

## ***How to Restore a Wounded Relationship (Pt. 3)—James 3:13-18***

### **I. REVIEW: RECOGNIZING WHEN THE SPIRIT OF A RELATIONSHIP IS WOUNDED**

- A. A relationship can be wounded at various levels, from being slightly injured to deeply broken. When a relationship is wounded, we are to make godly appeals to one another. Jesus taught us to go to our brother to make an appeal, both when they have *something against us* (Mt. 5:24) and when we have *something against them* (Mt. 18:15-16).

*This is part three in a series I am doing on restoring wounded relationships. Here's a quick review of the first two sessions. When a relationship is wounded, the Bible teaches us to make a godly appeal. We are not to draw back and leave the wounded relationship where it is at, but we are actually to move forward, not to withdraw and get isolated, but go in the opposite direction and make appeals to the others who are involved in that wounded relationship.*

*Now Jesus taught us the appeal goes in two different directions. That is, we make the appeal in two different directions. He said in Matthew 18 that when you have something against somebody, you are to go to them. Then in Matthew 5 Jesus said that if somebody has something against you, you are to go to them. On both occasions He tells you to go to them. In other words, if you are bothering them, go to them; if they are bothering you, go to them. You might ask, "Well, Lord, what about them?" The answer is that the Lord actually gives the responsibility to take initiative to every believer regardless which side of the conflict they are on, whether they are the one bothered or they are the one bothering somebody else.*

*Jesus' idea is that if He mandates every believer to take initiative, then even if only one of them obeys, the healing process begins. So as a sincere believer in the Lord, you always take the responsibility to go forward and do not wait for them to come to you. Matthew chapters 5 and 18 are the first two sessions in the series.*

*Now today we are looking at James 3. Matthew 5 and 18 mostly focused on what we did or what was done to us. It is more focused on the wrong actions. James 3 goes a few layers deeper. It is not talking about what we do, but about why we do it. He addresses the issue of our own motives and the emotions we have in our heart.*

*Now I just really want to get your attention on James 3 by this statement: that in the years that I have been walking with the Lord, James 3 has been one of the most formative and significant passages in my spiritual life for over thirty, forty years, something like that. I would only say this about ten different chapters of the Bible—that this is one of those most formative chapters for my life. The reason I am saying that is because I am wanting to give much attention as to the importance of this chapter in terms of what I believe will affect and change your spiritual life or strengthen your spiritual life.*

*The apostle James identifies the things that cause us to offend people and the things that cause us to be offended. He identifies the motives that cause us to offend and cause us to be offended. The real burden of this passage is that he wants us to see our contribution to our own wounding. Let me say that again. He wants us to see how we contribute to the very fact that we might be bitter.*

*Now it is really obvious how the person who mistreated us contributed to our wounding. In James it says that it is true that the other guy—the enemy without—did mistreat you and you are hurt. That is understandable, but there is an enemy within as well. It is your response. It is not just the story of who did what to you, but it is how you responded. There is an enemy without us, and there is an enemy within. It is very significant to understand the whole picture if we are going to see relationships healed and our hearts set free.*

- B. We are to do all that we can to restore relationships, so far as it depends on us (Rom. 12:18).

<sup>18</sup>*If it is possible, as much as depends on you, live peaceably with all men. (Rom. 12:18)*

- C. We are to appeal in the right *tone, timing, process, spirit, and ratio* of affirmation to correction. The tone of our communication is a very important issue in restoring a relationship. A defensive tone hinders the process. We make appeals in a spirit of gentleness, aware of our deficiencies.

<sup>1</sup>*you who are spiritual restore such a one in a spirit of gentleness, considering yourself... (Gal. 6:1)*

- D. Confessing our faults and humbling ourselves is an essential part of seeing our relationships healed and expressing our love for Jesus. To be reconciled to others, we must genuinely confess and repent of our sin or insensitivity. We cannot do this by saying, “*If you are hurt, I am sorry,*” but “*Since I sinned against you or was insensitive toward you, forgive me.*”

<sup>16</sup>*Confess your trespasses to one another...that you may be healed [reconciled]. (Jas. 5:16)*

- E. We all are both *victims* and *agents* of our offense and wounding. We are victims when we are mistreated, and we are agents when we respond wrongly and allow an injustice against us to become a festering wound in us. The injustice done against us does not produce bitterness, but rather it is our wrong response to the injustice that produces bitterness. If we respond wrongly, the conflict escalates to consume our time, energy, emotions, and money.

<sup>15</sup>*If you bite and devour one another, beware lest you be consumed by one another! (Gal. 5:15)*

*We are all both victims and agents of our own wounding. Let me break that down a little bit. We are victims, meaning people really do mistreat you, and they really do mistreat me, so we are victims. But it is not just that we have really been mistreated. There is another dimension. We are also agents of our wounding. What I mean by that is that we have responded wrongly, so we are actually participating in our own bitterness. In fact, the cause of our bitterness is our response.*

*Now an injustice against us will never cause bitterness. An injustice against us causes some pain, some turmoil, and some anxiety in the short-term, but the injustice against us cannot make us bitter until we respond to it in a wrong way. It is the response that makes the painful injustice escalate into a deep-seated bitterness. It is our wrong response that creates the bitterness.*

*Now one of the points of James 3 is that by nature, by the most natural mindset— natural wisdom is the term that he is going to use—it is the most natural thing to focus on the injustice and not to focus on our response. It is so easy to see the injustice, and it is difficult to measure and really see and get a hold of our wrong responses. That is the theme of the last part of James 3.*

*The reason this is so important is because we can talk about going to our brother when they offend us, we can talk about going to our brother when we offend them, but if we do not go deeper to the issues of the heart that actually cause and fuel the offense, then we are never ever going to see relationships healed in the way and in the measure that God wants.*

*In Galatians 5 Paul warns us that “if you bite and devour one another”—he is talking about verbally here—“if you bite and devour one another”—slander, argue, counter-argument, counter-accusation, yeah-but-I-did-not-but-you-did, yeah-but-you-did-not-but-I-did, and just on and on and on—Paul calls that biting and devouring one another. He says that if you do it, I warn you—he is talking to believers—you will be consumed. It will consume your time. It will consume your energy. It will consume your money. It will consume your emotions. He says, in effect, that if that conflict escalates, it will consume you. Most of us probably understand that. I*

*certainly know what that means to be consumed by that for a period of time. A wrong, an injustice, and it just captures you, and you respond wrongly for a period of time.*

## **II. TWO PRIMARY OBSTACLES TO HEALING A WOUNDED RELATIONSHIP (JAS. 3:13-16)**

- A. James addressed the two primary issues behind offenses in relationships that are not healed. This is a very practical passage in how to avoid or heal relational wounds. He pointed out two types of wisdom (perspectives)—heavenly and earthly (v. 15)—and their different results (v. 16, 18). He identified jealousy and selfish ambition (v. 14) as two primary causes of relational conflict.

***<sup>13</sup>Who among you is wise and understanding? Let him show, by his good behavior, his deeds in the gentleness of wisdom. <sup>14</sup>But if you have bitter jealousy and selfish ambition in your heart, do not be arrogant and so lie against the truth. <sup>15</sup>This wisdom is not that which comes down from above, but is earthly, natural, demonic. <sup>16</sup>For where jealousy and selfish ambition exist, there is disorder and every evil thing. (Jas. 3:13-16, NAS)***

*You might not get the context of James 3 at a quick read. You actually find it in James chapter 4, the first few verses. The context of this passage is addressing conflict resolution. He makes it clear in James 4:1, where he says, “You have conflict, you have quarrels, you have debates...” That is what he is talking about here. So we are going to back up to the verses before he makes that big statement because it is all one large section that goes together.*

*Here in James 3:13-16, we have a very practical passage on how to avoid breaking a relationship, how to do your part to heal broken relationships, but equally important what to do so that your heart gets free when you are the victim of an injustice. When someone really did treat you wrong or say wrong things about you, this passage really addresses how our heart gets free.*

*Now in this passage he points out two types of wisdom. There is heavenly wisdom, and there is earthly wisdom; he contrasts the two. When he talks about heavenly wisdom, he is talking about the biblical perspective. There is a biblical perspective, a heavenly perspective of the conflict, he says, and then there is a natural, an earthly perspective. The earthly perspective is the one that we are so aware of because it comes so naturally to us. Mostly the earthly perspective is: they treated me wrongly, I am mad, and I am going to get payback or at least get vindicated.*

*James says that is earthly perspective, earthly wisdom. Payback, get vindicated, only see the conflict and the enemy without. He says that you will never get ahead in your spiritual life by the earthly perspective. Then he said that there is a heavenly perspective, a heavenly wisdom, a biblical perspective, and that is to see the big picture of what is going on. That is going to involve seeing the enemy within, seeing our own motives as well as the enemy without in the way we have been mistreated.*

*Then he goes on to describe two different results. The heavenly wisdom, the biblical response, leads to righteousness with peace. He says, but if you respond the natural way—the way we are all wired to respond just by our natural humanity— then there will be disorder. Not just disorder in the relationship, there will be disorder in your emotions in your heart. You will live in a disorder that is unnecessary, if you respond in the way that is the most natural way to respond.*

*Then he addresses the two causes of the wrong response, the real crux of the matter. He defines them very clearly as jealousy and selfish ambition. James is not talking about the extreme expressions of jealousy and ambition. We all can see those, and when we do, we respond, “Ugh, those are horrible.” No, James is talking*

*about the subtle operation that goes unperceived in our heart, the unperceived subtle operation of jealousy and ambition.*

*He says that if you do not perceive it, if you do not identify and resist that unspoken force that is motivating and driving your inward emotions and your thought processes, it will bring disorder to your life no matter how you rationalize it. You can have Bible verses to back up and validate what you are doing, but if you do not identify those subtle operations of those two things, he says that you will have disorder in your insight and you will have disorder in the relationships that are affected in that particular conflict.*

*He starts off by asking the question in James 3:13, “Who among you is wise and understanding?”*

*He is, of course, writing to Christians so he is expecting them to answer, “Me. I am.” When he says which ones of you are wise in understanding, he means which of you has the biblical perspective, or who will agree with the biblical perspective? You believe it, you know it, and you agree with it. Of course they would say, “Us. We do.”*

*Then he says that wisdom is more than the knowledge of what the Bible says; it is the commitment to apply it. So you or I can have Bible knowledge, but it is not called wisdom until we are committed to apply it. Wisdom is far more than knowledge; wisdom requires application.*

*He asks who sees the biblical perspective and is committed to respond in a biblical way, and they respond that they are. He says, “Good. Here is the test. Here is how you know if this is true about you. Here is how you can examine yourself, because you do not want to live in delusion about this. You want to know if you are really doing it.” James really lays it out clearly. He continues, “Okay, if you are committed to biblical wisdom”—that means the perspective as well as applying it by your responses—“let that man or woman show by his good behavior.” Another way you could say it, “Let them show that they are really into God’s wisdom by their biblical responses”—in the place of good behavior, you could put biblical responses.*

*Then he sums it up. I love this summary. He gives the right response in a very interesting phrase. He goes, “Let him show it in his deeds in the gentleness of wisdom.” That is, his deeds are motivated by the gentleness of wisdom. Then James goes on in verse 17—we will look at it in a few minutes—to elaborate on what the gentleness of wisdom really means.*

*So James asks who is wise? They answer that they are. He responds, “Okay, that means you see the biblical perspective. You are committed to responding rightly. And here is how you will know if you are really doing it or you are living self-deluded in your spiritual life.” The wise one will make the responses outlined in verse 17 that he summarizes or calls “deeds done in the gentleness of wisdom.”*

*In verse 14, he describes the other side of the argument. He says that the most natural response is to have jealousy and ambition in your heart, and particularly in its even more subtle forms that we do not perceive are driving us. They become an emotional energy on the inside that we do not really label. Most of us do not really label it clearly, or we do not label it in due time.*

*What James says is that if you have that working in you—and all of us do, that is the point—it can escalate to bitter jealousy, but it starts off as subtle jealousy. He instructs, “Do not be arrogant and lie against the truth.” That is, do not lie to yourself about the truth of what is happening in your heart. Now when he says, “Do not be arrogant,” what he is really saying is, do not imagine that the reason you have feelings of bitterness is only because you are mistreated; do not imagine that you are not contributing to your own bitterness.*

*The most natural thing for us to do is imagine they did it and that is why we are angry; the enemy without is responsible. James says, “Yes, but the enemy within is also responsible. It is the combination of the two. If you think it is only them and that you are completely innocent about the reason you are bitter,” he says, “you are*

*arrogant, you do not see the truth, and you have just blame-shifted the whole thing onto part of the problem, and you have missed a major part of the problem—the enemy within.”*

*He points out, “You are lying against the truth. You have convinced yourself of the lie. You have sowed the lie to yourself.” Here is the problem in verse 15—this wisdom, in other words, this way of interpreting the conflict (because remember the context is solving the problems you find in James 4), this wisdom, this way of interpreting the conflict is not that which comes from above. It is not heavenly wisdom; it is not the biblical perspective. This is not God’s wisdom.*

*He says that way of interpreting the conflict where you do not have any contribution to why your heart is hurting—it is only they did it, you did not do anything, you did not respond in a wrong way—that mindset is earthly, it is natural. The word **natural** in some translations is the word **sensual** and it is **demonic**.*

*It is demonic? He says that yes, it really is, because when jealousy and ambition are operating in your heart, it is the agenda of the devil, the demonic agenda that you are making room for in those relationships so that the brokenness can continue. The kingdom agenda is always to heal and to bless, to serve and to be humble, to trust God to give us the things we are longing for, trusting Him to give it to us in His time.*

*Again, he goes on in verse 16 to say that where there is jealousy and selfish ambition, there is disorder. The disorder is not only in the relationship that is in conflict. That is obvious disorder. But there is also disorder in the heart of the believer, even the sincere believer, who does not own their part of the conflict.*

*I do not mean just their part in the conflict, but also their part of their own bitterness or their part of their own offense. Remember, just a person doing injustice against you is not enough for you to get bitter. You have to make a wrong response for bitterness to take root and to grow in your life. So that is what he says. He says that there is disorder and there is everything evil.*

*So we have to be intentional about identifying this enemy within. We have to be intentional about resisting it. We have to be intentional about responding in the gentleness of wisdom. Verse 17 lays out seven different ways we respond in the gentleness of wisdom, but we have to be intentional about that. We have to be committed to it to avoid the disorder.*

*Now it is not enough to avoid the disorder in the relationship; we want to avoid the disorder in our heart. We want a heart that has liberty. We want a vibrant heart. We want to feel the love of God and feel love for God and feel love for people, even our enemies. God loves His enemies, and it is our inheritance to be able to love our enemies in the love of God. Beloved, do not settle for anything less than that.*

*Jesus said, “Even the unbelievers love people who love them. If you like people who like you,” He said, “you can be an unbeliever and not in the kingdom and like people who like you. There is not a problem with that.” He continued, “But it is your inheritance to love people who do not like you because you are like your heavenly Father.” Boy, I want to walk in that, not just because it is noble and a benefit to people, but what a way to live on the inside! What a picture of liberty!*

- B. **Wise and understanding:** The issue is which wisdom or perspective guides our life, the heavenly or earthly (v. 15). The person of heavenly wisdom is the one who agrees with God’s ways.

*Let’s go back and look at a few of the phrases a little bit more. So he starts off with a question. Who among you is wise and understanding? Again, who has God’s perspective, the biblical perspective, and is committed to walk it out in the biblical responses as laid out in verse 17?*

- C. **Let him show by his good behavior:** our words and actions reveal which wisdom or perspective we embrace.

*Let him show by his good behavior. Let him show by his biblical responses. Now it is not enough to claim faith in the truths of the Bible. I mean I have faith, confidence that the Bible truths are true, and you have confidence. So we could say as a company of people that we have faith in the Bible. What James would say is that is good, but that is not enough because if, under the pressure of not getting what you want, you do not respond in a biblical way, it is not enough to have a generic faith in the Bible. We need to have faith to respond in a biblical way, and particularly under the pressure of not getting what we want.*

*When we feel mistreated and overlooked, when we do not get what we want, we have a pressure in our heart. We feel this pressure—they are not giving me the promotion, they are not giving me the honor, they are not including me in the group or on the team or in the inner circle that I want to be a part of, I do not feel included, I do not feel promoted, I do not feel honored, I do not feel recognized, I do not feel I have been given an opportunity—and that these create pressure is normal. What James is really saying here is that responding in the gentleness of wisdom means even under the pressure of not getting what you want.*

- D. **Gentleness of wisdom:** this speaks of deeds being done in gentleness or meekness that comes from having wisdom or a godly perspective.

*The gentleness of wisdom again speaks of deeds done in this gentleness or meekness that flow out of the biblical perspective. So we do our deeds, we respond in a certain way as verse 17 says, because we believe the biblical perspective, the heavenly wisdom.*

- E. **Bitter jealousy:** many offenses are rooted in jealousy or the desire to have what another has (their role, honor, money, possessions, abilities, friends, life situation, etc.).

*Let's look at this illusive thing called jealousy. Now it escalates to bitter jealousy if not dealt with, but it begins as a subtle form of jealousy. To understand what James is really addressing here, we need to see the subtlety of how jealousy and selfish ambition operate in our lives.*

*I will give just a very simplistic description of this for us today, not an in-depth comprehensive one. For many of us, it begins with the media. We are bombarded all of our lives with media images of what we are to be, of things that are good, and what we can expect. When we see these images that bombard us all of our life of what we can expect, those expectations begin some of those jealousies, not all of them, and they get entrenched in us. They become something that becomes a very strong desire. It started off as an image that we just kind of looked at it, then that is what we are going to be.*

*Some of the examples are how young people, male or female, see a model or actor on TV, and they say, "I am going to look like that. I am going to be like that." They see the successful athlete or the gifted musician or the successful businessperson or the politician or the scientist or whatever. They say, "I am going to be that," and they set this picture in their heart. Sometimes that can be good, but there is fine line between being inspired to noble things and ending up with jealousy to be what you are not called to be in the will of God in that season of your life.*

*So jealousy is wanting to be who somebody else is or to have what somebody else has. That expectation gets awakened in us, and it becomes a desire that grows. It goes from being a clear desire to being a demand, "I demand that this is going to happen in my life." Then when somebody comes along who blocks that goal—sometimes that goal is not clearly defined, but we know when the goal is blocked, when somebody blocks it. I do not get the promotion. I do not get the honor. I do not get the going forward. I do not get the money. I do not get the attention. I do not get included. And I do not like it because I was picturing this would happen in my life. Those people or that guy is stopping it. Or, that guy is not helping me do it. He could help me; all he has got to do is give me the money, open the door, make it work for me.*

*So we just subconsciously get the “bah-humbugs.” We look at that guy and feel, “Ugh,” because that expectation turned into a desire, which turned into a demand. Then when that goal was blocked or when somebody who could help did not help, we get this “How could you treat me this way” attitude, and trouble begins.*

*A lot of folks, myself included, do not connect that feeling of subtle jealousy. We have seen what someone else has, we see what someone is, and we want to be that, and it grows to a demand that becomes part of our emotional makeup. James says that you better identify it because over the course of your life you are going to have collisions when people do not help you follow through to get “that.” You might not even have “that” defined, but you get that feeling of being kept from what you wanted.*

*I think of the preacher who watches the mega-church guy on TV, which is so common. The TV guy has this huge ministry, and the preacher has a little congregation. He sits, he watches, and he just subtly shifts over to thinking, “I am going to have a ministry like that.” He does not even know when it shifts, but it does. It gets in him, and he does not even connect the dots, but over the time his leadership style is affected by the pressure of wanting that which he saw another person have. It is called jealousy but he does not think of it as jealousy. He has got this “pressure.” His leadership style creates this. New pressures are involved in the way he leads—this new anxiety, this new discontentment. James says that it is jealousy operating in you. The guy thinks, “Jealousy? I do not have a problem with jealousy.” But James is pointing out that you just do not know how it operates. That is the problem; connect the dots.*

- F. **Selfish ambition:** Many offenses are rooted in selfish ambition or the expectation to gain a better position, increased honor and recognition, more money, be invited to “join the team,” or even to have a special relationship with someone who does not respond in the same way.

*Offenses can also be rooted in selfish ambition. Now, ambition is a powerful thing, and there is also godly ambition. Not all ambition is bad. I have seen people neglect godly ambition and zeal because they do not want to be ambitious. You do not want to act in selfish ambition. That is what you do not want. You **do** want godly ambition; you absolutely do. There is a fine line between being inspired by a noble virtue to do a noble thing and being jealous to have what is not yours in the will of God in that season. It might be yours in some other season. There is a fine line between those two things.*

*Many offenses are rooted in selfish ambition. The problem is only noticed when our ambition is blocked. For example, “You know I have served for five years in that business, and I should now be one of the directors of that company as one of the director moved on or did something, and I am in line...” But then they do not pick you, and that is when the ambition is revealed to us, but most of us do not think there is selfish ambition on our part; we now think we have been mistreated.*

*James is saying, in effect, “Well, you know, you have got a case that you have been mistreated, but that is not your biggest problem. Your biggest problem is that you have an enemy inside you that you do not know you have, and that enemy is roaring like a lion.” When your goals are blocked, you can identify that enemy. If you love the truth, you can identify that enemy.*

*Well, we have expectations for a better position, for increased honor, more recognition, being invited, being included to be a part of something. Some people have this pain because they want a special relationship with that guy or gal. I do not even mean romantic relationship right now. They want to be in that little group, or be that person’s best friend, or one of their best friends, that sort of thing. I see this all the time, and it does not happen because the other person does not have the same expectation. The first person feels, “How dare they not*

*make me their best friend! I mean, what mistreatment! I know—he just is not relational or she is not relational. They just don't know how to relate to people! I am being mistreated, and they are not relational."*

*James says that while all might be true, there is also ambition in your heart that you are not identifying. You are just blame-shifting the whole thing onto someone else, and you are not taking responsibility for contributing to your own negative feelings. You may feel that you did not do anything wrong. James explains that you were born with it. You came by it honestly. It has been festering and growing in you all of your life, and unless it is identified and addressed, it does not take care of itself.*

*Now the selfish ambition in itself is not the big power, the big evil power. The big power is the **demand** that we make. **It is when that ambition grows from desire to demand.** As in "I demand this, and if I do not get it, I am mad, and I am going to throw a fit about it. I am going to make a point out of it, and I am going to get some kind of payback, some kind of vindication. Somebody better make this right and give me what is mine." That is when the ambition becomes dangerous. That is when it becomes an evil force, a sinister force that begins to take root in our heart. This is what James is talking about.*

*James is constantly contrasting the heavenly and the earthly, and what he really means by the heavenly perspective here is that you shift over and trust God to give you that promotion, to give you that relationship, to give you that honor. Do not trust that guy or that gal. Trust God. Shift over and put your confidence in Him to give it to you. Because I have good news for you—nobody can stop the will of God in your life. If God wants you in that position in the business world, in the political arena, in the ministry arena, in any arena of life, nobody can permanently in any long-term way stop that goal from happening in the will of God.*

*So the heavenly perspective is shifting in whom you are trusting for your expectations to be fulfilled. Do not look at the guy and say, "He did not give me that role." Look at heaven and say, "Father, if You want me to have the role, it will happen in Your good time; nobody on earth can stop it."*

1. Some see themselves as being mistreated and used, or they see the unresponsive person as non-relational, instead of owning their part in the offense—in having expectations and strong desires for things that they did not get.

*Now we see ourselves as being mistreated, and the truth is sometimes we are. That is, the mistreatment is legitimate, but we are never going to get a relationship healed and our heart freed by focusing only on the mistreatment. We have to address that a bit, but if that is all we address, and we do not address the enemy within, we are never going to get free.*

*The guy says, "I have been used. I worked in that ministry...or I worked in that company...or I served on that team... and I was used."*

*The Lord says, "Well, you prayed for years that I would use you, and I used you." Here's the problem. What they mean by "I was used" is that they served, but they had the intention of having a return to their personal life in a way they expected.*

*The Lord would say, "Oh, that means you served with an unspoken contract in your heart, with the expectation of getting a particular return." He says, "There is a return in the kingdom. You have helped My kingdom, and I remember it forever. I will reward you. I am pleased by it, so the return is there."*

*"No, I wanted the return that I identified myself. I want that reward to come to my life now. I was used."*

*Beloved, that is not the biblical definition of being used—when you do not get the return that you demand. If you are used, and you bring a return to the kingdom, and God is pleased, beloved, you are ahead of the ballgame! You and I win; that is the heavenly perspective.*

*Well, what James wants them to do is own their part in the offense and see the big picture of what is going on.*

2. Some of the most painful relational conflicts are related to having different expectations for the relationship. If someone sees you as their *best friend*, while you see them as a *casual friend*, then offenses can occur that may not be solved.
3. Some are offended because they deeply desire to be included in a certain group or promoted to a position of leadership that others do not feel is right.

*Sometimes we want to get promoted or be included in a certain group or promoted to a different position of leadership. Now when those things do not happen, how are we supposed to respond? We are stuck with that initial pain and turmoil which is understandable. The pain and turmoil that comes initially is a gut reaction. It is feeling like “Ugh, I am discombobulated. I do not like the feel of this. What do I do?” James says to take the heavenly perspective, not the earthly perspective. It will bring disorder if you go the other way and say, “I deserve it. I should be included. I should be promoted. I should get that money. I should get that honor.”*

*The Lord is saying, “Do not go there in your thinking. I will give you what is yours in My time, and nobody will stop Me.”*

*As we acknowledge that we have subtle jealousy and selfish ambition in our heart—it is more than just a beginning of it; it is a form of this operating in our heart—if we will acknowledge it, we will understand that our personal ambition is not rooted in the will of God for this season of our life. So you are saying, “I really did want that promotion. I really did, and I think I deserve it. But because I did not get it, I am willing to acknowledge it is ambition that is not in the will of God right now.” Because, if it is in the will of God, it will happen. Then we release that demand into God’s hand. Beloved, we can get peace in our heart, and we can live in liberty, in victory on the inside, even in the midst of being mistreated.*

**G. *Do not be arrogant and lie against the truth:*** this is one of the most important principles in healing relational conflicts, having a good marriage, or being of person with excellent character.

1. It is a very natural response for all of us to “*lie against the truth*” by refusing to take responsibility for the truth about our unperceived jealousy and selfish ambition that has contributed to being offended and hindering the healing of the relationship.

*Here is one of the most important phrases in the entire passage. He says, “Do not be arrogant, and do not lie against the truth.” Now it is so compelling to lie to yourself about this. It is so compelling, and it is so natural to not see our ambition and jealousy, but to see only the injustice.*

*It is so natural to see the enemy on the outside and not the enemy on the inside. This is one of the most important principles I think in the whole kingdom of God in this passage right here. If you lay hold of this principle of not being arrogant as though you are not contributing to your own pain and of not lying about the truth that you are also contributing to the pain that you have, if you will grasp that, if you will buy that, then this will be one of the most important principles in healing relationships. It is one of the most important principles in a good marriage.*

*I mean this is marriage 101, for a man and a woman both to buy into this truth in their marriage relationship. It is an absolute key principle in developing excellent character in your life. To decide that you are a person who is not going to lie against the truth, but you are going to ask the Spirit. By the way, He is the Spirit of truth. If you ask Him, He will tell you.*

*Do not ask once, “Holy Spirit, do I have it? Okay, I don’t hear anything,” and move on. No, you ask Him, and you linger and ask Him a few times over the next few months, and you might get some disturbing answers. I get*

*disturbing answers; I do not like the answers I get. You know, I have been tempted to go for a second opinion, but then I go to someone else, and they agree with the Holy Spirit anyway. Number one, it is the most natural response for us to lie against the truth by refusing to take responsibility for how we are contributing to the issue.*

2. Some people live in bondage to “always having to be right.” When was the last time that you verbalized to someone that you had a measure of selfish ambition that contributed to the offense? The inability to see our ambition will hinder the healing process.

*Number two, some people live in what I call “bondage to having to be right.” I know a few people, not many, who in five years, ten years, twenty years, thirty years have never ever admitted they are wrong in their marriage, in their child raising, in their work relationships, in their church relationships. I know a few guys like that, and I have one thing to say: that is bondage! That is not freedom because you live in perpetual turmoil. If your mindset is that you are right most all the time, I am telling you, you will be living in turmoil that is not necessary and from which you could be free. The spirit of liberty is in walking in the truth.*

*So let me ask you, when was the last time that you identified and **verbalized**—not just identified. Identified is good; verbalizing is better—when you in your marriage, in a ministry context, in a relationship leadership thing in the business world, whatever, where you acknowledged, “You know, I am mad at you.”*

*The guy answers, “Yeah, I know you are.”*

*“I am partly mad because of my ambition.” When is the last time you actually acknowledged that? If you say you have, does anybody else know that you have ever done that? Do the people around you ever heard you say that? Anybody in your family?*

*If you have not, then as a shepherd with tenderness I say this to you—if you do not do that regularly or if you have never done it, I will say very tenderly—alert, alert, alert! You are in spiritual danger zone! If that is how you carry your heart, you are in spiritual danger. Your marriage will be bad, your friendships will be continually injured, your heart will be in turmoil perpetually, and your spiritual life will be thwarted.*

*If you do not acknowledge that you have ambition and jealousy contributing to your own anguish and contributing to some of the disconnect with people—yes, you can acknowledge their contributing but—if you do not see you are also wrong, you will never have a liberated heart. This is a critical principle in terms of healing wounded relationships.*

H. James defined offenses rooted in our jealousy and ambition as earthly, natural, and demonic (v. 15).

*Now James defines this offense that is so easy for us to have and that escalates to bitterness. Offense can be just the beginning; it is not quite bitterness. Offense that gets entrenched in us is what I mean by bitterness. James said that this kind of mindset is earthly, natural, and demonic.*

1. **Earthly:** this perspective demands that we be treated in a way that fulfills most of our expectations. This “wisdom” is rooted in the temporal values in our humanistic culture.

*Number one, it is earthly. This means we did not learn that response or that perspective from the Bible; we learned it from our culture. Nowhere in the Bible are we taught to demand our rights, demand honor, get revenge if they do not make amends, tell everybody until they do, make big trouble. You will not find that in the Bible, but you will find it all over our culture. James says that it is earthly; it is not heavenly. That is not the biblical perspective at all.*

2. **Natural:** our sense of entitlement to honor, comfort, inclusion, and promotion are natural.

*Number two, he says it is natural. The Greek word used there is translated sensual in the King James. It is a pleasure-oriented perspective. I want more comfort. I want more honor. Not sensual necessarily in the sense of sexual, but sensual in the sense of feeling—I want to feel more about my own grandeur, honor, and security. James is saying that it makes perfect sense to the natural mindset, but the Bible does not tell us to demand those kinds of entitlements be given to us.*

3. **Demonic:** this wisdom gives the devil opportunity and results in bitterness that is energized and stirred by demonic influences. James was not saying that such people are demon-possessed. He was pointing out how human interests can serve demonic interests. Jesus rebuked Peter for promoting a demonic agenda in his human-centered counsel that Jesus refuse to die on the cross (Mt. 16:21-23).

***<sup>21</sup>Jesus began to show to His disciples that He must...be killed...<sup>22</sup>Peter took Him aside and began to rebuke Him, saying, “Far be it from You, this shall not happen to You!”<sup>23</sup>But He turned and said to Peter, “Get behind Me, Satan! You are an offense to Me, for you are not mindful of the things of God, but the things of men.” (Mt 16:16–23)***

*Now it sounds like he is exaggerating, but he is not. He says that it is demonic. Demonic? What he means by demonic is that we are giving the devil opportunity to touch our heart. We are giving the devil opportunity to bring disorder to that relationship. That is what he is talking about. He is not saying that the people are demonized. He is saying you are giving the devil opportunity in your life. All of us have done this so many times. We are not demonized because we do it. Then again, if you give yourself to this in a lifestyle—I mean you really go for this like King Saul who became demonized because of his jealousy—people do get demonized by it. But in a more general sense he is saying that you have given the devil an opportunity for his agenda to happen in your life.*

*Now the classic example of how James is using this term, demonic, is found in Matthew 16. You know the story when Jesus said to Peter and the disciples, “I am going to go to Jerusalem and die.”*

*Then Peter said, “Lord, I rebuke you! May it never be!”*

*Then the Lord said, “Well, Peter, I rebuke you. You are speaking the voice of the devil to Me right now because your mind”—read the verse carefully, I have it on the notes there in Matthew 16—“your mind is set on man’s agenda, not on God’s agenda.”*

*So the definition of wisdom being demonic is when we are demanding man’s agenda. When God says, “That is not My agenda. It is not My agenda for you to demand that role or that honor or that money or that this or that that. That is not My agenda for you. My agenda is for you to walk in humility, that you would trust Me, and you let Me break in on My time. That is My agenda,” but we respond, “Well, Lord, I do not like Your agenda. I want my agenda now. I want what my way of doing things now.”*

4. Anger gives opportunity for the devil to establish a stronghold in our relationships.

***<sup>26</sup>...do not let the sun go down on your wrath [anger],<sup>27</sup>nor give place to the devil. (Eph. 4:26-27)***

- I. **Disorder and every evil thing:** Wherever we express jealousy and selfish ambition in a specific relationship, we contribute to the disorder in that relationship.

*James says that there will be disorder and everything evil when we speak or act in jealousy and selfish ambition. Now one thing that is evil is the disorder in your heart and in the relationship. No amount of counseling will fix you if you do not address this issue of causing disorder—your own ambition and jealousy. You can go to counseling forever, but if you do not identify the jealousy and ambition, the disorder will not go away no matter how much you pay the best counselor. It is not going to happen.*

*Another thing that is evil is that people step back from part of their inheritance in God because of the pain and the bitterness. They step back from a relationship even though God says that you have an inheritance in that relationship for all of your days. “Well, I do not want that relationship.” He asks why, since it is a beautiful relationship. “Well, they did not treat me right.” People lose their inheritance in that relationship, and they step back from it. They lose their inheritance in that business, they lose that inheritance in that team, they lose that inheritance in that ministry, and it did not need to happen. But because they never saw their own contribution to the problem, they step back and lose their inheritance.*

*James says, “Do not let evil cascade in your life and these consequences have a domino affect. Do not do that. Do not do that! Own your part so you can walk in liberty and get your full inheritance in every relationship, every business venture, every team you are a part of, every ministry, every whatever it is.*

### III. SEVEN VIRTUES THAT CONTRIBUTE TO HEALING RELATIONSHIPS (JAS. 3:17-18)

- A. He described the responses that are inevitable in any who have a heavenly perspective (wisdom).

***<sup>17</sup>But the wisdom from above is first pure, then peaceable, gentle, reasonable, full of mercy and good fruits, unwavering, without hypocrisy. <sup>18</sup>And the seed whose fruit is righteousness is sown in peace by those who make peace. (Jas. 3:17-18, NAS)***

*Now just ever so fast, as we have only got about two or three minutes to go here. I just want to give a snapshot. James gives seven virtues or you could call it seven responses. This is what the gentleness of wisdom looks like. These are things that give expression to the fact that you do have heaven’s perspective, heavenly wisdom, God’s perspective.*

*He goes on to say in verse 17 that this wisdom is pure, it is peaceable, it is gentle, it is reasonable, it is full of mercy, it is unwavering, and it has no hypocrisy in it.*

- B. **Pure:** this includes having pure motives that are honest about resisting our selfish ambition.

*Wisdom from above is pure. This involves being committed to the kingdom values in our life and not the values of our culture in demanding we get what we want or throwing a fit, either a subtle fit or an overt fit. James says, that is not purity; that is not what is pure. He says, “Check your responses. Are you responding that way? That is not pure.”*

- C. **Peaceable:** to be “peace-loving” is the opposite of the disorder caused by selfish ambition.

*He says that godly wisdom is peaceable. It loves peace. “Well, I do want peace, but I want a little vindication and a little payback.”*

*James says, “No, it is the **response** that is committed to peace, even if you lose the argument. Even if you lose some of the stuff, there is peace in that kingdom relationship.”*

D. **Gentle:** this speaks of the quality of being accommodating, considerate, patient, agreeable, etc.

*It is gentle. This word for gentle means accommodating and agreeable. It is a person with whom is easy to resolve difference. They are trying to be agreeable in it. They are not stubborn, they are not defensive in the conflict, and they are not resistant. That word gentle means that here. It is not the same word as meekness and gentleness in other passages.*

E. **Reasonable:** This is translated as “willing to yield” by the NKJV. We are to be willing to yield to the appeal of others and to do things “their way,” even if it is not absolutely the best way.

*Those with godly wisdom are reasonable. They are willing—I like the translation many Bibles have—they have a willingness to yield. When somebody appeals to them, they set their heart to be willing to yield to the appeal even if it means not doing things the absolute best way. They say, “You know what? I want to do it as much your way as possible, I want to get on your team and be a part of that, of doing it your way.” That is being reasonable.*

F. **Full of mercy:** We are to be merciful with the failures and deficiencies of others that are related to the relational conflict. To be “full” of mercy includes not requiring that their perspective of the conflict be 100% accurate. This includes having mercy that overlooks the bad responses of others and does not hold it against them. Mercy is acting generously towards others.

<sup>8</sup>*Above all things have fervent love...for “love will cover a multitude of sins.” (1 Pet. 4:8)*

<sup>13</sup>*Mercy triumphs over judgment. (Jas. 2:13)*

*Then he talks about godly wisdom being full of mercy. When we are in the conflict, we say, “Yeah, but look Lord, look what they did in the conflict. They did it, and I want them to own it. They did it.”*

*The Lord says, “I want mercy in your heart, in your response.”*

*“I want them to pay for what they did.”*

*The Lord says, “If it is kingdom perspective, I want mercy. I do not want payback. I want mercy.”*

*“Well, Lord, their perception of the conflict is not 100 percent accurate.”*

*The Lord says, “Just be merciful.”*

*“What? Okay, I will be merciful.” So we speak in our heart to the other person, “It is not what really happened, but I will forgive you.” That is merciful; it is that “overlooking” of the multitudes of faults that were done in that relationship. Love overlooks.*

G. **Unwavering:** This is translated as “without partiality” in NKJV. This includes not having a double standard in our evaluation of the actions of others.

*There is no double standard for evaluating what is going on. No double standard where we allow ourselves leeway in regards to sin, but we don’t allow the other person in the conflict the same leeway.*

H. **Without hypocrisy:** it is sincere and not simply acting kindly for show or to gain an advantage.

I. James promised that the seven virtues in verse 17 are “seed” whose fruit results in righteousness.

<sup>18</sup>*And the seed whose fruit is righteousness is sown in peace by those who make peace. (Jas. 3:17-18, NAS)*

*Just another sixty seconds here, and we will bring this to a close. In verse 18 he says that the seed whose fruit is righteousness, when sown in peace, the harvest will be righteousness with peace. Here is the point, it is a seed we sow, and it takes a while to see the harvest of righteousness if you respond this way. That is, you will not necessarily see instantaneous fruits of righteousness, but you will see righteousness in you. You will see a new rightness in the relationship instead of disorder. You even give your adversary the chance to respond in a right way by your generosity. When you respond rightly, many people say, “Well, if you are going to be that way about it, then maybe I will give in a little bit, too.” You actually release them to respond in the same way.*

- J. ***The seed whose fruit is righteousness:*** as we sow the seeds that are identified in verse 17, we will see the growth of righteousness in our life and relationships.
1. We will see a cascading effect on others who will also be inspired to act and speak in righteousness as our response helps them to overcome their bitterness related to a wounded relationship.
  2. When we counsel our loved ones to identify even a small residue of jealousy or selfish ambition in their heart, we will be helping them to grow in righteousness and will help them to heal wounded relationships.
  3. It is common to listen to a friend described how they were mistreated by someone. If we truly love them, then we will not simply justify their complaints of being mistreated, but we will be peacemakers who help them locate jealousy or selfish ambition in their heart.

*If you have a friend who comes to you and says, “Listen to what so-and-so did to me,” and you are their good friend, you say, “They did that? Are you kidding?”*

*“Yeah, they did that, and I did not get the money, I did not get the honor, I did not get this or that. They did this; they said that against me.”*

*“Are you kidding?”*

*Our natural temptation as friends, is to put our arms around them saying, “Those people are bad, and you are good, and I agree with you. Bah-humbug! They are bad.”*

*Here is what James’ teaching tells us, “If you really love them, you can agree they were mistreated. That is legitimate. But say, ‘I love you so much, and we agree there is an enemy on the outside. I want to help you see the enemy on the inside.’”*

*They may say, “What do you mean, an enemy on the inside? There is no enemy there.”*

*“Yeah, there is. I love you so much that I want you to actually see even that.” Beloved, you will be a good friend if you do that.*

*I love this story of Julie Meyers that she has told several times. One of her sons was in a situation on one of the worship teams. He had been involved over the years, and he was getting a bad deal. It truly was a bad deal that was happening. Her son came home and said, “Mom, they are not letting me do this and that and the other.”*

*Instead of saying, “Oh my poor, innocent, amazing son who is always right,” she said, “You know what? You probably deserve to do that, but let me tell you this. It is not the biblical response to demand anything. You go, and you serve them. You do all the grunt work, and you do it with a happy spirit. You bless, and that is the kingdom response.”*

*I tell you, her son did that and got a spirit of liberty on the inside. That is what a true spiritual mom and dad would say to a good friend or a son or daughter. Do not jump on their side and let them live in bondage. Help them see the enemy within. Yes, we agree with their problem, and we help them see the enemy within.*

K. ***Sown in peace by those who make peace:*** Those who make peace speak things that facilitate unity between people. Their words, actions, and attitude are unity-protecting.

1. Peacemaking is at the heart of Jesus' teachings, and it is His standard for discipleship.
2. Jesus promised a special blessing to all who consistently seek to reconcile relationships. This involves seeking reconciliation in our personal relationships, as well as helping others reconcile their relationships.

***<sup>9</sup>Blessed are the peacemakers, for they shall be called sons of God. (Mt. 5:9)***

L. Frustration and anger that leads to offense and bitterness is often caused by any who violate our personal rights or block our goals for honor, comfort, money, etc.

***<sup>1</sup>What is the source of quarrels and conflicts among you? Is not the source your pleasures that wage war in your members? <sup>2</sup>...You are envious and cannot obtain; so you fight and quarrel. (Jas. 4:1-2, NAS)***

M. Our anger or offense does not result in accomplishing God's righteous purpose in our lives.

***<sup>20</sup>...for the anger of man does not achieve the righteousness of God. (Jas. 1:20, NAS)***

*Amen and amen, let's stand.*