives. In fact, Paul calls them babes.

Spiritual babes are immature Christians who have not grown up in their spiritual lives. They are still controlled by worldly wisdom instead of godly wisdom. If this is true, because they are just new Christians, 1 Peter 2:1-2 says, “Therefore, laying aside all malice, all deceit, hypocrisy, envy, and all evil speaking, as newborn babes, desire the pure milk of the word, that you may grow thereby.” Here, we see how to help our physical and spiritual children learn to help new Christians who are struggling with conflicts in their lives.

First, we want to help our children learn how to help new Christians lay aside the things that are a part of worldly thinking. Romans 12:2 says, “And do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind, that you may prove what *is* that good and acceptable and perfect will of God.” New Christians have been conformed to worldly thinking for many years. As a result, they need to be shown how to transform their thinking. New Christians need to be shown how to lay aside all malice, deceit, hypocrisy, envy and evil speaking. They will only be shown how to lay aside these things as our physical and spiritual children learn to walk alongside these new Christians and provide the love of a nursing mother and the example of a godly father as mentioned in 1 Thessalonians 2:7-12.

In addition to that love and example, new Christians also need to learn how to transform their minds. The verse we quoted earlier, from 1 Peter 2:2 says, “As newborn babes, desire the pure milk of the word, that you may grow thereby.” Here, we see the way to show our children how to help new Christians transform their minds. This transformation happens as our children help new Christians learn to understand and apply the milk of the Word to their lives. Many new Christians have never grown, because they never had a spiritual parent to provide love, provide an example to follow, and help them learn to understand what parts of the Bible are like milk so that

they can learn to understand and apply the Word of God to their lives. I encourage new Christians to read the book of 1 John every day for a month and then during that month I meet with them regularly to help them understand what they are reading. The second month, I encourage them to do the same thing with the book of 1 Thessalonians, as these books were both written to new Christians.

Hebrews 5:11-14 shows what happens when new Christians do not have a spiritual parent to walk alongside, provide love, provide an example and help the new Christians learn to understand the milk of the Word. Those verses say, “Of whom we have much to say, and hard to explain, since you have become dull of hearing. For though by this time you ought to be teachers, you need *someone* to teach you again the first principles of the oracles of God; and you have come to need milk and not solid food. For everyone who partakes *only* of milk *is* unskilled in the word of righteousness, for he is a babe. But solid food belongs to those who are of full age, *that is*, those who by reason of use have their senses exercised to discern both good and evil.” Both the writer of Hebrews, as well as James, when he wrote this book, recognized that many new Jewish Christians had not grown to spiritual maturity. The writer of Hebrews said that the people had been Christians long enough that they should have been teachers of others. Instead, they had become dull of hearing and needed a spiritual parent to teach them.

James recognized that the conflicts that were going on among the Jewish Christians were the result of the fact that they were still following worldly wisdom instead of godly wisdom. As a result of worldly thinking, they had a strong desire for worldly pleasures. James 4:2-3 says, “You lust and do not have. You murder and covet and cannot obtain. You fight and war. Yet you do not have because you do not ask. You ask and do not receive, because you ask amiss, that you may spend *it* on your pleasures.” Here, we see that immature Jewish Christians had all of the same problems as immature Gentile Christians who had no background in the Word of God. Romans 7:19-20 says, “For the good that I will *to do*, I do not do; but the evil I will not *to do*, that I practice. Now if I do what I will not *to do*, it is no longer I who do it, but sin that dwells in me.” Even when we will to do good, we will continue to think and act like the world if we do not yield to the Holy Spirit but instead act in our own strength. In fact, we see that we can be guilty of any sin when we depend on our own strength

Here, we see that in spite of all of the sins these Jewish Christians were committing, they were praying. However, their prayer life showed that they had remained as spiritual babes. In 1 Corinthians 13:11, Paul wrote, “When I was a child, I spoke as a child, I understood as a child, I thought as a child; but when I became a man, I put away childish things.” The word that is translated “child” here is the same word that is translated “babe” in 1 Corinthians 3:1-3 and Hebrews 5:11-14. That word speaks of a child who is not yet able to speak clearly, or a spiritual toddler. A spiritual toddler is one whose prayer life is focused on his or her own problems and his own needs. James said the result is that their prayers are not answered, because their prayers focus on the things that will give them pleasure instead of giving them spiritual growth.

James 4:4-5 says, “Adulterers and adulteresses! Do you not know that friendship with the world is enmity with God? Whoever therefore wants to be a friend of the world makes himself an enemy

of God. Or do you think that the Scripture says in vain, ‘The Spirit who dwells in us yearns jealously.’” Verse 5 shows us that James is writing to Christians in these verses because he speaks of the Spirit who dwells in us. In these verses, we see that we can be guilty of spiritual adultery as well as physical adultery. Spiritual adultery is described as being a friend of the world. There were probably some Jews, in the church, who were only professing Christians and did not have genuine faith. However, there were also Jews who had never had spiritual parents to love them, provide an example to follow, and walk alongside them to help them grow in their obedience to the Word.

We see this illustrated in Ephesians 4:11-16. Spiritual leaders were given by Christ to help new Christians grow to maturity. Verse 13 points out that the goal of the Lord is for every Christian to become mature. However, Ephesians 4:14 says, “That we should no longer be children, tossed to and fro and carried about with every wind of doctrine, by the trickery of men, in the cunning craftiness of deceitful plotting.” The word used here for “children” is the same Greek word used in 1 Corinthians 3:1-3, 1 Corinthians 13:11, and Hebrews 5:11-14. When spiritual leaders fail to equip the saints for the work of the ministry, there will be spiritual toddlers who fail to grow and mature. That is why we want to help our physical and spiritual children learn how to become spiritual parents to those who are new Christians.

James went on to give the cure to worldly wisdom beginning in verse six. James 4:6 says, “But He gives more grace. Therefore He says: ‘God resists the proud, but gives grace to the humble.’” The proud include those who are only professing Christians and those who have failed to grow to spiritual maturity. In the case of those who are only professing Christians, we want to help our children learn to explain the Gospel clearly so that those individuals can experience the grace of God. Ephesians 2:8-9 says, “For by grace you have been saved through faith, and that not of yourselves; *it is* the gift of God, not of works, lest anyone should boast.” Those who are only professing Christians need to have the Gospel explained clearly to them so that they can be saved by grace through faith.

For Christians who are depending on their own strength, and have remained spiritual toddlers, we need to help them obtain a spiritual parent. We want to help our children become spiritual parents and learn how to explain to such individuals the importance of humbling themselves before God by yielding to the Holy Spirit so that the Holy Spirit can change and transform their lives. In 1 Corinthians 4:16-17, we see that Paul sent Timothy to carry out such a ministry. Those verses say, “Therefore I urge you, imitate me. For this reason I have sent Timothy to you, who is my beloved and faithful son in the Lord, who will remind you of my ways in Christ, as I teach everywhere in every church.” May the Lord richly bless you as you help your children learn to minister to weak Christians who desperately need a spiritual parent.