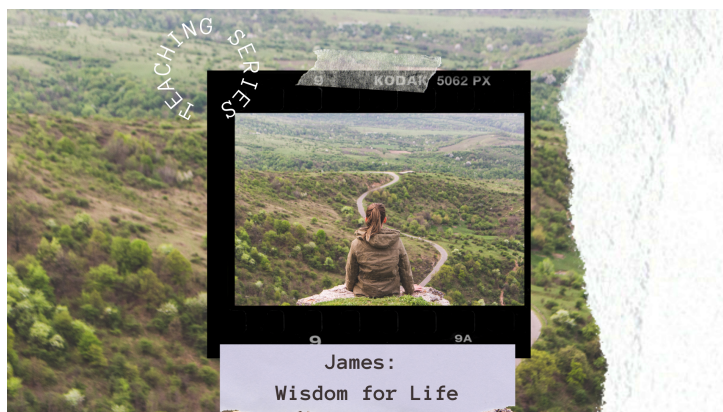


#4 – JAMES 4: THE GOOD FIGHT (Jill Weber)

- Where have you seen God at work in your life this week? (Share any brief examples and encouragements).
- Was there anything from Sunday's message which you found particularly inspiring or challenging?
- Was there anything else you particularly noticed?



James 4:1-12

What causes fights and quarrels among you? Don't they come from your desires that battle within you? You desire but do not have, so you kill. You covet but you cannot get what you want, so you quarrel and fight. You do not have because you do not ask God. When you ask, you do not receive, because you ask with wrong motives, that you may spend what you get on your pleasures.

You adulterous people, don't you know that friendship with the world means enmity against God? Therefore, anyone who chooses to be a friend of the world becomes an enemy of God. Or do you think Scripture says without reason that he jealously longs for the spirit he has caused to dwell in us? But he gives us more grace. That is why Scripture says:

*'God opposes the proud
but shows favour to the humble.'*

Submit yourselves, then, to God. Resist the devil, and he will flee from you. Come near to God and he will come near to you. Wash your hands, you sinners, and purify your hearts, you double-minded. Grieve, mourn and wail. Change your laughter to mourning and your joy to gloom. Humble yourselves before the Lord, and he will lift you up.

Brothers and sisters, do not slander one another. Anyone who speaks against a brother or sister or judges them speaks against the law and judges it. When you judge the law, you are not keeping it, but sitting in judgment on it. There is only one Lawgiver and Judge, the one who is able to save and destroy. But you – who are you to judge your neighbour?

If we are part of any community, be that family, workplace, or church, unless our relationships are entirely superficial, we cannot avoid conflict, but we need to learn how to engage in it well – to 'fight the good fight'! However, we don't all have the same instincts when it comes to disagreements...

- *How do you handle conflict? Do you enjoy a 'fight'? Or, do you freeze, or run away to avoid confrontation?*
- *What animal best describes you when crossed? Are you meercat? A snail? A lion? Or something else?*
- *When it comes to conflict, how differently do you behave at home? At work? At church?*
- *James writes that conflicts come from unfulfilled desires and wanting what we cannot get. Can you think of a significant conflict in your own experience where that makes sense?*

James is leading us beyond **conflict management**, and **conflict resolution** to something which can only emerge through humility, which we might call **conflict transformation**. Ruth Haley Barton describes this as the understanding that in the midst of disagreements God is mysteriously at work, inviting us to be conformed into the image of Christ. Trouble is, we don't realise how wilful we are, how entrenched we are in getting our own way, until that gets challenged. Jill says, "I thought I was holy, until I got married, and then I realised I was merely undisturbed." But, she adds, "if you're married, your spouse is God's number one agent of sanctification... the one who will help you become holy."

- *(For the married...) In what ways has your spouse 'helped' you in your journey to holiness?*
- *(For everyone...) Where or how have you learned to live joyfully even when you don't get your own way?*
- *What does it mean, in practice, to submit to God and resist the Devil? (Remember that the name, 'Diabolos' in Greek, means 'an accuser', or 'a slanderer'. And see James 4:11-12)*
- *Is there a conflict you are experiencing now that could be an invitation to transformation – for you to become more like Jesus? How might that happen?*