



Week Two

Draw near to God,
and he will draw near to you.
Cleanse your hands, you sinners,
and purify your hearts,
you double-minded

James 4:8

This study follows a pattern of gathering—reflection—sharing—prayer.

GATHERING

Last week our practice focused on drawing near to God — the love that motivates. How did that go for folks?

This week's theme in worship was "Holy and Blameless". How do you feel about the invitation to be holy and blameless before God?

Laurie's sermon talked about her friend Bill, and the love that motivated him to remain clean and sober. She related the story of him among his work friends in a bar, where community was gathered around what was, for Bill, a corrupting influence and able to be his joyful, goofy self in the middle of the corrupting influence. How does her suggestion of this as a picture of holy (that is, uncorrupted) and blameless (that is, not crossing the line to drink) seem to you?

SHARED REFLECTION: Ephesians 1:3-10,

Read Ephesians 1:3-10 out loud 3-4 times, pausing for silence between each reading. As you listen, pay particular attention to what Paul says about God and Christ in relationship to being holy and blameless. After the groups has finished all of the readings, talk about what struck you.

Laurie's sermon reflected on sin as both transgression (related to blameless) and a corrupting influence (related to holiness). In Ephesians 1:3-10, what are all the actions on God's part, and especially in Christ, that are undertaken to present us holy and blameless?

"Holiness is not the antithesis of relation – it does not drive God from the unholy and lock God into absolute pure separateness. Rather, God's holiness is the quality of God's relations to that which is unholy ... God's destruction of sin is accomplished in his triune acts of *fellowship* with humanity, in which he condemns, pardons and cleanses by taking upon himself the situation of the ruined creature." — John Webster, *Holiness*

Last week we spoke about God's holiness drawing near in covenant with Israel — this week about God's holiness drawing near on the cross in Jesus. The passage from James 4:8 for our memory verse exhorts us to cleanse our hands and purify our hearts — how is it different doing this in faith and reliance on Jesus' work for us instead of self-reliance?

Week Two ...

SHARED LIFE —

Practicing holiness ... Confession

This week's practice for holiness is confession. There is a spiritual practice called the Examen that reflects at the end of each day on two things — God's presence with us, and where we need forgiveness in Jesus' name to draw near to God. If you google search "Examen" you'll at least one resource that works for you.

- **Request** the Spirit to lead me through my review of the day.
- **Relish** the moments that went well and all of the gifts I have today.
Where have I been especially aware of God's gift of consolation / joy / life?
Where have I experienced desolation / discouragement?
- **Remember** God's presence in both consolation and desolation
- **Review** the day.
- **Repent** of any mistakes or failures.
- **Resolve**, in concrete ways, to live tomorrow well.

How goes it with your soul?

These are questions that your group may be ready to use at some point for mutual accountability and encouragement. They can also be questions you use to meet up with each other in prayer partners between group meeting times. The goal is authentic discovery and mutual love as we seek to follow Jesus with our whole heart, mind, soul and strength.

Where is God at work in your life?
Where are you resisting?

Where are you cooperating?
How can we pray & encourage you?

PRAYER

Be sure to dedicate time to praying together in God's presence and for one another. You may want to take some notes here to remember how to hold each other in prayer during the week.