Introduction: Piercing Words – Wounded Lives

The root cause of interpersonal conflicts is our consuming passion for self-gratification.

James 4:1-3 (NASB)

• Our Problem =

• The Symptoms =

• Our Strategy =

• The Results =
God’s Diagnosis:

- We’ve believed a lie.

- We’ve betrayed a trust.

- We’ve become an enemy.

James 4: 4-6 (NASB)

"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. Or do you think that the Scripture speaks to no purpose: "He jealously desires the Spirit which He has made to dwell in us"? But He gives a greater grace Therefore it says, "GOD IS OPPOSED TO THE PROUD, BUT GIVES GRACE TO THE HUMBLE."

James 4: 4-6 (NASB)
God’s Prescription: humble yourself

and God will heal your relationships.

James 4:7-10 (NASB)

Four Steps to Diffuse Conflict:

1. Give in to God
   “Submit yourselves therefore to God . . .”
   James 4:7a

2. Get tough with Satan
   “Resist the devil and he will flee from you.”
   James 4:7b

3. Get close to God
   “Draw near to God and He will draw near to you.”
   James 4:8a

4. Get right with others
   “Cleanse your hands . . . purify your hearts . . .”
   “Let there be tears for the wrong you’ve done . . .”
   James 4:8b

      James 4:9

God’s Promise:

Humble yourselves in the presence of the Lord, and He will exalt you.

James 4:10 (NASB)
Personal Application and Discussion Questions:

1. What is at the core of our conflicts with other people? Briefly define “hedonism” in your own words.

2. Why is hedonism a lie? How are we influenced to unconsciously “buy into” its philosophy daily?

3. How does God view our strategies to gratify ourselves apart from Him?

4. What is the solution to interpersonal conflict? What specifically is involved in “humbling ourselves” before God and others?

5. Is there a specific relationship that needs attention in your life? What would humbling yourself look like in this situation?
Introduction: Few things have more power...

11 Brothers, do not slander one another. Anyone who speaks against his brother or judges him speaks against the law and judges it. When you judge the law, you are not keeping it, but sitting in judgment on it. 12 There is only one Lawgiver and Judge, the one who is able to save and destroy. But you-who are you to judge your neighbor?

James 4:11-12 (NIV)

We are commanded to stop “tearing one another down” by our “slanderous” speech.

• What is “slanderous” speech?

• How is slanderous speech commonly practiced?

• Why do even sincere Christians get caught in the “web” of speaking against others?
Why is “tearing others down” by our speech and judgmental attitudes one of the most serious sins mentioned in Scripture?

- **Reason #1:** Because it demonstrates total disregard and contempt for God’s highest command – to love one another. (Leviticus 19:18, James 2:8)

  > Anyone who speaks against his brother or judges him speaks against the law and judges it. When you judge the law, you are not keeping it, but sitting in judgment on it.

  James 4:11b (NIV)

- **Reason #2:** Because it reveals that we are in fact “playing God.”

  > There is only one Lawgiver and Judge, the one who is able to save and destroy. But you—who are you to judge your neighbor?

  James 4:12 (NIV)

How can we break the habit of “playing God?”

- **Step 1:** Develop convictions about speaking against others.

  > Do not judge, or you too will be judged. 2For in the same way you judge others, you will be judged, and with the measure you use, it will be measured to you.

  Matthew 7:1-2 (NIV)

  > But I tell you that men will have to give account on the day of judgment for every careless word they have spoken. 37For by your words you will be acquitted and by your words you will be condemned."

  Matthew 12:36-37 (NIV)
➤ **Step 2:** Ponder the **consequences** of your speech.

34“*A new command I give you: Love one another. As I have loved you, so you must love one another. By this all men will know that you are my disciples, if you love one another.*”

John 13:34-35 (NIV)

➤ **Step 3:** Refuse to buy **the lie**!

3So when you, a mere man, pass judgment on them and yet do the same things, do you think you will escape God’s judgment?

Romans 2:3 (NIV)

➤ **Step 4:** Refuse to let others **gossip**.

➤ **Step 5:** **Talk** less!

19*When words are many, sin is not absent, but he who holds his tongue is wise.*

Proverbs 10:19 (NIV)
Summary: A good paraphrase to memorize!

11 Don't criticize and speak evil about each other, dear brothers. If you do, you will be fighting against God's law of loving one another, declaring it is wrong. But your job is not to decide whether this law is right or wrong, but to obey it. 12 Only He who made the law can rightly judge among us. He alone decides to save us or destroy. So what right do you have to judge or criticize others?

James 4:11-12 (TLB)

Discussion Questions:

1. What was most helpful to you from today's message?

2. Why, from God's perspective, is it so important that we speak about one another and relate in a loving manner? What's at stake?

3. Where do you find yourself most prone to "speak against" someone or become judgmental?

4. Which of the practical steps to stop "playing God" do you need to put into practice? Share your game plan to do this with your group.

5. Is there someone you need to apologize to?
Introduction: Henry’s “good job” was a bad deal!

Why do we make bad job decisions?

“Come now, you who say, ‘Today or tomorrow, we shall go to such and such a city, and spend a year there and engage in business and make a profit.’”

James 4:13 (NASB)

• The business plan included:
  
  • He chooses his time.
  
  • He selects his location.
  
  • He limits his stay.
  
  • He defines his market.
  
  • He projects his profits.
The Problem: The business plan excluded God!

“Commit to the Lord, whatever you do, and your plans will succeed.”

Proverbs 16:3 (NIV)

“In his heart a man plans his course, but the Lord determines his steps.”

Proverbs 16:9 (NIV)

Summary: Bad decisions about work flow from false assumptions.

“Why, you do not even know what will happen tomorrow. What is your life? You are a mist that appears for a little while and then vanishes.”

James 4:14 (NIV)

False Assumption #1: Life is predictable.

False Assumption #2: Life is long.
How Do We Make Good Decisions About Work?

“Instead, you ought to say, ‘If it is the Lord’s will, we will live and do this or that.’ As it is, you boast and brag. All such boasting is evil. Anyone, then, who knows the good he ought to do and doesn’t do it, sins.”

James 4:15-17 (NIV)

Principle #1: Make God’s will the foundation for all decision making.

Principle #2: Recognize the root cause of planning apart from God.

Principle #3: Don’t buy the lie.

(Upwardly mobile work opportunities are automatically the will of God.)

Principle #4: Act on your God – given dreams and impulses.
Conclusion: A word of hope for those who have bought the lie and paid the price: “GOD WANTS TO RESTORE YOU!”

Discussion Questions:

1. Why do our work decisions have such a significant impact on our relationships?

2. What are two common assumptions that lead to bad decisions regarding our work? Share a time or experience that verifies the reality of this truth.

3. From today’s study, what three guidelines would you give to someone who came to you for advice concerning a big job opportunity?

4. What aspect of this message/passage impacted you the most? Why? What practical application could this truth have in your life right now?
Introduction: “If I had more money, I would be more happy.”

- True or false?
  - Exhibit A = Yesterday’s Headlines
  - Exhibit B = Today’s Relationships

- The Lie: My **significance** and **value** is measured by the quality and quantity of the things I **possess**. **Possessions** provide security and power, so I can be safe, personally satisfied, and rule my world.

- Overview of the passage:
  - Intended Audience
  - Historical Background
  - Structure of the Passage

- The Truth: God **IS NOT** opposed to wealth. Many of the greatest believers in the Bible were wealthy; but God **IS** opposed to the misuse and abuse of wealth.

- Warning! Misused wealth brings God’s judgment!

  “*Now listen, you rich people, weep and wail because of the misery that is coming upon you.*”

  James 5:1 (NIV)
The wrong uses of wealth: 4 warnings!

1. Don’t hoard it!

   “Your wealth has rotted, and moths have eaten your clothes. Your gold and silver are corroded. Their corrosion will testify against you and eat your flesh like fire. You have hoarded wealth in the last days.”

   James 5:2-3 (NIV)

2. Don’t steal it!

   “Look! The wages you failed to pay the workmen who mowed your fields are crying out against you. The cries of the harvesters have reached the ears of the Lord Almighty.”

   James 5:4 (NIV)

3. Don’t waste it!

   “You have lived on earth in luxury and self-indulgence. You have fattened yourselves in the day of slaughter.”

   James 5:5 (NIV)

4. Don’t abuse it!

   “You have condemned and murdered innocent men, who were not opposing you.”

   James 5:6 (NIV)
The right uses of wealth: 4 commands!

1. **Save** it faithfully!

   “The wise man saves for the future, but the foolish man spends whatever he gets.”
   Proverbs 21:20 (TLB)

2. **Make** it honestly!

   “Work brings profit; talk brings poverty!”
   Proverbs 14:23 (TLB)

   “Let him who steals steal no longer; but rather let him labor, performing with his own hands what is good, in order that he may have something to share with him who has need.”
   Ephesians 4:28 (NASB)

3. **Spend** it wisely!

   “Command those who are rich in this present world not to be arrogant nor to put their hope in wealth, which is so uncertain, but to put their hope in God, who richly provides us with everything for our enjoyment. Command them to do good, to be rich in good deeds, and to be generous and willing to share.”
   1 Timothy 6:17-18 (NIV)

4. **Give** it generously!

   “One man gives freely, yet gains even more; another withholds unduly, but comes to poverty. A generous man will prosper; he who refreshes others will himself be refreshed.”
   Proverbs 11:24-25 (NIV)

   “It is more blessed to give than to receive”
   -Jesus Christ, Acts 20:35 (NIV)
Summary: Until you get your financial house in order, your relational life will always be in chaos.

Discussion Questions:

1. Why is money such a “hot button” in our relationships? What does money reveal about our inner attitudes and values?

2. How is “The Lie” sold to us daily? What are some general evidences that most of us buy much of “The Lie?”

3. How will putting our finances in order ultimately put our relationships in order also?

4. What specific step do you need to take to get your finances and/or attitudes about them aligned with God’s Word?
**Introduction:** Under pressure, we tend to play the "if only..." game

**The Lie:** "The grass is greener on the other side of the fence" mentality. If I could only change ((personal fill-in)) then everything would be wonderful.

**The False Premise:** My happiness = God’s number one agenda

- **Major Premise** = God wants me to be happy

- **Minor Premise** = My situation, job, marriage, school, relationships are so painful/stressful that...

- **Conclusion** = This situation or relationship can't be God's will for my life.
The Truth: Running from adversity and conflict in relationships does not solve problems, but compounds them. Patience and perseverance are the keys to relational transformation.

7 Be patient, then, brothers, until the Lord's coming. See how the farmer waits for the land to yield its valuable crop and how patient he is for the autumn and spring rains.

8 You too, be patient and stand firm, because the Lord's coming is near.

9 Don't grumble against each other, brothers, or you will be judged. The Judge is standing at the door!

10 Brothers, as an example of patience in the face of suffering, take the prophets who spoke in the name of the Lord.

11 As you know, we consider blessed those who have persevered. You have heard of Job's perseverance and have seen what the Lord finally brought about. The Lord is full of compassion and mercy.

12 Above all, my brothers, do not swear—not by heaven or by earth or by anything else. Let your "Yes" be yes, and your "No," no, or you will be condemned.

James 5:7-12 (NIV)
Four Commands:

- We are commanded to be **patient**. James 5:7-9
  even when circumstances are beyond our control.

- We are commanded to **stand firm**. James 5:10
  even when our circumstances are unfair and unjust.

- We are commanded to **persevere**. James 5:11
  even when we don't understand why God is allowing such adversity in our lives.

- We are commanded to demonstrate our **patience**. James 5:12
  and perseverance by keeping our vows and commitments.
Discussion Questions:

1. Why is it so easy to fall into the "grass is greener" mentality?

2. What must we understand and grasp about relationships if we are to endure the "hard times" to later enjoy the "best times"?
   a. What does the farmer teach us about the seasons of relationships?
   b. What do the prophets teach us about adversity in relationships?
   c. What does Job teach us about the value of persevering through the hard times?

3. In what relationship do you most need to develop patience or perseverance?

4. How does what comes out of your mouth encourage that perseverance or hinder it?

5. The "greener grass" mentality is a powerful lie; what or who could help you refocus your commitment to follow God's truth?