

Friendship with God



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James 4:6-10

I remember the first time we took our little boy, Crider, to Disney World. It was the first time he could really remember it. He was about two years old. We were going with Memish and Papaw. As you know, a fifteen hour drive is hard for a little two-year-old so we tell him all of the great things he is going to see and the magical experiences he is going to have. He is not very happy in the backseat, but we entertain him. Finally, we get to the Florida state line and pull over to a rest stop because he needs a rest and we need a rest, so we all go in. When he walks into the rest stop there is an entire wall filled with brochures. How many of you guys have been to the Florida rest stop? There is every brochure you can imagine for Disney, Sea World, and all of these great things. So, he walks in and over to that wall, and I am thinking this is great, this will entertain him for a little while. He starts picking them up and pointing and saying the names of Mickey and Minnie. All of the things we have told him about are here in the brochure. Now there are brochures all over the floor but it has been a good ten minute break for all of us. He is not screaming, he is happy, he has brochures, so this is awesome. Then it came time for us to leave and keep driving to the actual Disney World, so I said, "Alright, Crider, it is time for us to go." He turned around, looked at me, and said, "NO!" and then he

turned back around. I am thinking... umm...ok... I say, "Crider, come on buddy. We have to go to Disney world. It is down the road and we still haven't gotten there yet and it is time to go, so let's go." Of course, he turns back around and he says, "NO!" As Dad, I am trying to minimize the situation because there are people starting to look, so I get down on his level and say, "Hey, buddy, it is time to go to Disney World." Again, he says, "NO!" He turns around and he grabs the wall of brochures, death grips it. He is not leaving. He thinks this is where he was supposed to be. I try to tell him, "Crider, this is not Disney World. We are not there yet; this is just pictures. There is a real thing, a better thing just up the road but in order to get there you have to let go of here. You can't hold on tightly to this if you want to get to what we really drove for. Disney World is not this." Of course, in his little mind he could not imagine anything better than those brochures. He could not imagine anything better than these images of Mickey, Minnie, and the castle. He, with a death grip, holds on and throws a fit because he does not want to leave the rest stop because to him this is as good as it gets. As a dad, prying his fingers, I am pulling him away, trying not to cause a stir. Everyone is looking and thinking what is this dad doing? I have to drag him out because I know that this is not what is ultimately going to make him happy. I know that we are going to get to a place where there is going to be more happiness and more joy. That is the place I had to get him to, but he couldn't understand that to get there he had to let go of this.

See, James has been talking about friendship. We talked about that last week, friendship with the world and friendship with God. James will say you can't be friends with both. You can't have friendship with the world and have friendship with God. Last week we talked about don't be friends with the world, and this week we are going to look at friendship with God. What does it mean to be a friend of God? I think really, in summary, what James is going to tell us is if you want to draw near to God in friendship it involves both drawing near and letting go. It is both of those. You have to draw near and you have to let go at the same time. Let's read what James tells us as he continues this theme of dealing with a people who are friends with the world when they should be friends with God.

Scripture

"But he gives more grace. Therefore it says, 'God opposes the proud but gives grace to the humble.' Submit yourselves therefore to God. Resist the devil, and he will flee from you. Draw near to God, and he will draw near to you. Cleanse your hands, you sinners, and purify your hearts, you double-minded. Be wretched and mourn and weep. Let your laughter be turned to mourning and your joy to gloom. Humble yourselves before the Lord, and he will exalt you."

In the context, we read about God gives more grace. He has just dealt with an adulterous people. They have these desires that long and want for these unrighteous things and it causes them to fight and quarrel amongst one another. Last week, as we saw, James says the problem is ultimately with friendship. You are friends with the wrong one. You are enjoying friendship with the world when you should be enjoying friendship with God. But, God is a good God and He comes after us; He rescues us. But God gives more grace. So because of God's grace, now we are going to see what it is like to experience friendship with God. Again, if you want to have friendship with God it is both a drawing near and a letting go. You have to let go of the wall of brochures in order to get something down the road that is better. You have to let go of you, the world, and your sin in order to really experience friendship with God.

Let's look at what the text says. Notice verse 7 says this, "Submit yourselves therefore to God." Now, why does James have to tell us? Why does he have to command us? If you notice, in these little verses there are about nine commands, nine things that you need to do. The first one is to submit. Why does he command us to submit to God? It is because by default we don't like submitting to God. Let's just be honest, by default, we love our freedom. We live in a culture that loves freedom, especially way more than in James's day. In James's day, they did not have the individualists like we do today. When James says submit to God he is writing to a culture who is submitting to authority, culture, and the good of

their neighbor, but we are hearing them in a culture that absolutely loves and celebrates freedom above all else. And that word, "submission," is a bad word, a cuss word in our culture. It is like...*wait, you want me to submit to an authority? There is actually a way I am supposed to live and an authority that I need to come under? No, that is not what I feel. That is not what I want.* We are a culture that believes if there are any rules, they are rules that we made that we can change at any time. We can do whatever our hearts desire. We can be whatever we want to be. There is no authority that is above us that tells us how we must live. But James is telling us, a people that live in a culture that absolutely celebrates and loves freedom, to submit, to obey.

Simon Kistemaker, in his commentary, says when James says submit, he actually means obey. In the Greek, Luke used the same verb when he describes the 12-year-old Jesus who was obedient to Mary and Joseph. The words "submit yourselves" describe the voluntary act of placing oneself under the authority of someone else to show him respect and obedience. So what does it mean to submit? It means to bring yourself under the authority of someone else. It means for you to trust what someone else says and build your life on that, to obey, to do according to that. What James is saying is not just submit, but submit what? There is that little word "to." Submit TO who? God. Submit to that God actually knows best for your life. Submit to that is your authority, and if you want to know what friendship with God, if you want to experience God, it is submitting to God. It is coming under His good authority.

So why would any one of us submit to God? Well, we have to believe that God actually knows best. I used to take students ziplining in Nicaragua when we would go on mission trips. On our R and R days, we would go ziplining off of a volcano. When we got to the zipline facility, we would have these tour guides that would tell us the rules. There were not a lot of rules because we were in Nicaragua, but we would get harnessed up and we had this little cage on the zipline that is holding onto the zipline. There was a tree about 100 yards ahead and they tell you in order to not hit that tree you have to use your hand as a brake. So they give us these big

leather gloves and they say, "Ok, this is very important. This is really the only rule that you really need to know. To brake, you need to put your hand behind the cage and you need to pull down so that you slow down rather than hit the tree. Put it behind the cage because if you put it in front of the cage as it is rolling it will cut your hand off." So we have a rule, we have an authority over us who is speaking a word to us, and I have an option. I can either submit to what this guy says and keep my hand behind the cage and I can have a good day ziplining, or I can resist and think I know more than what this guy knows... *Yes, he made the thing but I obviously know more about this so I am going to resist. I am going to try and experience something different than what he says. I am just going to go ahead and put my hand in front of the cage.* Well...if I had, I would be here with some different mannerisms, right? It would not have gone as well if I had resisted the word this guy was speaking to me, so I found myself submitting to whatever he said.

See, we will submit to God if we believe that God actually knows best. Submitting is an act of faith. It is an act of trust. You have to believe that God knows more about your life than you do and He knows more about *you* than you do. He knows more about how you should live and behave than you do. So if we want to experience abundant life like Jesus says, we will live under His good rule and reign. That is how it was supposed to be in the garden until Adam and Eve stepped outside of that and said we are going to do the world how we want to. We see all of the chaos from it. Several of us had news alerts on our phone this morning — tornadoes and flash floods...chaos. The disarray of a cosmos that is twisted because of our sinfulness and God is inviting us back to say live in the alignment of the universe again, live under my good word. Submit to God. That is how we begin our friendship, but we need to know that we submit to God in a culture and world that celebrates freedom and that is often hard to do. Everything is going to say you do you, you live free, you do whatever you want. James says no, you need to submit to what God says. That is where life is actually found.

But the second thing that we see is that we must resist in a world of bondage. Here is the paradox of our culture and the world — Paul said in Romans chapter 6 that no one is actually free. None of us is actually free. We are all actually in bondage. We are all actually slaves. We are either a slave to God, which leads to life, or we are a slave to sin, which leads to death. All of us are in bondage to someone so it is not just submit or don't submit. It is who are you going to submit to? You will submit to something whether that be God, yourself, your sin, or the world. So we not only have to submit in a culture that prizes freedom, but we have to resist in a culture filled with bondage. What do we resist? James is going to finish the line in the rest of verse 7 of chapter 4, "Resist the devil, and he will flee from you." So we had the command to submit and now we have resist. Again, this is a command. You are commanded to resist. Why are we commanded to resist? It is because by nature we all submit to Satan, the world, and ourselves. Submitting to Satan would be living life for you. It is living a selfish life. That is the way of the world. That is the way Satan would want you to live, as an enemy of God.

So, how do we not submit to the evil one? How do we resist the evil one? We do so by submitting to God. You resist the devil by submitting to God. It's like, how do you resist darkness? You run to light. How do you resist the cold? You run to a fire or warmth. How do you resist hunger? You run to food and you eat. You resist one by running to another. We resist the evil one by running to the Holy One. We submit to God and that is how we practically resist Satan and our own sin and our own temptations. We are dealing with all sorts of temptations in James. He dealt with it in the opening chapters and he dealt with it right here where we have passions at war within us.) What do we do when we are tempted to love the world and live for the world? In those temptations, you submit to God. You run to God. You seek after God. In other words, you resist those temptations by running to the right place — you run to God.

As we submit to God, as we draw near to God, it is like calling base in tag. Have you ever played tag with a group of kids? I have four kids and they have a lot of cousins, so our house often has anywhere from fifteen to

twenty kids running around. A lot of times, I get to play tag with all of the kids. Here I am, a grown man, playing tag with middle schoolers, grade schoolers, and preschoolers. It is a big yard and we are all playing tag and there are set bases. My goal is to try to find the slowest kid because that is who I am going to run after. I don't want to have to run a whole lot, so I tag them pretty quick so they can be it. As I run towards the slowest kid, I am always surprised how when I get close, they will reach out and grab a tree, and they will say what? BASE! I am always like... *what, that is not base!* When they do that then the chase is over, I can't do anything because they just called base. They were running and screaming in fear, but now, when their hand hits the tree and they call base, all of a sudden the kid who feared me turns around and says, "Na-na-na-na-na you can't get me!" "Well, yeah I could have but you just called base!" What do I do when they call base? Well I immediately try to find the next little kid, right? They called base so there is nothing more for me to do except flee from them and chase after someone else. See, I think James is trying to get us to see that when temptation comes, when you are tempted to walk away from the Lord or do things against the Lord, when Satan is tempting you to do whatever, or your own desires are tempting you to do whatever, what do you do? You call base! What does it mean to call base? It means submitting to God. When you submit to God, you call base.

Notice there is a command. The command is to "resist the devil." But there is also a promise if you resist the devil — "he will flee from you." That is a beautiful promise that comes with that command. If you will resist, he will flee. He will not keep coming. Temptation will not overtake you if you go to the grace of the Lord Jesus. If you run to Him, if you go to Him through the gospel that you are calling base, then the devil will flee from you.

Not only do we call base by submitting to God, but we also call base by drawing near to God. Here we are going to see that beautiful verse. Look with me in verse 8, "Draw near to God, and He will draw near to you." Notice again we have a command and a promise. What is the command? Draw near to God. You are commanded from God to draw near to Him. James is saying draw near to God. That is a command! I am telling you,

church, DRAW NEAR TO GOD! That command comes with a promise. If you draw near to God, "He will draw near to you." Now, why does He have to command us to draw near to God? Shouldn't that just be obvious? Shouldn't that be what we do as believers? Why would James have to command us and remind us? It is because by default we don't naturally draw near to God. By default, we draw near to ourselves. By default, we are so tempted to constantly make life about us.

Now, what is the context of this command to draw near to God? What are we dealing with? It is friendship! James is not saying draw near to a distant dictator who doesn't know you and will never know you...draw near and he might shout a blessing down. No, he is saying draw near to the God who loves you, who is your Heavenly Father, and who is a friend to you! Draw near to the God who knows your name, knows the hairs on your head, knows the thoughts in your brain, and the desires in your heart. The God who knows you better than you know yourself, draw near to HIM. He knows you and He will draw near to you. This is not draw near to some God who is up there and doesn't intervene or care about your life. No, this is draw near to a God who longs to be friends with you, to walk with you, to have a relationship with you. This should blow our minds! If your mind is not blown right now then you don't get who you are and who God is. I mean, just think about that for a moment. If we draw near to God, the God of the universe, the God who created us, the God who created the cosmos and who rules over everything, that same God — if we draw near to Him He will draw near to us, to you! Let that sink in for just a minute. What does this mean? It means that God wants relationship with you. Let that sink in because I don't know if we believe that. I don't know if we actually believe that God wants to be our friend. Why would He? I mean, I am me and He is God — there is a big chasm. There is a big distance between me and Him. But what does the Scripture say? If you draw near to God, God will draw near to you. The context is friendship. God actually desires a relationship with you. God wants to have friendship with you. That should absolutely blow our minds.

I remember when I raced motocross. I met a guy named Nicky Hayden. Nicky Hayden was a superbike racer and I was in motocross. I didn't know that much about him but I just knew that he was a big deal. He would come and ride with us on a dirt bike. We would get to talk a little bit, but I just didn't know the guy very well. As he was leaving that first time I met him, one of my buddies said, "Hey, you know who Nicky Hayden's biggest fan is?" I said, "No, I don't really know him. Who is his biggest fan?" He says, "His biggest fan is Michael Jordan." I said, "Wait, you mean he is fans of Michael Jordan?" "No, Michael Jordan is his fan. Michael Jordan goes to all of his races. Michael Jordan goes to the pits. Michael Jordan absolutely is like fandom of this guy, Nicky Hayden." I remember hearing that and thinking...*no, that can't be. No. No, we are fans of Jordan. Jordan is not a fan of anybody else because he is Jordan. Jordan can't be a fan of somebody else.* But the truth is he was and it sort of blew my mind because I could not even get my mind around that. How much more should this text absolutely blow our minds to think we can be a friend of God and we can pursue God, but for God to pursue us? God would be a friend of mine? HOW CAN THAT BE? The only way we can know that is because the Scripture says it and He wrote the book. He is telling us He wants to draw near to us. He wants to be in close relationship to you.

Now, I know there is fear that comes with that. What if I draw near to God but He does not draw near to me? What if I draw near but I am not good enough? There is some fear there. What if I love God but He doesn't love me back? What if His grace is not there for me? What if I run home as the prodigal son but the dad stays on the front porch with his arms crossed and says go back to wherever you came from? What if God does not have compassion and mercy for me? What if I draw near and He casts me out? I just want to point to the context of these verses. Last week, He called this group of people an adulterous people. He made a covenant with them and they are running after other idols. They are giving their lives to the world. In the text that we read together He calls them sinners and double minded people — yet this is the group that James says if you will draw near to God He will draw near to you. That is the grace of God. I promise you there is more than enough grace for you because GOD GIVES GRACE. God

continues to give grace no matter where you are or who you are. If you will draw near to God He will draw near to you. We are going to see that you draw near to God through the cross of Christ. It is not through our goodness or our efforts; we draw near to God through the cross of Christ. Even as believers, as part of the family, there is a right way to draw near to God and there is a wrong way to draw near to God.

In Isaiah chapter 29, verse 13, there is a group of people who draw near to God. This is what it says, "And the Lord said: "Because this people draw near with their mouth and honor me with their lips, while their hearts are far from me, and their fear of me is a commandment taught by men." This is a condemnation. Here is a group of people who are coming to church to worship, and God says I am not into it at all because the only reason you are drawing near to me is to get lip service. You are only drawing near to me because you think you have to and because you think you should, and by doing so, you think I am going to give you some stuff. There is no heart after me. There is no true fear of me; it's only what your mom and dad say.

Then there is a correct way to draw near to God, and that is by faith. Notice what Hebrews will tell us. Hebrews 11, verse 6 says this, "And without faith it is impossible to please Him, for whoever would draw near to God must believe that He exists and that He rewards those who seek Him." So for those who draw near, you must BELIEVE. You must believe that He exists and He rewards those who seek Him. You must believe in the gospel. It is by FAITH that we draw near and it is a desire that we draw near. It is not with cold hearts, like those Old Testament people tried to draw near with their lips, no, with warm hearts and affection we draw near to God with our faith in the Lord Jesus.

You know, I think about Jesus and the gospels. What did He tell the disciples? He told them many things, but He first said follow me...Come, follow me. Those words follow me sound similar to draw near. Draw near. Come. Follow Me. In John chapter 15, Jesus would say don't just follow me but also abide in me. How do we abide in Him? We abide in Him through

His Word. James does not really tell us how exactly to draw near but we can see, from the pages of Scripture, practical ways to draw near. Jesus tells us to follow Him and that is what Christianity is all about, it is about following after Jesus, abiding in Jesus through His Word. So, how exactly do you draw near practically on a daily basis? How, as a believer, do you draw near to God because you want Him to draw near to you? If you want to be in His presence, to feel His friendship, to live your life according to His Word, not your thoughts, how do you practically draw near? We often overcomplicate it, but it starts with His Word. You have to fall in love with His Word to draw near to God. It is that daily opening of your Bible and listening to what God says to us. This is His Word to us. So we are reading it and hearing from Him, then in response, we are praying to Him. It is that fellowship, that friendship with God. We are hearing God and responding to God in prayer and obedience, and we are applying what God says to our lives. We draw near to Him through His Word. We draw close to Him in prayer. We have an actual relationship, not with a distant deity, but with a GOOD friend, a good Shepherd, a good Father, a good big Brother. We come to Him in relationship.

Notice how many times that the gospels will say Jesus withdrew to draw near. Jesus, the busiest life ever, He had a whole mission to proclaim; He had a world to save. He had a big to-do list, but often Jesus would withdraw so that He could draw near. For us, I think if you are going to draw near to the Lord, you have to have that space in your life where you constantly draw away in order to draw near. You have that time where it is just you and the Lord. You should be reading Scripture, responding, praying, and having those sweet moments with the Lord. As I read this text, I wanted to list all the ways you need to draw near to God, so at first I made them all about Jesus and you as an individual, because I am an American and I think everything is individualistic. That's the culture we live in. But as I was reading, I noticed all of the pronouns in this text are all plural. James never says *you* draw near, he always says *y'all* — *y'all* resist, *y'all* draw near. In other words, it is a community activity, it is all of us together, so you don't only draw near to Jesus alone, but you also draw near to Jesus together. We draw near as a people, as a family.

There are two things I do weekly that really help me draw near to God. The first one is on Wednesday morning. Before my day gets going, I meet with five guys for breakfast. We have a discipleship group where we open up the Bible and talk about what God has showed through the week during our reading. It's amazing — I get to compare the sections of Scripture that I studied and what I wrote in my journal to what these other guys say about what God showed them. The different perspectives show me things that I missed. It is this community activity of us getting together. I draw near to God with the help of these guys. When I am tempted to draw away, it is these guys who are helping me draw near. We draw near together. We draw near with people.

The second thing I do every week is even grander than that, and that is gathering here with you. We as a people were meant to gather together as the body of Christ for a corporate coming together and a corporate drawing near to God. We were meant to sing songs together, not just to God but to each other! As Hebrews says, we are stirring each other up as we meet, so don't neglect the meeting, the coming together, because we are doing special stuff together. We are praying together, hearing sermons together, going together — we are ministering together at this gathering. So, we draw near not only alone but also draw near together, and there is something special when we gather to draw near as one people.

We also see that as we draw near to God, God reveals stuff in our lives. As we draw near, we can't help but start repenting and being broken. As we draw near to God who is light and holy, we see that we have a lot of dust and dirt on us that need cleansing. Notice what James will tell us in verse 8, "Cleanse your hands, you sinners, and purify your hearts, you double-minded." There is that little snapshot of repentance. It is a snapshot that he probably got from the Old Testament because it is language of the Old Testament. Look at Psalm 24: 3, "Who shall ascend the hill of the LORD? And who shall stand in His holy place?" In other words, who shall be in the presence of God? That is the question. Picking up in verse 4, "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." Who can come into the presence of God?

Those who have clean hands and a pure heart. James is bringing that imagery into this New Testament church to say don't forget as you draw near to God you have to cleanse your hands and purify your hearts.

So, right off the bat there is a little bit of trouble...because how do we do that? My hands are clean, but my heart? How do I cleanse my heart? What does that look like? How do I do that? We are getting into gospel territory. Purifying your heart and cleansing your hands in a real way, you can't do on your own; it must be done by the gospel. That is why we sing *nothing but the blood of Jesus* can wash away our sins. That is what we believe. That is what we say to each other. As we draw near to God, we cleanse our hands and hearts through the gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ.

We see there are really two ways this happens. If you are an unbeliever, this act of repentance, this act of cleansing and becoming clean — there is a first repentance for justification where you realize that you are dirty and you can't fix yourself so you turn to Christ. You understand that He has righteousness that He wants to give you as a gift. In order to get His righteousness you believe in Him as the Lord, the sovereign God of the universe who died on your behalf, rose again, and paid your penalty. If you will believe in Him as your Lord and Savior, He will take your sin and give you His righteousness. That is what the gospel is all about! We get clean hands and a clean heart through the gospel by believing in the finished work of Christ for us.

Then as believers, there is an ongoing process of cleaning our hands and our hearts, and that is called sanctification. It is not to get *into* the family; it is what we do as the family. As you draw near to God as a believer, you start to see there are still things in your life that are not correct. There is still a lot of twistedness, still a lot of things that don't conform to the Word of God and the will of God. So what do I do when I stumble? What do I do when I fall? What do I do when I am tempted to do those things that I know are not who I am in Christ? You clean your hands and your heart. You go to the Lord and confess that...*Jesus, I confess. Would you, by the gospel, clean that out of me and my life? I don't want to think like that. I*

don't want to act like that. God, change me. You have saved me by the cross; now continually change me by the cross. Continually work the righteousness of Jesus into my life so that it plays out in a real and true way.

How do we get to that place where we want to be clean and pure? It only happens from a place of brokenness. Notice what James says in verse 9, "Be wretched and mourn and weep. Let your laughter be turned to mourning and your joy to gloom." He wants these people to be friends with God but they are friends with the world, so they will have to work out some stuff within themselves. They will have to submit to God, draw near to God, and resist the evil one. By doing all of those things, there will be some work they need to do in their hearts — they will have to repent, they will have to hold tight to the gospel, to the cross of Christ. In order to get there, they have to be broken over the sin in their life. So he tells these people to be wretched; that means to feel a certain way, to feel a certain emotion, a certain brokenness over your sin. Then based on those emotions, do certain things — weep and mourn.

See, here is what we find: when you love God, God changes your loves. That is what the gospel does. When we love God, God changes our loves. All of a sudden, the things that we used to love apart from God we don't love anymore. That is what James is getting at here. He says your laughter will be turned to mourning. The things that you used to laugh at and joke about will now make you broken over those things and you will mourn over those things. He says the things that used to bring you joy now bring you gloom. The places you used to go, that person you used to hang out with and did those certain things with, those sites you used to click on, those words you use to say to wound other people, all of those things that used to bring you joy, now because of your relationship with God and you are drawing near to God, those things are not bringing you joy. They are bringing you gloom. They are making you sad. The things that break God's heart are now breaking your heart and you are the one doing those things that break God's heart. So what do you do when you are the one doing the things that break God's heart and now break your heart? You go to God!

You draw near to God. You don't run away and hide; that is what Adam and Eve did. They went and hid and tried to fix it themselves. No, you run to God and say God I blew it again, but I know that the cross redeemed me and saved me — so based on Christ, cleanse this from me because I don't want to fall into this same thing again — I want to be near to you.

How do we get to the place of brokenness and repentance so that we can submit to God by drawing near to God and resisting the evil one? It has to come from a place of humility. Notice what it says in verse 10, the last verse we will look at, Humble yourselves before the Lord, and He will exalt you.” Humble yourself before the Lord. You have to know who you are and who God is. You have to know that you are not in charge of the universe; you are not the centerpiece of the universe, GOD IS. I love what C.S. Lewis says about humility. He says humility is not thinking less of yourself, it is thinking of yourself less. Humility is not saying oh, I am a terrible person; no, you are an image bearer of God. God has redeemed you! You have dignity and worth! Instead, humility says I know who I am, but I am going to stop thinking a lot about me. I am going to think less about me because I am thinking more about God and His people and His mission. Life is not about me anymore; life is about God. That is what the place of humility is. You count others more significant than yourself, as Philippians says. Jesus said in Luke 9 that you deny yourself, take up your cross, and follow Him. That denying of self is what humility is. I am going to deny my desires, my passions, and my will when they don't conform to God and I will crucify those and come after God because I deeply want friendship with God.

In this text, as we work backwards, we see that there is also a command and a promise. If you humble yourself, that is the command, what is the promise? God will exalt you. God will get you to the place where He wants you to be. God will get you right where He wants you to be to use you, to maximize His glory and for your good. So how do we get to that place where God wants us to be? It starts with humility that leads to brokenness and repentance. Then you draw near to God, resist the evil one, and submit to God as you pursue friendship with God — only by His grace. It is by His grace that God causes you to draw near to Him. As you draw near

to Him, God draws near to you. It is this beautiful picture of God working in you and it culminates into this beautiful friendship between you and God. James wants you to have friendship with God and he piles on a whole lot of commands that you need to follow. I know we don't like commands. We don't like to-dos, but he just piles them up. Let's go through the list again. He says, you want friendship with God submit, resist, draw near, cleanse, purify, be wretched, mourn, weep, and humble yourself. Those are all of the things that you need to do in order to experience friendship with God. But notice he does not just give a bunch of commands; he gives us beautiful promises that as you do them, Satan will flee. That is a promise. As you do them, God will draw near. That is a promise. As you do them, God will exalt you. He will get you to where you need to be. That is a promise.

In order to get friendship with God you have to let go of the world that we so often love. Just like my little two-year-old, Crider, at a rest stop in Florida, miles and miles away from where we were going, he just could not imagine there was anything better. For some of you, you are gripping tight to the world, to the wall of brochures because you can't imagine there is something better. James is saying there is something way better; there is friendship with God. In order to draw near to God, in order to have friendship with God, you have to let go of friendship with the world. In order to get you have to let go. The question really boils down to, who do you want? Who do you want to be friends with? Do you want friendship with the world? Or do you want to be friends with God? If you want to be friends with God, it is about both drawing near *and* letting go.