

# The Potter's Christian Life Center

SERMON NOTES  
with Pastor Greg Formey



## Down Is The Way Up

**James 4:8-10**

Sunday, August 18, 2019

One of the problems with pride is that there is always going to be someone who can top you. They will run faster, jump higher, win more, be more beautiful, tell a funnier story, receive more applause and go one step farther than you did. Even if no one beats your record in your lifetime, someone eventually will.

*A New England pastor and a rabbi were having a conversation one day over lunch. The pastor proudly proclaimed, "One of my ancestors signed the Declaration of Independence". He thought that the rabbi would be very impressed by this. To his embarrassment, the rabbi responded, "I understand your pride. One of my ancestors signed the Ten Commandments."*

**<sup>8</sup>Draw near to God, and he will draw near to you. Cleanse your hands, you sinners, and purify your hearts, you double-minded. / <sup>9</sup>Be wretched and mourn and weep. Let your laughter be turned to mourning and your joy to gloom. <sup>10</sup>Humble yourselves before the Lord, and he will exalt you. ESV**

One of God's great dreams is to work freely in our lives, but cannot be realized if we are bound with pride. Pride brings temporary highs, but inevitably leads to humiliation. The Lord then uses times of humiliation to bring us to humility.

### **CHANGE YOUR BEHAVIOR**

**<sup>8b</sup>Cleanse your hands, you sinners...**

The Jews were accustomed to washing their hands before they participated in public worship. The symbolic message here is that in order to gain the favor of God, it is necessary to put away our sins and approach Him with a desire to be pure and holy.

### **Psalm 24:3-5**

**<sup>3</sup>Who shall ascend the hill of the LORD? And who shall stand in his holy place? <sup>4</sup>He who has clean hands and a pure heart, / who does not lift up his soul to what is false and does not swear deceitfully. <sup>5</sup>He will receive blessing from the LORD and righteousness from the God of his salvation.**

This refers to putting an end to unrighteous actions. Our behaviors are evidence of the condition of our hearts. Jesus said in **Matthew 7:16**, **“You can identify them by their fruit, that is, by the way they act.”**

## **FOCUS YOUR MIND**

**<sup>8c</sup>Purify your hearts, you double-minded**

James is warning us not to be satisfied with a mere change of behavior. There must be more significant work that reaches to the heart and changes the things we love. If the heart is wrong, nothing can be right.

## **ENGAGE YOUR EMOTIONS**

**<sup>9</sup>Be wretched and mourn and weep. Let your laughter be turned to mourning and your joy to gloom. <sup>10</sup>Humble yourselves before the Lord, and he will exalt you. ESV**

This grieving, mourning, and weeping speaks of seriousness. This is not a laughing matter. It appears that many Christians today have never learned to mourn over their sin. By nature we are a proud people. God's presence and power flows only from repentant heart. God says, **“This is the one I esteem: he who is humble and contrite in spirit, and trembles at my word” (Isaiah 66:2).**

Joy will eventually come to us, but first we must admit to our willfulness so that God can lift us up. This brokenness is the pathway to elevation in the kingdom. Anything else will result in humiliation.

**The pathway leading up begins with bowing down in humility.**