

## James 4:6-10

June 28, 2020

Tons of self-help or “how-to” material is streamed, downloaded, or read daily. Some classic How-to book titles are:

- How to Make Money in Stocks
- How to Make Your Money Last
- How to Win Friends and Influence People
- How to Read a Book
- How to Stay Alive in the Woods

James has a how-to lesson for us today. His lesson is more important than Making or keeping money, than winning friends than, reading a book or even staying alive in the woods.

James 4:6-10 = How-to Get More Grace From God

We saw this last week in verse 6 of chapter 4, “But he gives more grace.” How to get more grace from God. Now, we don’t want to misunderstand grace by super-spiritualizing it, we need to understand what it means in verse 6. Here, grace means help.

How to get active, constant, relentless help from the Almighty God.

I don’t know about you, but I want as much help as I can get from God. If there is a way to get extra help from God just so I can keep my thoughts straight, so I can be the husband, father, pastor I want to be, so I can honor God, so I can fight sin, if there is extra help from God to be had—I want it.

And I’m sure I am not alone.

So what is the key to getting this help?

Be Humble.

That is what our section tells us this morning. You want extra help from God? Be humble.

PROP: Be humble and get help from God.

The Key to grace from God is humility in us. I’ll show you where that comes from—

“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. <sup>8</sup> Draw near to God, and he will draw near to you. Cleanse your hands, you sinners, and purify your hearts, you double-minded. <sup>9</sup> Be wretched and mourn and weep. Let your laughter be turned to mourning and your joy to gloom. <sup>10</sup> Humble yourselves before the Lord, and he will exalt you.” James 4:6-10

PRAY

**1. First How-To of Humility: Submission (James 4:6-7)**

Submission to God.

Vs. 6,

Submit yourselves therefore to God. Resist the devil, and he will flee from you.

Do you see the idea? We are to submit to God, and as we submit to God will we be resisting the devil. In other words, the opposite of not submitting to God is being used by the devil.

James in his stark all or nothing way tells us you are always submitting to someone—either God or the devil.

Which would you like it to be?

You see we think to submit to the devil we have to practice black magic, sign an agreement in blood, have a set of voodoo dolls, or join a witches coven. Nope. All we need to do to serve the devil is to be proud.

Pride is that dangerous.

To submit to God means that you willingly place yourself under his authority and you become completely subject to his will. You give yourself to God without question or qualification. To submit to God is easy to say but hard to live out.

How do we submit to God?

- We seek to obey him.
  - How we speak, what we do, even what we want.
- We put ourselves at his disposal
- We put ourselves second—always.

Do you want help from God? Live an active obedience before God in every facet of your life.

This means: We don't postpone obedience. To submit to the authority of God is to obey. When wait to obey we are not resisting the devil.

This means: We control our tongues and do not speak against people. We speak as those who speak before an ever attentive God.

This means: We consider others better than ourselves.

This means: We are quick to listen, slow to speak, and slow to anger.

At this point all of us are thinking—I do not submit to the Lord as well as I need to. I don't want the things he wants. I don't always speak in a way to honor him. I don't always obey.

Right?

What do we do? Be humble about it and ask for help.

The reason we can be humble and go to God again and again for the sins we commit with our actions, words, and desires is because when Jesus went to God he was rejected. This is the only reason humility is safe for us.

Jesus was completely humble always asking for help from his father. Always getting it. Except for one day. On that day, the humble one was crushed. So that we might be able to freely go to him and ask for help. Humility before the father is only safe today because the son was destroyed by the father for ALL our sins.

In other words, we can go to him and ask for help, and he will not hold our sins against us.

Do you want help from God?

Ask yourself this: Is there any area of your life where you are not submitting to the Lord's authority? Go to him and ask for help.

It is so easy to think—I can't go to him again with this sin...again. False. No go. Confess, ask for help. Staying away from God is submitting to the devil. God doesn't help the deserving he helps the humble.

The first how-to of humility is submission.

## ***2. Second How-to of Humility: Draw Near (James 4:8-9)***

Vs. <sup>8</sup> **Draw near to God, and he will draw near to you.**

James is so straightforward. There is ritual or rite of passage we have to do to go before God—what do we do? Draw near.

But notice—it is drawing near for a specific purpose.

Vs 9,

Cleanse your hands, you sinners, and purify your hearts, you double-minded. <sup>9</sup> Be wretched and mourn and weep. Let your laughter be turned to mourning and your joy to gloom.

To cleanse hands means to change your actions. To purify your hearts means to confess the evil that is lodged within. In other words, draw near to him and he will draw near to you and as he draws near you will be more aware of what you need to change.

Drawing near to God takes humility. No one is proud in the presence of God. In the throne room, as the throngs of angels are arrayed in his presence, no angel is checking his phone or disinterested. When men and women are in the presence of God—we become aware of those things in our lives that we need to cleanse, purify, and where we need to weep.

Do you see what he is saying?

The sins we commit and the sins we fantasize about should not be things we cherish but things that make us weep. We should not laugh at our past or present sins like they are no big deal, but we should mourn.

Why?

Because when we are sorrowful for our sins—only then are we in a place to be able to ask for forgiveness of our sins. Sorrow, real sorrow precedes confession.

<sup>8</sup> Draw near to God, and he will draw near to you.

I'll be honest there are times, I wish this verse was reversed. Something like, God will draw near to you, and you will draw near to him.

But herein lies the challenge. It takes humility to draw near to God. To ask for help. To come to him again and ask for help. We might all want to be chased down by God, as if we are that important. Drawing near takes humility. To draw near means we admit we need his help.

Don't get me wrong—He has pursued us. He has sent his Son to claim us as his own. He has sent his Spirit to indwell our lives. That is wonderfully true. Now, as Christians his ongoing help comes to us as we admit we need it by drawing near.

How can we draw near?

With his Word: It takes humility to come to him and say—I need you to inform me, I need you to guide me, I need you to speak to me. Otherwise I have no clue what to say or do. The humble draw near to the Scriptures and ask him to speak.

We draw near—

In prayer: It takes humility to talk to God and ask for help. Prayer is just an ongoing conversation with God. When you just think about your problem—nothing good happens—when you pray and ask for help you unleash the Almighty One.

We draw near—

By serving: It takes humility to give other people your time and energy without expecting anything in return. By serving someone else you are putting yourself below them and meeting their needs.

We draw near—

By Worshiping: Singing together/Hearing the Word preached—we need this more than can be expressed. It takes humility to put yourself in connection with others.

God gives grace (help) to those who are humble enough to come to him regularly.

Even as Christians it can be tempting to NOT draw near because you haven't for a while. It can be tempting to stay away. Go to him and restore your fellowship with him. He is not going to say—Where have you been?

No. He is not like us. He is always glad to hear from us.

Those who get help. Those who are humble—regularly draw near to God.

First how-to of humility: Submission

Second how-to of humility: Draw near

What happens to the humble?

### ***3. Third How-to of Humility: Exaltation***

You would expect that the help God gives the humble might be something like—to the humble I will give more help and things will go a bit better for you. Or your life will make sense. But that is not what James says—he says something far more audacious. And hard to believe.

Vs. 10 <sup>10</sup> **Humble yourselves before the Lord, and he will exalt you."**

He will exalt you.

That is an unexpected word. Exalt? He will promote you, raise you up, he will take up your cause. He will cause you to prosper.

How?

I wish I could tell you. In ways we cannot imagine in this life AND the life to come.

In our world, the humble get stepped on and pushed out—in God’s economy they humble are exalted. The humble are not vying for their own rights and privileges to get ahead—they entrust their cause to God.

It is the same thing that Jesus said in Luke 18—

“I tell you, this man went down to his house justified, rather than the other. For everyone who exalts himself will be humbled, but the one who humbles himself will be exalted.” Luke 18:14

It would seem that the way to personal exaltation is to grasp for glory, fame, importance and position. But it is not. The way to exaltation is through humility. So counterintuitive.

Be Humble and be—  
Raised up