

James
War and Peace: Learning to Deal with Conflict, Part 2
James 4:1-10
July 2, 2006

Tom Pennington, Pastor
Countryside Bible Church

Many years ago, I had the opportunity, perhaps as some of you have had, to read Neil Postman's insightful book about the American culture. If you've not read it, I strongly encourage you to get it, and to read it. It's called, *Amusing Ourselves to Death*. Postman doesn't claim to be a Christian or an evangelical. In fact, he simply examines our culture as a sociologist would: sort of carefully pulling back layers of our corporate consciousness. In the introduction to his book, *Amusing Ourselves to Death*, Postman reminds us that in the middle of the twentieth century, there were two famous men, both of whom wrote their predictions about where life in the West, where life in America was headed. One of those men was George Orwell. You remember reading his books, and particularly, in his book, *Animal Farm*. Orwell drew a picture of his prediction of the future, which was a future of absolute world domination by Marxism and totalitarianism.

The other man who wrote in the middle of the twentieth century, with his own predictions about what the future would look like, was Aldous Huxley. Huxley, in his book, *Brave New World*, predicted that the future held, not a future of slavery to oppressors of totalitarian regimes controlling every facet of our lives; rather, Huxley said, "we are looking toward a brave new world, a future that is obsessed with the pursuit of trivial pleasure. In Orwell's world, books were unnecessary because they would be burned. In Huxley's world, books were unnecessary because no one would read them. Orwell, of course, badly missed on his prediction. Marxism appears to be dying or, at the least, we can say, it has endured twenty-five very difficult years. Huxley, on the other hand, proved himself, in this case, anyway, to be a prophet. His view of the future has proven to be chillingly accurate. Most people in the West, and particularly here in American culture, do live for pleasure of one form or another.

Living for pleasure, however, is absolutely deadly. It's deadly to the individual soul. It's deadly to one's relationship to God. And, as we discovered last week (we looked at James 4), it is devastating, the self-seeking pursuit of pleasure is devastating on all of our relationships. Because as we pursue pleasure, our pursuit of pleasure puts us up against, and in conflict with, the people around us. Now, as we talk about pleasure, I thought it was important this morning,

Available online at: www.countrysidebible.org
Copyright © 2006 Tom Pennington. All rights reserved.
Unedited transcript for personal use only.

before we continue to look at James 4, that I make some careful distinctions, so that you don't misunderstand James or me. The Bible does not say that pleasure, in and of itself, is sinful. In fact, we're told that God pursues His own pleasure. In Psalm 149:4, "the Lord takes pleasure in His people." In fact, Scripture makes it clear that there are legitimate pleasures that have been given by God to man. Psalm 37: 4, "Delight yourself in the Lord, and He will give you the desires of your heart." You see, our world is filled with things in which we can find legitimate pleasure.

Scripture tells us that food, for example, and times of feasting are one of those. We all enjoy that. The ancients did, and we do, as well. You remember what Paul told Timothy. And that is, that all things are given for our, what? Enjoyment, if they're received with thanksgiving, a specific reference to food, there in his letter to Timothy. We enjoy feasting. That was a part of Israel's world. It's a part of our world. That's a good thing. That's a legitimate pleasure.

We enjoy family. We enjoy children. We find pleasure in friendship. We find pleasure in the joys of married love. All of these things are good and legitimate pleasures. In fact, Scripture tells us that heaven, itself, will be a place of consummate pleasure. Unlike the Islamic view of 70 virgins, Scripture tells us, that instead, we will find our pleasure, our ultimate pleasure in God, Himself! Psalm 16:11 says, "In your presence is fullness of joy. And in Your right hand there are pleasures forever."

C.S. Lewis understood this reality. In his book, *The Screwtape Letters*, and most of you are familiar with *The Screwtape Letters*. In this particular book C.S. Lewis writes as if this were a series of letters written by an older, more experienced demon to his young apprentice, named Wormwood. And as this older demon writes, of course you have to think sort of in a backwards way, because he's writing as if he were the enemy of God, and it were good (what he's doing is good). But listen to what C. S. Lewis has this older, more experienced demon write to Wormwood, his younger apprentice:

"Never forget, that when we are dealing with any pleasure in its healthy and normal and satisfying form, we are, in a sense, on the enemy's ground. I know we've won many a soul through pleasure. All the same, it is His, (that is, a reference to God). It is His invention, not ours. He made the pleasures. All our research, so far, has not enabled us to produce one. All we can do is to encourage the humans to take the pleasures, which our enemy has produced, at times, or in ways, or in degrees which He has forbidden. Hence, we always try to work away

from the natural condition of any pleasure to that which is least natural. As ever-increasing craving for an ever-diminishing pleasure is the formula.”

Those are incredibly insightful words. That’s exactly right. True and legitimate pleasure comes to us from God; and we are to enjoy that legitimate pleasure in this created world, always with an eye to God’s glory. It was Augustan who said that when we enjoy the things around us, we are always to enjoy those things with an eye to God’s glory. And if we enjoy those things without an eye to God’s glory, then those things have become to us idols. We are ultimately, then, to seek our true pleasure, our ultimate pleasure in our God.

Now just as there are legitimate pleasures that God has given us as good gifts, an expression of His love and goodness to us, there are also, the Scriptures tell us, sinful pleasures, pleasures that are opposed to God. Now the question is: “When is pleasure sinful?” Well, let me give you three answers to that question. “When is pleasure sinful?” First of all, when legitimate pleasure, God-given pleasure, becomes more important to us than God is. When a God-given pleasure becomes more important to us than God.

Listen to 2 Timothy 3:4. Paul, in describing to Timothy the last days, says, “Men shall be lovers of pleasure, rather than lovers of God.” When pleasure, whether sinful pleasure, certainly, but let’s talk for a moment legitimate pleasure. When legitimate pleasure becomes more important to us, and we love it rather than God, then that pleasure has become sinful. When this happens, even a legitimate pleasure, a God-given pleasure can become an idol of the heart.

Pleasure is sinful, secondly, when legitimate pleasure is pursued in excess. When legitimate pleasure is pursued in excess. As I mentioned before, food and feasting is a wonderful gift from God. And I intend to do so at lunch, in just a few minutes, as many of you do. That’s a good thing! While Scripture commends that, and Scripture encourages us to enjoy this good gift. At the same time, the same Scripture forbids gluttony. So, a legitimate pleasure, in excess, can be sinful.

A third way pleasure is sinful is (and this is an obvious one) when Scripture forbids that pleasure when it’s a forbidden pleasure. For example, God has given us a wonderful gift of the physical relationship in marriage. But sex before marriage, or outside of marriage is forbidden by Scripture. That pleasure is a sinful pleasure. And by the way, let me say generally, about sinful pleasure, whatever it is make no mistake that sin often brings great short-term pleasure. I’m reminded of Hebrews 11:25, where we’re told that Moses chose to endure ill-treatment of the

people of God rather than to enjoy the passing pleasures of sin. Oh, yes, sin for a short time can be very pleasurable, very satisfying. But it's passing! It's short-lived. It never really satisfies Samuel Johnson, the great, famous eighteenth century scholar, said this:

“Of all that hath tried the selfish experiment, let one come forth and say that he has succeeded. He that hath made gold his idol, has it satisfied him? He that has toiled in the fields of ambition, has he been repaid? He that has ransacked every theatre of sensual enjoyment, is he content? And any answer in the affirmative, not one!”

John McMurray says, “The best cure for hedonism is the attempt to practice it.” Someone gives themselves to pleasure, and they soon find that it is a cardboard dream.” It never satisfies. It simply creates an appetite for more and more and more. In fact, if you live to satisfy your cravings, as a goal of life, you are not only living in rebellion against your creator, but Scripture says you are a slave. Titus 3:3, speaking of unbelievers, describes them as being “enslaved to their pleasures.” The Jewish rabbis put it this way (speaking of those cravings of the heart): “The evil impulse is first a wanderer who passes by; then a guest; and finally master of the house, who gives orders.”

Now, it's these sinful pleasures that James is referring to in chapter 4. Where do these cravings for sinful pleasures come from? Well, as we learned last time, they come from our flesh, from our fallenness, from that part of us that is not yet redeemed. These cravings arrive and arise. How do they affect us? Well, those who live to satisfy their cravings (and this is very important to understand; those who live to satisfy their cravings are internally in a constant state of war. Look at verse 1: “The pleasures that wage war in your members....” “Members” is a reference to the members of the human body. He's saying, “Within you, there rages a war....” For the person who lives to satisfy his cravings has a war within his own heart.

That's the same thing Peter said in 1 Peter 2:11, where he speaks of those cravings that “wage war against the soul.” Now understand this: Where a person is living to satisfy their cravings, there is an internal war constantly raging. And when there is conflict with others, it is simply the spilling over, if you will, of that internal war that already exists in their own hearts. Notice verse 1 again: “The source of the wars and battles among you, (that is among you people) is the cravings within each of you.” Listen carefully to what I'm about to say, because this is absolutely crucial to understand. When a person is at war with others, when a person is known

for arguments and quarreling and fighting, that expression of fighting is merely the overflow of the war within their own hearts.

So, these cravings, these lusts, these desires for pleasure of various kinds are the driving force, not only as we found in chapter 1 of James, behind temptation; but they're also the source of every quarrel and every argument that we ever have with others. This is what we began to learn from James last Sunday. Now all of that is introduction. And the reason is, it's very important for you to understand the nature of the pleasure that James is describing here. There are good and legitimate pleasures. And there are sinful pleasures. He's talking about sinful pleasures. Now, you follow along as I remind you of the flow of his argument here in James 4:1.

What is the source of quarrels and conflicts among you? Is not the source your pleasures that wage war in your members? 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. You ask and do not receive, because you ask with wrong motives, so that you may spend *it* on your pleasure. You adulteresses! Do you not know that friendship with the world is hostility toward God? Therefore, whoever wishes to be a friend of the world makes himself an enemy of God. Or do you think that the Scripture speaks to no purpose: "He jealously desires the Spirit which He has made to dwell in us?" But He gives a greater grace. Therefore *it* says, "GOD IS OPPOSED TO THE PROUD, BUT GIVES GRACE TO THE HUMBLE." Submit therefore to God. Resist the devil and he will flee from you. Draw near to God, and He will draw near to you. Cleanse your hands, you sinners. And purify your hearts, you double-minded. Be miserable; and mourn and weep. Let your laughter be turned into mourning, and your joy to gloom. Humble yourselves in the presence of the Lord, and He will exalt you.

Now, it's hard to see on the surface the flow of the theme that ties that paragraph together. But it is a paragraph. There is a common theme. And the common theme is introduced to us in verse 1: "Where do these quarrels and fightings come from?" The issue is conflict. That's the theme that lies behind this paragraph. And what we learn in this paragraph is that there are very specific steps that you and I must take in order to deal with interpersonal conflict. In fact, this paragraph contains several imminently practical steps for dealing with conflict in our lives. And the first comes in the first three verses.

It's this: identify the true source of conflict. You see, before you and I can legitimately and adequately deal with the conflict in our lives, we must understand where it comes from. What's the source? Verse 1, "What is the source of quarrels and conflict among you?"

Now the second part of verse one we could legitimately convert to a statement of fact. James says, "The source of the quarrels and conflicts among you is your pleasures." You see, the pursuit of sinful pleasures, or our efforts to satisfy the sinful cravings of our hearts, is what creates quarrels and arguments. As we saw last time, the word "pleasures" translates the Greek word, "hedone." You recognize that word. It's the word from which we get our English word, "hedonism," or "hedonist." It came to be used of the pleasure, or the desire of all the senses. And eventually, it came to describe the desire of, or the cravings of, the heart. Get the picture that James is painting here.

For all of us, who are believers, there are still within us, growing out of that unredeemed part of us, strong desires, or cravings that are continually assaulting our souls. Those cravings may be for position, for power, for influence, for peace, for security, for safety, to be married, not to be married, to have children, not to have children. Any number of strong desires: to be liked, to be accepted, for sexual pleasure. There're any number of strong desires that could be resident within our hearts. But that's what he's describing: those strong cravings that are attached to our unredeemed self, the flesh that still resides in us, even though we're a new person in Christ. We still retain the flesh. And attached to that, are these cravings. They assault our souls. According to James 1:14, they lead us into temptation. And, according to James 4:1, they lie behind every sinful conflict.

Very important to understand that when you're involved in a quarrel, or when I'm in a quarrel, when we're in an argument or fight with someone else, the issue, the true source of the conflict is not the issue we're arguing. It isn't the other person in the argument. The problem is us: the cravings of our hearts! You see, James pictures here the cravings of our hearts like a mighty army inside of us, ready at a moment's notice to declare war against anybody who stands in the way of our getting whatever it is we set our hearts upon. I told you last time, every time you find yourself in a quarrel, in an argument, in a verbal war, ask yourself this question: "What self-centered craving am I trying to protect by engaging in this argument?" Because that's what it always comes back to.

Now, as we continue to look at what James teaches us, here; James is still helping us to see the true source of our conflict. But notice the progression of his argument. In verse 1 he makes the

point that self-seeking desires lie behind every conflict, every quarrel. And then in verse 2, he illustrates exactly how those desires produce quarrels and arguments. He's told us that it is these desires that produce them. And now in verse 2, he's going to give us a couple of illustrations to help us see how that actually happens.

The first illustration is found at the beginning of verse 2. "You lust and do not have." Now the word "lust" is a synonym for the word "pleasure." They're used together and synonymously here. The word "lust" simply means "to crave", "to have a strong desire", "to set your heart on something". What's the relationship between lust and pleasure? Lust is the craving unfulfilled; and pleasure is the craving satisfied. And so, he says, "You crave and you do not have." You know, there are profound lessons about God's moral universe in that statement. God, in His great love, usually does not allow all of our cravings and desires to be fulfilled. And even when they are fulfilled, they never fully satisfy. You see, our lives are crowded with discarded pleasures. Before we enjoyed them, each one promised to bring true lasting satisfaction. But, instead, it only created a greater appetite for more.

It's like the marooned man dying of thirst, imagining that the salt water that he drinks is truly satisfying his thirst; when, in reality, it's only creating this greater appetite for what truly satisfies. James writes, "You crave, and you do not have. So you commit murder." Now those are, by design, words intended to shock us. Remember, he's writing to Christians. There are those who believe that there were actual murders going on in the churches to which James wrote. But I think James really wants us to realize how evil our desires and the conflicts that they cause really are. You see, we're tempted to sort of dismiss them as unimportant; to assume that quarrels and fights are really not that big a deal. But James is warning us of where our sinful desires can lead us, if we allow them to run unrestrained.

John Blanchard, in his commentary, writes: "Unbridled selfish passion knows no limits. It will do anything to achieve its ends. Never underestimate the power of human desire." And boy, if you want an illustration of that, look in the Old Testament. The two greatest illustrations, the first one, of course, and the most common one being David. In 2 Samuel 11 David prayed. He wanted more than anything else to be with Bathsheba. And he worked it out for that to happen.

And then when he realized that she was pregnant, to cover the deed, he decides to manipulate Uriah, his faithful man to go to his home, so that perhaps, it would be obvious that the baby was by Uriah. But, Uriah, being an honorable man, refused to go in, and dwell with his wife. And, because of that, David felt, in his own deceived mind, that there was on only one option left to

him; and that was to arrange for Uriah to be thrust forward in the battle and all the other troops withdrawn, so that he would be killed. Uriah died, as it were, by David's own hand. It's as if David took a sword and plunged it into Uriah's heart in the sight of God.

Nathan comes in to David and says, "You are the man." Listen, don't ever underestimate the power of the cravings that live in your heart and mine. If we don't control them, if we don't restrain them by the power of the Spirit, there is no limit to where they will go to satisfy themselves.

The other example, of course, would be the unbelievers Ahab and Jezebel, who desperately wanted. Ahab desperately wanted Naboth's vineyard, which was nearby his palace. And, like the weak man that he was, he pouted until his wicked wife, Jezebel said, "Don't you worry, Ahab. I'll get it for you." And she arranged for false accusations to be leveled against Naboth, and for him to be stoned to death, because they wanted a vineyard.

Don't you, for a moment, imagine that things have changed today. Our sinful desires, left unchecked, can go to the most extreme measures to satisfy themselves. While it's true that our sinful desires can lead to actual murder, as with David, I think James probably has in mind, as most commentators believe, a metaphorical use of the word, "murder" here. In other words, it's not that the people in the congregations James wrote to were actually killing each other. Instead, it was a metaphor for something else that was going on.

Turn back to Matthew 5. You'll remember the words of our Lord. In Matthew 5:21, as He presents His famous sermon on the mount, He explains the law of God. He doesn't repeal the law of God. He explains it and interprets it in a much more deep and profound way. And in verse 21 He says,

"You have heard that the ancients were told, 'YOU SHALL NOT COMMIT MURDER' and 'whoever commits murder shall be liable to the court.' [be guilty of death.]
"But I say to you, that everyone who is angry with his brother shall be guilty before the court;" [In other words, worthy of the death penalty]. "and whoever says to his brother, 'You-good-for nothing,' shall be guilty before the supreme court; and whoever says, 'You fool, shall be guilty *enough to go* into the fiery hell."

Now Jesus isn't giving really different levels, here, of offenses. He's saying this: that angry, derogatory words, name calling, and hatred in the heart are, before the throne of God, the moral equivalent of murder. They are potential murder; because it's the same feeling. It's the same expression of hatred that expresses itself in anger in the heart hatred in the heart and pouring out words versus taking a knife or a gun and killing another person. And so what James is saying, in James 4, I think, is this: He's saying, "When we crave and we can't have, our hearts become filled with sinful anger for the person who stands in our way." It's as if we are willing to kill them, we so badly are angry with them and hate them. And given the time and opportunity and circumstances, we would. That's what James is saying.

In verse 2 he gives us a second illustration. He says, "You are envious and cannot obtain, so you fight and quarrel." Now he's making the same basic point, here, as the previous phrase. But there is a progression. Instead of just anger and hatred in the heart, now that anger erupts in fighting and quarreling. We crave something we don't have, and somebody is in our way of getting it. The first thing that happens is this anger and hatred, the moral equivalent of murder, occurs in the heart. And then, it explodes into the relationship in quarreling and fighting and arguing when we don't get what we want. Don't miss the big point that James is making here: All human conflict, whether a verbal argument between family members or friends, whether physical violence, or murder, or wars between nations, All human conflict can be traced back to one common source: the unmet cravings of our sinful hearts for what we want.

Now in the rest of verse 2 and in verse 3, James is still, here, helping us to identify and understand the true source of our quarrels. He's made it clear that the source is these unfulfilled desires. But that raises an immediate question: why are they unfulfilled? Why are these desires not satisfied? And James, then, identifies two reasons that these desires often aren't met and aren't satisfied.

The first reason is: We don't ask. Verse 2, "You do not have, because you do not ask." D. Edmund Hebert, great commentator on the book of James says, "Instead of turning to God as the giver of every good and perfect gift, we attempt to satisfy our gnawing wants through our own efforts." We just don't ask. Now this doesn't mean, by the way, that these people weren't praying at all. It just they weren't praying and asking God about these particular cravings. Usually, we know that it wouldn't be right to ask God for these things that we're going to consume on our own pleasures. Instead, what do we do? We scheme. We plan. And we sulk when we don't get it. And we get angry with the person who stands in our way. Compare that with Jesus' promise in Matthew 7:7. "Ask and it will be given to you. Seek and you will find.

Knock and it will be opened to you.” In other words, everything that is good and right for us everything that is according to God’s will, when we ask, God responds.

But there’s a second reason that our desires, these desires, are often not fulfilled. Not only do we not ask; but in verse 3, we don’t ask with the right motives. “You ask and do not receive.” You see, sometimes, we are so clueless, that we do ask God for things we want that are fully intended just to satisfy these sinful cravings in our hearts. But we don’t receive what we ask for. Why? Verse 3, “Because you ask with wrong motives.” Literally, in the Greek text, it says, “You ask badly.” And then he goes on to explain why “badly”. The next phrase explains it. “You ask badly, so that you may spend it on your pleasures.” The Greek word translated “spend” in this context implies, “to spend recklessly,” “to spend with abandon.” The same word is used of the Prodigal Son, in Luke 15, where it says, “He spent everything.” In other words, “You ask, so that you may spend with reckless abandon on your pleasures.” Same word as verse 1, “pleasures”.

You know, we often are unaware when this happens. We can see it, sometimes, in the lives of others. But in our own hearts we don’t even see when we’re asking God for things that are really simply to satisfy our own sinful heart. Let me give you an example, not from my life, or from your life, but from the life of a member of Parliament. One commentator records that the following prayer was found in the papers of the deceased John Wöhr, a member of Parliament. Listen to a written prayer that was found in his papers: “Oh Lord, Thou knowest that I have mine estates in the city of London. And likewise, I have lately purchased an estate in the county of Essex. I beseech Thee to preserve the two counties of Middlesex and Essex from fire and earthquake. And since I have a mortgage in Hertfordshire, I beg of Thee, likewise, to have an eye of compassion on that county. As for the rest of the counties, you may deal with them however You please. You know what? That sounds funny. And it is.

But it’s not so funny, because it really shows our own hearts. Often, our motives are every bit as skewed as that. We ask God for something. And our motive to get that thing is to satisfy a sinful desire. Let me give you an example. Did you know that we can pray for the conversion of a family member, or a co-worker; and we can pray earnestly for that, but for all the wrong reasons. Our prayer for them to be converted may simply be so that our lives will be easier so that our lives will be less trouble. We can pray that our service in the church would be effective and successful. Seems like a worthy thing. But we can pray that with the wrong motive. We can pray it with our primary motive being for the increase and building up of our own reputation.

One writer puts it this way: “Prayer is not asking God for what we want. It’s asking God for what He wants.” You know, as you think about the fact that our pleasures, our desires are what lie behind our temptations and our arguments and our quarrels and our conflict in life, it reminds you that our greatest and most compelling need is that our desires would be changed. Isn’t that right? That our desires would be changed! What Jonathan Edwards called “our affections” That our affections would be changed to love and crave holy things and good things and things that God delights in. We need to pray that God will change our desires, that first and foremost, above everything else, we would desire God! we would find our ultimate joy in Him! And we must pray, then, that God would help us to see how every pleasure that we seek outside of God never really satisfies.

Annie Dillard, in her book, *The Writing Life*, describes the fascinating scientific experiment. In the experiment, a male butterfly was placed in an enclosure with a living female butterfly of his own species, and with a painted cardboard cutout one. Can you guess what happened? When the cardboard cutout of the butterfly was bigger than the male butterfly, and when it was bigger than any female butterfly could ever be, the male butterfly frantically tried to get the attention of the cardboard piece. Nearby, the real, living female butterfly constantly opened and closed her wings, in vain. She couldn’t get his attention. This isn’t just a problem for butterflies. This is a profound illustration of human nature, male and female. We spend our lives chasing cardboard pleasures all the time ignoring the real thing: pleasure that’s found in God.

You know, the prophet, Jeremiah. Turn back to Jeremiah 2 for a moment. The prophet, Jeremiah confronts this problem in powerful language. Jeremiah 2:9,

“Therefore, I will contend with you,” declares the LORD.” [The word, “contend” here is a Hebrew word that literally means “court case”. He’s saying, “I’ve got a court case against you. I’m the plaintiff. And I’m presenting a complaint against you, Israel.” This is God speaking. “I have a court case against you. [I have a complaint I want to present in court!] And with your sons’ sons, I will contend. For cross to the coastlands of Kittim and see, and send to Kedar and observe closely,” [in other words, check the nations around the south] and see if there has been such a *thing* as this! Has a nation changed gods when they were not gods? But My people have changed their glory for that which does not profit. Be appalled, O heavens, at this, and shudder, be very desolate,” declares the LORD.”

He says, "Listen! When the skies hear this, they should shut up. They should absolutely be shaken to their foundation at what I'm about to say." Verse 13, "For My people have committed two evils: They have forsaken Me, the fountain of living waters, to hew for themselves cisterns, broken cisterns that can hold no water." What a graphic picture of the human heart! Leaving living fountains of fresh, cool water to hew out our own cisterns that don't even hold water!

Let me ask you, this morning: Is there anything that gives you more pleasure than God? Is there anything in your life that gives you more pleasure than God, Himself? Then, whatever it is has become to you your own cistern, hewn out, that will never satisfy. That thing has become to you an idol of the heart. And it'll never satisfy. You are pursuing a cardboard reality instead of the real thing. David says, "God, in Your presence is fullness of joy. And it's Your right hand there are pleasures forever." Everything else is a cardboard dream. Let's pray together.

Father, Thank you for the clear teaching of James. Father, I pray, this morning, for all of us. I pray, first and foremost, for Your people. Lord, I pray for Your people, that You would help us to see the true source of the quarrels and fights that describe us. Lord, help us to see that those come from our own sinful hearts, the unmet cravings of our own sinful hearts.

Lord, I pray for those Christians here, this morning who have allowed something to become more pleasurable to them than You. Father, help them to see the idolatry of that. Help all of us to confess our sins to You, and to turn to You, the only true and lasting source of joy and pleasure.

Father, I pray for the Christians here, this morning, who are engaged and known for quarreling and fighting. Lord, don't let them look around. Don't let them look at others. Don't let them excuse themselves. Help every person known for that to take an honest look at their own heart, confess their sin, to see the manifestation of their own ungodliness.

Father, I pray for the people, who are undoubtedly seated here this morning, who are in slavery to their cravings, who don't know Your Son. Father, I pray that You would cause the Light to shine in their hearts of the wonderful, good news that in Christ, sins are forgiven, and sin's dominion is broken. We no longer have to be its slave. Father, don't let us leave here unchanged by Your ancient Words to us.

I pray it to the glory of Jesus Christ, and in His Name, Amen.