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**The War Within**  
**James 4:1-10**

In the book *The Great Divorce* C. S. Lewis describes hell as a vast city that stretches on and on for millions of miles. One day a visitor arrives in the city and mentions to his tour guide that most of the houses seem empty. So he asks whether there was once a much larger population. His companion replies: Not at all. . . . The trouble is that they're so quarrelsome. As soon as anyone arrives he settles in some street. Before he's been there twenty-four hours he quarrels with his neighbor. Before the week is over he's quarreled so badly that he decides to move. Very likely he finds the next street empty because all the people there have quarreled with *their* neighbors—and moved. . . . But even if he stays . . . he's sure to have another quarrel pretty soon and then he'll move on again. Finally he'll move right out to the edge of the town. It would be nice to think that quarrels were confined to hell or to those who don't know Jesus Christ. But nothing could be further from the truth.

**Group Discussion.** Why do you think Christians spend so much time arguing among themselves?

**Personal Reflection.** What are some of the things that cause fights and quarrels in your family or at work? In James 4:1-10 the author does not just expose the existence of quarrels and fights but explains *why* they occur. James hopes that if we understand the cause of our quarrels, then we will be more open to the cure that God offers. *Read James 4:1-10.*

1. What words in this passage reflect tension and conflict?
2. If James asked most people, “What causes fights and quarrels among you?” they would respond, “It’s the other person’s fault!” How does James challenge that idea?
3. The meaning of verse 2 is seen most clearly in the following translation: “You want something and do not have it; so you commit murder. And you covet something and cannot obtain it; so you quarrel and fight” (NRSV). Why would frustrated desires lead a person to be verbally or even physically violent?
4. James goes on to say, “You do not have, because you do not ask God” (v. 2). When our desires are frustrated, why is prayer better than fighting?
5. Sometimes even God won’t give us what we want (v. 3). Why is it important to examine our motives when we pray?
6. When we pray with worldly motives, in what sense are we asking God to help us commit spiritual adultery (vv. 4-5)?

**7.** If you fight and argue a lot, or if you desire the wrong things for the wrong reasons, then James says you need God's grace (v. 6). What steps do we need to take to receive that grace (vv. 6-10)? Why do you think God requires such a radical response?

**8.** Even though James has stressed that our own evil desires and motives are the true source of quarrels, he says in verse 7, "Resist the devil, and he will flee from you." Why do you think the devil loves to see us fight and quarrel?

**9.** When we resist the devil in the ways that James suggests (vv. 6-10), why will he flee from us?

**10.** Think of someone with whom you regularly fight and quarrel. How can James's insights and commands help you live in greater peace with that person?

*Ask God to make you the kind of Christian who is a true representative of the Prince of Peace.*

**Now or Later** Take time this week to examine your heart. What impure motives might be hindering your prayers? How might those motives reveal an infatuation with the world? Come near to God by following the steps James outlines in this passage. Then ask the Lord to help you desire and pray for the things that are pleasing to him.