

Drawing Near To God

James 4:1-10

What is the source of so many conflicts and problems that Christians face in their lives?

- The conflict between wanting to serve God yet living as a “*friend of the world*” (James 4:1-4).
- The name James ascribes to the one who claims to be a child of God but in fact is a friend of the world is “*adulteress*”.
 - That is, there is a breach in our relationship with God when our primary love is for the things of this world (cf., 1 John 2:15).

- James writes that the solution to the problem of spiritual adultery is to “*draw near to God*” (James 4:8).
- To “*draw near*” is to re-establish the fellowship that we once had with our Father in heaven.

How Do We Draw Near To God?

1. Recognize that it’s our responsibility!

Our responsibility

- Before we can draw near to Him, we have to desire to be close to Him.
 - We have to want to be with our Father.
 - Our spiritual hunger. **Matt. 5:6; John 6:35, 66-68**
 - **Developing & retaining a sense of “need” for Him.**
 - The sick need the doctor (Matt. 9:12-13).
 - The Laodiceans felt they had no need. (Rev. 3:17; cf., Deut. 8:11-14)
 - Only if we are willing to work at it! (**Phil. 2:12**).

Our responsibility

- If you’re not as close to God as you once were, rest assured, it’s not God who moved.
- Our personal responsibility; **2 Chron. 15:2**, “... if you seek Him, He will let you find Him...”
- The **degree of effort?** **Jer. 29:13**, “you will seek Me and find Me, **when you search for Me with all your heart.**” (cf., **Matt. 7:7-8; Acts 17:27**).
- “*Drawing near to God*” will only happen to those who prioritize it - “*seek first His kingdom and His righteousness*” (**Matt. 6:33**).

How Do We Draw Near To God?

1. Recognize that it's our responsibility!
2. Develop a heart of humility.

Develop a heart of humility & submission

- Any reconciliation begins with humility.
- *"God is opposed to the proud, but gives grace to the humble. Submit therefore to God. Resist the devil and he will flee from you. Draw near to God and He will draw near to you...Humble yourselves in the presence of the Lord, and He will exalt you"* (James 4:6-10).
- Pride destroys our fleshly relationships and it will keep us from ever being able to "draw near" to God. Rom. 12:3, 16
- Who's invited? **Matt. 11:28-30**

Develop a heart of humility & submission

- **1 Peter 5:5-6**, "...all of you, clothe yourselves with humility...God is opposed to the proud, but gives grace to the humble. **Humble yourselves, therefore, under the mighty hand of God...**"
- How can we ever hope to "**draw near**" to God if He, because of our pride, is "**opposed**" to us?
- "**Opposed**" - "a military term which means to arrange one's army in battle against a foe" (Vine's Expository Dictionary of Biblical Words)
- Our pride and arrogance has to go!

How Do We Draw Near To God?

1. Recognize that it's our responsibility!
2. Develop a heart of humility.
3. Overcome temptation.

Overcome Temptation

- Choose to say "no" to Satan – he can be resisted.
- James wrote, "*resist the devil and he will flee from you*" (James 4:7).
 - We cannot continue to give way to sin and walk in darkness and ever hope to draw near to Him.
- We start by being aware of his presence and his schemes or devices.
 - 1 Peter 5:8, he prowls about like a roaring lion.
 - 2 Cor. 2:11; Eph. 6:11-12

Overcome Temptation

- Beyond saying no to Satan, we must learn to say no to self...
- Mark 8:34, "And He summoned the multitude with His disciples, and said to them, ***If anyone wishes to come after Me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross, and follow Me.***"

How Do We Draw Near To God?

1. Recognize that it's our responsibility!
2. Develop a heart of humility.
3. Overcome temptation.
4. Repent and seek God's forgiveness.

We must repent!

- **James 4:8-9**, "Draw near to God and He will draw near to you. **Cleanse your hands**, you sinners; and **purify your hearts**, you double-minded. Be **miserable and mourn and weep**; let your laughter be turned into mourning, and your joy to gloom."
- **Sin is what separates man from God (Isaiah 59:1-2).**
- **Must exhibit true biblical repentance. 2 Cor. 7:11-12**

We must repent!

- Biblical repentance (as opposed to "*the sorrow of the world*") includes "*vindication... indignation... fear... longing... zeal... avenging of wrong*" and a demonstration of innocence (2 Cor. 7:11-12).
- If we hope to be with God one day, we must purify ourselves "*just as He is pure*" (1 John 3:3).

How Do We Draw Near To God?

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5. Draw closer to our brethren.

Draw closer to our brethren

- James 4:11-12, "Do not speak against one another, brethren. He who speaks against a brother, or judges his brother, speaks against the law, and judges the law"
- Heb. 10:24-25
- Rom 12:10-11, "Be devoted to one another in brotherly love; give preference to one another in honor; **11** not lagging behind in diligence, fervent in spirit, serving the Lord"

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6. Increase our communication

Increase our communication

- True in *any* relationship.
- We first must listen to Him (Matt. 17:5).
- That involves consistent diligence to read and meditate on God's word (Ps. 1:2; 2 Tim. 2:15).
- The more careful we listen to the Lord, the closer we can follow to Him (John 10:27).

Increase our communication

- We also draw near when we unceasingly (1 Thess. 5:17) and persistently (Luke 18:1-8) communicate with God in prayer.
- It is through our prayers that we express to God our requests (Phil. 4:6) and "*heart's desire*" (Rom. 10:1) and "*cast*" our anxieties, worries and concerns "*upon Him, because He care for you*" (1 Peter 5:7).
- God has directed us to "*cast*" that which weighs on our hearts and minds upon Him and not keep it to ourselves.

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7. Make an investment

Make an investment

- There are but two choices that Jesus spoke of. (Matt. 6:19-21).
- Need to be able to look beyond the immediate rewards that life may offer and focus on that which is eternal (Heb. 11:24-26).
- We can have faith that our investment in heaven is safe, (2 Tim. 1:12).
- This is an investment which involves our time, our blessings and more than anything else, our very lives. (2 Cor. 8:5).

Why?

Why is it that so many Christians, during the times of their life when they need so desperately to "*draw near to God*" actually do the opposite and turn their back on Him?

But one of the "*precious and magnificent promises*" that have been "*granted to us*" (2 Peter 1:4) by our Father in heaven is the promise that if we do what we must do to "*draw near*" to Him,

"He will draw near to you" (James 4:8).

We have God's unbreakable word on that. Though God's promise is unwavering, it unfortunately is so often declined and neglected – it doesn't have to be that way.

Will You Draw Near Today?

Heb 10:19-22, "Since therefore, brethren, we have confidence to enter the holy place by the blood of Jesus, by a new and living way which He inaugurated for us through the veil, that is, His flesh, and since *we have* a great priest over the house of God, **let us draw near with a sincere heart in full assurance of faith, having our hearts sprinkled clean from an evil conscience and our bodies washed with pure water.**"