

How the Church Can Become Enemy of God

James 4:1-6

James 4:1–6 (NKJV)

Where do wars and fights *come* from among you? Do *they* not *come* from your *desires for* pleasure that war in your members? ² You lust and do not have. You murder and covet and cannot obtain. You fight and war. Yet you do not have because you do not ask. ³ You ask and do not receive, because you ask amiss, that you may spend *it* on your pleasures. ⁴ Adulterers and adulteresses! Do you not know that friendship with the world is enmity with God? Whoever therefore wants to be a friend of the world makes himself an enemy of God. ⁵ Or do you think that the Scripture says in vain, “The Spirit who dwells in us yearns jealously”? ⁶ But He gives more grace. Therefore He says:
*“God resists the proud,
But gives grace to the humble.”*

Introduction:

There is no greater thing than to be called a friend of God like Abraham

James 2:23 (NKJV)

²³ And the Scripture was fulfilled which says, “*Abraham believed God, and it was accounted to him for righteousness.*” And he was called the friend of God.

and the Lord’s disciples.

John 15:13–14 (NKJV)

¹³ Greater love has no one than this, than to lay down one’s life for his friends. ¹⁴ You are My friends if you do whatever I command you.

But there is nothing more troubling and potentially disastrous than to be call the enemy of God. Being the enemy of God as a lost person puts you on the road to utter destruction and ruin. It propels you toward a Godless and Christ-less eternity in Hell. It places you under the full fury of the wrath of God not for a moment and not for just hours, but for all time and eternity with no chance of a relief or a time of rest but full fury all the time, relentless and unending, a darkness that is never dispelled, and pain that is never diminished and a tribulation that is never lifted. Nothing can be so horrifying than the unending torture that will come from dying as an enemy of God.

But what is just as shocking and sobering is that the Church of Christ can place itself in a position to be treated as an enemy of God. All the bride of Christ need do, is become a friend of the world. Find another affection and love something other than Christ. Let her eyes be drawn away by the attractions of the world system. Find that there devil in all his disguises, as an angel of light, looks more beautiful to her than Christ.

There is nothing so destructive to a marriage than for one to bring in another lover and there is nothing more destructive to the Church than for her love and affection to be drawn away by the pleasure of the world.

Of the 7 churches listed in Revelation 1-3, there are only 2 that were faithful. The others were seduced by the world, the flesh and the devil.

We are currently living in a time of unprecedented unfaithfulness on part of the church. She is head over heels in love with the world. Her desire more and more is to look like the world, act like the world and talk like the world.

Much like a married couple who have lived with each other for so long, tend to have the same mind, and think the same things and finish each other's words. So the church has truly become a

mimicker of the world. It is in many ways a mirror reflection of the world.

The spirit of worldliness has always been a problem for the church; it manifests itself in varied and often subtle ways

Hiebert, D. E. (1997). [James](#) (Revised Edition, p. 220). BMH Books.

The church as become a better representation of the World than the the Christ who saved her.

There are so many examples of this affection for the world in the last few decades, and especially in the last 10 years. Ministries that have dedicated themselves to fighting for the faith and defending the church against the false teachers have grown exponentially. There is no limit of material to go through and not limit to the insanity that the church has engrossed herself in.

The key to understanding this text is to understand the them of the passage which is found in **verse 4**,

“.....Do you not know that friendship with the world is enmity with God? Whoever therefore wants to be a friend of the world makes himself an enemy of God.”

We have the words, **Friendship with the world** and **Friend of the world**

And we have the words, **enmity with God** and **enemy of God**.

To understand these words will help us see the severity of the words in this text. In fact I believe that this is some of the strongest words in James, if not the strongest. Even more than the fact that the tongue can be set on fire from Hell.

First Word,

Friend, Friendship

Friendship

philía; gen. *philías*, fem. noun from *philéō* (5368), to befriend, love, kiss. Love, friendship, fondness, with the gen. of obj. (James 4:4; Sept.: Prov. 10:12; 15:17). In James 4:4, *philía* involves the adopting of the interests of the world to be one's own.

Zodhiates, S. (2000). In [The complete word study dictionary: New Testament](#) (electronic ed.). AMG Publishers.

Friend

φίλος, η, ον

① pert. to having a special interest in someone.
beloved, dear, and act. loving, kindly disposed,

devoted^② subst., one who is on intimate terms or in close association w. another)

Arndt, W., Danker, F. W., Bauer, W., & Gingrich, F. W. (2000). In [*A Greek-English lexicon of the New Testament and other early Christian literature*](#) (3rd ed., pp. 1058–1059). University of Chicago Press.

The noun “friendship” (*philia*) occurs only here in the New Testament, but the kindred word “friend” (*philos*) is common; both come from the common verb *phileō*, which means “to love, to have affection for”; it also means “to kiss” as an indication of affection. “Friendship” thus denotes an attitude that is marked by kindly regard and affection

Hiebert, D. E. (1997). [*James*](#) (Revised Edition, p. 228). BMH Books.

Its verb form, *phileō*, is often rendered “love” (e.g., Matt. 6:5; 10:37; 1 Cor. 16:22) and is even used of the Father’s love for the Son (John 5:20) and of the Father’s and the Son’s love for those who have saving faith (John 11:3; 16:27; Rev. 3:19). Though they are often used as synonyms in the New Testament, the more common and stronger verb for love (*agapaō*) seems to be more volitional, whereas *phileō* is more emotional. James uses *philia* to

describe intense and deep affection for the evil world system.

MacArthur, J. F., Jr. (1998). [James](#) (p. 192). Moody Press.

“With the world” (*tou kosmou*, an objective genitive) marks the “world” as the object of this affection

Hiebert, D. E. (1997). [James](#) (Revised Edition, p. 228). BMH Books.

“The world” here does not refer to the material creation but rather to the mass of unredeemed humanity as an egocentric world-system that is hostile to God. It is “a mighty flood of thoughts, feelings, principles of action, conventional prejudices, dislikes, attachments, which have been gathering around human life for ages, impregnating it, impelling it, moulding it, degrading it” (Liddon). Its central aim is self-enjoyment and self-aggrandizement in disregard of or in open hostility toward God. To cultivate the world’s friendship implies conformity to its principles and aims. To be controlled by the spirit of worldliness is wholly incompatible with loyalty to God

Hiebert, D. E. (1997). [James](#) (Revised Edition, pp. 228–229). BMH Books.

the man-centered, Satan-directed system of this present age, which is hostile to God and God's people. It refers to the self-centered, godless value system and mores of fallen mankind. The goal of **the world** is self-glory, self-fulfillment, self-indulgence, self-satisfaction, and every other form of self-serving, all of which amounts to **hostility toward God**

MacArthur, J. F., Jr. (1998). [James](#) (p. 193). Moody Press.

1 John 5:19 (NKJV)

¹⁹ We know that we are of God, and the whole world lies *under the sway of the wicked one*.

Galatians 1:4 (NKJV)

⁴ who gave Himself for our sins, that He might deliver us from this present evil age, according to the will of our God and Father,

This brings us to the next set of words,

enmity with God and enemy of God.

ἔχθρα *échthra*; gen. *échthras*, fem. noun from *echthrós* (2190), enemy. Enmity, hatred, hostility

Zodhiates, S. (2000). In [The complete word study dictionary: New Testament](#) (electronic ed.). AMG Publishers

enmity with God

“Hatred” (*echthra*) denotes an attitude of personal hostility, the opposite of “friendship.” “Toward God” (*tou theou*) is again the objective genitive, “enmity toward God.” “The enmity is not on God’s side but on that of the man who makes himself ‘a friend of the world.’ ” The definite article with “God” points to the God whom Christians openly acknowledge and to whom they have pledged their total allegiance. They cannot embrace both God and the world. As objects of fellowship and love, they are mutually exclusive (Rom. 8:5–8). In yielding to the spirit of the world, they are in fact taking up a position of opposition to God.

Hiebert, D. E. (1997). [James](#) (Revised Edition, p. 229). BMH Books.

Luke 23:12 (NKJV)

¹² That very day Pilate and Herod became friends with each other, for previously they had been at enmity with each other.

Romans 8:7 (NKJV)

⁷ Because the carnal mind *is* enmity against God; for it is not subject to the law of God, nor indeed can be.

Galatians 5:19–20 (NKJV)

¹⁹ Now the works of the flesh are evident, which are: adultery, fornication, uncleanness, lewdness, ²⁰ idolatry, sorcery, **hatred**, contentions, jealousies, outbursts of wrath, selfish ambitions, dissensions, heresies,

enemy of God.

ἐχθρός *echthrós*; fem. *echthrá*, neut. *echthrón*, adj. from *échthos* (n.f.), hatred, enmity. Hostile, inimical.

(II) In an act. sense, as a subst., *ho echthrós*, an enemy, adversary (Matt. 5:43; 10:36; 13:25; Luke 1:71; 19:43; Phil. 3:18, “enemies of the cross”); in a pass. sense, a person hated or rejected as an enemy **Deriv.:** *échthra* (2189), enmity, hatred.

Syn.: *enantíos* (1727), opposite, contrary, antagonistic; *anósios* (462), wicked, unholy; *stugnētós* (4767), hated, odious, hateful; *bdeluktós* (947), detestable, abominable; *misoúmenos*, the pres. pass. part. of *miséō* (3404), to hate, hated.

Ant.: *phílos* (5384), friend; *hetaíros* (2083), companion; *oikeíos* (3609), relative, adherent; *súntrophos* (4939), one who has been brought up together with someone, comrade; *adelphós* (80), brother

The Old Testament has much to say about **the enemy of God**. David testified, “Surely God will shatter the head of His enemies, the hairy crown of him who goes on in his guilty deeds” (Ps. 68:21), and Solomon declared, “Let the nomads of the desert bow before him, and his enemies lick the dust” (Ps. 72:9). Isaiah proclaimed, “The Lord will go forth like a warrior, He will arouse His zeal like a man of war. He will utter a shout, yes, He will raise a war cry. He will prevail against His enemies” (Isa. 42:13), and Nahum said, “A jealous and avenging God is the Lord; the Lord is avenging and wrathful. The Lord takes vengeance on His adversaries, and He reserves wrath for His enemies” (Nah. 1:2, cf. v. 8).

MacArthur, J. F., Jr. (1998). [James](#) (p. 195). Moody Press.

Reciting the blessings and benefits that come to believers because of their salvation and justification before God, Paul told believers in Rome, “For if while we were enemies we were reconciled to God through the death of His Son, much more, having been reconciled, we shall be saved by His life” (Rom. 5:10). Later in that letter he further explained,

For the mind set on the flesh is death, but the mind set on the Spirit is life and peace, because the mind set on the flesh is hostile toward God; for it does not subject itself to the law of God, for it is not even able to do so, and those who are in the flesh cannot please God. However, you are not in the flesh but in the Spirit, if indeed the Spirit of God dwells in you. But if anyone does not have the Spirit of Christ, he does not belong to Him. (8:6–9)

The **enemy of God** is fleshly and by definition devoid of the Holy Spirit (Jude 19).

Looking forward to the future resurrection of believers, when the Lord Jesus Christ takes His own fully to Himself, Paul writes, “But each in his own order: Christ the first fruits, after that those who are Christ’s at His coming, then comes the end, when He hands over the kingdom to the God and Father, when He has abolished all rule and all authority and power. For He must reign until He has put all His enemies under His feet” (1 Cor. 15:23–25; cf. Heb. 1:13; 10:13; Nah. 1:2)

MacArthur, J. F., Jr. (1998). [James](#) (p. 196). Moody Press.

verse 4,

“.....Do you not know that friendship with the world is enmity with God? Whoever therefore **wants** to be a friend of the world **makes** himself an enemy of God.”

Boulomai (**wishes**) connotes more than just wanting a desire or wish to be fulfilled. It carries the stronger idea of choosing one thing over another.

MacArthur, J. F., Jr. (1998). [James](#) (p. 193). Moody Press.

2525. καθίστημι *kathístēmi*; or *kathistáō*; fut. *katastēsō*, aor. *katéstēsa*, from *katá* (2596), down, and *hístēmi* (2476), to stand. To set, set down, place.

Zodhiates, S. (2000). In [The complete word study dictionary: New Testament](#) (electronic ed.). AMG Publishers.

“Becomes” (*kathistatai*), the very term used in 3:6, asserts that by his decision to foster friendship with the world the individual “becomes,” “constitutes himself,” or takes his stand as, God’s enemy. The present tense points to the continuing condition, whereas the middle voice marks it as a self-chosen position. It is not a matter of a Christian quite unintentionally finding himself in an atmosphere pervaded by worldliness. He has made his deliberate choice to be a friend of the world.

Neutrality toward God is impossible. His decision to love the world defies God's rightful claim to his total allegiance. As Moo remarks, "God will brook no rival, and when the believer behaves in a way that is characteristic of the world, he demonstrates that, at that point, his allegiance is to the world rather than to God." The startling result of their attitude is a serious call to repentance

Hiebert, D. E. (1997). [James](#) (Revised Edition, p. 229). BMH Books.

Friendship with the world and friendship with God are mutually exclusive.

MacArthur, J. F., Jr. (1998). [James](#) (p. 194). Moody Press.

2 Corinthians 6:14–7:1 (NKJV)

¹⁴ Do not be unequally yoked together with unbelievers. For what fellowship has righteousness with lawlessness? And what communion has light with darkness? ¹⁵ And what accord has Christ with Belial? Or what part has a believer with an unbeliever? ¹⁶ And what agreement has the temple of God with idols? For you are the temple of the living God. As God has said:

*"I will dwell in them
And walk among them.*

*I will be their God,
And they shall be My people.”*

17 Therefore

*“Come out from among them
And be separate, says the Lord.
Do not touch what is unclean,
And I will receive you.”*

18 *“I will be a Father to you,
and you shall be My sons and daughters,
says the Lord Almighty.”*

7 Therefore, having these promises, beloved, let us cleanse ourselves from all filthiness of the flesh and spirit, perfecting holiness in the fear of God.

This infatuation and love for the world should be uncharacteristic of the true believer. In fact based on Scripture, it blurs the line and makes one question as to whether or not some may be Christians at all.

We all stumble and we we all sin, and at times and find ourselves lured away by the things of this world. And sadly many believers can be seduced by the wisdom of the world because Biblical discernment is at an all time low.

So in many cases the church looks like the world. Some are unintentional, but by far, most are

intentional. We believe the world system has better answers and better ways and means of accomplishing our goals and solving our problems. So the Bride of Christ goes running to another man.

But this should not be the case. We are to be salt and light, not sugar and darkness.

1 Corinthians 2:12 (NKJV)

¹² Now we have received, not the spirit of the world, but the Spirit who is from God, that we might know the things that have been freely given to us by God.
Romans 8:1 (NKJV)

There is therefore now no condemnation to those who are in Christ Jesus, who do not walk according to the flesh, but according to the Spirit.

Romans 8:5 (NKJV)

⁵ For those who live according to the flesh set their minds on the things of the flesh, but those *who live* according to the Spirit, the things of the Spirit.

1 John 2:15 (NKJV)

¹⁵ Do not love the world or the things in the world. If anyone loves the world, the love of the Father is not in him.

1 John 4:4–6 (NKJV)

⁴ You are of God, little children, and have overcome them, because He who is in you is greater than he who is in the world. ⁵ They are of the world. Therefore they speak *as* of the world, and the world hears them. ⁶ We are of God. He who knows God hears us; he who is not of God does not hear us. By this we know the spirit of truth and the spirit of error.

1 John 5:4 (NKJV)

⁴ For whatever is born of God overcomes the world. And this is the victory that has overcome the world—our faith.

John 15:19 (NKJV)

¹⁹ **If you were of the world, the world would love its own. Yet because you are not of the world, but I chose you out of the world, therefore the world hates you.**

Romans 12:2 (NKJV)

² And do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind, that you may prove what *is* that good and acceptable and perfect will of God.

Colossians 3:1–2 (NKJV)

3 If then you were raised with Christ, seek those things which are above, where Christ is, sitting at the right hand of God. ² Set your mind on things above, not on things on the earth.

Believers not only are to be separated from the world but dead to the world. Like Paul, they should say, “May it never be that I would boast, except in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ, through which the world has been crucified to me, and I to the world” (Gal. 6:14). Contrary to Demas, who “loved this present world” and deserted Paul and the church (2 Tim. 4:10), we are to “deny ungodliness and worldly desires and to live sensibly, righteously and godly in the present age” (Titus 2:12).

For believers to pursue worldly things goes against the grain of their new nature, and they cannot be comfortable or satisfied until they renounce those things and return to their first love. ...Christians are “to live the rest of the time in the flesh no longer for the lusts of men, but for the will of God. For the time already past is sufficient for you to have carried out the desire of the Gentiles, having pursued a course of sensuality, lusts, drunkenness, carousing, drinking parties and abominable idolatries” (1 Pet. 4:2–3).

MacArthur, J. F., Jr. (1998). [James](#) (pp. 194–195). Moody Press.

We have to live in the world, but the world does not have to live in us.

We are not to be so heavenly minded that we are no earthly good, but we are not to be so earthly minded that we are no heavenly good either.

The concern of James is serious. There were those in the church that apparently were adopting the tactics and thinking of the world, which was a reflection of the fact that they were practicing the wisdom of the world. As a result the true salvation of some was questionable and in some cases outright deniable.

You can't have the wisdom of the world in your life and it not affect you. And in this context, although there is a chapter division in your Bible, there is not one in the mind of James.

There is no connective particle in the Greek, so it is as if James is saying, Here is the wisdom of the world,

James 3:14–16 (NKJV)

¹⁴ But if you have bitter envy and self-seeking in your hearts, do not boast and lie against the truth. ¹⁵ This wisdom does not descend from above, but *is* earthly,

sensual, demonic. ¹⁶ For where envy and self-seeking *exist*, confusion and every evil thing *are* there.

This is the world's wisdom and how it acts

But God's Wisdom is

James 3:17–18 (NKJV)

¹⁷ But the wisdom that is from above is first pure, then peaceable, gentle, willing to yield, full of mercy and good fruits, without partiality and without hypocrisy. ¹⁸ Now the fruit of righteousness is sown in peace by those who make peace.

So why the conflict, why the war, why the fights among you?!

Let me add before we begin to look at verse 1

There is no greater way to destroy the effectiveness of the church than by worldliness or the church loving the world. And to be clear, I'm not talking about dress codes and haircuts or whether a person watches a movie. You can have all of the external stuff and have very corrupt hearts.

I'm talking more about how the world gets into the inner thinking of the church, the inner reasoning and logic and moral fabric of the church, thru philosophy and wisdom, or the thinking of the world. This is the internal destruction of the church. This is one of the most dangerous seasons for the church and the believers. At a time when we need to most alert and saturated with biblical wisdom, many are playing church and saturating themselves in the world.

2 Corinthians 10:3–5 (NKJV)

³ For though we walk in the flesh, we do not war according to the flesh. ⁴ For the weapons of our warfare *are* not carnal but mighty in God for pulling down strongholds, ⁵ casting down arguments and every high thing that exalts itself against the knowledge of God, bringing every thought into captivity to the obedience of Christ,

LESSON

I. The Source of Worldliness

II. The Shock of Worldliness

III. The Seriousness of Worldliness

I. The Source of Worldliness

1. Where do wars and fights *come* from among you? Do *they* not *come* from your *desires for* pleasure that war in your members? ² You lust and do not have. You murder and covet and cannot obtain. You fight and war. Yet you do not have because you do not ask. ³ You ask and do not receive, because you ask amiss, that you may spend *it* on your pleasures.

James begins by describing the turbulent and conflicting ways worldly wisdom affects a believer and then rebukes them for the adulterous affair with the world.

1. Where do wars and fights *come* from among you?

The opening question is frankly diagnostic: The absence of a finite verb and the repetition of the interrogative adverb *pothen* add pungency to the question. Fully aware that all their conflicts are only symptomatic of something deeper, James goes right to the heart of their trouble. They are challenged to

identify the true source of their “fights and quarrels.” The plurals indicate that the reference is not to an isolated occurrence in their midst but to a chronic condition.

When used in combination, the first of these strong terms denotes the protracted state of hostility, while the latter points to the specific outbursts of hostility in active conflict.

Hiebert, D. E. (1997). [James](#) (Revised Edition, p. 222). BMH Books.

Apparently, the trials that he begin by addressing where bringing some pretty bad sinful attitudes to the top. For the Christians it is purifying and for the unbeliever, it is confirming, that they aren't real.

1 Peter 1:6–7 (NKJV)

⁶ In this you greatly rejoice, though now for a little while, if need be, you have been grieved by various trials, ⁷ that the genuineness of your faith, *being* much more precious than gold that perishes, though it is tested by fire, may be found to praise, honor, and glory at the revelation of Jesus Christ,

1. Where do **wars** and **fight**s come from among you?

wars

4171. πόλεμος *pólemos*; gen. *polémou*, masc. noun.

(I) Generally, war (Matt. 24:6; Mark 13:7; Luke 14:31; 21:9; Sept.: Ex. 1:10; 2 Kgs. 3:7).

(II) Particularly, fight (1 Cor. 14:8; Heb. 11:34; Rev. 9:7, 9; 11:7; 12:7, 17; 13:7; 16:14; 19:19; 20:8; Sept.: Ex. 13:17; 2 Sam. 19:11; Job 39:25).

Hyperbolically referring to strife (James 4:1).

Deriv.: *poleméō* (4170), to make war, fight.

Syn.: while *pólemos* embraces the whole course of hostilities, *máchē* (3163), battle, includes the use of arms of hostile armies; *agōn* (73), struggle; *pálē* (3823), wrestling.

Ant.: *eirēnē* (1515), peace; *hēsuchía* (2271), quietness.

Zodhiates, S. (2000). In [The complete word study dictionary: New Testament](#) (electronic ed.). AMG Publishers.

Polemos (**quarrels**), from which we get the English “polemics,” relates to general, prolonged, and serious disputing or combat and is often rendered “war” (e.g., Matt. 24:6; Heb. 11:34; Rev. 11:7; 16:14)

MacArthur, J. F., Jr. (1998). [James](#) (p. 184). Moody Press.

fight

3163. μάχη *máchē*; gen. *máchēs*, fem. noun from *máchomai* (3164), to fight. Fighting, battle (2 Cor. 7:5; 2 Tim. 2:23,

controversies respecting the Mosaic laws; James 4:1; Sept.: Gen. 13:7; Prov. 15:18). The NT includes many kinds of battles such as legal battles as in Titus 3:9, and battles of words (*logomachíai* [3055]) in 1 Tim. 6:4.

Deriv.: *ámachos* (269), not contentious.

Syn.: *agón* (73), strife, fight; *pálē* (3823), wrestling; *pólemos* (4171), war which embraces the whole course of hostilities, not a mere battle; *máchē* (3164), battle, strife; *stásis* (4714), insurrection or sedition as a civil war; *pólemos*, a battle between nations.

Ant.: *anápausis* (372), inner rest; *anápsuxis* (403), revival; *ánesis* (425), liberty, relief; *katápausis* (2663), rest from, cessation of work; *eirénē* (1515), peace; *hēsuchia* (2271), quietness.

Zodhiates, S. (2000). In [The complete word study dictionary: New Testament](#) (electronic ed.). AMG Publishers.

Conflicts translates *máchē*, which refers to a specific fight or battle. Both terms are used here metaphorically of violent personal relationships, which, in the extreme, can result even in murder (v. 2).

MacArthur, J. F., Jr. (1998). [James](#) (p. 184). Moody Press.

2 Timothy 2:23–25 (NKJV)

²³ But avoid foolish and ignorant disputes, knowing that they generate **strife**. ²⁴ And a servant of the Lord must not quarrel but be gentle to all, able to teach, patient, ²⁵ in humility correcting those who are in opposition, if God perhaps will grant them repentance, so that they may know the truth,

Titus 3:9–11 (NKJV)

⁹ But avoid foolish disputes, genealogies, contentions, and **strivings** about the law; for they are unprofitable and useless. ¹⁰ Reject a divisive man after the first and second admonition, ¹¹ knowing that such a person is warped and sinning, being self-condemned.

1. Where do wars and fights *come* from among you?

“**Among you**” (*en humin*) may be rendered “in you” and taken to refer to the old nature in the believer causing inner feelings of tension and frustration. But the context makes clear that agitated community relations are in view

Hiebert, D. E. (1997). [*James*](#) (Revised Edition, p. 222). BMH Books.

conflict within the church is not in God’s will or design. Jesus said to the disciples, “A new commandment I give to you, that you love one another, even as I have loved you, that you also love one another. By this all men will know that you are My disciples, if you have love for one another” (John 13:34–35), and later in His high priestly prayer He entreated His Father that believers “may all be one; even as You, Father, are in Me and I in You, that they also may be in Us, so that the world may believe that You sent Me” (17:21). After Pentecost, “the congregation of those who believed were of one

heart and soul; and not one of them claimed that anything belonging to him was his own, but all things were common property to them” (Acts 4:32). Paul exhorted factious church members in Corinth, “by the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, that you all agree and that there be no divisions among you, but that you be made complete in the same mind and in the same judgment” (1 Cor. 1:10), and called on believers in Philippi to “conduct yourselves in a manner worthy of the gospel of Christ, so that whether I come and see you or remain absent, I will hear of you that you are standing firm in one spirit, with one mind striving together for the faith of the gospel” (Phil. 1:27; cf. 2:1–4).

Just as in the church since, conflict was a frequent problem in the early church. After giving Corinthian believers the exhortation just mentioned above, Paul later scolded them, saying, “I, brethren, could not speak to you as to spiritual men, but as to men of flesh, as to infants in Christ. I gave you milk to drink, not solid food; for you were not yet able to receive it. Indeed, even now you are not yet able, for you are still fleshly. For since there is jealousy and strife among you, are you not fleshly, and are you not walking like mere men?” (1 Cor. 3:1–3). Still later, he wrote them, “For I am afraid that perhaps when I come I may find you to be not what I wish and may

be found by you to be not what you wish; that perhaps there will be strife, jealousy, angry tempers, disputes, slanders, gossip, arrogance, disturbances” (2 Cor. 12:20).

Paul admonished Titus to tell believers under his care to remember their former lives apart from God:

Remind them to be subject to rulers, to authorities, to be obedient, to be ready for every good deed, to malign no one, to be peaceable, gentle, showing every consideration for all men. For we also once were foolish ourselves, disobedient, deceived, enslaved to various lusts and pleasures, spending our life in malice and envy, hateful, hating one another. (Titus 3:1–3)

Such normal conflict among the unconverted sadly finds its way into the church.

MacArthur, J. F., Jr. (1998). [James](#) (pp. 185–186). Moody Press.

According to [Columbia Daily Herald](#), there are an average of 19,000 scarring and major church hurts recorded in the United States alone annually. That tallies about 50 church issues that hurt thousands of members. However, not all churches who experience hurt split up,

<https://www.christiantoday.com/article/why-are-churches-today-splitting-up/79909.htm>

Many church hurts, division and fighting can come from some serious matters. A few of those might be

1. Doctrinal matters of the main issues, Gospel issues.
2. Tolerating a false teacher.
3. Covering up a sinful situation
4. Ordaining unqualified men
5. Changes in worship to suit the world's taste.
6. A lack of financial accountability.

and there are many more that may cause intense disputes within the church.

But sadly, I can't say that that is the only reasons why a church might fight or war with each other.

The fights shown below, however, are a bit unusual. Indeed, most of them are downright absurd. I picked 25 of my "favorites." They are listed in no particular order. The parenthetical commentary is my own.

- 1. Argument over the appropriate length of the worship pastor's beard** (*I think I saw a verse in*

Scripture that indicated it is to be no more than 1.5 inches longer than the pastor's beard.).

- 2. Fight over whether or not to build a children's playground or to use the land for a cemetery** *(I'm dying to know the resolution of this one.).*
- 3. A deacon accusing another deacon of sending an anonymous letter, and deciding to settle the matter in the parking lot** *(The church could have sold tickets to this event and raised a lot of money.).*
- 4. A church dispute of whether or not to install restroom stall dividers in the women's restroom** *(I'm calling unfair on this one. The men should have their stall dividers too.).*
- 5. A church argument and vote to decide if a clock in the worship center should be removed** *(I think this one is a timely argument.).*
- 6. A 45-minute heated argument over the type of filing cabinet to purchase: black or brown; 2, 3, or 4 drawers** *(This one is an official cabinet meeting of the church leadership.).*
- 7. A fight over which picture of Jesus to put in the foyer** *(I just want to know who took the pictures.).*
- 8. A petition to have all church staff clean shaven** *(No church planters are allowed.).*

9. **A dispute over whether the worship leader should have his shoes on during the service** (*I vote for shoes, shirts, and pants.*).
10. **A big church argument over the discovery that the church budget was off \$0.10. Someone finally gave a dime to settle the issue** (*I have to admit this issue is ten times more important than the church missing a penny.*).
11. **A dispute in the church because the Lord's Supper had cran/grape juice instead of grape juice** (*Of course it should be grape juice. It's right there in Hezekiah 4:11.*).
12. **Business meeting arguments about whether the church should purchase a weed eater or not. It took two business meetings to resolve** (*Wow. This fight was really whacky.*).
13. **Arguments over what type of green beans the church should serve** (*I could have resolved this conflict quickly: none.*).
14. **Two different churches reported fights over the type of coffee. In one of the churches, they moved from Folgers to a stronger Starbucks brand. In the other church, they simply moved to a stronger blend. Members left the church in the latter example** (*Perhaps they started a new church: The Right Blend Fellowship.*).

- 15. Major conflict when the youth borrowed a crockpot that had not been used for years (*I bet it was a bunch of crocky old adults.*).**
- 16. An argument on whether the church should allow deviled eggs at the church meal (*Only if it's balanced with angel food cake for dessert.*).**
- 17. An argument over who has the authority to buy postage stamps for the church (*The members were licking their wounds over this issue.*).**
- 18. A disagreement over using the term “potluck” instead of “pot blessing” (*I get it! The concept of luck contradicts the theology of a sovereign God. This issue is very serious. Good luck trying to resolve it.*).**
- 19. A church member was chastised because she brought vanilla syrup to the coffee server. It looked too much like liquor. (*Beth Moore confessed she was the culprit who brought the syrup. Don't you know, Beth, we Baptists cannot have vanilla syrup at anytime? Chocolate is fine though.*).**
- 20. An argument in church over who has access to the copy machine (*I think a calendar should be made where every church member has at least five minutes access to the copy machine each year. You can have a business meeting to vote on each five-minute increment.*).**

- 21. Some church members left the church because one church member hid the vacuum cleaner from them. It resulted in a major fight and split** (*Thus the Second Electrolux Church was born.*).
- 22. An argument over whether to have gluten-free communion bread or not** (*I thought gluteny was a sin.*).
- 23. A dispute over whether the church should allow people to wear black t-shirts, since black is the color of the devil** (*Are you sure he's not red? That's what I've heard.*).
- 24. A fight over whether or not to sing "Happy Birthday" each week** (*I've got an idea. Alternate it with the doxology.*).
- 25. An argument over whether the fake, dusty plants should be removed from the podium** (*Just give them a little water. They should be fine.*).

<https://churchanswers.com/blog/twenty-five-silly-things-church-members-fight-over/>

So what is the answer to the source of these wars and conflicts

1. Where do wars and fights *come* from among you? Do *they* not *come* from your

desires for pleasure that war in your
members?
