

The Origin of Quarrels

Paul wrote in 2 Corinthians 7:5: “For even when we came into Macedonia our flesh had no rest, but we were afflicted on every side: conflicts without, fears within.” Take that in for a moment. Paul and companions were called by God to go to Macedonia, their first entrance into Europe. It was an exciting time. A new continent opened to the gospel. But what did Paul find? Conflict and quarreling. It was all around him. He couldn’t get away from it. It seemed everyone was angry and upset. What did this produce in Paul? Fear. Conflict produces fear. And what do we do when we are afraid? We either fight or flee. We either punch back or we run away or distance ourselves from the conflict. If that is not a commentary today, I don’t know what is. But where do the quarrels come from? James 4:1-3 tells us: “What is the source of quarrels and conflicts among you? Is not the source your pleasures that wage war in your members? 2 You lust and do not have; so, you commit murder. You are envious and cannot obtain; so, you fight and quarrel. You do not have because you do not ask. 3 You ask and do not receive, because you ask with wrong motives, so that you may spend it on your pleasures.” There is a lot there but focus on the word “pleasures” or “desires.” There is something we want, and we do not easily get it. It is as simple as a child who wants something, can’t get it, and pitches a fit. If we are ever going to figure out this culture of quarreling, we are going to have to figure out what we want so badly that we are willing to go to war. The answers may sound noble: fairness, justice, what is right, respect, even, love. Too bad the way we try to obtain these often has the opposite outcome. Things get less fair, more unjust, less right, disrespectful, and more unloving. Two wrongs never make a right. We should learn to ask each other amid the conflict, what do you want, and if it is holy and good, how can we have it without hurting someone else?