

- The modern Catholic and Episcopalian liturgies contain a pleasing segment in their worship called “passing the peace.” It requires that one shake hands with those around him and sincerely say, “Peace be with you.” The other then responds, “Peace be with you.” This new “tradition” is a nice touch, but it can have problems. The people of one small New York congregation found it beyond their limits. They could not bare shaking hands with people to whom they bore lifelong grudges. So they fired the priest and found a new one sympathetic to their needs. (Shared in R. Kent Hughes James commentary.)

- *And what about the fist fight between the pastor of Faith Fellowship Church and a board member on the front lawn of the church.* (A Faith Fellowship Church in a different state.)

- But, secondly, he is pitilessly insistent in exposing the cause of the problem, which is a collection of very ordinary things within the individual heart. Pleasures, desires and needs! Seeking and demanding for self! We need, in fact, to read the verses again (4:1-3) and, as it were, to insist on the ordinariness of what they say. It is not only the notorious, most outrageous and insistent demands, to have our own way and feed our own needs, that make for wars and fightings. It is at root no more than the existence in each of us of a self-centered heart, a controlling spirit of self-interest (J.A. Motyer).

WARNING: HAPPINESS UNDER CONSTRUCTION
→FIGHTING & QUARRELING UNDERWAY←



- The seventeenth-century Jewish philosopher Spinoza observed: “I have often wondered that persons who make boast of professing the Christian religion—namely love, joy, peace, temperance, and charity to all men—should quarrel with such rancorous animosity and display daily towards one another such bitter hatred, that this, rather than the virtues which they profess, is the readiest criteria of their faith.” *Some battles, to be sure, need to be fought. But even then they must be fought without sacrificing Christian principles and virtues* (from Douglas Moo James commentary).



- We each have legitimate desires, but because of our fallen nature our desires (pleasures, passions) have been compromised, skewed by our sinfulness. Even sexual passions. Sexual desire is God-crafted and God-given. Sex is not sin. Sex becomes sin when we twist the legitimate, God-given desire.
- We are hard-wired to pursue significance, respect, fulfillment, joy, etc. Those desires and passions are in our hearts because God made us that way. The problem is that when people do not look to God to fulfill these desires, then all manner of evil comes forward. As is very evident as we view the world around us, and sometimes within us.
- James points out our problem. We fight and quarrel because we try to fulfill our pleasures apart from God. This is what James is addressing. We want to fulfill our needs for significance and happiness with friendship with the world. And in doing this we are conflicted, battling within, and battling without.

