Lesson Title: Can’t We All Just Get Along?

Focus Passage: James 4:1-10

Key Objective: To help students see that conflict comes from one place: inside of us. To help students identify the root of conflict and how to neutralize it by submitting to God.

Teaching for Excellence: So we are back in the book of James this week. As you prepare to teach this lesson, you could probably think of some different situations from the past week or two where there was a conflict. Maybe you were part of the conflict, or maybe you just observed the conflict. Regardless, there are root causes for every conflict that we allow to creep into our hearts.

James identifies three things that cause conflicts and wars: greed, selfishness, and rebellion. Most of our conflicts with other people can be tied to our desire for more, our resistance to consider others, and our rejection of God’s guidelines for us. No matter what the season or situation, we can see the seeds of conflict popping up all around us.

Before you step to the podium to teach your students, make this real in your own life. Take time right now to confess the ways that you have let greed, selfishness, and rebellion raise their ugly heads in your heart. Read Psalm 139:24-25 and ask your Heavenly Father to point out anything in your heart and life that offends Him. Then confess it as sin and move on to resist greed and selfishness by serving someone else.

Preparation for Today’s Lesson

1. Bring in 200 pennies.
2. Bring a giant candy bar or even better, a $10 iTunes card.
3. Index cards, pencils, or pens for everyone to take notes.
4. Provide a couple of extra quiet times and Bibles for students who may not have them.
5. A whiteboard and erasable markers.
Getting Your Students' Interest

Teacher’s Note – Ice Breaker

Penny Grab
Bring in 200 pennies. Give each student a penny, then put the rest on a table or on the floor in the center of the room.

When I say go, you can pick up as many additional pennies as you can in the next 20 seconds. The winner gets this $10 iTunes Card (or a giant candy bar).

“Go!” [After 20 seconds, call time. Reward the person with the most pennies; then ask the following questions:]

You each were given a penny. What was the problem with this game?
- Did this game bring out the best or worst in most of us? [Allow for responses.]
- What are some methods you used to get more pennies? [intimidation, manipulation…]
- How is this game like real life? [Allow for responses.]

Today we will be talking about conflict. Conflict comes from our attempts to meet our own needs regardless of the needs of others and we will be looking in the book of James for some answers.

Introducing the Lesson

James had written this letter to people in his congregation that he cares about, but he has also written this letter because he cares about those who have yet to believe. The testimony of the church that is lived out in the community can help or hurt the cause of the Gospel. James has already told his church to put favoritism out of their lives and treat every person as valuable regardless of how rich or powerful they may be. This has a direct impact on our ability to communicate the Gospel. Today we will read about James’ confrontation with people who have regularly fallen into conflicts and who are even warring with each other, due to greed, selfishness, and rebellion against God’s way of living. Let’s take a look at how we can get along better with our friends and family by looking at James 4:1-10.

Teaching the Word

[Read James 4:1-10 together. You may have a student or two read it aloud, or go around the room having each student read successively.]

Conflict is never very fun for anybody. Some people think that conflict is always bad. But conflict can be something that shows us things we need to change and do differently so that we can treat each other the way God wants us to treat them. Today we’re going to let James show us where conflict comes from and how we can use it to become even closer to God.

[As you get started, break into groups of two or three and re-read James 4:1-4. See if you can find the three people that we fight with. Give students about 5 minutes. Give candy to each group that makes a sincere try. Answers are below.]
So who are we really fighting?

A. We Fight with Ourselves (James 4:1-2a).

The heart of sin comes from our selfishness to get what we want when we want it. James says that conflict comes from inside of us. So the first person that we fight with is ourselves. We want stuff and we think about it a lot. When we live trying to get what we want, we end up unfulfilled because we can never get everything we want.

Sometimes we see so many things that we think we need or want. What if your parents took you to the mall for Christmas or your birthday and told you that you could have any “one” item in the mall that you wanted? [Obviously, students would have no problem picking something.]

Would that be easy or hard for you? It would be hard for some of you because you want it all.

Let’s turn to 1 John 2:16 and then keep a marker or your finger there as we’ll be going back to this verse several times in relation to our James passage today.

What is the first thing on this list of worldly things that doesn’t come from God, the Father? [The lust of the flesh]

When we are driven by our cravings, it gets very hard to have peace in our hearts.

B. We Fight with Each Other (James 4:2).

James tells us that conflict comes from hurting other people to get what we want. According to verse 2, what does our selfishness interfere with most?

1. Selfishness Corrupts our Relationships. We treat each other poorly because we want stuff for us no matter what it does to people that we care about. When you and I are focused on getting what we want, we do things that hurt people. We also do things that we may not normally do like lying, cheating, or blowing off rules.

2. Selfishness Disables our Prayers. [Have a student read James 4:3.] If we look at the model prayer that Jesus showed us, we don’t hear Him ask for anything that was just for Himself. He asked specifically for whatever His Heavenly Father wanted for Him.

[Re-read 1 John 2:16.]

What is the second thing on this list of worldly things that doesn’t come from the Father? [The lust of the eyes.] A lot of times we see things that our friends have and we are willing to fight to get them. This makes it very hard to have peace in our relationships.

C. We Fight with God (James 4:4).

James tells us that conflict comes from rejecting what God wants and choosing to do what we want instead.
According to this verse, what is it that causes us to go astray or wander off in our relationship with God? [When we turn to our own way.]

That’s what James is telling us in verse 4. If we aren’t doing what God has told us to do, then we are at war with Him. We aren’t at war with the church or the youth pastor. We are running away from what God has chosen for us to do and be. In other words, we go our own way.

Now let’s look back at 1 John 2:16 one more time. What is the third thing on this list of things that doesn’t come from the Father? [The pride of life]

A lot of times we see things that our friends have and we are willing to fight to get them, making it very hard to have peace in our relationships. All three of these are in direct opposition to God and His will for us. They disable our relationship with God and with other believers.

The Antidote for Greed, Selfishness, and Rebellion (James 4:7-10)

James summarizes the cure for greed, selfishness, and rebellion in verses 7 through 10. Let’s read these verses. They all revolve around turning our eyes to God.

I. Submit to God!

How much room does it tell us to give the devil in this verse? [Give “no place” to the devil whatsoever!]

The first way to submit to God is to resist the devil. Ephesians tells us that the devil uses our anger to resist God. When we get angry, we use it to get even with people. This means that our selfishness is taking over because we want our way. That’s why we fight. We have to fight to get our way, but James tells us to back down and let God have His way.

Don’t forget, God’s way is best for you. Close your eyes and listen to this verse: “‘For I know the plans I have for you,’ declares the LORD, ‘plans to prosper you and not to harm you, plans to give you hope and a future.’” Jeremiah 29:11

II. Get Closer to God.

The closer we are to God, the more we are like Him. Whomever you spend the most time with will influence the person that you begin to look and think like.

One of the ways we get closer to God is regularly confessing the sin in our lives.

III. Humble Yourself before God.

If conflict comes from our attempts to be in control, then peace comes when we humble ourselves before God. To be humble is to serve, even when we aren’t required to.
[Pass out Review Sheets here and have the students fill in the blanks as you review and summarize the main points of the lesson; then go on to the specific application below.]

Applying God’s Truths

Teacher’s Note: Challenge students to consider at least one practical way they can conform their lives to the truths they have learned.

Here are a couple of suggestions:

- Neutralize greed by giving something away to someone who can’t give anything back to you.
- Remember that God owns it all, so go find a friend and lend him your X-Box or PS3 for the weekend or something else you really like.

**Bottom Line:** Next time you run into a situation that involves conflict, stop and check to see where it’s coming from (inside you, between you and another person, or between you and God); then work on promoting PEACE and HARMONY.

[Close by having a student read Romans 12:9-18.]

Get along with each other. Live at peace!

Next week, we are going to dig into the most foundational book of the Bible, the Book of Genesis.
Can’t We All Just Get Along?
James 4:1-10

So Who Are We Really Fighting?

A. We Fight with ____________ (James 4:1-2a).
   The heart of sin comes from our ____________ to get what we
   want when we want it. When we are driven by our ____________,
   it gets very hard to have peace in our hearts (1 John 2:16).

B. We Fight with ___________ ___________ (James 4:2).
   James tells us that conflict comes from hurting other people
   to get what we want.
   1. Selfishness Corrupts our ____________.
      When you and I are focused on getting what we want, we
      do things that hurt people. We also do things that we
      wouldn’t normally do.
   2. Selfishness Disables Our ____________ (James 4:3).
      If we look at the model prayer that Jesus showed us, we
      don’t hear Him ask for Himself. He asked specifically for
      whatever His Heavenly Father wanted for Him.

C. We Fight with ____________ (James 4:4).
   James tells us that conflict comes from rejecting what God
   wants and choosing to do what we want.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>What three things do not come from God, the Father? (1 John 2:16)</th>
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| 1. The lust of the ________,  
  2. The lust of the ________, and  
  3. The ________ of life.  |
| All three of these are in direct opposition to ________ and His will for us. They disable both our relationship with God and with other believers. |

The Antidote for Greed, Selfishness, and Rebellion (James 4:7-10).

I. ______________ to ___________! (Ephesians 4:26-27)

II. Get ______________ to ______________.
   The closer we are to God, the more we are ____________ Him.

III. ______________ ______________ before God.
   To be humble is to ______________, even when we aren’t required to.

LIFE IMPRINT: Read and meditate on Romans 12:9-18. Now try applying these admonitions! Here’s the bottom line: Next time you run into a situation that involves conflict, stop and check to see where it’s coming from (inside you, between you and another person, or between you and God); then work on promoting PEACE and HARMONY!

Sneak Preview

Next week in Genesis, look for the sequence of creation. What a mighty God we serve!

Life Step – Lesson 7 (Student Worksheet)