

## A SERIES OF DEVOTIONS BASED UPON THE LETTER OF JAMES

### A DIFFERENT WAY

James 4:1-3 “What causes fights and quarrels among you? Don’t they come from your desires that battle within you? You desire but do not have, so you kill. You covet but you cannot get what you want, so you quarrel and fight. You do not have because you do not ask God. When you ask, you do not receive, because you ask with wrong motives, that you may spend what you get on your pleasures.”

The evening news frequently begins with the latest body count telling viewers of the most recent shooting, the number wounded and killed. This is true in Phoenix, St. Louis, Chicago, Los Angeles or wherever you live in this country. Law enforcement is trying to determine how to bring lawlessness under control. Mayors, county, state and national leaders are beside themselves attempting to find ways to bring a halt to the senseless killing, smash and grabs, hateful attacks, etc.

James asks the question that is being asked by so many, “What causes fights and quarrels among you?” He then provides answers as if his question is rhetorical, “they come from your desires . . .” Reading between the lines, these are not good desires. They are selfish. They are the opposite of God’s second table of His Commandments, “You shall not take vengeance or bear a grudge against any of your people, but you shall love your neighbor as yourself: I am the LORD.” (Leviticus 19:18)

Retaliation is not God’s way. James says that God is not answering prayers because people are praying with wrong motives. Instead of praying for the good of family members, neighbors, friends, strangers and yes, enemies, so many are looking for ways to do great bodily harm to those with whom they disagree.

Jesus taught, “If your enemy is hungry, feed him; if he is thirsty, give him something to drink. In doing this, you will heap burning coals on his head.” Do not be overcome by evil, but overcome evil with good. (Romans 12:20-21) Jesus said, “But I tell you, do not resist an evil person. If anyone slaps you on the right cheek, turn to them the other cheek also. And if anyone wants to sue you and take your shirt, hand over your coat as well. If anyone forces you to go one mile, go with

them two miles.” (Matthew 5:39-41) “Above all, love each other deeply, because love covers over a multitude of sins.” (1 Peter 4:8)

Prayer: Lord, fill my heart with Your love to be able to treat those in my life in a way that is pleasing to you, gives honor and glory to Your name and is a blessing to them. In Jesus’ name. Amen.

Lord, help us walk Your servant way  
Wherever love may lead  
And, bending low, for getting self,  
Each serve the other’s need.

You came to earth, O Christ, as Lord,  
But pow’r You laid aside.  
You lived Your years in servanthood;  
In lowliness You died.

No golden scepter but a towel  
You place within the hands  
Of those who seek to follow You  
And live by Your commands.

You bid us bend our human pride  
Nor count ourselves above  
The lowest place, the meanest task  
That waits the gift of love.

Lord, help us walk Your servant way  
Wherever love may lead  
And, bending low, forgetting self,  
Each serve the other’s need.  
(LSB 857)