

Small Group Guide: Humility Before God

Based on James 4:1-12



Opening Prayer

Begin your time together by asking God to humble your hearts and open your minds to His Word. Pray for grace to see yourselves honestly and for courage to submit fully to God's will.

Ice Breaker

Share a time when you were unexpectedly humbled (like the pastor's tennis story). How did that experience affect you? What did you learn about yourself?

Key Scripture

James 4:6-7 - "But he gives more grace. Therefore he says, 'God resists the proud but gives grace to the humble.' Therefore submit to God. Resist the devil and he will flee from you."

Key Takeaways

1. **Pride vs. Humility:** Pride led to humanity's fall; humility is what can save us through Christ.
 2. **Proper Prayer:** We often ask God to serve our desires rather than asking how we can serve His will.
 3. **Friendship with the World:** Trying to appease culture while claiming to follow God creates spiritual adultery.
 4. **The Order Matters:** Submit to God FIRST, then resist the devil—not the other way around.
 5. **The Comparison Trap:** We tend to compare our best to others' worst, but God's standard is His own perfection.
 6. **Grace for the Humble:** God's grace is available to all, but it comes to those who humble themselves before Him.
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Discussion Questions

Understanding the Text

1. **James 4:1-3** - What does James identify as the source of conflicts and fights among believers? How does this apply to churches today?
2. **James 4:4** - What does it mean to be "friends with the world"? What does spiritual adultery look like in practical terms?
3. **James 4:7-8** - Why do you think James puts "submit to God" before "resist the devil"? What happens when we try to reverse that order?

Personal Reflection

4. When you pray, how much of your prayer is asking God to serve your desires versus seeking His will? Be honest with yourself and the group.
5. The pastor mentioned we often focus on things we're good at to avoid being humbled. What areas of your life do you avoid because you don't want to feel "not good enough"? How might God want to work in those areas?

6. **James 4:8** - "Draw near to God and He will draw near to you." What does it practically look like to draw near to God in your daily life? What obstacles prevent you from doing this?

Going Deeper

7. The sermon referenced the Prodigal Son. Where are you in that story right now—at home with the Father, running away, or on your way back? What would it look like for you to take the next step toward Him?
8. **James 4:9** - Why does James tell us to "lament and mourn and weep"? How does considering eternal things rather than seeking pleasure lead to wisdom?
9. **James 4:11-12** - How do we balance biblical discernment with not judging others? Where have you seen this misunderstood in the church?

Application

10. In what specific area of your life are you currently trying to "sit on God's throne" by deciding right and wrong for yourself rather than submitting to His Word?
11. The pastor said, "God is not our servant. We are His servants." How does this truth challenge the way you approach your relationship with God?
12. What would change in your life this week if you truly grasped the "chasm" between God's holiness and your sinfulness—and the beauty of being clothed in Christ's righteousness?

Practical Applications

This Week's Challenge

Choose ONE of the following to practice this week:

Option 1: Prayer Audit

- Review your prayers from this week. Write down what you've asked for.
- Categorize them: How many were about your desires vs. seeking God's will?
- Rewrite one prayer each day to focus on "Your kingdom come, Your will be done."

Option 2: Humility Check

- Identify one area where you're resisting submission to God.

- Confess it to a trusted friend or accountability partner.
- Take one concrete step toward surrender in that area.

Option 3: Drawing Near

- Set aside 15 minutes daily to "draw near to God" without asking for anything.
- Simply worship, read Scripture, and listen.
- Journal what God reveals to you about His character and your need for Him.

Option 4: Grace Extension

- Identify someone you've been judging or speaking negatively about.
- Pray for them daily this week.
- If appropriate, reach out with encouragement or reconciliation.

Accountability Questions

1. What specific step will you take this week to humble yourself before God?
2. How can this group pray for you as you seek to submit to God rather than resist Him in pride?
3. Who will you share what you've learned with this week?

Memory Verse

James 4:6-7 - "But he gives more grace. Therefore he says, 'God resists the proud but gives grace to the humble.' Therefore submit to God. Resist the devil and he will flee from you."

Closing Reflection

The pastor ended with this powerful reminder: "I know how badly I need the cross. So I want you to receive it too because I know what it is to receive it."

Take a moment of silence to reflect:

- How badly do you recognize your need for the cross today?
- Are you living in the reality of being "washed and clothed in His righteousness"?

- What would it look like to share that same grace with others this week?
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Closing Prayer

Close by praying together:

- Thank God for His grace that is available to the humble
 - Confess areas of pride and self-reliance
 - Ask for help to submit fully to God's will
 - Pray for each other's specific challenges and commitments
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5-Day Devotional: Humility Before a Holy God



Day 1: The War Within

Reading: James 4:1-3

Devotional: James confronts us with an uncomfortable truth: the conflicts in our lives often stem from desires warring within us. When we approach God in prayer, we must examine our motives. Are we asking God to serve our agenda, or are we seeking to align with His will? The flesh constantly pulls us toward self-gratification, but the Spirit calls us to surrender. Today, reflect on your recent prayers. How many have been about what you want versus seeking God's kingdom first? True peace comes not from getting what we desire, but from desiring what God wants. Humility begins when we stop demanding that God serve us and instead ask how we can serve Him.

Day 2: Friendship with the World

Reading: James 4:4-6; Hosea 1-3 (overview)

Devotional: James uses shocking language—"adulterers and adulteresses"—to describe believers who befriend the world. Like Israel's spiritual adultery in Hosea, we commit betrayal when we give our hearts to cultural approval rather than God's truth. The social pressure to conform is real, but it pales compared to the persecution early believers faced. Yet James tells them—and us—to resist worldly compromise. God is jealously protective of our devotion because He alone deserves it. The beautiful truth? He gives grace to the humble. When we acknowledge our weakness and turn from cultural idols, God's grace rushes toward us. Today, identify one area where you've compromised truth for acceptance, and choose humility over pride.

Day 3: Submit, Then Resist

Reading: James 4:7-8; Luke 15:11-24

Devotional: "Resist the devil and he will flee" is incomplete without "submit to God" first. We cannot fight spiritual battles in our own strength while playing god in our lives. Submission isn't weakness—it's aligning with the One whose plans are good. Like the prodigal son, the moment we turn our hearts toward home, the Father is already running toward us with open arms. Drawing near to God requires repentance, a turning away from the life we've been living apart from Him. The Father doesn't wait at a distance, arms crossed in judgment. He sprints toward His returning children. Which direction is your

heart facing today? Turn toward Him, and watch Him close the distance with love and grace.

Day 4: Mourning That Leads to Joy

Reading: James 4:9-10; Ecclesiastes 7:1-4

Devotional: James' call to "mourn and weep" seems counterintuitive until we understand its purpose. He's not condemning joy, but calling us to sober reflection about eternity. When we stop chasing temporary pleasures and consider life's true meaning, we gain wisdom. Solomon taught that the house of mourning teaches more than the house of feasting. Taking time to contemplate our need for God, the seriousness of sin, and the reality of eternity brings clarity. This mourning isn't depression—it's honest assessment that leads to humble dependence on Christ. When we see the chasm between our sin and God's holiness, we finally grasp how desperately we need the cross. Spend time today in quiet reflection, allowing the weight of your need for grace to deepen your gratitude.

Day 5: The Only Righteous Judge

Reading: James 4:11-12; Romans 3:21-26

Devotional: We have no authority to condemn others because we stand equally in need of grace. Only God sits on the judgment throne; only Christ's righteousness qualifies anyone for heaven. This doesn't eliminate discernment—we can recognize sin and offer the gospel—but it destroys our arrogance. The comparison game fails when we realize we're all measured against God's perfection, not each other's failures. One day you'll stand before a holy God, fully aware of the chasm between His righteousness and your sin. Thank God for Christ, who clothes you in His righteousness so that what God sees is not your failure but His Son's perfection. Stop judging others and start offering them the same grace you desperately needed. Let humility replace condemnation, and let love replace pride.