

Steps Toward Maturity (Part 4)

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[0:00] James chapter 4. And then next week will be chapter 5.

! And turning not just a chapter but to a new book. James 4 verses 1-17. Let me read this! I'll be reading again out of the New International but I think you'll be able to follow along with me if you have another translation.

What causes fights and quarrels among you? Don't they come from your desires that battle within you? You want something but don't get it. You kill and covet but you cannot have what you want. You quarrel and fight. You do not have because you do not ask God. When you do ask and you could kind of put in those few times that you do ask.

You do not receive because you ask with wrong motives. That you may spend what you get on your pleasures.

[1:18] Now just a little interjection there. God has no requirement to fulfill our pleasures.

He has a requirement to nurture and guide us in his perfect will. Now there will be pleasure that comes out of that.

God created us. God created us a part of us to desire pleasures and you know that has its proper place. But that's not the driving thing according to the Lord.

You know the beautiful thing that I try to say and we pray this for our children many times. Lord help them to understand. Your way is the best way.

If you could graph out or the ledger sheet or put your pros and cons. The pros would far outweigh the cons.

[2:21] What we imagine the cons would be. By following God. He is not some cosmic wet blanket wanting to just make your life miserable.

That's not who God is. But if I go over there and beat my head against that wall I'm liable to have a headache. I don't know that I could blame the wall.

Continuing in verse 4. You adulterous people. Don't you know that friendship with the world is hatred toward God? Anyone who chooses to be a friend of the world becomes an enemy of God. The verse that pops into my mind is 1 John 2, 15 and 16. Do not love the world or anything in the world. If anyone loves the world the love of the Father is not in him.

For everything in the world. The cravings of sinful man. And the lust of his eyes. The boasting of what he has and does. Comes not from the Father.

[3:27] But from the world. Continuing in verse 5. Or do you think scripture says without reason that the spirit he caused to live in us envies intensely?

I see great value in that. I'm glad when every now and then Mary will say something like, you know, you need to watch that person.

Or watch that, you know. I'm seeing something. And I, you know, my first reaction is usually something like, oh, come on. But she's like, no, even.

Well, there's wisdom in there and everybody, you know, maybe a little envy in there. So, those are good things at times. Isn't that kind of neat?

That God could be jealous for us. That he values us so much. That he doesn't want to share us with something that he doesn't want to share us with.

[4:32] That he wants to keep us for himself. I'd be kind of be, you know, you see some of these movies of the mafia or whatever.

They talk about a made man. This guy, this guy's on the inside. He's in. He's got all of the protection. He's got the benefits.

I'd kind of like to be a made man of God. That God had my back. That God's watching out for me. He's jealous for me. Envy intensely this spirit that he's given within the heart of the believer.

Well, that reminds me of a couple of verses. 1 Corinthians 3.16. Don't you know that you're the temple of God and the spirit of God lives in you.

Dwells in you. That tabernacling. I can't remember who mentioned to me. They were going camping. Boy, when you get in a tent, you know what living's like.

[5 : 38] Or what not really living's like. You know, you just seem to experience everything in a tent. We feel the heat more. We feel the cold more.

We feel, you know, I've been in a tent when it's been hot. And I've been in a tent when it's been cold. And I've been in a tent when it's been blowing. And I've been in a tent when it's been raining. And you just want to touch it, don't you? You just experience life so much more in that tent. And here, obviously, the tent, the word means to tabernacle.

Tabernacle. We think of tabernacle as a noun. But it's like it can be a verb to or the adverb, whatever you call that. You tabernacle.

It's something you can do. Because the Spirit of God tabernacles within us. That's what the meaning of it dwell. He resides.

[6 : 38] And you can experience everything more fully because He's there. He's, you know, take off your jacket and stay a while. You know, He's get comfortable.

You know, have a seat on the couch. He's relaxed and taking up residence in our lives. That's this idea of God's presence there.

I also think of 1 Corinthians 2, 12. It says, we've not received the Spirit of the world, but the Spirit is of God that we may understand.

You know, there's so much of, if you want to say religious, there's so much of reading. How many times have you said, and I know you've heard somebody else say, well, I just don't understand it. You've invited somebody to church, or you've talked to somebody about your Sunday school class, or some kind of outreach, maybe something in the park. You've invited them to maybe the concert you had a few weeks ago, and you got to talking about spiritual things.

[7 : 40] And you've heard this, well, I just don't understand it. It just doesn't make sense. God is the author of clarity.

If there's unclarity, disclarity, what's the right phrasing there? If it's not clear, it's of the devil.

God is the God of clarity. Well, continuing in verse 6. Well, let me just read the last part of 5 to then slide into verse 6.

The Spirit He caused to live in us envies intensely, but He gives us more grace. That is why Scripture says, God opposes the proud, but gives grace to the humble.

That's really the phrasing for now. I'm trying to think of what I, verse 7's, there's one more verse we haven't gotten.

[8 : 54] Verse 7 is the one I said was the key verse for chapter 4. 6 and 7 go together. Let me go ahead and read it. Again, verse 6. But He gives us more grace.

That is why the Scripture says, God opposes the proud, but gives grace to the humble. Submit yourselves then to God. Resist the devil, and he will flee from you.

That's what the outline's going to be here in just a moment. But again, when I hear, especially when you know there's quoting, God opposes the proud, but gives grace to the humble.

And, of course, it's referred to several times in the Bible. But, you know, a passage I really try to meditate upon a lot, and I try to make the practical application. And, of course, usually those verses that you know you really need to apply, it's because you really need to apply them.

Maybe struggle in that area. But Philippians 2, 3, and 4, it tells us, you'll do nothing out of selfish ambition or vain conceit. But in everything, consider others better than yourselves.

[9 : 57] Look not only to the things of your own interest, but also to the interests of others. And then, of course, probably the more famous, most famous, 1 Peter 5, 5, and 6, this idea of humility.

Young men, now I can say that now, you know, those young guys, you know, young men, submit yourselves to those who are older. All of you, clothe yourselves with humility toward one another because God opposes the proud but gives grace to the humble.

Therefore, humble yourselves under the mighty hand of God that he may lift you up in due time.

That's the word for today, humility.

We'll get to that in just a moment. Verse 8, Come near to God and he will come near to you. Wash your hands, you sinners.

Purify your hearts, you double-minded. Grieve. Mourn. Wail. Change your laughter to mourning and your joy to gloom.

[11:09] Humble yourselves before the Lord and he will lift you up. So, verse 11, Brothers, do not slander one another. Anyone who speaks against his brother or judges him speaks against the law and judges it.

When you judge the law, you're not keeping it but setting in judgment on it. There's only one lawgiver and judge, the one who's able to save and destroy.

But you, who are you to judge your neighbor? Now listen, you who say today or tomorrow we'll go to this city or that, spend a year there, carry on business and make money.

Why, you don't even know what will happen tomorrow. What is your life? You're a mist that appears for a little while and then vanishes.

Instead, you ought to say, if it's the Lord's will, we will live and do this or that. As it is, you boast and brag.

[12:19] All such boasting is evil. Anyone then who knows the good he ought to do and doesn't do it sins. And we saw a couple of chapters ago it talked about, you know, we need to be doing.

And now here clarifies it. You know, it's not just doing anything but if you, if you sense the Lord's leadership and that can come, I mean, obviously you read something very, you know, there's a lot of the Bible that's just pretty straightforward.

You know, the Ten Commandments and I mean, you can just, there's a lot of stuff in the Bible you don't even have to pray about. A lot of times, oh, let me pray about that.

Well, there's some things I don't need to pray about. Very clear in the Bible. Other things you do need to pray about, as I mentioned earlier, seek some wise counsel, come to some consensus.

When you sense God leading you, we've got to act. we've got to make a choice.

[13:20] We've got some choices to make. It seems, James sets this up with, it seems like things are out of control. He talks about there's, there's quarreling.

He talks about there's accusations in verses 11 and 12. He talks about then these plans that we're making. We're going to go to this city or that city in verses 13 through 17.

Your world may seem out of control and yet God is there asking you to make choices. The beautiful thing about what God asked us to do, he never asked us to do something that he doesn't then enable us to do.

his way, his timing, and for his glory. And so I want to give you four choices as we've read through this passage.

Four choices to make. The first one, submit to God. Verses seven and eight, it's pretty clear. And I want, something that helps me is, is kind of when I put, you know, what might be called a rubric, but, but just some, some lanes, put some lanes.

[14:41] Everybody likes, things work better when they're lane markers on the road, don't they? Matter of fact, if, if you've probably never noticed this, Tom's not here, but you know, most residential streets don't have lanes, markers in them.

And sometimes, you know, there's a, an area where, you know, those young kids, you know, they're just kind of speeding up and down and, and they found out that, I mean, I'm talking about a residential street.

I'm talking about houses. If they put markers, lane markers, it slows people down. There's just something about knowing where the boundaries are.

Nothing's been said about the speed limit. You know, obviously the road's not changed. You know, the, the speed bumps. Now, maybe they had already tried all that stuff, but putting those lane markers down seems to slow people down.

It helps to have lanes. And so a couple of lanes that I usually use when I'm looking at a passage and I'm, I'm trying to make some application. You know, I've read it many times.

[15:47] I've praying. I, I, I try to look at, you know, well, you know, from the mental perspective or from the, the physical perspective or from the relational perspective. And so here mentally, this idea of submit, you know, my, my will, my mind, you know, I, you know, we talk about making up our mind.

Mentally, there's a challenge here that we submit. When it, when it comes to, am I going to go to the left or to the right? I'm mentally making, that decision is being put before the Lord.

Not my will, but your will be done. Physically, this idea of submit, what does it mean to submit to God? There's a physical aspect to this.

It says, draw near. How do you draw near to God? You know, most of us are, well, you know, I just need to get closer to God.

You've heard, you've said that. People, I just need to get closer to God. What's that mean? Or a phrase that helps me a lot.

[16:58] What's that look like? Because, you know, there, there are times, you know, we, we just need to break this thing down. And some, oh, I, you know, I, I want to, I want to show more appreciation to my parents.

You know, maybe there was a Father's Day or a Mother's Day, you know, this past or a year ago or a decade ago and, and you just got convicted. You know, I, I just need to show more respect to my parents.

That's a pretty, that's a pretty neat thing to say. What's that look like? Well, let's come up with four things.

How are four ways I could respect my, my mom or my dad? What are, you know, four very specific things that we could respect our, our mom or dad?

What's one thing that we could do? Call them up. Now you could, you could say, give them attention. Give them time.

[18:03] Calling them up. And then of course, even make that more, calling them once a day, once a week, you know, calling them up. What's something else that we could do that would physically show or identifiably show this warm fuzzy that it's called respect?

Remember their birthday. Remember their birthday. Okay, well that's taking that phone call another step. It's not just any day that you call.

Their birthday. Doing something, remembering their birthday, doing something on their birthday, taking them out, sending them a card, giving them a call.

What's something else? Acts of service. I've been changing a lot of light bulbs lately. And you know what?

When we're, when my mom and I are out somewhere, she'll mention that. And you know, if somebody's mentioning something now, you know, that's, that's almost a nothing.

[19:11] And yet, if somebody's mentioning something, I've learned in some listening classes I've taken, if somebody's repeating some information that's valuable information, you need to file that away.

Doing acts of service, mowing the lawn, or doing something for them. What's one more thing that we could do? Okay.

Their opinion and listening. Again, something very specific. How many times have you said, well, if you didn't want my opinion, why did you ask?

So, sometimes it's not just listening, but then taking some action on that. Okay. So, right there.

Physically. Four very specific. So, this idea of drawing near to God.

I want to get closer to God. Okay. What's that look like? What are four things that you could do?

Well, what are four things that the person on the other end of your aisle could do to draw closer to God?

[20:24] Praying. Reading the Bible. Okay. Prayer. Reading the Bible. What's something else that you could get closer to God doing?

Worshipping in the spirit of truth. Okay. Obeying. Living by His commandments. Obeying. Tithing.

Practicing service. Okay. So, right there. Five or six applications.

Oh, I just need to get closer to God. No. What you need to do, you need to pray more. You need to read your Bible more. You need to come to Sunday school more.

You need to come to worship more. You need to tithe. You need to serve. You need to, you'll make sure that's, of course, the genuine heart, that's a, that's a really warm fuzzy, but again, you can slice that out as well.

[21:33] What does that genuine heart of worshipping the Lord and spirit and truth look like? But, you know, we've, we've heard this verse so many times.

Draw near to the Lord. Resist the devil and he will flee. Oh man, that, that sounds so neat. But what does that mean? It means doing those things you just told me about.

Submit to God. Number two, resist the devil. Again, the same mental and physical choices is number one, just, it's the other side of the coin.

And let me remind you, it's much easier to do a positive than it is to avoid a negative. Now, we need to avoid negatives. But one of the best ways to avoid the negatives is to do the positives.

focus on Jesus. Sometimes, our focus becomes on the devil and our focus is staying away from the devil. Our focus needs to be on Jesus.

[22:47] Our focus needs to be on that reading of the Bible and that prayer and that worshiping. And it will be much easier and, and things will seem to fall into place better in the resisting of the devil side of, that other side of the coin.

Number three, another choice is to wash your hands. Verses eight and nine.

Let me, let me move over to the emotional side. We talked about the physical, we talked about the mental. What about emotionally? emotionally. Sometimes we don't like to talk about our emotions and, and emotions take on different observations, but it, it mentions in verses eight and nine.

Let me just read that again. Verse nine says, grieve. Emotionally, we need to tease that out.

You know what tease that out means? Ladies, somebody, I need some help on the teasing out.

You, you, you, you kind of split that out.

[24:07] You, you, you kind of dig, you need to dig a little deeper there and, and see what's going on. Separate that out. There needs to be some grieving over our sin.

There needs to be some bother. There needs to be some emotional sobriety. So, sober, just, oh.

There needs to be some, oh, moments. Oh, wow. That's not good. Oh. There needs to be some of those.

Can you hear that? That, that, that, that, that's, that's hurt. It's hurting God.

That's hurting the spirit. That's hurting a loved one. It's hurting me.

[25:19] And so, this idea of washing the hands. You know, you could take that a lot of different ways. I just want to focus on that word. Emotionally, there needs to be some grieving.

What that looks like, you know, I'm going through the death of my father and I've heard it said and I think somebody's even, you know, people will grieve differently.

I remember way back in college learning about these steps of grief and so, I assume, you know, that's probably pretty, pretty real.

Sometimes, it seems there's an order. Sometimes, the order might be mixed up a little bit but there, there needs to be, it's going to look different to different people but there, there needs to be some grieving.

And then, number four, you have a choice, you need to humble yourself. This would be what I would call the spiritual. You know, we looked at it physically and mentally and emotionally.

[26:26] This is what I would just call the spiritual aspect. And sure, there's some bleeding over of overlapping of these but how do you do humble?

I, I discern humility is not something you initiate. Humility is a response.

If I'm walking down the aisle or walking at the grocery store or in the mall and somebody bumps into me, I have a couple of choices to make.

And I can only make those choices in response to something. You know, it's hard to walk down the mall and, you know, I'm going to go share some humility with somebody.

Who can I humble? Who can I share humility with? But as things happen to you, somebody bumps into you or somebody spills something on you and how do you respond?

[27:49] Well, you can respond several ways but you could and maybe humility is not the word that comes to mind. Maybe kindness or maybe politeness or something but I want you to see humility is a response as the spirit of God moves on you.

How do you respond? That's humility. Humility is surrender. Humility is accepting. Humility is trusting in God.

And so when I challenge you to do humility, it's still an action, it's still a choice, but it's always in response to the situation that God has placed you in.

Verse 17, anyone then who knows the good he ought to do and doesn't do it, sins. My challenge today, I don't know that I've ever really specifically said it this way, my challenge for you today is to not sin, quit sinning.

Now maybe that's the underlying text of every sermon, quit sinning. but the application today is as God reveals this to you, you have choices to make.

[29:19] Here are four that I challenge you to make. Thank you.