

Gathering Question: Share with your group the top two things that cause fights or quarrels in your family or at work. Are those two things the real problem or are they symptoms of much deeper problems? Explain your answer.

The War Within

In his 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 arrived in the city and he mentioned to his tour guide that most of the houses seem empty. He asked if there was once a much larger population to which the guide replied,

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 have moved... But even if he stays ... he is sure to have another quarrel pretty soon and then he'll move on again. Finally he will move right out to the edge of town.

Wouldn't it be nice if all hard feelings and quarrels were confined to hell and did not plague our time here in this fallen world? But we know that is not the case.

In James 4, James does not just expose the dirty little secret that Christians tend to love to quarrel and fight but he also explains why they occur. It is possible that James is hoping that when we understand the cause of our conflicts that we will be more open to the cure that God offers for our struggles.

Paul states it with extreme clarity, "Have nothing to do with stupid and senseless controversies; you know that they breed quarrels. And the Lord's servant must not be quarrelsome but kindly to everyone..."

Read: James 4:1-10; II Timothy 2:23-26

Reflect:

1. Most people would say of a conflict that the other person caused it. How would James respond to that?
2. James says that some fight because they want something and do not have it. Why would frustrated desires lead a person to be verbally or even physically abusive?
3. Why is it important to examine our motives when we pray?
4. Why are controversies and quarrels "stupid" according to Paul?