

BIBLE DISCUSSION GROUP STUDY QUESTIONS

In preparation for Sunday, October 9, 2011

Passage: James 4:6-10

Memory Passage: James 4:9-10

DAY 1 – ASK FOR INSIGHT

READ THE PASSAGE

(a) **Read James 4:6-10.** What does James intend to counter with his use of the adversative “but” that begins v. 6? For what does God give more grace? What does the word “therefore” tell us in v. 6? How does what follows (the end of v. 6) connect with what precedes?

(b) What does it mean to be “proud” (v. 6)? Why does God oppose the proud? Why do the humble receive grace and the proud receive opposition from God?

(c) What areas of your life are poisoned by pride? What consequences have you suffered because of the sin of pride in these areas? What actions do you regularly take to deal with pride in these areas? Are you convicted when you read that God opposes the proud? If so in what ways, and if not, should you be? Spend time in prayer right now asking God to help you understand this week, in a greater way than ever before, what it means to be humble and how to pursue humility.

(d) *Family:* Have a balloon ready for this lesson. Begin by asking your family, “What does pride mean?” Help them flesh out a definition (e.g. an excessively high opinion of one’s own importance), and as the discussion progresses, blow up the balloon to a normal inflation. Then discuss ways that a person can show pride. Every time a new way is announced, add more air to the balloon. Keep doing this until the balloon pops (as your family realizes that you intend to keep blowing up the balloon they should be more excited about coming up with more ways one can show the sin of pride). After the balloon pops, **Read Prov. 16:18** and explain this verse using the “destruction” of the balloon as you filled it with pride as an object lesson.

DAY 2 – ASK FOR INSIGHT

READ THE PASSAGE

(a) **Read James 4:6-10.** Make a list of every command you find in vs. 7-10 (there are at least 10!). Three of these commands have promises tied to them: list the 3 promises. Now, explain what each of these commands has to do with pride.

(b) What does the word “submit” mean? Do you think of it being an active or passive action? Think back on your life during the last week: How often have you actively, consciously, submitted to God? Choose one time and analyze it for a moment: What was the sin you passed up to submit to God? Was it easy? How did you actually make your decision to submit? What Scripture passage filled your mind to reveal to you what your choice would look like if it were submitted to God?

(c) **Read Luke 4:1-13, Rom. 13:14, 1 Cor. 6:18, 10:14, 1 Tim. 6:11 & 2 Tim. 2:22.** Write down everything you learn about resisting the devil and his wiles from these verses. Can you submit to God at the same time you fail to resist the devil? Why or why not? Can you resist the devil without submitting to God?

(d) In your life, as you have resisted the devil, do you sense the promise that James makes being fulfilled (i.e. that the devil flees from you) or do you sense the devil intensifying his pressure for you to sin? Did the devil flee from Jesus at His first act of resistance in Matt. 4, or did it take constant resistance and submission to His Father? When Satan fled, did he flee for good (v. 13)? So what do you learn about resisting the devil from His example?

(e) *Family:* Plan for a tug-of-war exercise outside. Divide your family into teams, and have fun with this game for a while, changing the teams and allowing for different people to experience victory. Then **Read James 4:7.** Explain what it means to submit to God (to actively and intentionally place one’s self under His authority and obey Him) and to resist Satan. Ask, “Is there any way that you could have continued to ‘resist’ the pulling of the other team and go and embrace them at the same time?” (The answer is “no” because to move toward them would be to automatically stop resisting them) Explain that, in the same way, being submitted to God necessarily means that we are resisting the devil because we can’t do one without the other.

DAY 3 – ASK FOR INSIGHT

READ THE PASSAGE

(a) **Read James 4:6-10.** How does one “draw near to God?” Have you ever felt that God is far from you? In what ways should this promise (“and He will draw near to you”) bring you comfort? Bring you conviction? What will you do the next time you feel that God is far away from you?

(b) The language of “drawing near” can be used of worship (e.g. Isaiah 29:13, Heb. 7:19) or of repentance (e.g. Zech 1:2-3). What do you think James has in mind in these verses given their context?

(c) God’s promise to not leave or forsake His people has brought confidence and boldness to His people throughout the Bible (e.g. Deut. 31:6-8, Josh. 1:5, 2 Chron. 28:20, Heb. 13:5). How does this promise affect your drawing near to Him? How does it bring you strength & comfort?

(d) *Family*: Using the example of a cute puppy (or anything cute & cuddly) explain the difference between showing love to that animal by “drawing near” and petting/holding it and standing far off and admiring it. Drive home the point that “drawing near” to something expresses a desire for deeper intimacy in the relationship. Then **Read James 4:7a & Deut. 31:6-8** and explain what it means to “draw near” to God and how God’s promise to never leave or forsake us sets us free to serve Him, obey Him, and witness about Him without fear.

DAY 4 – ASK FOR INSIGHT

READ THE PASSAGE

(a) **Read James 4:6-10**. Using priestly language James addresses both the external (“cleanse your hands”) and internal (“purify your hearts”) life of his hearers. In what areas of your life do you need to “cleanse” your actions or “purify” your motives and desires? How will you be obedient to these commands today?

(b) “Sinners” & “double-minded” are parallel ideas in this sentence. In what ways are sinners double-minded? Is he addressing justification or sanctification? Does your life look like you are “double-minded?” How might you address this double-mindedness today?

(c) Why does James tell us to “be wretched and mourn and weep?” Over what are we to do these things? Is James saying that authentic faith is joyless when he tells us to turn our laughter into mourning and our joy to gloom? How does v. 9 square with James’ command in 1:2?

(d) *Family*: Make up and tell a fairy-tale type story about 2 friends who did something wrong but did not get caught (make sure that their offense is something your family can understand and to which they can relate, something they could picture themselves doing). In your story, have one of the friends be remorseful and sad about what they did and the other happy and joyful that they did not get caught. Ask, “Why was the one friend happy and the other sad?” Lead in a discussion about what produced the sadness or joy in your fictitious characters, and then **Read James 4:8-9** and explain that believers, when they sin, should be ones who are humble and repentant before God, not happy and unaffected by their sin.

DAY 5 – ASK FOR INSIGHT

READ THE PASSAGE

(a) **Read James 4:6-10**. What is the purpose of v. 10? How is it related to v. 6? To verses 7-9?

(b) Is self-exaltation a struggle for you? Are you one who is constantly in need of having other people know what you have done, what you are thinking, when you are right about something, or how much knowledge you have? Is receiving credit a must for you? How should this verse challenge your need to exalt yourself? What comfort does this verse bring in this area?

(c) **Read Micah 6:8**. Meditate on this verse and spend some time in prayer asking God to show you ways that you are not walking humbly before Him and how He would like you to implement James 4:6-10 (the process of leading a humble, repentant life before God). Don’t ignore the promptings of the Holy Spirit as He shows you ways that you are leading an arrogant, self-exalting life, a life that neglects submitting and drawing near to God in humility and repentance.

(d) *Family*: **Read James 4:6-10** and walk your family through an example of repenting from a sin by using the process of humble repentance outlined in these verses. Be specific and concrete so they understand exactly what it means to live a humble, repentant life that honors God and exalts Him rather than us.

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Submitting to God