

# WHERE DO WARS COME FROM

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*James 4: 1-6 NKJV*

*1Where do [a]wars and fights come from among you? Do they not come from your desires for pleasure that war in your members? 2You lust and do not have. You murder and covet and cannot obtain. You fight and [b]war. [c]Yet you do not have because you do not ask. 3You ask and do not receive, because you ask amiss, that you may spend it on your pleasures. 4[d]Adulterers and adulteresses! Do you not know that friendship with the world is enmity with God? Whoever therefore wants to be a friend of the world makes himself an enemy of God. 5Or do you think that the Scripture says in vain, "The Spirit who dwells in us yearns jealously"?*

*6But He gives more grace. Therefore He says:*

*"God resists the proud,  
But gives grace to the humble."*

We are observing the horror of the modern war in Ukraine.  
What is a Just War?

Just war theory says that armed conflict is only moral as a last resort, waged by a legitimate government, for moral reasons, and using moral means.

...always subject to debate.

It's also critically important to distinguish between the concept of a just war and the idea of a holy war. Just war theory does not support the concept of waging holy wars, and neither does the Bible.

Christian application of just war theory stems from several scriptural principles:

- human beings have intrinsic value (Genesis 1:27)
- but are also inherently sinful (Romans 3:10).
- God instituted human government specifically to maintain order and justice (Romans 13:1-5; 1 Peter 2:14).
- Mankind in general, and Christians in particular, are morally obligated to pursue a more just world (Proverbs 21:3; Micah 6:8; Matthew 5:13-16).
- This obligation does not, however, imply any use of violence to "advance" the faith (John 18:36).
- Further, God's prohibition on killing applies to murder (Exodus 20:13), not to capital punishment (Genesis 9:6) or justified warfare (Psalm 18:34) or legitimate self-defense (Luke 22:36).
- At the same time, cruelty, revenge, and hatred are condemned by the Bible (Romans 12:19; Proverbs 20:22; Galatians 5:19-24).

The most commonly understood version of just war theory is grounded in these biblical ideals, simplified into five major points. Per just war theory, any conflict not meeting all of these conditions is "unjust" and morally unacceptable. It's important to re-emphasize that this framework cannot remove all possible controversy. There will always be differences of opinion about whether a particular war—or any war—fits these points.

The five main requirements of a "just war" are as follows:

1. A just war is declared by a legitimate government. According to just war theory, independent people or groups cannot act as vigilantes, taking upon themselves the right to wage aggressive warfare. This also excludes government actions that go beyond established rules; for instance, if a national leader were to ignore that country's laws in ordering an attack or if a military leader staged a coup and immediately attacked another nation.
2. A just war is an act of last resort. Prior to engaging in violence, a nation must make every effort to attain its intended goals by other means. This might include diplomacy, economic or legal actions, and so forth. This is a crucial tenet of just war theory: war results from the failure of all other options. It is not one option among many. As an extension of this idea, the government should seek to end the conflict as quickly as is reasonably possible.
3. A just war is fought for a just cause. The intended outcome of the war itself must be morally upright. Goals such as freeing people from death and persecution or stopping another nation's conquest might meet this definition. A desire to gain more land or to punish another nation for some perceived insult would be an example of an unjust goal.
4. A just war seeks prudent goals. Warfare is less justifiable when it has little to no chance of succeeding. This requirement is meant to balance the concept of a "just cause." Grandiose ideas can't be claimed as valid reasons for bloodshed. Likewise, a war cannot be justified unless its goals, even noble ones, are proportionate to its toll of death and destruction. For example, the goal of improving another nation's educational system is not a morally valid reason to engage in open warfare.
5. A just war uses moral means. According to just war theory, noble ends or goals do not justify any and all actions to achieve victory. In short, the ends do not justify the means. This means a just war is restrained to proportionate levels of violence and does not engage in excessive or cruel use of force. This principle also requires making an effort to avoid civilian casualties, undue destruction, or actions that would unreasonably affect those uninvolved in the conflict.

NOW, I WANT TO CUT TO THE HEART OF THE MATTER. THAT IS THIS: VANITY DESTROYS.

Vanity played a role in the first sin in the Garden of Eden, and it continues to be the root of most sin today. Satan introduced vanity with the words, "Has God really said . . .?" (Genesis 3:1). Eve saw that the forbidden fruit was beautiful, tasty, and appealing, and vanity began to stir within her. The desire for pleasure and personal promotion displaced God in her heart. Still today, sin occurs when we allow our own opinions to trump God's Word. When vanity rules us, God does not. When God rules us, vanity has to go.

King Saul let vanity rule his life until it destroyed him. Strikingly handsome, gifted, and chosen by God, Saul had the potential to be a world-changer (1 Samuel 9:1–2). Humbled at first that he should be God's elect king (1 Samuel 9:21, 10:21–22), Saul soon let vanity go to his head (1 Samuel 13:8–14). His vanity decided that he was important enough to disregard the command of the Lord and make things happen in his own way. Because of this, God removed His blessing and His Spirit from Saul so that the remainder of his reign was plagued with jealousies, murder, and discord (1 Samuel 16:14; 18:10–11).

Paul tells us to pray for those in government over us "that we may live peaceful and quiet lives in all godliness and holiness" (1 Tim. 2:2).