

Go About to Lock the Locks

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On March 30, 2011, more than six years ago, a sermon was presented based on the epistle of James, chapter 4. Due to ongoing events over these six plus years, and due to some recent developments, I've been asked to resurrect that sermon. That sermon was titled The Box. I'm not going to give this sermon verbatim as times and circumstances have changed, but the crux, the basis, the foundation of today's sermon is the same as the sermon six plus years ago.

The title of today's message is,

Go About and Lock the Locks

We will begin today as we did six years ago by turning to James chapter 4.

James 4:1. *Where do wars and fights come from among you? Do they not come from your desires for pleasure that war in your members?
2) You lust and do not have. You murder and covet and cannot obtain. You fight and war ... (NKJV)*

On his album, "Poems, Prayers and Promises," in the poem titled, "The Box," John Denver had this to say about war.

Once upon a time in the land of Hushaby
Around the wondrous days of yore
I came across a sort of box
Bound up with chains and locked with locks
And labeled, "kindly do not touch, it's war."
Decree was issued round about all with a flourish and a shout
A gaily colored mascot tripping lightly [before]
"Don't fiddle with this deadly box
Or break the chains, or pick the locks
And please, don't ever play about with war."
Well, the children understood, children happen to be good
They were just as good around the time of yore
They didn't try to pick the locks
Or break into that deadly box
They never tried to play about with war.
Mommies didn't either, sisters, aunts, grannies neither
'Cause they were quiet and sweet and pretty
In those wondrous days of yore.
Well, very much the same as now, not the one to blame somehow
For opening up that deadly box of war.

But someone did, someone [opened the] battered lid
And spilled the insides out across the floor.
A sort of bouncy bumpy ball made up of guns and flags
And all the tears of horror and the death that goes with war.
It bounced right out and went bashing all about
And bumping into everything in store.
And what was sad and most unfair
Is that it didn't really seem to care
Much who it bumped, or why, or what, or for.
It bumped the children mainly, and I'll tell you this quite plainly
It bumped them every day and more and more
And leaves them dead and burned and dying
Thousands of them sick and crying
'Cause when it bumps, it's really very sore.
Now there's a way to stop the ball, it isn't difficult at all.
All it takes is wisdom
I'm absolutely sure that we could get it back into the box
And bind the chains and locks the locks
No one seems to want to save the children anymore.
Well, that's the way it all appears
'Cause it's been bouncing 'round for years
In spite of all the wisdom whizzed since those wondrous days of yore.
At the time they came across the box
Bound up with chains and locked with locks
And labeled, "Kindly do not touch, it's war."

Although John Denver's poem, "The Box," was recorded nearly forty-seven years ago, put to lyrics in protest of the Viet Nam conflict and the strife that was prominent throughout southeast Asia at that time, the words of this poem can be applied to the specifics of what we just read in James 4:1-2; *of the wars and fights among us, the desire for pleasure that war in our members*. This applies to the strife and contention found within human beings, strife and contention found within the greater Church of God corporations and between corporations, and sad to say, the strife and contention found within the physical entity that makes up the church, those within the spiritual body of Christ.

James 1:1. *James, a bondservant of God and of the Lord Jesus Christ, to the twelve tribes which are scattered abroad: Greetings. (NKJV)*

Although James' epistle carries a general salutation to the twelve tribes which are scattered abroad, chapters 1, 2 and 3 are addressed specifically to the brethren, and the context of all five chapters is specific to church brethren, specific to the spiritual body of Christ. Now one might state that strife, contentions, wars, fights, unrest and arguments in the church. Yes, strife, contention, unrest, quarrels, conflicts and dissensions within the church should not be, but they are. Over many years, we have all heard sermons regarding slander, we've all heard sermons regarding gossip. We've

heard sermons touching on envy and contempt. We've heard sermons even about hatred. Today we will review a similar theme, for today we will visit the sources and causes of strife and contention and we will discover antidotes for such.

Scripture is vividly clear that strife and contention will be with us until the very end. Why? Because Satan will continue to stir the pot. He will stir that pot until the very end. Even though strife and contention will surround us continually, it doesn't mean that we have to fall prey to such. It doesn't mean that we have to walk about with warring members in conflict.

Let's revisit James 4:1.

James 4:1. *Where do wars and fights come from among you? Do they not come from your desires for pleasure that war in your members? (NKJV)*

The word "members" here is interesting. It's Strong's 3196, and it pertains to a limb or a part of a body. So, one could say regarding James 4:1, *Where do wars and fights come from among you? Do they not come from your desires that war somewhere within your flesh, or that war within your eyes?* Now let's read 1 John 2:15 and 16.

1 John 2:15. *Do not love the world or the things in the world. If anyone loves the world, the love of the Father is not in him.*

16) For all that is in the world—the lust of the flesh, the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life—is not of the Father but is of the world. (NKJV)

The lust of the flesh and the lust of the eyes found here are the warring members, if you will, in James 4:1. Yet the word "members" found in James 4:1 is also metaphorical in nature. A metaphor as in members of a group or association. One could say members of the spiritual body of Christ.

In the study guide, Exploring the Bible – The General Epistles in the March 2004 edition, under the heading of James, chapter 4, Fights and Quarrels. The author writes,

After relating in the previous verse (James 3:18) that peace is a natural outcome of righteous conduct, James must now rebuke members of the church because relationships between them (emphasis on relationships between them) are anything but peaceful. The obvious reason for the resentment and hostilities, warring within or among the members, was a lack of applying the royal law of loving neighbor as self.

Let's turn to the scripture about loving neighbor as thyself.

Romans 13:8. *Owe no one anything except to love one another, for he who loves another has fulfilled the law.*

9) For the commandments, "You shall not commit adultery," "You shall not murder," "You shall not steal," "You shall not bear false witness," "You shall not

covet,” and if there is any other commandment, are all summed up in this saying, namely, “You shall love your neighbor as yourself.”

10) Love does no harm to a neighbor; therefore, love is the fulfillment of the law. (NKJV)

Love does no harm. Love fulfills the law. So, why do we war with one another? Why do we war amongst ourselves?

Consider this. Warring in our members, as we read in James 4:2, pertains to the wars within each of our members, warring within ourselves and between each of our members; in other words, warring among ourselves. It’s an understatement to say that it shouldn’t be that way. But it is.

Ephesians 4:1. *I, therefore, the prisoner of the Lord, beseech you to walk worthy of the calling with which you were called,*

2) *with all lowliness and gentleness, with longsuffering, bearing with one another in love,*

3) *endeavoring to keep the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace.*

4) *There is one body and one Spirit, just as you were called in one hope of your calling;*

5) *one Lord, one faith, one baptism;*

6) *one God and Father of all, who is above all, and through all, and in you all.*

7) *But to each one of us grace was given according to the measure of Christ’s gift.*

...

13) *till we all come to the unity of the faith and of the knowledge of the Son of God, to a perfect man, to the measure of the stature of the fullness of Christ;*

14) *that we should no longer be children, tossed to and fro and carried about with every wind of doctrine, by the trickery of men, in the cunning craftiness of deceitful plotting,*

15) *but, speaking the truth in love, may grow up in all things into Him who is the head—Christ—*

16) *from whom the whole body, joined and knit together by what every joint supplies, according to the effective working by which every part does its share, causes growth of the body for the edifying of itself in love. (NKJV)*

Here we find an outline of what our deeds should be like. We are to keep the unity of the spirit until we all come to the unity of the faith.

It’s sad to say, and it’s been stated before, we’re not there yet. Some may say we should be, but we’re not. We need to ask ourselves the following: How many years have we been sitting in services since our baptism? It’s a rhetorical question. How many years have we been sitting in services since our baptism? At baptism, we were to bury the old man. Question: Did we? From time to time, our actions don’t reflect that. From time to time, our deeds are not what they should be. By deeds, I’m referring to

our interactions with each other, whether these interactions are brethren to brethren, brethren to the ministry, ministry to the brethren or ministry to the ministry.

Look at what Paul states in Ephesians 4:17.

Ephesians 4:17. *This I say, therefore, and testify in the Lord, that you should no longer walk as the rest of the Gentiles walk, in the futility of their mind, 18) having their understanding darkened, being alienated from the life of God, because of the ignorance that is in them, because of the blindness of their heart; 19) who, being past feeling, have given themselves over to lewdness, to work all uncleanness with greediness. 20) But you have not so learned Christ, 21) if indeed you have heard Him and have been taught by Him, as the truth is in Jesus: 22) that you put off, concerning your former conduct, the old man which grows corrupt according to the deceitful lusts, 23) and be renewed in the spirit of your mind, 24) and that you put on the new man which was created according to God, in true righteousness and holiness. 25) Therefore, putting away lying, "Let each one of you speak truth with his neighbor," for we are members of one another. (NKJV)*

Let each of us speak truth with his neighbor, for we are members. It's the same Strong's word, 3196, that we referred to earlier in James 4:1. We are members of one another. We are members together in one body. Question: Are we? It's another one of those rhetorical questions. Are we at one with one another or are we at odds with one another?

I don't think anyone within the body of Christ doubts that we are in the end times. The time is short. Let me try to make this as vivid as possible, as clear as possible. In professional football, the sports announcer might state, "We're in the fourth quarter." Well, from a spiritual perspective, I agree. But I also agree we are closer to the end of the game than we think. I'm not saying that salvation is a game that we can toy with. It's anything but a game, but metaphorically, we are in the fourth quarter and even closer to the end because I personally feel we're in the last two minutes of the game. The last two minutes means a great deal to professional football athletes. The last two minutes means it's time to proactively implement what they refer to as the two-minute drill. The two-minute drill is analogous to our spiritual lives. The two-minute drill is a hurry-up offense in American football in which the offensive team implements two aspects of play to avoid delays between plays, striving to confuse the defensive team. The success of the two-minute drill rests on two aspects and two aspects only, focus and execution. Nothing else. Focus on the plays being called by the coach and execution of those plays. Execution here meaning, *to hurry up, to accomplish, to carry out, to perform, to execute a maneuver.* Execution can also mean *effective action.*

An example of execution would be the lyrics to the poem, "The Box," which states,

Turn the bouncing ball of war back in the box
And go about to lock the locks.

Execution here is a maneuver of focusing on putting the bouncing ball into the box and go about immediately to lock the locks. Spiritually, we too are not only in the fourth quarter, but the six thousand years allotted to man are nearing the final two-minute warning. Time is running short and we must focus more diligently than ever on our calling and apply (execute, if you will) God's word as never before. We must come to the point of unity within the body of Christ, unity of the spirit and unity of faith. We must stop walking as the Gentiles walked as we read in Ephesians 4:17.

Ephesians 4:17. *This I say, therefore, and testify in the Lord, that you should no longer walk as the rest of the Gentiles walk, in the futility of their mind, (NKJV)*

We must stop warring within our members. Stop warring among our members. As an aid to get us to the point of what we read in Ephesians 4:1-3, living in all lowliness and gentleness and longsuffering, bearing with one another in love, endeavoring to keep the bond of peace in our lives. Today in this message, we will identify the sources, the causes of strife and contention. We will discover how to change our actions, thus living by the royal law.

1. Sources of strife and contention.

1.A. Hatred.

Proverbs 10:12. *Hatred stirs up strife, but love covers all sins. (NKJV)*

Four simple words in the New King James, *Hatred stirs up strife*. The International Standard Bible Encyclopedia defines "hatred" as *a feeling of strong antagonism and dislike, prompting to injury*. Those are pretty strong words, straight and to the point. Hatred causes strife because hatred is a work of the flesh.

Galatians 5:19. *Now the works of the flesh are evident, which are: adultery, fornication, uncleanness, lewdness, 20) idolatry, sorcery, hatred, contentions, jealousies, outbursts of wrath, selfish ambitions, dissensions, heresies, 21) envy, murders, drunkenness, revelries, and the like; of which I tell you beforehand, just as I also told you in time past, that those who practice such things will not inherit the kingdom of God. (NKJV)*

A cause of strife and contention is hatred, and hatred from God's perspective, is a work of the flesh. Unrepented of hatred will keep one from the Kingdom of God.

1.B. Perverseness.

Proverbs 16:28. *A perverse man sows strife, and a whisperer separates the best of friends. (NKJV)*

The King James Version states:

Proverbs 16:28. *A froward man soweth strife: and a whisperer separates chief friends. (KJV)*

Froward means *perverse*, and *perverse* means *willfully disposed to go counter to what is right, good and proper*. *Perverse* can also mean *wicked*. I believe that is what comes to mind for most of us when we hear the word *perverse* or *perversion*. The definition of *perversion* is *showing a deliberate and obstinate desire to behave in a way that is unreasonable or unacceptable, often in spite of the consequences*.

Proverbs 11:20. *Those who are of a perverse heart are an abomination to the LORD ... (NKJV)*

In other words, God hates a perverse heart. Why?

Proverbs 8:8. *All the words of my mouth are with righteousness; nothing crooked or perverse is in them. (NKJV)*

Wisdom, in this chapter, is personified and what is being stated here is that there is no perverseness in wisdom.

Proverbs 17:20. *He who has a deceitful heart finds no good, and he who has a perverse tongue falls into evil. (NKJV)*

God hates perverseness because there is nothing froward or perverse about God, for God is love, God is righteousness.

1.C. Transgression.

Proverbs 17:19. *He who loves transgression loves strife, and he who exalts his gate seeks destruction.*

He who loves sin loves strife. Another way of saying this is, he who loves strife sins. What is sin?

1 John 3:4. *Whosoever commits sin transgresses also the law: for sin is the transgression of the law. (KJV)*

Strife and contention among God's people is sin, the breaking of one or more of the spiritual ten.

1.D. Anger.

Proverbs 29:22. *An angry man stirs up strife, and a furious man abounds in transgression. (NKJV)*

A furious man abounds in sin.

Proverbs 26:21. *As charcoal is to burning coals, and wood to fire, so is a contentious man to kindle strife. (NKJV)*

An individual living a life of anger is the catalyst to strife. Anger stirs the pot, and soon the pot boils, and soon after that, if left unattended, the pot boils over.

1.E. Pride.

Proverbs 13:10. *By pride comes nothing but strife ... (NKJV)*

Pride is a breeding ground for contentions among us. The word “pride” used here is Strong’s 2087, transliterated as “dadoen” and its root word means *arrogance*. What is the antonym for arrogance? It’s humility. Regarding humility, what does the Lord require of us?

Micah 6:8. *He has shown you, O man, what is good; and what does the LORD require of you but to do justly, to love mercy, and to walk humbly with your God? (NKJV)*

If we are walking humbly before God, there would be no pride, and if there would be no pride, there would be no contentions among us.

1.F. Disagreement.

In Act 15 we find a prime example of disagreement and the contention it brings.

Acts 15:36. *Then after some days Paul said to Barnabas, “Let us now go back and visit our brethren in every city where we have preached the word of the Lord, and see how they are doing.”*

37) Now Barnabas was determined to take with them John called Mark.

38) But Paul insisted that they should not take with them the one who had departed from them in Pamphylia, and had not gone with them to the work.

39) Then the contention became so sharp that they parted from one another. And so, Barnabas took Mark and sailed to Cyprus; (NKJV)

The contention here was so sharp that they parted ways. They walked a separate path if you will. This has happened in the end-time body of Christ as well. Disagreements of various types have led to separations, the exact opposite of what we read earlier in

Ephesians 4. We are not to go our separate ways. We are to build the body of Christ in unity, in the spirit of faith.

1 Corinthians 3:3b. ... *For where there are envy, strife, and divisions among you, are you not carnal and behaving like mere men? (NKJV)*

Again, this references back to Ephesians 4:17, walking as the Gentiles walk.

1 Corinthians 1:10. *Now I plead with you, brethren, by the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, that you all speak the same thing, and that there be no divisions among you, but that you be perfectly joined together in the same mind and in the same judgment.*

11) *For it has been declared to me concerning you, my brethren, by those of Chloe's household, that there are contentions among you.*

12) *Now I say this, that each of you says, "I am of Paul," or "I am of Apollos," or "I am of Cephas," or "I am of Christ."*

13) *Is Christ divided? Was Paul crucified for you? Or were you baptized in the name of Paul? (NKJV)*

Verse 13 is the question. The overwhelming majority of us today were at one time affiliated with the Worldwide Church of God. We were not baptized in the name of Hebert W. Armstrong. We were not baptized in the name of our former association or any association since. We are not of any elder who may have baptized us. We are not of any organization or corporation with whom an elder may be affiliated with or any elder that may be employed by a specific corporation. Verse 13 states, Is Christ divided? Brethren, we are of Christ. Christ is not divided. The answer is found in Romans, chapter 12.

Romans 12:3. *For I say, through the grace given to me, to everyone who is among you, not to think of himself more highly than he ought to think, but to think soberly, as God has dealt to each one a measure of faith.*

4) *For as we have many members in one body, but all the members do not have the same function,*

5) *so we, being many, are one body in Christ, and individually members of one another. (NKJV)*

Now hold that thought and refer to 1 Corinthians 12:12.

1 Corinthians 12:12. *For as the body is one and has many members, but all the members of that one body, being many, are one body, so also is Christ. (NKJV)*

There should be no disagreement, no divisions among us. We've been baptized into Christ. We may choose to fellowship or affiliate with a specific organization, but our allegiance is to Jesus Christ. We are to follow in His footsteps, not any man's footsteps, not in any organization's or corporation's footsteps. We are to follow Christ's footsteps.

Follow His word, the word of God. That's where the truth is found. Not in any man's writings, we are to follow Christ and the Father.

John 17:17. *Sanctify them by Your truth. Your word is truth. (NKJV)*

1.G. A quarrelsome spirit.

A quarrelsome spirit is a source of strife and contention.

It's interesting how the following scripture is worded.

Galatians 5:15. *But if you bite and devour one another, beware lest you be consumed by one another! (NKJV)*

The dictionary definition of the word "devour" is *to swallow or eat up voraciously or ravenously, to consume destructively*. Are we to consume one another ravenously or destructively? A quarrelsome spirit will do exactly that. What we find in the previous scripture is simply a paraphrase of our opening scripture; wars and fights come from a desire that wars within ourselves. As stated before, this shouldn't be.

So, where are we in this message today? Well, to this point, we have defined seven scripturally-based sources of strife and contention. What then are the antidotes?

2. The antidotes of strife and contention.

Today we will review five, but I'm sure there are more.

2.A. Simplify our lives.

Proverbs 17:1. *Better is a dry morsel with quietness, than a house full of feasting with strife. (NKJV)*

We read here that a small piece of parched morsel, overcooked or burnt if you will, that this piece of burnt morsel is better than a house full of feasting with strife. In other words, the simplicity of a quiet meal is better than the exuberance of a house full of many contentious guests at a feast. We're going to get hungry as we read these scriptures.

Proverbs 15:17. *Better is a dinner of herbs where love is, than a fatted calf with hatred. (NKJV)*

In other words, the simplicity of a vegetable meal prepared with love is better than a huge steak prepared in a hostile environment. It doesn't mean that we should not fellowship over a meal, that we should not break bread together, for we certainly should, but there should be simplicity in such with everyone participating and taking part. It makes it easier for everyone else. Peace and calmness is found in simplicity. Peace is

easier to attain when things are simple. There is less contention when things are not so complex.

2.B. Be slow to anger.

Proverbs 14:29. *He who is slow to wrath has great understanding, but he who is impulsive exalts folly. (NKJV)*

Slowness of wrath, anger if you will, rids one of the emotional aspect of a conversation or discussion, whereas a short fuse can cause immediate strife. A short fuse can cause immediate contention.

Proverbs 29:8. *Scoffers set a city aflame, but wise men turn away wrath. (NKJV)*

It is wisdom to turn away from wrath. It's interesting, the dictionary definition of "wrath" is *fierce anger*.

2.C. Avoid the contentious and their controversies.

Titus 3:9. *But avoid foolish disputes, genealogies, contentions, and strivings about the law; [why?] for they are unprofitable and useless. (NKJV)*

In other words, avoid the above. Avoid simply means *to keep away from, shun, evade, have no part in*.

2 Timothy 2:23. *But avoid foolish and ignorant disputes, knowing that they generate strife. (NKJV)*

Want to generate strife in your life? Just go ahead and participate in foolish and ignorant disputes.

Want to live peacefully? Read 2 Timothy 2:22.

2 Timothy 2:22. *Flee also youthful lusts; but pursue righteousness, faith, love, peace with those who call on the Lord out of a pure heart. (NKJV)*

Here's where our conversation and conduct should be, with those who practice righteousness, keeping the law, keeping the commandments, those who practice faith, love and peace with who? With those who can call on the Lord out of a pure heart.

2.D. Avoid quarrels.

Proverbs 20:3. *It is honorable for a man to stop striving, since any fool can start a quarrel. (NKJV)*

Duh! Any fool can start a quarrel, but it's honorable to stop one.

Proverbs 17:14. *The beginning of strife is like releasing water; therefore stop contention before a quarrel starts. (NKJV)*

You see, strife is like running water. It keeps flowing and flowing and flowing. It reminds me of the Energizer Bunny. It's keeps running and running and running. It's best to make sure the spigot is turned completely off at all times; thus, the water won't flow at all.

2.E. Follow peace.

Romans 12:18. *If it is possible, as much as depends on you, live peaceably with all men.*

19) *Beloved, do not avenge yourselves, but rather give place to wrath; for it is written, "Vengeance is Mine, I will repay," says the Lord.*

20) *Therefore "If your enemy is hungry, feed him; If he is thirsty, give him a drink; For in so doing you will heap coals of fire on his head."*

21) *Do not be overcome by evil, but overcome evil with good. (NKJV)*

Don't live peaceably with some men and women or just some of the brethren, but live at peace with all people.

Romans 12:16. *Be of the same mind toward one another. Do not set your mind on high things, but associate with the humble. Do not be wise in your own opinion.*

17) *Repay no one evil for evil. Have regard for good things in the sight of all men. (NKJV)*

Be a peacemaker.

Matthew 5:9. *Blessed are the peacemakers, for they shall be called sons of God. (NKJV)*

Peacemakers shall be called sons and daughters of God.

Reflecting back on our American football analogy, we need to be peacemakers now more than ever because we're in the waning minutes of the fourth quarter. We should have the foresight, the drive and desire and determination to move forward with our spiritual two-minute drill. When you have the drive and desire to put the bouncing ball of war back in the box and go about to lock those locks, there's no time for continuing strife and contention. There's only time, brethren, for healing of our relationships, a time for preparing to be the bride of Christ. There's only a short time remaining to be highly focused on our playbook if you will, God's word, our Coach's instructions found within the pages of the Bible. We need to have that focus and we need to execute His instructions that are found in the pages of Genesis to Revelation.

Colossians 3:12. *Therefore, as the elect of God, holy and beloved, put on tender mercies, kindness, humility, meekness, longsuffering;*
13) *bearing with one another, and forgiving one another, if anyone has a complaint against another; even as Christ forgave you, so you also must do.*
14) *But above all these things put on love, which is the bond of perfection.*
15) *And let the peace of God rule in your hearts, to which also you were called in one body; and be thankful. (NKJV)*

Philippians 2:1. *Therefore if there is any consolation in Christ, if any comfort of love, if any fellowship of the Spirit, if any affection and mercy,*
2) *fulfill my joy by being like-minded, having the same love, being of one accord, of one mind.*
3) *Let nothing be done through selfish ambition or conceit, but in lowliness of mind let each esteem others better than himself.*
4) *Let each of you look out not only for his own interests, but also for the interests of others.*
5) *Let this mind be in you which was also in Christ Jesus, (NKJV)*

The bottom line resolution to strife and contention, warring in and between our members, is to fill our minds with that of Jesus Christ. Put on the mind of Christ. These verses from Philippians, chapter 2 are full of another entity which resolves strife. I'm going to reread Philippians 2:1-4, but this time from the New Living Translation.

Philippians 2:1. *Is there any encouragement from belonging to Christ? Any comfort from his love? Any fellowship together in the Spirit? Are your hearts tender and compassionate?*
2) *Then make me truly happy by agreeing wholeheartedly with each other, loving one another, and working together with one mind and purpose.*
3) *Don't be selfish; don't try to impress others. Be humble, thinking of others as better than yourselves.*
4) *Don't look out only for your own interests, but take an interest in others, too. (NLT)*

The attributes listed above are stated in the New King James Version as affection, mercy, like-mindedness, one accord, one mind, selflessness, esteeming others above self, and looking out for the interests of others. How are these attributes summed into one word? What would that word be? It's love, the outgoing concern for others.

1 Corinthians 13:4. *Love suffers long and is kind; love does not envy; love does not parade itself, is not puffed up;*
5) *does not behave rudely, does not seek its own, is not provoked, thinks no evil;*
6) *does not rejoice in iniquity, but rejoices in the truth;*
7) *bears all things, believes all things, hopes all things, endures all things.*
8) *Love never fails ... (NKJV)*

Love is the key ingredient in ending warring.

1 Corinthians 13:11. *When I was a child, I spoke as a child, I understood as a child, I thought as a child; but when I became a man, I put away childish things. (NKJV)*

As young children, how did we speak or think or act? I'm going to use myself as an example. In many cases and many times, it was 180 degrees different from that of love. I can remember my best friend, Jimmy Reed. I know I've used this example in the past. We were inseparable. We did everything together. We even fought with each other. We were always at each other. As I said, I've used this example in the past. I'll use the short version today. One summer afternoon, walking home from the local drug store. It was one of those drug stores that had the old soda fountain. We were walking up 86th Avenue and getting close to the intersection of 30th. I lived at 85th and 30th. I can't even tell you why, we were having a blast and then all of a sudden, we were warring at each other. Can't remember what it was about, probably some childish thing, but I do remember the outcome of the fight. We tore each other's t-shirts to shreds, and our blue jeans became grass stained and dirty. We departed never, ever to speak or see each other again. An hour later, our moms had us in front of each other, both apologizing. Then I think we went into the back yard and played a game of marbles.

The point is that kids fight, and they fight quite often, at least they did back in the 1950s. And you know what? We survived. Was it childish to do so? Yes, it was. What do we find in verse 11? We are admonished to put off childish things.

1 Corinthians 13:13. *And now abide faith, hope, love, these three; but the greatest of these is love. (NKJV)*

Love is greater than faith. Love is greater than hope. Why would that be? It's greater than faith and hope because love has always existed, because God has always existed, because God is love.

Some of you may have picked up on this already, but I have purposely left out the definition of strife, and the definition of contention. The definition of strife is *vigorous or bitter conflict, discord, to quarrel, to clash*. The definition of contention is *dispute, struggling in opposition*.

If any of us are involved in strife and/or contention, apply what we read here in James, chapter 3. Think about applying what we read here in our lives, especially if we are currently involved in any strife or contention, warring within or among ourselves.

James 3:13. *Who is wise and understanding among you? Let him show by good conduct that his works are done in the meekness of wisdom.*

14) *But if you have bitter envy and self-seeking in your hearts, do not boast and lie against the truth.*

15) *This wisdom does not descend from above, but is earthly, sensual, demonic.*

16) *For where envy and self-seeking exist, confusion and every evil thing are there.*

17) *But the wisdom that is from above is first pure, then peaceable, gentle, willing to yield, full of mercy and good fruits, without partiality and without hypocrisy.*

18) *Now the fruit of righteousness is sown in peace by those who make peace. (NKJV)*

The closing lyrics of the poem, "The Box," state:

Now there's a way to stop the ball, it isn't difficult at all.
All it takes is wisdom
I'm absolutely sure that we could get it back into the box
And bind the chains and locks the locks.

Brethren, each of us has access to wisdom, the wisdom spoken of by John Denver in his poem, the wisdom that is given to us in the words of God Almighty.

James 1:5. *If any of you lacks wisdom, let him ask of God, who gives to all liberally and without reproach, and it will be given to him. (NKJV)*

If we're lacking wisdom, ask God for it.

Proverbs 2:6. *For the LORD gives wisdom; from His mouth come knowledge and understanding;*

7) *He stores up sound wisdom for the upright; He is a shield to those who walk uprightly;*

8) *He guards the paths of justice, and preserves the way of His saints.*

9) *Then you will understand righteousness and justice, equity and every good path.*

10) *When wisdom enters your heart, and knowledge is pleasant to your soul,*

11) *Discretion will preserve you; understanding will keep you, (NKJV)*

The Lord gives wisdom. We must apply it in our lives.

Another personal example as we begin to wrap things up. I'm going to throw myself under the bus once again. This is a story you have not heard.

We just heard that wisdom is defined as having knowledge and good judgment. The two go together. Wisdom is having knowledge and good judgment.

There was an episode while I was stationed at an Airforce base in Okinawa, Japan. I was there for a portion of 1968, all of 1969 and a good portion of 1970, at the height of the Viet Nam conflict. As a staff sergeant with three and a half years of experience, I had the knowledge, but the story I'm about to tell you lacks judgment. As a staff sergeant, my assigned duty was to manage a number of lower-rank airmen. One day there was some illness and I had to stand in for one of the airmen. His assignment that

day was to pull P.M. (preventative maintenance) on a MA1A start cart. What is that? You can check on Google or Bing. It's a small turbine engine on four wheels. When under full pressure, full power, full thrust, it generates high velocity air for starting aircraft. By the way, did I tell you that this MA1A is fueled by JP4, the same fuel used in jet aircraft? It's used to start aircraft because of the high velocity air flow and it was used on the F4 Phantoms, the F105 Thunder Chiefs. They were the work horse of the Viet Nam conflict. The high velocity air produced by the MA1A would turn or spool up, if you will, the jet engine and it would ignite the aircraft engine. Now I had pulled preventative maintenance on MA1A's probably hundreds of times over the prior two years without any issues, but this time was different. Due to the lack of wisdom, again I had the knowledge, but not the judgment. I took a few shortcuts. After all, I was a staff sergeant (pride). Policy states that the very first thing you do with performing maintenance on a MA1A is to disconnect the power supply, disconnect the batteries. Well, I think one of you has guessed it already. I did not disconnect the batteries that day. About half way through the PM, I was to replace the fuel filter and, in doing so, I spilled some JP4 fuel into the carriage area. Everything was fine until the wrench that I was using slipped out of my hands and shorted across the live battery contacts, the battery terminals, and in a split second there was this flash and spark and, yup, my MA1A was on fire. Luckily for me, I did follow the policy of having a fire extinguisher close at hand, and I promptly put out the fire. I was totally embarrassed. Staff sergeants just don't do stuff like that. Totally embarrassed, I looked around at the other airmen in the hangar and no one, not one of them got wind that I nearly destroyed an entire aircraft hangar and its millions of dollars of aircraft and equipment, not to mention the possibility of loss of life. Yes, it's the exact same hangar that I was standing fire watch in during Typhoon Cora, the category 5 super typhoon that hit the Ryukyu Islands, and the roof nearly blew off of that hangar. Been there, done that, but I didn't get the t-shirt.

Bottom line to this personal example is simply this. In our lives, physical and spiritual lives, we must apply wisdom. In my short story, I did not.

Proverbs 3:13. Happy is the man who finds wisdom ... (NKJV)

I was very happy. I had that fire extinguisher right at hand.

13b) ... and the man who gains understanding; (NKJV)

Did I gain understanding after that? You bet I did.

14) For her [wisdom] proceeds are better than the profits of silver, and her gain than fine gold.

15) She is more precious than rubies, and all the things you may desire cannot compare with her.

16) Length of days is in her right hand, in her left hand, riches and honor.

17) Her ways are ways of pleasantness, and all her paths are peace.

18) *She is a tree of life to those who take hold of her, and happy are all who retain her. (NKJV)*

Brethren, all we have to do is apply what God supplies.

Proverbs 4:5-13 talks about getting wisdom and understanding.

Proverbs 4:11. *I have taught you in the way of wisdom; I have led you in right paths.*

12) *When you walk, your steps will not be hindered, and when you run, you will not stumble.*

13) *Take firm hold of instruction, do not let go; keep her, for she is your life. (NKJV)*

Wisdom, brethren, is the principle thing. We have access to it. All we have to do is ask for it and then apply it in our lives.

Ephesians 4:31. *Let all bitterness, wrath, anger, clamor, and evil speaking be put away from you, with all malice.*

32) *And be kind to one another, tenderhearted, forgiving one another, even as God in Christ forgave you. (NKJV)*

By applying God's spirit in our lives, thus insuring wisdom in our lives, we can bring strife to a halt, and each of us can halt contentions. We can end the warring in our members. Each of us can return the bouncing ball of war back into the box, and each of us can go about to lock the locks.