

Submit to Resist

There is nothing more humbling than being a mom or mother figure to children. Babies spit up on you, burp in public, make other noises and scream at the top of their lungs in the most inopportune places.

Would you rather have a humble boss who is willing to listen to your ideas & questions or a know-it-all boss full of pride? Spouse? Friend?

Given the choice most, if not all of us, would pick the humble boss, spouse, friend. There is something that draws us to a person of humility and repulses us about the person who is driven and controlled by selfish pride. Humility has a powerful draw.

Humility Attracts God's Grace.

The word Humble in Greek means "lower or make low". Humility in the context James is sharing with the church, and us, means *trusting God above myself*. A willingness to, in humility, surrender my plan, my will, to God's plan & his will for my life. The antithesis of humility in this context is "I know better than God". Pride. God hates it.

James 4:1 – 3 (NIV) 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.

Every moment of every day, a war is waged within us; a war for control of your soul. Something will control it. Godliness, the draw of worldly desires or our selfishness.

When we put ourselves where God alone belongs, conflict always results.

James 4:4 (NIV) 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.

Enmity means hostility. In the context of this verse, James gives us a warning that we shouldn't be chasing after worldly desires & selfish ambitions. Friendship with the world is *hostility* with God.

James 4:5 (NIV) Or do you think Scripture says without reason that he jealously longs for the spirit he has caused to dwell in us?

God is not jealous *about you*, he is jealous *for you*, for his own glory. Our sin nature makes us *rebellious against God*. Bent towards sin. Given the choice to do God's will or our own, we will naturally choose to do our own thing.

James 4:6 (NIV) But he gives us more grace. That is why Scripture says: "God opposes the proud but shows favor to the humble."

God's undeserved, unearned favor. It's a gift to us. God only gives grace to those who are willing to admit that their selfish desires and passions have led to quarrels and fights and arguments with others. Those willing to admit their complete dependence on God & not on themselves.

James 4:7 (NIV) **Submit yourselves, then, to God. Resist the devil, and he will flee from you.**

To submit is not passive, but active. It comes from two words: "under" & "arrange". It's a military term. James puts his language in terms of warfare. James is saying we are at war with the devil or evil.

A humble person submits to his Commander-in-Chief. A Christ – follower willingly places his/her self under the authority of God. Here's why:

Submission to God's Will Provides Power to Resist the Devil's Way.

Submission is a choice we make. It's something each one of us must decide on our own to do or not to do. The process of submission starts in our heart.

If we don't decide in our hearts that we are going to willingly submit to God, then we are not truly submitting.

We can resist God's will, or we can resist the devil, *but we can't do both*. As a Christ – follower there is NO Spiritual victory in life w/o submitting to God. Why?

The heart of pride always circles around to *self – sufficiency*. How do we submit to God?

Ephesians 6:10 – 11 (NLT) **A final word: Be strong in the Lord and in his mighty power. ¹¹ Put on all of God's armor so that you will be able to stand firm against all strategies of the devil.**

ALL, not some. We need it ALL. It's his mighty power, not our mighty power.

Ephesians 6:12 (NLT) **¹² For we are not fighting against flesh-and-blood enemies, but against evil rulers and authorities of the unseen world, against mighty powers in this dark world, and against evil spirits in the heavenly places.**

If we are fighting in the spirit world we need God's Spirit fighting for us. Satan has power, but he can't compete with God's power.

Ephesians 6:13 (NLT) **¹³ Therefore, put on every piece of God's armor so you will be able to resist the enemy in the time of evil. Then after the battle you will still be standing firm.**

Ephesians 6:14 – 15 (NLT) **¹⁴ Stand your ground, putting on the belt of truth and the body armor of God's righteousness*. ¹⁵ For shoes, put on the peace that comes from the Good News so that you will be fully prepared.**

Ephesians 6:16 (NLT) **16 In addition to all of these, hold up the shield of faith to stop the fiery arrows of the devil.**

Moms: all to possible to be pulled in so many directions that it's difficult to spend consistent time talking, listening and soaking up God's Word and his presence.

Moms, you have an enemy of your soul & he is unrelenting in his attacks on you. He will attempt to run you down and steal your joy. He starts his attack in your mind! The enemy of your soul will feed you thoughts that make you feel: sad, angry, bitter, guilt (have I done enough?), anxious, fearful, lonely, depressed or full of self – doubt (why don't I have it together like her?). May feel unfulfilled. Less than. No matter how strong you are the enemy is coming for you. Not if, but when.

Husband, mother figure: Pray for your spouse. Pray for that person that you are a mother figure to. Encourage them, build them up. If possible – give them breaks so they can be refreshed & refueled. Husbands, our words, actions & support are critical. Tell her you are praying for her and will pray with her whenever she needs you to do so. She is in a battle; fight for her! Be her *knight in shining armor* & call out to God on her behalf.

Ephesians 6:17 (NLT) **17 Put on salvation as your helmet, and take the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God.**

In humility we receive forgiveness of our sins & begin a life – changing relationship with Jesus. We offer God control of our mind. Memorize scripture. What goes in, comes out.

Ephesians 6:18 (NLT) **18 Pray in the Spirit at all times and on every occasion. Stay alert and be persistent in your prayers for all believers everywhere.**

Humble ourselves before God & let Him control us, then he can work through us. How? In prayer. The power in our prayers is God's power working, not ours.

James 4:8 (NIV) **Come near to God and he will come near to you. Wash your hands, you sinners, and purify your hearts, you double-minded.**

The audience James was writing to had set their hearts on worldly pleasure. In chasing after it they had drifted away from God. When we chase worldly pleasure it *always* negatively affects our relationship with God.

They had become estranged from God, but they were still his children, his people. God assures them he will welcome them back. Where do you see that?

Come near to God and he will come near to you. It's *instruction* from God followed by a *promise* from God. He jealously yearned for their devotion, but their devotion had been to chase the pleasures of this world. If you & I as sinners draw near (close) to a Holy God, we will naturally want to repent of our sins. Why?

In the presence of holiness, the light reveals our darkness. In His presence we see just how messed up we are; how impure our motives, thoughts & desires really can be. How do we draw near to God?

James says, “**wash your hands**”: The hand represents actions or things we do. It’s a command to make our conduct pure. To STOP doing wrong. *Submission to God’s Will provides power to Resist the Devil’s Way.*

“**You sinners**” is a strong term that James uses to expose the extent of their involvement in worldly attitudes & actions.

To “**purify your heart**” represents motives or intentions. James is saying, “purify your thoughts and motives”. Again, only possible by humble submission to God’s Will that *provides power to Resist the Devil’s Way.*

The “**double – minded**” describes the way the people reading this letter attempted to love God and the pleasures of the world at the same time. Lips: “I Love God”. Actions: totally different way.

What do we do when we find ourselves there? When we’ve drifted away from the closeness in our relationship w/God. Wanting to love God w/our whole heart but doing the wrong thing w/the wrong motives? *Humility Attracts God’s Grace.*

Take Sin Seriously.

True sorrow for sin is not being sorry that we were caught (all of us feel bad then), but sorry that our heart was so hard that we could commit this sin against God.

James 4:9 (NIV) **Grieve, mourn and wail. Change your laughter to mourning and your joy to gloom.**

If we take sin lightly it becomes easy to keep doing it. The enemy will whisper: “it’s no big deal. God will forgive you”. He will but that’s not obedience. That’s not humility leading, it’s pride. Satan doesn’t play by any rules. He knows sin isn’t fair.

When we confess our sin; when we are *genuinely repentant* over what we have done, said, thought or chased after, God does something amazing, totally undeserved and even hard to believe. Here is how good God is!

James 4:10 (NIV) **Humble yourselves before the Lord, and he will lift you up.**

Humility Attracts God’s Grace. When we humble ourselves, when we submit to God’s will and receive the power to resist the devil’s schemes and ways. When we take sin seriously. God promises that he will lift us up out of our guilt and waywardness and bring us to a place of wholeness and right standing (righteousness) with him. And He will receive the glory.

In what area are you flirting with sin? Where is humility and pride battling it out? Who’s consistently winning the battle? Where are you feeling fulfilled? Are you chasing after

what somebody else has expecting it to fulfill you? Humility is what attracts God's Grace. Submission to God's will provides power to resist the devil's way and to take sin, and the consequences of it, seriously.

Small Group Questions

1. What was challenging, convicting, encouraging, or timely for your current circumstances?
2. Given the choice, would you prefer a friend, spouse or boss who is full of pride or humility? Why? What do you admire most about someone who is strong but also humble? How did Jesus demonstrate a life of strength *and* humility?
3. Read James 4:7 - 10. What actions does James instruct us to take? Why is the order of those actions so important? What typically happens if we try to resist without submitting first? Why do you think believers often try to go it alone instead of submitting & relying on God?
4. Steve said, "We can resist God's will, or we can resist the devil, *but we can't do both*. Do you agree or disagree? Why? What does it look like in practical terms to resist the devil?
5. Read Ephesians 6:10 – 18. What is the source of strength in spiritual warfare? Why is it important to remember our struggles are spiritual? What are the pieces of armor mentioned and how do they help us fight the battle? What's the only offensive weapon described and how does it help us fight? Why is prayer an essential practice for winning the war?
6. What does it mean to draw near to God? What promise is given to those who draw near to God? What practical steps can you take this week to pursue and draw nearer to God?
7. Over what does James say we are to "Grieve, mourn and wail. Change your laughter to mourning and your joy to gloom"? Why should we take sin seriously? What's the danger in not taking it seriously?
8. What promise is given in verse 10 to those who draw near to God and humble themselves before Him? How does humility attract God's Grace? What might that look like?
9. What are some areas of your life that you find it difficult to submit (or turn over) to God's control? How do your actions demonstrate to those around you that you are living in submission to God?
10. Close in prayer. Submit yourself to God so you can actively resist the devil and his strategies that war against you this week.

