

**Sermon or Lesson: James 4:1-3** (NIV based)  
[Lesson Questions included]

TITLE: Motivations and Compulsions Of Sinful Sensual Desires

INTRO: Have you ever heard of or been witness to a church split over the color of the carpet? If so, were you baffled as to how such an outcome could happen?

In our passage, we will see what some of the underlying dynamics are that produce this kind of conflict.

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READ: James 4:1-3

v.1 - READ

[Lesson Question: Identify and describe the cause of evil doing that is cited in verse 4:1 and compare it to the causes cited in verses 3:13-18.]

SECTION POINT: In addition to envy and selfish ambition (vv.3:14-16), our sensual desires also cause conflicts among believers.

- - From the discussion in previous verses 3:13-18, bitter envy and selfish ambition drive believers to pervert the use of godly wisdom, which results in fomenting "disorder and every evil practice". (v.3:16)
- - In continuation of that discussion, this issue is being further developed by the asking of a question, "What causes fights and quarrels among you?".
- - Specifically, the discussion progresses by now adding another driving motivation that incites conflicts - our "sensual desires", which are herein identified and declared as the source of fights and "warfare" among us. (Strong's #2237, #4171)
  
- - Our sensual "desires battle within [us]" (v.1) - they wage ongoing war within us.
- - We each want what we want - to make us feel comfortable. And we want it now !!
- - In so doing, we utilized carnal inclinations that we have in various aspects of our life in order to implement carnal means that will acquire carnal gains for ourselves. (from Strong's #4754, #3196)
  
- - For comparison, the pursuit to gratify sensual desires is essentially a broadened extension of the acting on "bitter envy and selfish ambition" (in vv.3:14-16) that desire status, position, authority, and power for oneself.
- - Gratifying sensual desires pertains to aspects relating to acquiring physical comforts or physical pleasures for oneself.

[Lesson Question: Can you think of any examples of physical comforts or pleasures that become the focus of conflicts?]

- - For examples, "among [us]" (v.1) believers or groups of believers in ministries, physical comforts or pleasures can involve conflict issues over such things as: the color of the carpet or paint, the kinds of chairs, the type of food, the logistics of the parking lot,

the decorations in rooms, the thermostat settings, the discretionary spending in budgets, the volume of the music, the time length of the service, the convenience scheduling of events, the setting up for and cleaning up after events, the purchase of non-critical equipment and appliances, the diverting of ministry funds for personal usage, what to do with budget surpluses, the pay scale and vacation time for paid staff, gratuities for volunteers, the dispensing of the benevolent fund, and etc.

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## v.2 - READ

[Lesson Question: What are our motivations and compulsions behind the fights and quarrels we engage in?]

SECTION POINT: Our sensual desires are a source that generates both powerful motivation and corresponding compulsions that move us into action.

### Powerful Motivation:

- - The powerful motivation is that we "want something" (v.2), something that we perceive we really want because we expect it to gratify a pressing sensual desire we "hold". (Strong's #2192)
- - This powerful motivation of 'wanting something' is compounded in strength when we "don't get it" (v.2), leaving us significantly and unacceptably unfulfilled, unsatisfied, and desperately "longing what our heart is set upon". (Strong's #1937)

### Corresponding Compulsions:

- - As a result of these powerful motivations, we become compelled to "kill". (v.2)

Q: Do believers kill or commit murder? Is that common? Is that what this means in this verse? Or could "murder" have a broader general meaning here? What are some things we can "kill" "among [us]" believers?

- - With our contentious and selfish words assisted by relating divisive actions, we in a sense can murder or destroy people, ministries, churches, ministry workers, ministry leaders, the openness to become a Christian, the appetite for attending church, the willingness to help, the generosity to give financially, the enthusiasm to promote, the joy and fun of doing ministry, the unity and harmony, the oneness in purpose, the activities of the Holy Spirit (see Ephesians 4:29-32), the edification from fellowship, the partnering in prayer, the reputation of the ministry, and etc.

- - The compulsion behind our sensual desires verbally and relationally reaps destruction.

- - As a result of these powerful motivations, we become compelled to "covet". (v.2)
- - "covet" = "zeal; moved to envy"; "enthusiastic devotion to [gratifying our sensual desires] and tireless diligence in its furtherance" (Zodhiates #2206; from "zeal" - AHD)
- - And yet we are not "able" "to obtain" what we want. (Strong's #1410, #2013)

- - As a result of these powerful motivations, we become compelled to continue our quest by persisting in "quarrelling and fighting" (repeated in v.2).
- - We have become fully engaged in and consumed by our quest to accomplish our personal gratification of sensual desires.
- - And yet we still "do not have" what we want.
- - In the midst of our compulsions to gratify our sensual desires, we rely solely on our own abilities and fail to "ask God", who refrains from giving us what we want because we do not ask Him.

- - In summary, 'we want things' is a dynamic we ourselves create and hold so supreme that we allow and even cause it to generate conflicts. We are not content or at peace with what we have; we want more; we want what others have (covet); we are compelled and propelled to get what we want; so we resort to manipulation and ongoing conflict to acquire things like others have.

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### v.3 - READ

[Lesson Question: What are the dynamics of the other reason cited here as to why God does not give us what we ask Him for?]

SECTION POINT: Receiving what you want from God minimally requires asking Him and having sinless motives.

- - Another reason we do not receive what we want from God is because when we do ask, we ask "wrongly or badly", in other words with "wrong motives". (Strong's #2560; v.3 NIV)
  - - The most common and obvious motive is that we want to "spend what we get" on our own personal gratification.
  - - By implication from this passage, another reason God does not give us what we ask for is because we use a sinful and contentious approach in trying to get what we want.
  - - Our thinking processes are all messed up because we ask for God's blessing and provisions for things He does not even approve of (gratifying our own sensual desires), and/or in ways He does not even approve of (fights, quarrels, killing, coveting).
  - - When we engage in trying to acquire things that satisfy our sensual desires, we may even think we are doing it for God because we ask Him for His favor.
  - - But we do not stop to realize that we are actually in opposition to God.
  - - We are so caught up in our pursuit that we fail to recognize that a direct means by which God opposes us is through not giving us what we want.
  - - And because God does not give us what we want, we do not wait upon God but instead we take matters into our own hands by personally initiating to get what we want, thereupon escalating our efforts by resorting to and engaging in: killing or destroying, coveting, quarrelling, fighting, warring, battling, conflicts, controversies, etc.
  - - Life is not about what you want and how you want it to benefit you. Life is suppose to be about sacrificing what you want for the benefit of others. (see Luke 9:23)
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BIG IDEA: Your sinful pursuit of sensual desires leads you into quarrels, fights, and conflicts, all of which God opposes.

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APPLICATIONS:

- - Do you think arguing, quarrelling, or fighting are acceptable conduct for you as a believer?
  - - Do you ever stop to carefully consider what your true motives are when you are arguing with another person?
  - - Do you test your motives in a conflict to determine if God would approve of them?
  - - Do you test your approach in a conflict to determine if God would approve of that?
  - - In the midst of an argument, do you find that you tend to get swept up into aggressively and tenaciously pursuing your agenda to the extent that you lose control and react automatically out of perhaps compulsion?
  
  - - Is it reasonable or appropriate or wise to ask and expect God to bless you when you are sinning?
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File name: James4\_1-3-SermonOrLesson.\_\_\_\_ (.htm, .doc, .pdf)

Translation used: NIV, quoted or referred to in various places within this document

Source: www.BelieverAssist.com

Updated: May 11, 2016