

Sermon Notes and Discussion Questions: The Source of Weakness and the Source of Strength

Our passions and desires are at war within us, and we must fight against them. Pride, boasting, and divisiveness mark worldly people, while humility, obedience, and repentance mark godly people.

INTRODUCTION

How would you define worldliness? Why is worldliness a temptation that even believers are continually drawn toward?

How is worldliness related to the topic of true and false wisdom?

This week we'll build on our previous study of true and false wisdom. Worldliness and godliness are both the root and the fruit of the wisdom we live by. False wisdom is rooted in and reproduces more worldliness. True wisdom is rooted in and reproduces more godliness. Apart from the wisdom of God, we will continually drift towards worldliness.

HAVE A VOLUNTEER READ JAMES 4:1-6.

The way we view the world causes us to grow in one of two ways: gladness and gratitude or entitlement and contempt. Of the two ways people grow, which way are you growing?

What circumstances in life lead you to feel most entitled? Why should you find satisfaction in God regardless of your circumstances?

When we learn to spot God's goodness in our lives, it leads to an ever-increasing sense of gladness and gratitude. As joy and satisfaction begin to grow in our lives, we learn to appreciate God's work regardless of our circumstances. In contrast, if we feel that God owes us something, instead of growing in gladness and gratitude, we'll grow in contempt. The only thing we deserve from God is death and eternal punishment, but by His grace, He has given us life.

How can social media feed our entitlement and ungratefulness?

HAVE A VOLUNTEER READ JAMES 4:7-9.

What three actions for submitting to God are commanded in these verses?

What does it look like in practical terms to resist the devil? How are you establishing support systems and accountability to help you resist spiritual attack and temptation?

James also said to resist the Devil. When we do, James said the victory over his temptation is certain—he will flee from you. The Greek word translated “resist” means “to oppose,” “to stand against.” James made it clear that in regard to the Devil (the word means “slanderer” or “accuser”) and our yielding to his temptations, there can be no neutrality.

What does it mean to draw near to God? For Him to draw near to you?

How is true sorrow and repentance over sin related to drawing near to God?

We must resist the Devil on the one hand and draw near to God on the other. James promised that the closer we get to God, the closer He gets to us, as the opposite ends of two magnets attract each other. To get closer to God we must cleanse our hands and purify our hearts. James had in mind that we need to clean up our outward actions as well as our inner attitudes and motives. We cleanse ourselves when we confess our sins and repent of our sins. We can be sure that if we are not actively drawing near to God, we are moving closer to worldliness.

APPLICATION

What has proved most effective in helping you resist temptation at different times in your life?
How do you need to act now?

What practical steps do you currently take to structure your day or week in order to pursue God?
What do you need to begin?

Who is someone in your life with whom you are having conflict or an uneasy relationship? How can God's grace help with that relationship?

PRAYER

Pray for God to empower you to resist the devil, drawn near to Him and take your sin seriously.