

James (Part 8) – Worldliness / Godliness

Matt Chandler – April 19, 2015

Good morning. If you have your Bibles, go ahead and grab those. James, chapter 4, is where we're going to be. We're going to cover the first 12 verses there in chapter 4. I know it's been a couple of weeks since we've covered James, so I want to kind of rehash just a little bit where we were. Just so you don't have to wonder, here's the argument from Scripture this morning.

The message of the gospel of Jesus Christ invades that space that's filled with quarrels and envy and conceit and jealousy and heals and moves in such a way that it creates humility and a type of unity within a covenant community where relationships are deep and thriving, and darkness is pushed back and pushed to the fringes. That's the argument we'll read in this passage of James, but to get there, I have to put it in its context.

Three weeks ago, the week before Easter, we looked at James, chapter 3, the last section of verses there. We said James is arguing that there is false wisdom. There's a way to live your life that's categorically false. It's out of step with ultimate reality. Then there's a way to live your life that lines up with what he calls true wisdom or living in step with the way God designed things to work. Really the litmus test on whether or not you're walking in false wisdom or true wisdom was what you do with two kind of theological ideas. Those two ideas were these.

Namely, speaking of the Bible, ultimately God is for God. Yes, God loves you. Yes, God will bless you. Yes, God is concerned for you. But ultimately, when we look at the God of the Bible, the driving motivation of everything God does is the glory of his own name, so what is uppermost in God's affections is not you or me but rather himself. That's really good news.

Then the second thing we said was because God is for God and because he is the Creator of all things he has designed things to work a specific way. To kind of distill that even further, there is a truth to be known and practiced and submitted to so that truth is not relative. What I mean by that

is *you* don't get to decide what's true. *I* don't get to decide what's true. There is a truth that can be known and must be applied if we're going to walk in step with ultimate reality.

James unpacks false wisdom like this. False wisdom categorically rejects that God is for God. If you believe in God at all, if there is a God, false wisdom says that God exists for me. He should use his power, his might, as a type of errand boy to get me what I want. If there *is* a God, false wisdom says he exists to bring me another pillow when I get uncomfortable. There is no truth to be had except what I decide is true for me.

It doesn't matter what the Bible says. It doesn't matter how the Christian church has historically viewed what the Scriptures say. "What I want is what I'm going to get. If the Bible kind of runs against me, then there should be an asterisk by that verse. If you look to the back, there will be my picture with the phrase, 'Never mind' underneath it." That's false wisdom. That's where it's rooted. The Bible tells us false wisdom has its heart on the here and now and has no view of eternity.

Living in false wisdom means the default posture, the default position, you take is, "This is all I get. There is no eternity. There is no thousand years from now. There is no ten thousand years from now. All I have is today. I'm going to spend my money like this is all I have. I'm going to treat my relationships like this is all I have. This is all there is. Eat, drink, and be merry, for tomorrow we die." Right? That's the refrain of false wisdom.

Even if you didn't look at this religiously but you just looked at it sociologically, you just looked at this intellectually, that idea is the death of everything human beings have called virtue since the beginning of time. "It's just about me, just about what I want. This is all there is. There's no need to sacrifice. Why would I ever lay down my life for you? This is all I have! This is all I have! Why would I ever sacrifice anything for you? In fact, my happiness must be uppermost in my affections. If there's a God, he is all about my happiness too."

Now there is no category for suffering. There is no category for what to do when relationships get difficult. There is no category for long-suffering commitment, because this is all there is. It's earthly in its nature. Because that's true, it's marked by bitterness and jealousy and selfish ambition. Again, this is just reasoning, right? I mean, if it's true you believe that if there is a God, he is basically your errand boy for your happiness, if you believe there is no such thing as truth except what you decide you want and what you desire, there's nothing that has to be submitted to.

Can it be any other way except that you would be consistently bitter and jealous and frustrated and angry? It has to be that way because you're the point. When you're the point, you're miserable, because everybody serves your purpose. We have to make *you* happy. Everybody has to serve you, and people don't. "Gosh! They're always doing stuff *they* want to do. What about *me*?" You become this expert on all you do and an expert on all everyone else doesn't.

This leads to bitterness. This leads to selfish ambition. This leads to jealousy, because anytime somebody has more than what you have, that's an affront. That's an affront to you. Like you deserve that. You should have that. That's rightfully yours. It sows seeds of discontent. Again, this is just reason. It leads, according to James, to every disorder and every vile practice.

If we can have real talk with one another today, we are really perverted, dark people. We really are! Look at me. If we thought we could get away with it, we would do the most horrific of things. If we thought we could get away with it, that there would be no cost here and now and there was no judgment to come, we would give ourselves over to the most deplorable, dark things imaginable. That's exactly what happens when you walk in false wisdom, because there's no truth except what you decide is true. There's no end except your personal happiness.

Regardless of who gets destroyed, who gets heartbroken, who gets left behind, you're going to be happy, and that's false wisdom. The Bible says it ends not just with a life of conflict but also with eternal damnation. Maybe you're a guest, and you're like, "Oh surely you don't believe in that archaic eternal damnation nonsense." No, I believe the holiness of God is so serious that rebellion against it would require such, and that the punishment fits the crime.

Then James also contrasts false wisdom with true wisdom. True wisdom categorically embraces God is for God, and the commands of God in Scripture are about leading me into life for his glory. What God wants for me in his commands is for me to surrender to his kingship, to his lordship, to lead me into the fullest possible life for the praise of his glorious grace. How is God most primarily about God? By growing joy in my soul toward him, like a happy marriage would encourage a confidence in the institution of marriage in those around it.

This is what James says, that we have eternity in view. Those who walk in true wisdom have eternity in view. We do understand there is more coming. As the apostle Paul would argue in the midst of his suffering, his current suffering isn't worthy to be compared to the future glory. I heard

a man one time say the first second of glory will make years of suffering vanish. The first *second* would make years of suffering vanish.

They live not in an abandonment of this world but in their hope being in the one to come. They are eternal in their mindset. Their lives are marked by a growing (not perfect, but growing) purity, reason, and humility. For how could it be any other way? To say, "I don't know; God does" is in and of itself a posture of humility. James would argue true wisdom leads to the fullest life possible. It's not an irony, but one of the great twists in kingdom economics is the way to life is dying to yourself.

We're fighting so much for life that we tend to lose it rather than gain it, because you let go to gain it. You let go to gain it! How do we grow in true wisdom? Three weeks ago, we said there were a ton of different tools given to us, but there are three primary tools in regard to growing in true wisdom.

1. *The Word of God*, and not just memorizing Scripture, because we see Jesus rebuked the Pharisees for knowing the Scriptures but not knowing him to whom the Scriptures testify. Right? We don't read the Bible like it's a newspaper. We don't read it just to memorize verses and not let those verses read us.

Again, Jesus says to the Pharisees, "You study the Scriptures in vain because you believe that in them you have life, and yet you refuse to come to me, to whom those Scriptures testify. Namely, the Bible is not the point; I'm the point. The Bible leads you to me." We have the Word of God.

2. *The community of the saints*. You want to walk in true wisdom? Surround yourself with those people who love Jesus and submit to his Word. You have God revealing himself to you in the Scriptures. That leads you into true wisdom. You're surrounded by godly men and women who are serious about the things of God. That leads you into true wisdom.

3. *Those who are further along than us in the faith and in life*. Three weeks ago we called these people *leaders*, and God has put them around us. There are those who have followed Christ longer, who have bled more, who have experienced more, who have submitted more wholeheartedly. We want to come to them in those times where we're confused or don't know what to do. We want to ask in humility for their guidance and for their help.

That was where we left off in James. Now James isn't going to get off of that, but he is actually going to take all of that true wisdom, false wisdom, how to grow into it and he is going to put it right on

the ground, right in the grittiness of life with other sinful human beings. Look there in James 4, starting in verse 1.

"What causes quarrels and what causes fights among you?" Now it doesn't get much more on the ground than that, does it? **"Is it not this, that your passions are at war within you? You desire and do not have, so you murder. You covet and cannot obtain, so you fight and quarrel. You do not have, because you do not ask. You ask and do not receive, because you ask wrongly, to spend it on your passions. You adulterous people! Do you not know that friendship with the world is enmity with God?"**

That means hostility toward God. Friendship with the world reveals a hostility toward God. Not indifference but hostility toward. Just because I won't have time to unpack it further, there are certain people you can flex at, certain people you shouldn't flex at. Correct? I don't know that flexing at God is the way to go. All right. Friendship with the world is hostility toward God. It shows you're hostile to your Creator.

This is verse 5. **"Or do you suppose it is to no purpose that the Scripture says, 'He yearns jealously over the spirit that he has made to dwell in us'?"** Then one of my favorite sentences in the Bible. **"But he gives more grace. Therefore it says, 'God opposes the proud, but gives grace to the humble.' Submit yourselves therefore to God. Resist the devil, and he will flee from you.**

Draw near to God, and he will draw near to you. Cleanse your hands, you sinners, and purify your hearts, you double-minded. Be wretched and mourn and weep. Let your laughter be turned to mourning and your joy to gloom. Humble yourselves before the Lord, and he will exalt you. Do not speak evil against one another, brothers.

The one who speaks against a brother or judges his brother, speaks evil against the law and judges the law. But if you judge the law, you are not a doer of the law but a judge. There is only one lawgiver and judge, he who is able to save and to destroy. But who are you to judge your neighbor?"

What we see happening here is almost all of us get into conflict and quarrels. Right? I mean, anybody here in the last year...no quarrels, no fights, just peace in Jerusalem in your world? Most of us have from time to time conflict and quarrels. Sometimes those quarrels are birthed out of

legitimate wrongs, legitimate sins, legitimate harms upon us. Sometimes quarrels are legitimate. Not all fights are evil.

But the type James is describing here is the type of conflict that's birthed out of a disordered heart. The conflict is not external but rather internal. Look back at verse 1. **"What causes quarrels and what causes fights among you? Is it not this, that your passions are at war within you?"** What causes the quarrels? What causes the fights? It's not really what's going on around you. It's not your crazy sister. It's not your loony mother-in-law. It's something going on inside of *you*.

Really the quarrels that are occurring have everything to do with you. It's not circumstantial. It's internally a spiritual reality. Here's how we try to unpack it. Lives tend to grow in one of two ways, and sometimes they're a combination of these two. You can probably identify yourself as one of these two branches.

People by the grace of God are aware of the goodness of God in their lives. They're able to spot simple generousities God has given to them. They appreciate the fact they're healthy. They know what it's like to feel strong, and they're glad they're healthy. They have a little bit of money in their pocket, and they can go out to eat. That gratitude of God's graciousness leads to gladness. Here's what's great. Gladness fuels gratitude that fuels gladness.

It's like it turns into a bonfire of praise...those of us who, by the grace of God, have been trained to spot the generosity of God in our lives. You're not owed health, and you're not owed money. You're not owed good friends. You're not owed fun marriages. You're not owed stable families. You're not owed... On and on and on I go. You don't deserve any of that. All of that is a gift of a loving Father. All of that is given to us.

When we see it as such, we grow in gratitude. The more gratitude we have, the more gladness comes. The more gladness we have, the more we spot things God has generously given to us. You have this ever-expanding joy in life and in God because your eyes are set on the goodness of God and not what you're lacking, which brings me to the other way people tend to grow.

The other way people tend to grow is they see all of that as something they're entitled to. They're entitled to it. If you feel as though you are entitled, you grow not in gratitude and gladness but contempt. When you think you deserve, you're owed, God should give you and you don't have, then

you grow contemptuous, first against others and then against God himself. When you see other people get blessed, you can't rejoice in that. That's an offense to you, because *you* deserve that.

Look...sidebar. I'm going to leave my notes. You don't want God to give you what you deserve. The greatest celebration in the heart of man should be around the unfairness of God. You don't want what you deserve. What you deserve is death and eternal torment. That's not what he gives. In fact, if you think about the stunning reality of common grace, that those who would mock and belittle God are still blessed with his good gifts, the gifts of common grace...

Those who hate Jesus Christ can still be married, can still have sex, can still have money, can still eat good food, can still be healthy physically. All those are gifts of common grace. They're gifts given to all mankind out of the generosity of God. When you don't get, you get entitled. Then you start to feel contempt, first to those who are being blessed like you wish you were blessed or like you think you *should* be blessed. Then that contempt eventually moves, and it gets pointed at God, because how dare God not give you the things you deserve?

In fact, as a pastor in the Bible Belt, I come across a lot of 20- and 30-year-olds who grew up in the church. They were good kids in church. I mean, they bought full in. They didn't watch any rated-R movies, except the ones about Christ being crucified. *The Passion* was all they did. They didn't listen to secular music. Instead, they listened to really terrible, lame music. Right? This was their lives. They didn't cuss. They didn't drink. They didn't go to the parties.

At some point, God didn't give them something they really wanted. I mean, as silly as it might sound, they didn't get into the college they wanted to or they got broke up by a boyfriend or a girlfriend. At some point, they didn't get what they thought they deserved, and so they said, "Forget you, God!" Then they bailed. They didn't want Jesus; they wanted his stuff. They got exposed as one who thought they could put God in their debt, and you can't put God in your debt. You don't have anything that's not his.

You can't barter with God. You have nothing to offer! What? Your life? He'll take your life if he wants it. Your worship? He'll reveal himself and stir up your affections. You have nothing to really... Do you really find yourself to be so crazy important, such a key cog in the global, universal plans of God that without you, the machine is going to break down? No, we get invited in to a family of faith. We're not a necessity for God's sovereign will to occur at the end game. This is all good news. I don't know that you're hearing it that way, but it's good news.

What happens is you tend to grow in entitlement and contempt. Like I said, it doesn't just terminate on people. It eventually terminates on God himself. That's what you see happening in this text. Look at the next verse. **"You adulterous people!"** Now adulterous (not idolatrous) is simply this: "You promise-breakers!" Now nobody wants to argue that, right? We are promise-breakers when it comes to the promises we've made God.

In fact, if we're really honest, some of us have made promises to God that we had no intention of keeping as we made them. It was like we could trick him for a second. "I'm never going to do that again," knowing full well we have plans later that day to do it. This is how dark the human soul is. We are promise-breakers. We see here, **"You adulterous people! Do you not know that friendship with the world is enmity [hostility] with God? Therefore whoever wishes to be a friend of the world makes himself an enemy of God."**

When lacking gratitude and gladness and instead walking in entitlement and a growing contempt toward those around you and then finally upon God, what the play is is to say, "If God won't give me what I deserve, I'll take it myself. If I have to wait on him, wait for him to do his... I don't trust him to be good. I don't trust him to give me what I want. I don't trust him to be enough for me. So I'm going to take my friendship away from God, and I'm going to give my friendship to those who are most hostile toward him."

This friendship language is a bit confusing to us, because we are a generation that is past- or post-Industrial Revolution. See, before the Industrial Revolution, you kind of lived in the same town. You probably had the same job your daddy did and his daddy did and his daddy did. There were some really good things about that, and there were some really terrible things about that. Really terrible in that, man, you could get marked for something your great-granddaddy did, and that shadow would follow you for the rest of your days.

The good in that is there were deep, rich, intimate friendships possible, whereas we live in the day where there are 8-foot privacy fences and *back* porches. Most neighborhoods don't even have sidewalks! You could live in a house for years and never meet your neighbors. Friendship for us means this: casual acquaintance. Watch how often we go, "This is my good friend." "Really? Where's he from?" "Uh... Bill, where are you from again?" We're not good friends.

In fact, if you think about it, here's what the Internet has allowed us to do. The Internet has allowed us to feel connected to people in a way that was defined as illegal stalking 10 years ago. "Oh, look what they had for dinner. Who are they having dinner with? Oh, look at that guy. Who is he dating? Oh, that girl. Oh! Let's look at her life. Oh, she graduated from that college. What? Oh, I guess that's her sister. Let's check out her sister." Right?

I mean, this is like voyeuristically peeking into other people's lives, and it carries this kind of false, drug-like, "I know them" kind of feel. You don't know them! You're not friends. "I am friends." No, you're casual acquaintances at best and, honestly, they might be freaked out if they knew how much you have learned about them, not by conversation or contact but just stalking them on the Internet. You do know when you're going through their Twitter timeline and you're favoring tweets from three years ago, they see that and are wiggled out, right? You're not friends.

Friendship in the first century would carry a completely different meaning. See, friendship in the first century would have been sought after, and it would have been restricted. If you watch Jesus do ministry, you get a sense of this. Jesus had the three. You always saw him with three. Then he had the 12. Then there were the 70. Then there were the 144. Then we see finally there's the 500. But Jesus spends the most time, the most intimate time, with the three. Friendships are restricted because you can't go deep with everyone.

Listen. I'm an extrovert, and I'm telling you, you can't go deep with everyone. That means you have to restrict. You have to make space. You have to open up time. You have to invite in. Although I want to know everybody, I only go deep with three men. There's an intimacy between the three of us. It's not sexual. It's not weird. It's not bromance. It's life on life. I have no secrets from them, so much so that when I filed my tax returns, they got a copy. I mean, you can giggle. I have no secrets.

You could not walk up to me after this service, go, "Guess what I know?" and cause any strand of fear to go off in me at all. I would be like, "What? What do you know, bro? Let me hear it." I mean, because I'm fully known. You want to feel safe? Have no secrets. If you want to feel safe, have no secrets.

If you want to sleep well at night, you want to get rid of that feeling that you might get busted and found out as a fraud, don't be a fraud. Case closed. Solved. I go deep with those three men. They know everything about me. If I'm wrestling with anxiety, they know I'm wrestling with anxiety.

If I do something I know is the right thing to do with the wrong motive and somebody tries to applaud me for that, I'm very quick to go, "No, no, no, no. I knew I was supposed to do that. That's not what I wanted to do. In fact, the first iteration of that email back had some words that might get me fired in it, and so I scrapped that because I knew better. So don't applaud me. I'm not godly. I'm just doing what I know is right until my heart catches up to my head."

Rich, good friendship is fought for, it's restrictive, and it invites in critique. See, first-century friendship and what friendship should be today is an invitation. "Hey, I'm going to do life deeply with you. I'm going to have no secrets from you. If you see inconsistencies, you see me wavering, you see me losing courage, you see me selling out, you engage me. You confront me lovingly for the good of my own soul and the glory of God in my life."

James' argument is that those who are entitled and growing contemptuous toward the Lord have decided to remove their friendship, "Shape me, mold me, lead me away from the Lord," and they'll give it to the enemies of God and say, "You shape me. You mold me, because there's a treasure I want that's better than that treasure." It's a horrific assault on the mercy and beauty of God, and we're all guilty.

What's crazier than that is the response of God to that. Look at verse 5. **"Or do you suppose it is to no purpose that the Scripture says, 'He yearns jealously over the spirit that he has made to dwell in us'?"** Then again, my favorite sentence. **"But he gives more grace."** I feel like literally I could take those two sentences and preach a 10-week series on them. I can't do that this morning, so let me very quickly talk about first, the jealousy of God, and then secondly, **"...he gives more grace."**

The jealousy of God is a confusing concept, because when we think of jealousy, we tend to think of things birthed out of fear or out of insecurity. That's definitely not how God is jealous. In fact, this idea of God being a jealous God is so confusing that Oprah Winfrey would actually cite it as a reason she doesn't believe in Christianity. I don't know if you know Oprah's testimony, but Oprah said she was sitting in a Christian church in New York, and the pastor was getting about how God is a jealous God. She thought to herself, "If God can be jealous of me, then he can't be God."

I'm like, "Goodness sakes! Take better notes, Oprah!" That's not what that text says, and it's certainly not what that pastor... I don't know if she was like putting car keys under seats. I don't know what she was doing, but she certainly did not hear the text. Cue the, "Oprah is a good woman"

email. Go ahead and email those to me, but God is not jealous *about* you. He is jealous *for* you for his own glory.

God's jealousy is not built around, "Oh, look at all they have" because we've already covered this. You don't have anything! His jealousy is, "I put that spirit in there. My glory is at stake. Their joy is at stake." His jealousy stems from the love of his own name and the hope that your joy in that name might reflect more perfectly his goodness and grace.

John Piper says it like this. "God's jealousy is not the reflex of weakness or fear. Instead God is jealous like a powerful and merciful king who takes a peasant girl from a life of shame, forgives her, marries her, and gives her not the chores of a slave, but the privileges of a wife—a queen. His jealousy does not rise from fear or weakness but from a holy indignation at having his honor and power and mercy scorned by the faithlessness of a fickle spouse."

You have this picture of someone rescued and ransomed, cleaned, and put in a place of honor who then betrays that rescue and runs back to her shame. The Lord is jealous for the spirit he gave us, and he is jealous for us to experience the fullest joy possible, made manifest only in knowing, loving, and following him. What's God's response to this type of adultery? What's God's response to this kind of blasphemy, this type of hostility? What's God's response to, "You're not a good king. You're not a good God. I'm going to go to your enemies, and your enemies will take care of me"?

Well, it's that crazy sentence. "**But he gives more grace.**" One of my favorite verses in the Bible... I'm sure I say this every week about some verse or another. Romans 5:20 really is there. It says, "**Now the law came in to increase the trespass...**" If we just stopped there, here's what he is saying. When the law comes in, it reveals we're in trouble. Moses comes down the mountain. The people are worshiping a golden calf. There's a kind of crazy, wicked, depraved kind of scene going on.

Moses comes down the mountain, and he reads the first one. "Thou shalt have no other gods before me. For I, your God, am a jealous God, visiting the iniquities of the father to the next generation." Oh! "Aaron, you'd better put away that calf." "I was telling him he should have put away that golden cow. I don't know why we're worshiping a cow. I mean, maybe a tiger or something, but a cow? It's not even a cow. It's a calf. It's like a baby cow. I mean, the most non-majestic creature imaginable is what we worship. I told him, God."

The first commandment reveals, "I've trespassed." The level of trespass increases. As those commandments were given, the trespass increases all the more. "Don't lie." Uh-oh. "Don't have anger in your heart." Uh... "Don't covet it." Dang it! "Don't steal." Agh! As he reads those, the level of guilt increases, but look at what abounds all the more. **"Now the law came in to increase the trespass, but where sin increased, grace abounded all the more..."**

For years, I've said this sentence to you: there is no sin with more power than the cross of Christ. Do you know where I get that? Right there is where I get it. **"...where sin increased, grace abounded all the more..."** I don't know how you dragged your sorry self in here today. I mean, maybe you dragged... Maybe the idea of God yearning jealously to redeem your spirit, you have no category for that. You think he is done with you, that you've sinned in ways he couldn't possibly accept.

Well, this text is saying, regardless of how high the sin volume is in your life, grace abounds all the more. I love how he words it. It abounds all the more. It monumentally abounds. It's not like a squeaker at the end there, all right? It's not that grace wins by a hair, grace wins by a length. Grace blows sin out of the water. It finishes, showers, gets dressed, has something to eat, and then sin crosses the finish line. Right?

That's grace abounding all the more. That's the good news of the gospel of Jesus Christ. Grace abounds all the more. How does God respond to our adultery? By turning up the volume of grace so loudly that the volume of rebellion is no longer heard but eradicated all together. That's the good news of grace. What should our response to this be? Look at verse 7.

"Submit yourselves therefore to God. Resist the devil, and he will flee from you. Draw near to God, and he will draw near to you. Cleanse your hands, you sinners, and purify your hearts, you double-minded. Be wretched and mourn and weep. Let your laughter be turned to mourning and your joy to gloom. Humble yourselves before the Lord, and he will exalt you."

How are we to respond to the volume of grace being turned up as a response to our cuddling up to the world and going, "Forget you! I'll trust your enemies to lead me into the fullest of life possible"? How do we respond to God's response? James says *submit*. Let go. One of the things that happens weekly as the pastor of this church is I get the opportunity to sit with those who week after week sit in our services.

They kind of are moved, and they want to trust the Lord, but they're fearful about, "If I trust the Lord, if I fully surrender, if I make Christ the Lord of my life, what's he going to do *here*? Will he take *this* from me? Will I have to give *this* up?" What's ironic to me (and I try to point this out in these conversations) is there's all this fear and trepidation over here, but the idea of losing it causes fear and trepidation too. But the play is, "I feel like I'm going to have these things taken from me."

"You mean the things that are causing all sorts of stress and anxiety in your life?"

"Yeah!"

But it's like stress and anxiety and fear become the very things that comfort us. They become the pacifier that's driving out our teeth in the hopes of comfort rather than the legitimate comfort of letting go, of getting off the throne of our hearts and, like I said at Easter, going, "I make a really crummy king. I'm exhausted trying to be king. I stink at it. I'm giving it my best, and I'm not doing a good job. Will you sit up there?"

Then getting to rest as Jesus goes, "Sure. That's my seat" and sits down and rules in a way that's better than we can imagine. I'm not saying he won't take from you, because loving fathers will take. It's cruel fathers who refuse to. Cruel fathers will allow their children to grow crooked. Loving fathers won't. If he takes, he takes as a loving Father, not as a cruel one. So we are to submit, but how do you submit? He gives us three things here.

1. *We resist the Devil*. One of the things that's great about being the pastor and having said repeatedly that I plan on giving you all the days God has for me. I'm not jetting out to pastor another church. I plan on dying as the pastor of The Village Church, hopefully not in a hospital. I hope, like, right here. Not today, but eventually, like, right here. It's going to be terrible for you guys but awesome for me. Okay?

In the end, the great thing is I can read a verse like this, and I so want to get into what the Devil is responsible for and what you're responsible for. Because we know from the Scriptures that, "The Devil made me do it" doesn't fly. What is his role, and what is my role in the wrestle against sin? Well, here's what's important for today.

First Corinthians 10:13 says, "**No temptation has overtaken you that is not common to man. God is faithful, and he will not let you be tempted beyond your ability, but with the**

temptation he will also provide the way of escape, that you may be able to endure it." I love this, because here's what the Bible just said. I have a legitimate enemy. I have real flesh in me that desires to rebel against the Lord. Those two things come together to be a quite powerful pull on my heart away from the Lord and toward friendship with the world.

God says, "Submit to me." How? Resist. It's wartime language in this text. It's language in the Greek that connotes aggression. Resist. Stand firm. Fight. You don't run. You turn, and you fight. You don't try to make it to safe ground. You pull your sword and engage. Resist the Devil.

Here's all I know. According to the New Testament, because the Holy Spirit is inside of me, I don't have to sin anymore. Now I will stumble. I will! But I don't have to. I resist, and God is faithful to make a way out. There's always an escape. There's always backup. There's always more powerful help coming. Resist the Devil.

2. *We pursue God.* We see here the command to, "**Draw near to God, and he will draw near to you.**" First, there's a promise there you shouldn't miss. "**Draw near to God, and he will draw near to you.**" How do we do that? Well, I'm not going to invent more than I've just covered two weeks ago. We do it...

A. *Via the Word of God.* Again, we don't read the Bible. That's one of the reasons I'm really excited about the Institute. We advertised more. That's why I'm excited about how we plan on doing the Institute, because ultimately, I'm not interested in just you knowing the Bible, but rather I want you to know the God of the Bible. See, we don't read the Bible like it's a newspaper; we read it like we're on a date. Are you tracking with me? We don't read the Bible for facts and figures. We read the Bible to gaze upon the beauty of God.

I want you to have the ability to open up the Word and find, "**...he gives more grace,**" and let that fuel your belief that he is for you and not against you and to stir up in you the zeal to see him for who he is and to be transformed by it. You're not transformed by law. You're transformed, according to the apostle Paul, by gazing upon the beauty of the Lord and being transformed from one degree of glory to the next.

B. *Via walking in community with one another.* You draw near to God by getting to know God via the Word of God and getting to know God via the saints. God has not just called you to himself but also he has called you to us. Not *us* necessarily in the church but other believers in Christ. There was a

guy you don't care about centuries ago who said, "He can no longer have God for his Father, who has not the church for his mother."

He has called us toward one another, and some of God's choicest blessings happen when we get around those who love him and walk alongside of them as we all seek to love him more. Community is an indispensable part of Christian maturation. This afternoon, if what you do, if your involvement here at the Village is just sitting and listening to me talk, you like how I talk, you like how Bleecker sings, then that's great until life happens.

Then when life happens...listen to me...that's going to be wholly inadequate. I'm telling you that as a brother who has been to a lot of hospital rooms and a lot of funeral homes in the last 12 years. What you want are brothers and sisters who are embedded into your life. You have an opportunity for that this afternoon if all you do is come and sit in here. I'm asking you to take that step.

Come to GroupConnect this afternoon. I don't ever want to lie to you. Trying to find community is difficult. It's awkward. It requires sacrifice that most of the time you don't want to give. People will get on your nerves, but here's the good news. You're going to get on people's nerves, and they're going to be longsuffering with you.

Hear me plead with you. Don't live an isolated life where you think because you read your Bible and come to church on Sundays you're getting the best of what God has for you. We are refined best in the furnace of community. We will be exposed in our nature, exposed in our pride, exposed in our fears. It sounds awful, doesn't it? But it's in being exposed at that level that God sanctifies and grows us in confidence.

C. Via leaders and those further along who God has given to us to seek out for help. That's how those same three things that are necessary to grow in true wisdom sit in this place as a way that we draw near to God. We resist the Devil; we pursue God via the Word, via community and friendships, and via other leaders; and then...

3. *We're serious about sin.* We're serious about sin in two ways. Look at what he says here. "**Cleanse your hands, you sinners, and purify your hearts, you double-minded.**" I love this because he is saying not only are you to be serious about the sin that's kind of visibly around your body, your hands, but also be aware of how wicked and dark your heart and mind are. Our watchfulness and seriousness about sin are not just about our actions but about our desires.

James is saying pay attention to your desires and take them captive and confess them and fight in the arena of your mind. You know nobody talks to you more than you do. Nobody! I don't care if you have a spouse who just has verbal diarrhea. I mean, like a faucet is always on. Nobody talks to you like you talk to you. From the second you wake up in the morning, there's an internal dialogue happening.

What are you saying to you? I'm telling you, if you pay attention to that you'll feel the need to confess a lot more than you probably do right now. All you've done is you've washed your hands. You're like, "I'm great!" But your mind is filled with all sorts of wicked conversations about other people, about the Lord, about what you think you deserve. James is saying, "No, no, no. Fight in the arena of your mind." Be serious about sin.

We're not only serious about sin, but we cleanse our hands, we pay attention to our mind. Then if you want to talk about a couple of sentences that fly in the face of everything Westerners embrace, look at what comes next. **"Be wretched and mourn and weep. Let your laughter be turned to mourning and your joy to gloom. Humble yourselves before the Lord, and he will exalt you."**

Here's a way I would argue. I would say the drug of choice in the modern age is levity. That's the drug of choice. It's entertainment and levity. "I just want to laugh. I just want it to be light and bubbly. I don't want anything that's heavy or thick or makes me feel bad. I just want somebody to make me feel good, and I want to laugh. I want church to be that, and I want home to be that. I want movies to be that, and I want..."

Our drug of choice is levity, and James is not having it. He says, "Mourn. Weep. Wail." Why? The Puritans were very deep thinkers. I mean, they had their own issues. How those guys could think so rightly about the things of God and own slaves has always kind of been an issue in my mind concerning the Puritans. But they wrote some profound things. One of the things the Puritans would pray for is tears. They would pray to be grieved by their sins.

When they felt like the weight of their rebellion against God wasn't falling on their hearts, they would literally stop and they would pray and ask God to help them mourn about their own sin. I've never met anybody in praying where they've gone, "God, I just pray you would crush me completely. I just have not seen my sin for what it really is, so will you just turn me into a heaping,

sobbing mess of regret?"

No. We want happy and chipper and, "Yeah, tell me how awesome things are. Let's talk about new heavens and new earth. Let's do that one!" Yet it's in the dirt, being fully busted and fully understanding what's now at stake, through tears and snot that the grace of God sends us into the orbit of joy.

The Bible tells us a woman was caught in adultery. She was dragged naked into a crowd and flung at the feet of Jesus. The men who caught her said, "The law says..." This woman was caught in adultery. "The law says we should stone her, should kill her." She is busted in her sin. She is naked and ashamed. She is thrown in front of a mob that has dragged her to this Rabbi and has the law on their side. "The law says she dies! What do you say?"

With snot and tears and dirt and shame all over her, Jesus says, "Let the one of you who is without sin cast the first stone." The Bible tells us from oldest to youngest, they dropped their stones and left. Then he picked up a rock and pelted her. No! That's not what happened. Gosh! Read your Bibles. I can't even believe you thought that.

No, the Bible says he walks over to her. He picks up her face. Don't miss this. He picks up her face! The Son of God, the Creator and Sustainer of all things, picks up this guilty woman's face. Her guilt is never in question. It is visible for all the world to see. In the most shameful, despicable moment of her life, he looks her in the face and says, "Has no one condemned you? Neither do I. Now go and sin no more."

See, it's in the dust. It's in the dirt. It's in our tears. It's in our heart-brokenness over our sin that the forgiveness and grace of this jealous God who gives more grace launches us into an orbit of joy. Do you think this woman got up and moped away, or do you think she leapt up and skipped away?

Then this type of grace penetrating this type of lives brings about a humility which God exalts. In fact, repeatedly you've seen in this text that the humble God knows. The humble God draws near to. The humble the Lord loves. You saw that there again. Then look at the conclusion here in these last two verses, and I want to give us a challenge as a community.

"Do not speak evil against one another, brothers. The one who speaks against a brother or judges his brother, speaks evil against the law and judges the law. But if you judge the law,

you are not a doer of the law but a judge. There is only one lawgiver and judge, he who is able to save and to destroy. But who are you to judge your neighbor?"

Now the way the argumentation of James' letter works is now what he is saying is those who have experienced grace, those who have experienced mercy, those who have mourned, those who have had their faces picked up by the Son of God, who understand he gives more grace, now become an expert not in the weaknesses of their brothers but in the strengths of their brothers. They rejoice in the God-blessing movement of the Holy Spirit in their lives.

With their mouths, with their lives, they don't tear down others. They build others up. A quick question. Are you more apt to see the shortcomings in others or the strengths in others? Are you more apt to identify where somebody needs to grow up, or are you more apt to celebrate what God is actively doing?

I'm not talking about discernment. I'm talking about judgment and condemnation. Do you feel the need to tear others down to exalt yourself? That would be somewhat of a litmus test that you haven't experienced grace. You might have a concept of it, but you haven't experienced it. Are you more apt to speak life into others or to point out others (whether passive-aggressively or aggressively) that they have fallen short?

James is arguing that where we walk in true wisdom and understand the grace of God, quarrels and fights and judgments begin to dissipate. It's not that we won't have them, because we always will. We're sinful. But we're quick to own. We're quick to seek forgiveness. We're quick to absorb things that normally would bring... If it's all about me, I can't absorb. I have to be right. If I've experienced grace, then I can absorb some sin against me.

Can you imagine what would happen in a community of faith where what we were most of all is experts on how God is growing each other? Our speech would revolve around that, and our calls would revolve around that, and our Facebook updates would revolve around that. On the wall or whatever, you would say, "I've just noticed God has been doing this in your life, and it's encouraged me, sister. Thank you. It's encouraged me, brother. Praise God for his work in your life."

When we started this series, the reason we put these boards out in our foyer is so you would have the opportunity to encourage others, to speak life into others, to enter into conflict and diffuse them

with grace. It's in this way by our love for one another that Christ is most visibly seen, savored, and worshiped.

Where do we need to confess today? Where do we need to own our sin? Where do we need to apologize to a brother and sister? Where have we not spoken life into others but actually actively torn others down? Where have we refused to celebrate the victories of others? Where have we reveled in the defeat of others? These are not the marks of someone who has experienced the grace of God. Who are you to judge your neighbor? You have your own stuff to worry about. Let's pray.

Father, I thank you for these men and women, again the opportunity just to let the Word of God kind of wash over us. Thank you for the opportunity to pray for our brothers and sisters, to enter into the rejoicing of some of our family members and to enter into the fears and sorrows of others.

Now I pray for those who would be represented on one side or the other all over this room and in the other rooms watching. There are those of us with much to celebrate, and there are those of us who are wrestling and fearful and afraid. We have issues that feel like they're not going anywhere anytime soon. They seem overwhelming.

I pray, Father, that you would encourage our hearts with your Word, with our time together. I pray where we have perpetrated conflict and quarrels because of a friendship with the world that is jealous and is selfish and is really driven by internal adultery that you would lead us to seek out forgiveness and peace. Help our hearts rest in you. It's for your beautiful name I pray, amen.

Don't jet out just yet. We're almost done. We end all of our services with the Lord's Supper, a celebration in what God has done for us in Christ. We provide Communion primarily for our covenant members, but if you're a guest today who is a believer in Christ in good standing with the church you're visiting us from, I want to invite you to celebrate with us. You are brothers and sisters, heirs of God, coheirs with Christ. We'd be fools to not celebrate with you and you with us.

We're going to pass out the elements. Here's what I would like to ask. If you're here today and you're not a Christian, you're not quite sure what to do with this Jesus stuff, you're kind of just waiting for this to get over so you can move on and do what's next for you, will you just abstain? Will you let the elements pass?

As always, I'm not trying to make you feel awkward, because the reality is the grace of God has invited you to sit down and celebrate with us via confession and repentance. You not taking the elements because you're not a believer is not us excluding but you refusing to sit down and submit and let go, so will you just let it pass?

Then I want to give you a couple of minutes just to consider the things that have been said. Consider your own heart. Consider if there's anything the Lord would have you do as you leave this service. Consider are there those you need to speak to? Are there those you need to apologize to? Are there areas of your life where you need to submit to the Lord so you might be freed up to encourage and speak life in to others?

Let me give you a couple of minutes here as we pass out the elements, and then I'll be back, and we can celebrate the Lord's Supper together as a family.

The Bible tells us that on the night Jesus was arrested, he took the bread, and he broke it. He said, **"This is My body which is broken for you; do this in remembrance of Me."** After eating, the Bible says Jesus took the cup. There were a lot of different things he said about the cup. My favorite has always been, "This is the blood of the new covenant." The new covenant is in. No longer would there be sacrifice for sin because he was going to be, once and for all, according to the writers of Hebrews, the sacrifice for our sin.

There's no penance we owe. There's no duty now that we must now fulfill, because Christ fulfilled it all in his death. We know that because of his resurrection. When he took the cup and he said, "This is the blood of the new covenant," he was saying, "Your debt is paid in full. You're going to be prone to forget it, so do this in remembrance of me."

Hey, we love you. If you find yourself in this season of life in a quarrel or in a situation you can't seem to get yourself out of, will you let us serve you and help you? We're going to sing and be dismissed, but there will be men and women up here. Man, if you need somebody to talk to, you want us to kind of get in that mess with you and walk alongside of you, that's what we're here for. We would love to do that. Why don't you stand with me? Let's worship the Lord, and then we'll go on out into the world.