

MBC WOMEN'S STUDY

RELATIONSHIPS: A MESS WORTH MAKING

WINTER/SPRING 2025/26

Class 6: Chapters 7b-8

CONTINUATION FROM LAST MONTH'S CLASS

- Last month we stopped on page 54 under the main heading of *The Two Foundation Stones*
- We will continue from that point and then into chapter 6.

WHAT IS IT ABOUT WORDS? (65-66)

- How much time, energy, and thought do we put into the words that we say to one another throughout the normal course of the day?
 - Not too much? “Perhaps this is because we think communication *is* ordinary.”
 - Since we communicate to one another largely in “meaningless” contexts and ways, “it is easy to underestimate its significance.”
 - Most of us will never say something that is so life-changing that we are encouraged to write a book or start a speaking tour.
 - We only think in the big picture mentality. We normally think about the top-down view. We don't always think about how our speech is going to impact the individual in the forest...we generally just think about talking to the forest.
 - **Example:** To the forest...*why is dinner not ready when I get home?*
 - **Example:** To the trees in the forest...*is everything okay right now? You usually have dinner ready, but since you don't today, did something happen to you?*
 - Tripp writes about our communication, “Your everyday communication influences the shape, quality, and direction of your relationships.”
 - In the above-mentioned example, how do the two different ways to talk influence the shape, quality and direction of a relationship.
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- “Everyday you tell people what you think about them, what you want from them, and what you would like to enjoy with them.”
- Since much of our communication is not “in grand moments of oratory,” we must be aware of those much smaller and seemingly insignificant moments of communication.
- “It is easy to forget the impact our words have on every relationship. There has never been a good relationship without good communication. And there has never been a bad relationship that didn’t get that way in part because of something that was said.”
- With such weight, power, and impact that our words have, we should be more careful with what words we are choosing to use at any given time.
- When is the last time you thought about how your words (both good and bad) have shaped relationships that you either currently have or had in the past?
- While we are not to mull over conversations, it is helpful to know where a relationship with either strengthened by our words or it came crashing down because of our words.
- I like where Tripp points us, “...we invite you to look at your words through the lens of Scripture.”
- Have you ever thought about or studied what the Bible has to say about our speech?
- “The Bible does not consider this area of life ordinary and unimportant. In fact, it does the opposite. It assigns words the extraordinary value they actually deserve.”
- If we desire our thinking on the massive importance of words, then we must go to the Scriptures and learn what the Bible has to say about both good and poor communication.

GOD’S PERSPECTIVE ON OUR WORDS (66-68)

- “The Bible can help you diagnose where you are in your talk and how to get where you need to be.”
- The Bible is not just about do say this and don’t say that.
- Reread Tripp’s quote, the Bible is not just a diagnostic tool, there to identify the nature, cause or location of a problem. The Bible is so much more!
- The rest of Tripp’s quote, the Bible also tells us how to get to where you need to be.
- **2 Timothy 3:16-17** “All Scripture is inspired by God and profitable for teaching, for reproof, for correction, for training in righteousness; so that the man of God may be adequate, equipped for every good work.”
- “Holy Scripture presents a kind of mirror to the eyes of the mind, so that our inner self may see its appearance” (St. Gregory the Great, 6AD – 7AD)
- Since our words come from our inner man, we need the Bible to show us what our inner man is doing, how we can destroy and build up.

Our Words Have Power (66-67)

- **Proverbs 18:21** “Death and life are in the power of the tongue, and those who love it will eat its fruit.”
- “This illustrates the constructive and destructive power of words while alerting us to the fact that our words always have direction. They are going either toward life or toward death.”
- While our words do not fatally wound someone, they can leave unseen marks for years or even a lifetime to come.
- Even the secular world has this thought:
 - Benjamin Whorf (1897–1941)—not the *Star Trek* character—was an early 20th-century American linguist who proposed that the way we perceive the world is influenced by the language we speak. Cognitive therapists recognize that pinning negative labels on ourselves is a type of cognitive distortion that can affect our moods and how we feel about ourselves.¹
- I could go on and on about this, but even those without Christ know that there is really power in words that are spoken and that one should be very careful about what is said.
- “Because our words have power and direction, they always produce some kind of harvest.”
- **Thoughts?** _____

Our Words Belong to the Lord (67)

- “Language is not a human invention to be used in whatever way serves our interests.”
- Thinking about words at a broader perspective, God uses words to both describe Himself to us and to communicate to us what He desires.
- In our modern day, there are two movements in the “church” which seek to undermine an accurate understanding of God’s Word.
- One is the Progressive Church.
 - This movement does not believe the Bible to be 100% without error...they reject inerrancy.

¹ <https://www.psychologytoday.com/us/blog/the-minute-therapist/202407/the-psychological-power-of-words>

- They would describe Scripture as a “spiritual travel journal” there to tell us how those in ancient history understood and related to God in their own time and place.
- They would also use the Wesleyan Quadrilateral approach to understanding:
 - **Scripture:** The foundational text, but subject to critique.
 - **Tradition:** The wisdom and history of the church.
 - **Reason:** Integrating scientific discoveries, historical scholarship, and logical analysis.
 - **Experience:** Valuing personal feelings, modern ethics, and social context as valid ways to discern God’s voice today.
- Second is the Emergent Church:
 - While similar to the Progressive Church in that it does not believe the Bible to be the actual words of God to man, this movement goes farther and casts off truth all together.
 - They believe that since humans are fallible, there is no way to know with full certainty propositional truth (that statements can be objectively verified as true or false).
 - Instead of trying to figure out what the Bible says with any clarity and certainty, they would hold to the hermeneutic of humility. Stating that it is far better to be honest that we just can’t fully know what words mean.
 - The Bible as a whole is a narrative in which we are to read ourselves into and that our fullest (though not complete) understanding of the Bible comes from a community or group effort.
 - Since each person has different experiences and each person interprets words through their experiences, each person is valuable to the overall goal of understanding.
- **Why do we need to know this when talking about relationships and words?**
- Tripp wrote, “Words separate you from the rest of creation, making you more like God than like animals. The gift of words calls us to live and speak in a God-focused manner. One of our greatest mistakes in communication is to take words as our own to use as we please.”
- Think again about the forest and the tree analogy. When the church (the forest) does not care about the words that are spoken. When those who are in the church (the trees) are being told that their words really can’t be known, there are going to be major issues.
- Just our ability to speak actual words separates us from the animals. While animals can certainly communicate with one another, they were not gifted with the same abilities that humans were to use letters, words, sentences, paragraphs to succinctly transmit information to one another.
- When we pay no attention to our words is when we potentially face larger problems.
- “Words, in short, have a high and holy calling.”

- Have you thought about the fact that God has given us words and that we are to be stewards of the words that we use on a daily basis?
- **Matthew 12:36** “But I tell you that every careless word that people speak, they shall give an accounting for it in the day of judgment.”
- Our words reveal what is going on in our hearts. Even the *seemingly* careless words that we say on a daily basis will be brought before us so that we can give an account for them.
- Since words are from God and since God will call us to account for them, take care how you spend your time with words.
- They are gifts that can be used for either good or evil. As believers, we have the mind of Christ and the Spirit to help us with our self-control.

The World of Talk is a World of Trouble (67)

- **James 3:2** “For we all stumble in many ways. If anyone does not stumble in what he says, he is a perfect man, able to bridle the whole body as well.”
- “With respect to one’s own affairs in life, if the tongue is controlled, general self-control will be the result. James asserted that controlled speech enables one to guide the whole body by the maturity of faith (cf. 1:26). The power of faith to bridle the tongue conveys a power to guide the activities of the body (as with the horse or ship, vv. 3–4). The sense of “guide” here is important, for it not only implies the curbing of evil action but also the directing of the body into good action.”²
- Our tongues are far more powerful than we can ever imagine. Our speech is going to “either guide the self into deeds of blessing or the deeds of cursing (cf. 3:10).”³
- As Tripp writes, “If you are honest, you have to admit that our words are the most powerful and consistent indicators of our need for the grace of Christ.”
- Since speech and actions go hand in hand, we really need grace.
- Listen to James’ words about the man who can bridle the tongue, he is *able to bridle the whole body as well.*
 - To bridle means to lead or to guide. Your words are going to guide or lead your actions. When we don’t have control over our words, our actions are also going to not be honoring to God.
- “James calls us to admit that our words are the most powerful and consistent indicators of our need for the grace of Christ.” **Thoughts? What words do you use that show your need for grace?**

² Kurt A. Richardson, *James*, NAC (Nashville: Broadman & Holman Publishers, 1997), 148.

³ Ibid.

Word Problems are Heart Problems (68)

- **Luke 6:45** “The good man out of the good treasure of his heart brings forth what is good; and the evil man out of the evil treasure brings forth what is evil; *for his mouth speaks from that which fills his heart.*”
- Ouch! Do you hear and feel the words of Jesus? Really listen to what He’s says...a good treasure in our hearts brings forth what is good and the evil treasure bring forth what is bad. Because of this, what comes out of our mouth is from the treasure in our hearts.
- The word *treasure* means “the place in which good and precious things are collected and laid up.”
- If we do some reverse engineering, we take the words and then work back to the treasure. This is what Jesus is saying...listen to your words (or those spoken to you) and you will know the inner man.
- Think of it this way, what are you putting in your inner man treasure box. Maybe it’s a good reputation, maybe it’s a desire for people to like you, respect you, think you are important...maybe you want people to see you in a way that does not reveal who you truly are.
 - If this is true, then your words will be deflective, defensive, arrows which are flung to make sure that others can’t get too close or can’t see too much.
 - Do you talk about your own deeds so that people will know something that you think is important about you?
- Here’s the other way. When we put the things of Christ in our inner man treasure box, the things of Christ come out. When we seek to put Christ’s identifying markers in our inner man, then when we are personally challenged, we don’t take offense.
 - It’s okay if we’re not the smartest guy in the room, we have Christ. It’s okay if you offend people because you don’t partake in their sinful events, your desire is to please the one you identify with; namely Christ.
 - It’s okay if people know that you’re not perfect, it allows you to point them to Christ.
- “Christ isn’t saying that people never put their feet in their mouth and say something stupid. We all have. But he is asking us to own the connection between our thoughts, desires, and words. The real problem with your communication is what you want to say and why you want to say it, *which ultimately has nothing to do with your language skills.* Christ reveals that the what and the why are shaped by the heart. Therefore, if we hope to transform the way we talk with one another, the heart must change first.”

Thoughts? _____

A RADICAL COMMITMENT TO THE CALL OF CHRIST (68-69)

- “God has an agenda for our relationships. For that reason, proper communication is not so much about getting what we want out of our relationships as it is being part of what God is seeking to do.”
- In other words, we need to ask why God has us where we are and interacting with the people that He has in our life. Nobody is in your life by accident. God had people around you so that you are able to represent Him before the onlooking world.
- For all the people that we interact with and have a relationship with we are, as Tripp says, ambassadors of Jesus.
- **2 Corinthians 5:20** “Therefore, we are ambassadors for Christ, as though God were making an appeal through us; we beg you on behalf of Christ, be reconciled to God.”
- “An ambassador does one thing only – represent. His job is to incarnate a king who is not present. Every word he speaks is directed by the king’s interests and will”
- This means that our words should be carefully chosen so that we represent our King in the way that He desires, not just what we think is right and good.
- What is the goal of the ambassador sent by God?
- To appeal to a broken world to be reconciled to God. This means that our lives are no longer about ourselves but about what God desires to do in and through us.
- “God is working in every situation and relationship to reclaim our wandering hearts. He wants to make us a people who are more interested in what he wants for us than what we want for ourselves.”
- If we trace this back to our treasures stored in our hearts, we can see if this is our agenda or not.
- Do we treasure this...*to incarnate Christ our King to the world He has us in?*
- If we do, then our words are going to reflect that truth.
- But, as Tripp says, “...we lose sight of reconciliation in many ways: When you flatter your friend because you want her to like you. When you trim the truth to avoid a conflict. When you yell at your child about his messy room. When winning an argument is all you care about. When you indulge in gossip. When you are better at pointing out wrong than asking for forgiveness. When you use words to hurt someone rather than help him. When your communication stays resolutely impersonal. When your words make you the center of attention.”
- This is when we know that our treasure in our hearts is not from the King but focused on us. This is when we are no longer ambassadors for Christ, representing our King, but we are self-promoters and self-defenders looking to protect our own sovereignty.

- “Here is the point: Your words are always in pursuit of some kind of kingdom. You are either speaking as a mini-king, seeking to establish your will in your relationships and circumstances; or you are speaking as an ambassador, seeking to be part of what the King is doing.”
- One of the greatest points that Tripp makes is “As sinners we want what we want when we want it, and we often see others as obstacles. We treat words as if they belong to us, to be used to get what we want. When we face how powerful our self-interest is, we are confronted by the truth that only a change in our hearts can produce a change in our words.”
- I think this is so profound and most likely one of the most often times missed treasures that we all store in our hearts. *We want people to do what we want them to do and when they don't, they are no longer fellow image bearers but obstacles that we need to manipulate, coerce, or move so that we can get our own way.*
- When we want our own way, we are willing to cast off our identity as ambassadors for Christ and take over our mini kingdom, sitting on our lonely throne of self.

TALKING LIKE AN AMBASSADOR (69-71)

- If we are to be an ambassador and our desire is to represent Jesus our King in the way that He desires, we must go the Scriptures and learn His way.
- **Ephesians 4:29-30** “Let no unwholesome word proceed from your mouth, but only such a word as is good for edification according to the need of the moment, so that it will give grace to those who hear. Do not grieve the Holy Spirit of God, by whom you were sealed for the day of redemption.”
- “If you want your words to reflect what God wants more than what you want, you should consider three things:

Consider the Person (“only what is helpful for building others up”)

- “Wholesome communication is other-centered communication.”
- “Paul says I should never say anything to you that is not helpful for you. Since God is focused on remaking you into his image, I should speak in a way that builds you up.”
- “I never want my words to be an obstacle to the work that God is doing.”

Consider the Problem (“according to their needs”)

- “Before I speak, I must think about what you are struggling with and what you most need. Do you need encouragement, comfort, hope, direction, wisdom, courage, rebuke, warning, forgiveness, patience, teaching, correction, thank, insight, a job description, or something else? **My words must be shaped by your need.**”

Consider the Process (“that it may benefit those who listen”)

- Ambassadorial communication is not just about the content of our words, but the manner in which they are spoken. Often we choose to say the right thing in the wrong way or at the wrong time. But the communication process, as much as the content of the words, needs to benefit the person. Confronting a teenager five minutes before she leaves for school is not helpful, even if the content is accurate. Rebuking a friend for an offense in front of others is not helpful. Asking your husband to consider how you hurt him as he is trying to get to sleep is not helpful.”

CONCLUSION

- “If we are ever going to give grace when we talk, we need grace to free us from our bondage to ourselves so that our words may be liberated to be used by God. Our relationships are workrooms for redemption.”

CHAPTER 8: OBSTACLES

- This chapter is about how God uses others in our lives so that even the conflict that we face will bring growth into the image of Christ.
- He quotes C.S. Lewis, "...but He means to get us as far as possible before death."
- God desires us to become as holy as possible in this life before entering the next.
- "Conflict with others is one of God's mysterious, counterintuitive ways of rescuing us from ourselves."
- Without other people in our lives, we would never know some of the areas that we struggle with. We would never know the depths of our self-interest, our self-focus, or our self-care if someone didn't come along and try to put the focus on themselves.

A Brief Word on Holiness in This Life

- We are, at the same time, as holy as we will ever be **and** growing in holiness day by day.
- "So if I'm a Christian, I've been justified by grace through faith in Christ (Ephesians 2), and I am clean and forgiven in him. I stand, objectively and definitely in the sight of God, forgiven and redeemed. There is nothing I can ever do to make God love me more, and there's nothing I can do that would make him ashamed of me, because I am complete in Christ. AND YET — at the very same time — there is the reality that I daily, hourly, moment by moment fall so far short of who he has called me to be, I don't even live up to my own expectations, much less God's hopes for me."⁴
- God sees us in Christ, **Colossians 3:3** "For you have died and your life is hidden with Christ in God."
 - Right now, you are in Christ. In a very real and practical way, you are in Christ and He is in you.
 - This is commonly referred to as our union with Christ.
- But it is also God's will for each believer that they are to be more sanctified, made more holy, in this life.
 - **1 Thessalonians 4:3** "For this is the will of God, your sanctification..."
 - **1 Peter 1:16** "because it is written, 'you shall be holy, for I am holy.'"
- Christians are called by God to be holy and to grow in their holiness.
- Our day-to-day lives should reflect the One that we are serving and loving with our lives.
- This is the constant tension in the Christian's life...we are at the same time holy and being made more and more holy.
- Here's the good and blessed truth...it is only because of our positional holiness before God...it is only because we are now in Christ that we are even able to grow in our holiness in this life.

⁴ <https://medium.com/@brycehales/what-is-spiritual-formation-69eb28dd129e>

- Since we are now in Christ, God is using everything in our life to bring closer to Him in communion and more like Christ in identity.
- God is using the conflict in our relationships for our good, for the other person's good, and for His glory.
- When you and I grow more into the image of Christ, God is glorified.
- The onlooking world can see the transformation that has taken place (and is taking place) in our lives and they know that it is only by the power of Jesus that you and I are being made new.
- It is when we think that we no longer need any work or that the work being done is not for our good that we start to lose the plot. We start to put our focus in the wrong areas and conflict ensues.

Conflicting Agendas (73)

- If you remember back to chapter 5, it was all about agendas. It was about our own agendas in our relationships also God's bigger and greater agenda.
- This section was the example of two ladies who were doing ministry together. One of the ladies wanted more recognition and sought to undermine other relationships to get it.

Facing Conflict Head On (74)

- Are you someone who moves into conflict or tries to avoid it?
- In either choice, is the overall goal the glory of God or the fulfillment of a personal agenda?
- Tripp's choice is "And if what we have been saying about the triune God is true, you must move toward people, not away from them"
- While I do agree with this, I don't see it as black and white.
- Personally, one question that I ask myself is *what fruit is going to come from this encounter?*
- In other words, what do I hope to see as an outcome **and** is that outcome even possible if I move towards resolving this conflict. **This starts by asking myself what are my own motives and desires for conflict?**
- **Proverbs 17:14** "The beginning of strife is like letting out water, so abandon the quarrel before it breaks out."
 - While I think that it is biblical and practical to make every effort to have peace, sometimes the other person does not really want peace. They may only want to have peace on their terms or in their timing. That's not really peace, that is still holding on to an agenda and desiring control.
 - **Proverbs 18:6** "A fool's lips bring strife, and his mouth calls for blows."
- Overall, as Christians, we should follow **Romans 12:18** "If possible, so far as it depends on you, be at peace with all men."

THE CAUSE AND CURE OF UNGODLY CONFLICT (74-80)

- “Why do we fight? Why do we struggle with other people? Why can’t at least one relationship in our lives come with a “no conflict” label attached to it?”
- Tripp says that “conflict is a problem the Bible addresses very directly.”
- “All you need is a heart that is ready and willing to hear the answer.”
- How often do we go to the Bible for our relationship help only to look for something either superficial or for the *other person*?
- The help that we need is not for the other person (at least initially), but for our own hearts and thought process.
- Tripp then takes us through **James 4:1-10** “{1} What is the source of quarrels and conflicts among you? Is not the source your pleasures that wage war in your members? {2} You lust and do not have; so you commit murder. You are envious and cannot obtain; so you fight and quarrel. You do not have because you do not ask. {3} You ask and do not receive, because you ask with wrong motives, so that you may spend it on your pleasures. {4} You adulteresses, do you not know that friendship with the world is hostility toward God? Therefore whoever wishes to be a friend of the world makes himself an enemy of God. {5} Or do you think that the Scripture speaks to no purpose: "He jealously desires the Spirit which He has made to dwell in us"? {6} But He gives a greater grace. Therefore it says, "GOD IS OPPOSED TO THE PROUD, BUT GIVES GRACE TO THE HUMBLE." {7} Submit therefore to God. Resist the devil and he will flee from you. {8} Draw near to God and He will draw near to you. Cleanse your hands, you sinners; and purify your hearts, you double-minded. {9} Be miserable and mourn and weep; let your laughter be turned into mourning and your joy to gloom. {10} Humble yourselves in the presence of the Lord, and He will exalt you.

Question 1: Why do we fight with one another? (75)

- Focusing on verses 1-3, Tripp focuses on our motives or desires first in the relationship.
- When we have been wronged or act out sinfully, it is common to say “I did that because you...”
- When we have conflict with someone else, it can be easy to point the finger at our opponent.
- But, Tripp writes, “He [James] makes clear that even if someone has sinned against us, the reason we fight is because there is something wrong going on inside us!”
- I will be the first to admit that this is a very hard concept to understand and holdfast to.
- *If I am sinned against, the outward fighting is because of my response which is because of what is taking place from within me?*
- James would give a resounding YES!
- What is taking place on the inside is coming out in relationships with others in the fellowship of believers.
- “...deformed desire is shown to engender conflict wherever active faith is not exercised.”⁵

⁵ Kurt A. Richardson, *James*, vol. 36, The New American Commentary (Nashville: Broadman & Holman Publishers, 1997), 174.

- Just as Tripp points out, “All desires are not wrong. But selfish desire is.”
- When we have deformed or selfish desire, there is going to be conflict...either with us or about us in the people around us.
- When believers are not willfully submissive to the God’s Word, they end up looking like and acting like the unsaved world around them.
- Arguments are inevitable, but we must look to our own motives desires as we respond to others.
- He asks the question, *what tends to produce conflict in your life?*
 - **Comfort.** I want, must have, and deserve comfort and you’d better not get in the way of me getting it! I fear hard work.
 - **Pleasure.** I want, must have, and deserve pleasure and you’d better give it to me! I fear pain.
 - **Recognition.** I want, must have, and deserve recognition or I will be devastated. I fear being overlooked.
 - **Power.** I want, must have, and deserve power and you’d better do what I say! I fear being told what to do.
 - **Control.** I want, must have, and deserve control and you will feel the brunt of my disappointment if you mess up my tidy little universe! I fear unpredictability.
 - **Acceptance.** I want, must have, and deserve acceptance and you are responsible to give it to me. I fear rejection.
 - What are some early warning signs in your life that you can pay attention to so you’re your conflict can be minimized?

Question 2: What has become more important to me than my relationship with God? (77)

- His answer is from **James 4:4** and what it looks like when believers become friends with the world.
- When we make something in our life as more important than God, it is spiritual adultery.
- Make sure to understand the point, it is not as if we have no other important things in our life.
- Tripp’s point is when we make the other, lesser important things, the main thing, is when we have effectively made an idol.
- We cannot, at the same time, seek to serve the Lord, please Him, live for Him, **and** seek out our own self-pleasure and satisfaction.

- If we are looking for recognition from others, for a “job well done,” we are no longer seeking to please the Lord with our work.
 - Our focus has moved from pleasing the Lord and His glory, to wanting others to not just see my good works, but then to glorify me for doing them.
- In the context of a relationship, when we seek this from others, the relationship is not going to work out very well.
- To be fair, a relationship is built upon one person recognizing the other person.
- It must be mutual and reciprocal in nature. But it must not be the main point nor focus.

Question 3: What does God do with people who forsake him for something else? (78-79)

- “When we wander from God, the Spirit he has poured out on us and who now lives in us becomes very concerned and jealous. A better way to translate the word “jealous” is “zealous.” The word “jealousy” has negative connotations, but it can actually be a very positive word. Like the person whose spouse has been unfaithful, God is zealous to do whatever it takes to regain the affection of our hearts. He doesn’t do this because he needs us; he does it because he loves us. When he pursues us and we humble ourselves and return to him, he then pours out even more grace!”
- As Tripp says, this section of James is notoriously hard to interpret and there are no shortages of varying interpretations out there.
- Listen to what Tripp further writes, “What do you think God typically uses to regain our affection? Ironically, he uses other people! That is one of the blessings of conflict. He uses the difficult seasons in our relationships to allow us to see what we typically live for besides him.”
- This is true of all of our relationships. God uses other people to mysteriously and counterintuitively rescue us from self-glory and self-love. Why does he do that? Because he loves us more than we love ourselves!”
- This section in James is astounding. The correction for sin is not more law...but more grace.
- “God wills the correction of his people through the continuing application of his favor. James conspicuously used the inclusive “us” here, hearkening back to the earlier expression, “We all stumble in many ways” (3:2). These many ways may even include deep descent into worldliness. But God remains generous with his gifts (cf. 1:5, 17). Unlike envy with its rivalry toward all, God maintains a favorable disposition toward believing sinners.”⁶
- The point he makes is that God does not turn His back on us when we put people or things above Him. He shows us more grace, a favorable disposition towards His children when they sin.

⁶ Richardson, *James*, 181.

- How counter is this to our own thinking when we deal with people? How quick are we to either remind someone of the rules or to give more rules?
- While sin is **never** acceptable, as James says...we all stumble in many ways...therefore we all need to have more grace.

Question 4: Once we are rescued, what should we do? (79-80)

- His focus is on the final section, **James 4:7-10**.
- “James calls the person in conflict to engage in spiritual warfare.”
- “No doubt James understood repentance to be a lifelong practice for every believer. All fall into sins that undermine faith and relationship to God; all must return to him for the restoration of whole-hearted commitment.”⁷
- Looking at these verses, notice the focus of the relationship...it is not between you and the person you are having a conflict with; but between you and God.
- **On a side note**, I have, at times, when dealing with friends or family members who are having conflict, pointed them to studies about who God is.
 - Once we learn more about our relationship with God, we are then better suited to handle our relationships with others.
 - James’ point is that when our relationship with God is off, our relationship with others is going to be off as well.
- In just these 4 verses, there are “The series of plural imperative verbs is stunning for its cumulative effect toward purifying faith.”⁸
 - Submit yourself to God...Resist the devil...Come near to God...Wash your hands...Purify your hearts...Grieve...Mourn...Wail...Change your laughter to mourning and your joy to gloom...Humble yourself before the Lord...
- When we put ourselves in this place before God, we are better suited to then respond and interact with people around us.
- When we focus on who we are before God and what our desires are for Him, we know better how we are grow into His likeness.
- It is a spiritual battle. Our enemy does not want us to be unified as one body under Christ. He does not want us to have fellowship with one another or grow more into the image of our Savior.
- Our battle is not against flesh and blood...it is against spiritual darkness.

⁷ Richardson, *James*, 183.

⁸ Ibid.

LET'S GET PRACTICAL (81-84)

- “Within those relationships you can start to form habits that can be practiced later in tougher moments of conflict.” **I love the habit language in the Bible.**

- Here are some of the ways we can start to train or retrain how we engage in godly conflict:

Understand that conflict is one way God works in our lives.

- God wants us to be more like Christ and when others are in our lives, it exposes areas we were unaware of.

Identify what drives ungodly conflict in your life.

- What ungodly desires or hidden fears do you have? What do you want more than God’s glory?

Recognize your default strategy in conflict.

- How do we engage with people so that our desired ends are met?

Engage in specific and intelligent spiritual warfare.

- Realize that your battles are within you...provoked by people outside of you...you need more grace!

Consider the other person.

- Once your mind is right with God, what does your conflict look like through your new eyes?

Make a plan to approach the person.

- “If you think that patience has run its course and you need to address an issue, approach the person in this way”:
 - Own whatever person sin you have brought to the situation.
 - Name the problem.
 - Explore possible solutions.
 - Implement the agreed-upon solution.
 - Evaluate your implementation.
 - If you get stuck and things don’t improve, be willing to get outside help.

- “He [God] will settle for nothing less in his creation than to see that all things ultimately bring him glory.”

CONCLUSION

- I like this C.S. Lewis quote from Mere Christianity, “The explanation is that He is building quite a different house from the one you thought of – throwing out a new wing here, putting on an extra floor there, running up towers, making courtyards. You thought you were going to be made into a decent little cottage: but He is building a palace. He intends to come and live in it Himself!”