

THE BEREANS

ACTS 17:11

James 4:1-4
Lesson #7
Social Justice
11/06/2022

The challenge of DISSONANCE

*A Berean's look
at the stress of
social conflict*



1

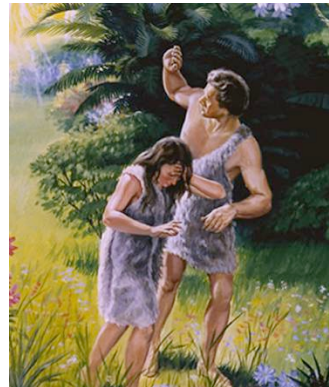
“The biggest source of stress in life is reality and those who chose to live in it.”

Lily Tomlin
(comedian)



2

The Fall created a profound dissonance



Genesis 3:10
“I was afraid because I was naked; so I hid myself.”

3

Dissonance as intellectual conflict

John 15:20

“A slave is not greater than his master. If they persecuted Me, **they will also persecute you;**”

John 10:10

“I came that they might have life, and might **have it abundantly.**”



4

Dissonance as inner moral conflict

Romans 7:19

“For the good that I wish, I do not do; **but I practice the very evil that I do not wish.**”



5

Dissonance as social conflict

James 4:1

“What is the source of quarrels and conflicts among you? **Is not the source your pleasures that wage war on your members?**”



6

Dissonance, Stress, and Social Conflict



Church



International



Marriage



Race



Government



Family

7



8

Responding to dissonance starts with recognizing its value

- ✓ It is a sign of “God’s image” in us.
- ✓ **It invites us to explore the root of the human dilemma**

which is the first step toward spiritual wisdom, creating an appetite for the Gospel of Christ.

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Understanding social conflict

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?**
 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. 4 You adulteresses, do you not know that **friendship with the world** is hostility toward God?”

10

Responding to stress starts with asking the right questions.

Question #1

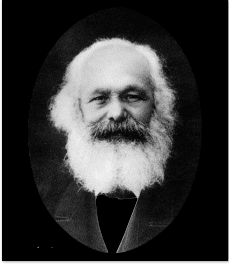
James 4:1

“What is the **source** of quarrels and conflicts among you?”



12

Understanding the stress of suffering has the attention of the whole world.



Marx
(reordering social systems)
Communism



Buddha
(detachment from the material world)
Enlightenment

12

Are cultural systems the problem?

People **IN POWER** within a culture:

- **make the rules**
- **keep the score**
- **write the history**
- **ASSUME THIS IS THE ISSUE**

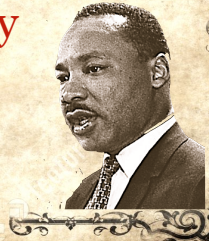
This is a neglected part of the problem.

But is it the source of social conflicts and the key to their solution?

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“Morality cannot be legislated, but behavior can be regulated. **Judicial decrees may not change the heart, but they can restrain the heartless.**”

Martin Luther King Jr.



14



A common assumption
If you want social peace you need a just society.

The Scriptures offer a different perspective.
Without inner peace there will be no social peace or justice.

15

How do Jesus and the Apostles address social justice?

John 18:36

“my kingdom is **not** of this world.”

Mark 7:20

“That which proceeds **out of** the man, that is what defiles the man.”

They say very little about the systems of the Roman Empire & what they do say is troubling (Matt.22:21, 1 Pet.2:13-20).

16

James 4:1

“What is the source of quarrels and conflicts among you?”

1. Social conflict is a heart problem

A broken life, failing to find hope in a broken world,

expresses itself in personal depression and social conflict.



17

war
social
conflict
distrust deception blame
Conflicts
Insecurity Anger Anxiety Shame

As fallen "image bearers of God" we long for life and live with dissonance.

When these longings are unmet through worldly strategies we get

18

"To change the law or the system and leave the heart unchanged is simply to drive social injustice underground and add to it hypocrisy."

19

short
tempered
anger irritable blame
Conflicts
You are blocking my goal to do things that will hinder the projection of my image as I seek security from other's acceptance giving them a messianic role in my life.

20

3. Inner stress can lead to **spiritual insight** if we are quick to hear, slow to speak, and slow to anger.

James 1

"¹⁹ This you know, my beloved brethren. But everyone must be **quick to hear, slow to speak and slow to anger**; ²⁰ for the anger of man does not achieve the righteousness of God."

Listen to your **soul's sorrow** as well as to the **Scripture and Holy Spirit**.

21

"I want protection." "I want correction."

"I need reflection."

Anxiety is a negative audit of the future. "Something awful might happen."

Anger is a negative audit of the past. "Something awful has happened."

These can be signs and symptoms of **spiritual issues that need addressing** and can lead me to reexamine my: **Perspectives - Goals - Priorities** which in turn can bring about **real change from the inside out.**

22

"1 . . . Is not the source **your pleasures (HEDONE)** 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."

2. "In the end it is always **between us and God, not between us & them.**"

Mother Teresa

23

White Evangelicals should take a careful look at their view of:



- **Christian nationalism** - Should we view America as an extension of God's kingdom?
- **American political philosophy** - Have we misplaced our faith, hope, & love?
- **Alien status** - Are we rejecting our alien status in American culture?
- **The real issue** - Is it spiritual or political?



24

"2 . . . 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."

4. The **subject** of our faith is just as important as the **object** of our faith.

- Our pleasures **may not align with God's purposes**.
- The prayer of faith can be canceled **by selfish motives**.



25

Satan doesn't want to take away our faith, hope, and love.

He just wants to control the **subject & object** of our faith, hope and love.



26

Satan doesn't mind legislative reform and civil order

If it leaves intact a hard heart of **fear, pride, self pity, & selfishness**.



27

Responding to stress starts with asking the right questions.

Question #2

"4 You adulteresses, **do you not know** that friendship with the world is hostility toward God?"



28

Signs of friendship with the world

- Refuse to see ourselves as "**aliens**" in it.
- Expect God to **bless us** with it.
- Seek **painkillers** through it.
- Demand **justice** from it.
- Blame **others** for it.
- Become a **part** of it.

29

James 3

“13 Who among you is wise and understanding? Let him **show by his good behavior** his deeds in the gentleness of wisdom.

Worldly Wisdom

“14 But if you have bitter **jealousy and selfish ambition** in your heart, do not be arrogant and so lie against the truth. 15 This wisdom is not that which comes down from above, but is earthly, natural, demonic. 16 For where **jealousy and selfish ambition** exist, there is disorder and every evil thing.

Godly Wisdom

17 But the wisdom from above is first pure, then **peaceable**, gentle, reasonable, full of mercy and good fruits, unwavering, without hypocrisy. 18 And the seed whose fruit is righteousness is sown in **peace** by those who **make peace**.”

Jeremiah 2:13

“For My people have committed two evils; they have forsaken Me, the fountain of living waters,

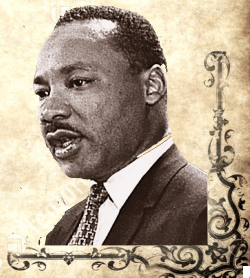


to hew for themselves cisterns, broken cisterns that can hold no water.”

“The Negro needs the white man to **free him from his fears**. The white man needs the Negro to **free him from his guilt**.”

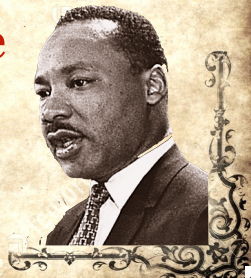
Both need the Word and Way of the Cross

Martin Luther King, Jr.



“Peace is not merely a distant goal that we seek **but a means by which we arrive at that goal**.”

Martin Luther King, Jr.



What should we learn from this lesson?

- **Jesus and his Apostles addressed many social issues within the church, but NOT IN THE ROMAN EMPIRE.**
- **Jesus and his Apostles addressed the root cause of social injustice - the HEART of those who shaped the systems of culture.**
- **Jesus miracles were SIGNS not SOLUTIONS to social problems.**

What might this tell us about our social action and expectations?

A Berean's look at ...

