# **COME NEAR TO GOD**

James 4:1-17

Key Verse 8

“Come near to God and he will come near to you. Wash your hands, you sinners, and purify your hearts, you double-minded.”

**Introduction**



In today’s passage James told believers not to fight with wrong desire and to love the world. Rather he encouraged the believers to submit themselves to God and come near to him, repenting sins. He also encouraged them to be humble before God recognizing their limitation. Through this passage we can learn that what we should desire for and where we should put our hope on.

**1.** **Read verses 1-5. What is the cause of fights and quarrels? (1-2a) What are the two reasons we don’t have what we want? (2b-3) Why shouldn’t we choose to be a friend of the world? (4-5)**

**1-1.** **Read verses 1-5.**

What causes fights and quarrels among you? Don’t they come from your desires that battle within you? 2 You desire but do not have, so you kill. You covet but you cannot get what you want, so you quarrel and fight. You do not have because you do not ask God. 3 When you ask, you do not receive, because you ask with wrong motives, that you may spend what you get on your pleasures.4 You adulterous people, don’t you know that friendship with the world means enmity against God? Therefore, anyone who chooses to be a friend of the world becomes an enemy of God. 5 Or do you think Scripture says without reason that he jealously longs for the spirit he has caused to dwell in us?

**1-2.** **What is the cause of fights and quarrels? (1-2a)**

***What causes fights and quarrels among you? Don’t they come from your desires that battle within you? 2 You desire but do not have, so you kill. You covet but you cannot get what you want, so you quarrel and fight***

· When we have wrong and evil desire it causes fighting and quarrels among believers.

· When we covet what others have, we become jealous and do fighting.

· Envy and selfish ambition produces fighting. Worldly desires never let us have contentment or satisfaction in the mind. Rather it causes problems inside and out.

· We should check our desire before God, and repent the desire if it is right one before God.

James 1: reads,

“but each person is tempted when they are dragged away by their own evil desire and enticed. **15** Then, after desire has conceived, it gives birth to sin; and sin, when it is full-grown, gives birth to death.”

· We should not covet what others have. Even if we covet, we cannot get what we want if God doesn’t allow. Rather we should be satisfied with what God gave us and be thankful for it.

· If we want to get something for our real need, we can come to God and ask him.

**1-3.** **What are the two reasons we don’t have what we want? (2b-3)**

***You do not have because you do not ask God. 3 When you ask, you do not receive, because you ask with wrong motives, that you may spend what you get on your pleasures.***

· We may do not commit your way to him, and make known our requests to him, but follow our own corrupt desire and inclinations: therefore we meet with continual disappointments and poverty.

· When we ask with wrong motive, God doesn’t give us what we ask. God doesn’t waste or spoil things to support our wrong motive.

· By asking with wrong motive such as worldly desire and selfish ambition, we can dishonor God and our prayer gets rejected.

· But if we seek anything in order to serve God with it, we may expect that he will either give us what we seek or give us hearts to be content without it, and give opportunities of serving and glorifying him some other way.

· God could not answer our prayer because we don’t ask in a right manner, not with faith or not with fervency.

· We should learn how to ask for what we need to serve God’s will and glorify his name and serve others.

· We don’t receive because we don’t ask God. If we don’t ask God for something that we need or want, God doesn’t give it to us. God gives us things according to his will even though we didn’t ask. Many things were given to us such as some talents, environment and siblings even though we didn’t ask. But when we have something that we want or need, we need to ask him.

· We don’t ask God for many reasons; lack of faith, lack of earnestness, laziness.

**1-4.** **Why shouldn’t we choose to be a friend of the world? (4-5)**

***You adulterous people, don’t you know that friendship with the world means enmity against God? Therefore, anyone who chooses to be a friend of the world becomes an enemy of God. 5 Or do you think Scripture says without reason that he jealously longs for the spirit he has caused to dwell in us?***

· You adulterous people – making friends with the world is spiritual adultery.

· Worldly people are called adulterers because they give their heart to the world. We are supposed to devote our hearts to God. But if we devote our heart to the world, it is enmity to God. We cannot serve God and world together. (Matt. 6:24)

· A man may have much good things of this life, and yet may keep himself in the love of God; but he who sets his heart upon the world, who places his happiness in it, and will conform himself to it, he is an enemy to God; it is rebellion against God to set the world upon his throne in our hearts. He who will act upon this principle.

· Being a friend of the world means becoming an enemy of God because the world is corrupted and sinful and disobeys God. Basically the world is against God because it is evil and hates truth under Satan’s influence. If we think seriously what the spirit of the world is, and we will find that we cannot suit ourselves to it as friends.

· If we follow the world, we cannot expect true peace from God and true success because we became the enemies of God.

· If we belong to God by loving him the most, he gives more grace than to live and act as the world do. The spirit of the world teaches men to be churls; God teaches them to be bountiful. The spirit of the world teaches us to lay up, or lay out, for ourselves, and according to our own desires; God teaches us to be willing to communicate to the necessities and to the comfort of others. The grace of God is contrary to the spirit of the world, and therefore the friendship of the world should be avoided. God can give us what we need more than anything that the world can give us.

· The Holy Spirit, whom God has placed within us, watches over us with tender jealousy. If our hearts are filled with the spirit of the world, it causes the jealousy

of the Holy Spirit and the corrupted spirit should be totally destroyed.

**2.** **Read verses 6-10. To whom does God give more grace? (6) What does James tell us to do in order to come near to God and to resist the devil? (7-10)**

**2-1. Read verses 6-10**.

But he gives us more grace. That is why Scripture says:“God opposes the proud

but shows favor to the humble.”7 Submit yourselves, then, to God. Resist the devil, and he will flee from you. 8 Come near to God and he will come near to you. Wash your hands, you sinners, and purify your hearts, you double-minded. 9 Grieve, mourn and wail. Change your laughter to mourning and your joy to gloom. 10 Humble yourselves before the Lord, and he will lift you up.

**2-2. To whom does God give more grace? (6)**

***But he gives us more grace. That is why Scripture says:“God opposes the proud but shows favor to the humble.”***

· God resists the proud, but gives grace unto the humble.

· The proud resists God; in his understanding he resists the truths of God; in his will he resists the truths of God; in his will he resists the laws of God; in his passions he resists the providence of God; and therefore no wonder that God sets himself against the proud.

· We should not let God resist us with the pride in us. Who can survive if God resists us?

· Even though we fail following the world, if we humble ourselves and repent our sins God gives us more grace. This is God’s amazing mercy and grace.

· God loves humble and repenting heart.

· When we repent, God gives us more grace to overcome the world.

· God gives “honor and help” to the humble. Wherever God gives true grace, he will give more. He will especially give more grace to the humble, because they see their need of it, will pray for it and be thankful for it; and such shall have it.

**2-3. What does James tell us to do in order to come near to God and to resist the devil? (7-10)**

***7 Submit yourselves, then, to God. Resist the devil, and he will flee from you. 8 Come near to God and he will come near to you. Wash your hands, you sinners, and purify your hearts, you double-minded. 9 Grieve, mourn and wail. Change your laughter to mourning and your joy to gloom. 10 Humble yourselves before the Lord, and he will lift you up.***

· Submit to God: We have to submit to God instead of succumbing to our evil desire, the world or Satan. God is the only one whom we should submit. Submission to any other things is evil.

· Submit your understandings to the truths of God; submit your wills to the will of God.

· Once we submit to God, God can bless us abundantly. Remembering the blessing follows the submission, we should be encouraged to do it.

· Resist the devil: When we try to submit to God, the devil starts working to hinder us not to submit to God.

· So we should resist the devil with firm attitude. Then the devil flees from us. If we resist the devil, it loses power and flees from us.

· If the devil would tempt us to give up our submission through miseries, and crosses, and affliction, so that we might avoid them by following his directions instead of God’s, we must resist these provocations not fretting ourselves in any wise to do evil. If we basely yield to temptations, the devil will continually follow us; but if we put on the whole armor of God, and stand it out against him, he will be gone from us. Resolution shuts and bolts the door against temptation.

· Come near to God. He will come near to you. If we come near to God repenting our sins and seek him, God comes near to us with much grace.

· The heart that has rebelled must be brought to the foot of God; the spirit that was distant and estranged from a life of communion and converse with God must become acquainted with him.

· We can come near to God through repentance, offering sincere worship, joining church and serving every duty he requires of us.

· Wash your hands- He who comes unto God must have clean hands. Paul therefore directs to lift up holy hands without wrath and doubting (1 Tim. 2:8), hands free from blood, and bribes, and everything that is unjust or cruel, and free from every defilement of sin: The hands must be cleansed by faith, repentance, and reformation, or it will be in vain for us to draw nigh to God in prayer, or in any of the exercises of devotion.

· Purify your hearts- Those who stay between God and the world are the double-minded. we have to repent our double- minded attitude which is to try to love God and world together. We have to purify our heart by removing all worldly things and serve God only with single heart.

· Grieve, mourn, wail – repent sincerely with broken and genuine heart.

· Humble yourselves. He will lift you up – To repent we should humble ourselves. When we repent our sins with humble heart, God lifts us up.

· When we come near to God in faith, repentance, and trust, and obedience, he will come to us for your deliverance. If there is not a close relationship between God and us, it is our fault, and not His. But if we return to him with humility he will lift up the humble.

· He will lift us up out of trouble, or he will lift us up in our spirits and comforts under trouble; he will lift us up to honor and safety in the world, or he will lift us up in our way to heaven.

. God will revive the spirit of the humble (Isa. 57:15), He will hear the desire of the humble (Ps. 10:17), and he will at last life them up to glory. Before honor is humility. The highest honor in heaven will be the reward of the greatest humility on earth.

**3.** **Read verses 11-12. Why shouldn’t we speak against others? (11a) Why should we keep the law instead of judging it? (11b) Who is the only lawgiver and Judge? (12)**

**3-1. Read verses 11-12.**

Brothers and sisters, do not slander one another. Anyone who speaks against a brother or sister[d] or judges them speaks against the law and judges it. When you judge the law, you are not keeping it, but sitting in judgment on it. 12 There is only one Lawgiver and Judge, the one who is able to save and destroy. But you—who are you to judge your neighbor?

**3-2. Why shouldn’t we speak against others? (11a)**

***Brothers and sisters, do not slander one another. Anyone who speaks against a brother or sister or judges them speaks against the law and judges it***

· ‘Slander’ in the Greek word, katalaleite, signifies speaking anything that may hurt or injure another.

· We must not speak evil things of others, though they be true, unless we are called to it, and there be some necessary occasion for that; much less must we report evil things when they are false.

· Our lips must be guided by the law of kindness, as well as truth and justice.

· We should not speak evil of one another, because we are brothers and sisters in Jesus. It is required of us that we may keep tender of the good name of our brothers where we cannot speak well, we would better to say nothing than speak evil of brothers; we must not take pleasure in making known the faults of others merely to expose them, nor in making more of their known faults than really they deserve.

**3-3. Why should we keep the law instead of judging it? (11b)**

***When you judge the law, you are not keeping it, but sitting in judgment on it.***

· The law of Christ is, “Do not judge others that you may not be judged. (Matt. 7:1)

· Speaking evil of others is breaking God’s commandment and judging it as if the law was too strict, and laid too great a restraint upon us.

· The law came from God. It represents God. The law is perfect. We should just keep it with humble heart.

**3-4. Who is the only lawgiver and Judge? (12)**

***There is only one Lawgiver and Judge, the one who is able to save and destroy. But you—who are you to judge your neighbor?***

· God is the Only Lawgiver and Judge. He is the only One who can judge because he gave the law and is the author of the law.

· God is the only judge who can judge justly and fairly based on the law.

· We are sinners who have a lot of defects. Our judge never can be perfect before God.

· God the Lawgiver, has reserved the power of passing the final sentence on men.

· God has the power to reward the observance of his laws, and to punish all disobedience.

**4.** **Read verses 13-17. Why shouldn’t we cling to the false security of our own plans? (13, 14) How should we view and live our lives instead of being boastful? (15, 16) Why must we practice what we know? (17)**

**4-1. Read verses 13-17.**

Now listen, you who say, “Today or tomorrow we will go to this or that city, spend a year there, carry on business and make money.” 14 Why, you do not even know what will happen tomorrow. What is your life? You are a mist that appears for a little while and then vanishes. 15 Instead, you ought to say, “If it is the Lord’s will, we will live and do this or that.” 16 As it is, you boast in your arrogant schemes. All such boasting is evil. 17 If anyone, then, knows the good they ought to do and doesn’t do it, it is sin for them.

**4-2. Why shouldn’t we cling to the false security of our own plans? (13, 14)**

***Now listen, you who say, “Today or tomorrow we will go to this or that city, spend a year there, carry on business and make money.” 14 Why, you do not even know what will happen tomorrow. What is your life? You are a mist that appears for a little while and then vanishes.***

· We don’t know what will happen tomorrow. Our future is not in our hands. It is in God’s hands. Even though we make plan for future life, our future can be totally different from what we planned.

· We are a mist that appears quickly. Our life on earth is so short and we are so weak. We cannot trust ourselves and we cannot have true hope for this world. All things in this world are meaningless.

· All the things in this world is not certain and solid. Everything vanishes away.

· But there will be eternal things and eternal life in different world, which is the kingdom of God. We should live to prepare the life and the world that is to come.

**4-3. How should we view and live our lives instead of being boastful? (15, 16)**

***15 Instead, you ought to say, “If it is the Lord’s will, we will live and do this or that.”***

· We should entrust our life to God and humbly follow his will and serve it. Living a life following God’s will is the best way to live.

· If the Lord will, we shall live. We must remember that our times are not in our own hands, but at the disposal of God; we live as long as God appoints, and in the circumstances God appoints, and therefore must be submissive to him, even as to life itself

· If the Lord will, we shall do this or that. All our actions and deeds are under the control of Heaven. So all we plan and all we do should be with a submissive dependence on God.

***16 As it is, you boast in your arrogant schemes. All such boasting is evil.***

· All such boasting is evil- Boasting before God is evil. We should humble ourselves and praise God only.

· We should avoid vain boasting, and to look upon it as very evil thing.

· People rejoice with the things that they have without considering what God did for them. Then they boast of these things. Such is the joy of worldly people, to boast of all their successes.

· Such rejoicing and boasting is evil; it is foolish and it is hurtful. It is a great sin before God. It will bring their destruction in the end.

· If we rejoice in God for that our times are in his hand, that all events are at his plan, and that he is our God in promise, this rejoicing is good; the wisdom, power, and providence of God. Then all things work together for our good.

· But, if we rejoice in our own vain confidences and presumptuous boasts, this is evil; it is an evil carefully to be avoided by all wise.

**4-4. Why must we practice what we know? (17)**

***If anyone, then, knows the good they ought to do and doesn’t do it, it is sin for them.***

· Even though we know what we are supposed to do and what is right, if we don’t do it is sin for us.

· So we have to take care of what we have heard and learned seriously and make all efforts to obey them. If not, our own hearts condemn us, then we can not have confidence towards God

· If we say, “I see”, and do not act suitably to our sight, then our sin remains.(John 9:41).

**Conclusion**

We should not seek things according to our wrong desire. Rather we should have right desire and motive before God. If we become a friend of this world and love worldly things, we become the enemies of God. We should humble ourselves with broken heart and repent our double-mindedness and submit ourselves to God fully. When we come near to God through repentance and humility, God comes near to us and lifts us up. We should not slander our brothers and sisters at all. We don’t know what will happen tomorrow. Everything is in God’s hands and his will stands alone. All we need to do is to humble ourselves and trust him only and do whatever he commands us wholeheartedly. This is the way how we can live truly joyful and fruitful life before God.

**One word: Come near to God**