

“HOW TO GET CLOSE TO GOD”

James 4:7-10

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On the heels of the promise of grace (v. 6), James outlines a way believers can return to God and stay close to Him. Through God’s grace, believers would be able to withstand the pull of the world system. Having yielded to the world’s allurements, believers had to resume a right relationship to God (4:7-10) and to one another (4:11-12).

I. GRACE THROUGH HUMILITY. James 4:7a, 10

- **1ST Command: RELINQUISH CONTROL OF YOUR LIFE. 7a**
“Therefore submit to God.”

The compound verb, *submit*, (consisting of the preposition, *under*, and the root, *to order, place, station*) demands that we accept our proper station under God. *Submit* is an action that we must bring about ourselves as the Holy Spirit operates in us. In James, submission means that we consciously recognize God’s desires ahead of our own.

- **10TH Command: RESPOND HUMBLY TO SUCCESS. 10**
“Humble yourselves in the sight of the Lord, and He will lift you up.”

Humble yourselves before the Lord – Humbling ourselves means recognizing that our worth comes from God alone. It is recognizing our desperate need of His help and submitting to His will for our lives. Although we do not deserve God’s favor, He reaches out to us in love and gives us worth and dignity, despite our human shortcomings.

And He will lift you up – This adds a precious promise. The picture is that of someone prostrate before a king, begging mercy. The king leans down from the throne and lifts the petitioner’s face from the dust. The person rises with grateful joy, knowing he or she is forgiven.

II. HUMILITY IN ACTION. James 4:7b-9

A. FELLOWSHIP WITH GOD INSTEAD OF THE DEVIL. 4:7-8a

- **2ND Command: _____ . 7b**
“Resist the devil and he will flee from you.”

Tactics for Resisting the Devil:

1. Refuse to accept Satan’s suggestion that you can be separated from Christ. Romans 8:38-39.
2. Ignore the temptation to doubt God’s grace. 1 John 3:9-24.
3. Reject the lie that you are beyond forgiveness. 1 John 1:9.
4. Pray before, during, and after attacks by the devil. Philippians 4:4-7; 1 Thessalonians 5:16-24; James 1:2-8.
5. Allow Christ to replace your way of thinking with His way of thinking. Philippians 2:5-8; 4:8-9; Romans 12:1-2.

Weapons in Resisting the Devil. Ephesians 6:14-20.

1. Belt of truth – wherever truth is spoken and lived, the devil is unwelcome. 14.
2. Breastplate of righteousness – living rightly is the result of advance training in the faith. When we are living under God’s guidance we are on guard against the devil’s attacks. 14.
3. Footwear of the gospel of peace – communicating the gospel is taking back territory controlled by the devil. 15.
4. Shield of faith – our faith in Christ makes Him our shield and protector. 16.
5. Helmet of salvation – salvation that God offers is our eternal protection. 17.
6. Sword of the Spirit, God’s Word – the Bible is a weapon when its truth is put to use, exposing the devil’s work and helping those losing the battle. 17.
7. Prayer – in prayer we rely on God’s help. 18-20.

- **3RD Command: _____ . 8a**
“Draw near to God and He will draw near to you.”

We do not have to come very far when we come near, but we do have to come. The idea of submission now includes the added benefit of God's immediate response. As we submit our wills and desires to God, we will discover His care and closeness in ways we cannot perceive when we are in rebellion against Him.

B. PURITY OUTWARDLY AND INWARDLY. 4:8b-c

- **4TH Command:** _____ . **8b**
"Cleanse your hands, you sinners."

The command to wash hands means to purify our actions and change our external behavior. The connection of washing to submission can be seen in the account of the Last Supper, where Jesus washed His disciples' feet. They had to submit to His serving them, which Peter found difficult to do (see John 13:3-10). The picture, then, involves the submission of our exterior lives to God's cleansing. The way we live matters to God.

- **5TH Command:** _____ . **8c**
"Purify your hearts, you double-minded."

The command to purify hearts calls for purity of thoughts and motives – changes on the inside. The people could not remain double-minded, trying to love both God and the world. If we allow the world to entice us away from God, we have become "double-minded." James has already used this term in 1:8. There it refers to someone who cannot decide if God is reliable. Here it refers to someone who is trying to maintain a friendship with both God and the world. Purity of heart implies single-mindedness.

C. REPENTANCE INSTEAD OF CARELESSNESS. 4:9

- **6TH, 7TH, 8TH Commands:** _____ . **9a**
"Lament and mourn and weep!"

Be wretched (Grieve) – "be afflicted."

Mourn – relates to the general outward demeanor of those gripped by deep grief. It indicates a grief of such intensity that it cannot be concealed.

Weep (Wail) – points to the resultant overflow of tears. It means crying or sobbing because of sin and shame. Such tears are a sign that a person is broken to pieces because of sin.

Submission to God brings people to a new awareness of their condition and shortcomings. As God draws near to us, we ought to sense our unworthiness. After all, we are being allowed to approach the holy, perfect God.

- **9TH Command:** _____ . **9b**
"Let your laughter be turned to mourning and your joy to gloom."

The sorrow being described in this verse is not a public show. We should not attempt to impress God with elaborate displays of repentance. There may be a time of public confession, but the grief-work over sin is largely private and interior. The outcome of this entire process must result in submission to God. The promises of His coming near (4:8) or of His lifting us up (4:10) are sure, but they can only be perceived by those who have humbled themselves before God.