

James 4:7-10. ⁷ Submit yourselves, then, to God. Resist the devil, and he will flee from you. ⁸ Come near to God and he will come near to you. Wash your hands, you sinners, and purify your hearts, you double-minded. ⁹ Grieve, mourn and wail. Change your laughter to mourning and your joy to gloom. ¹⁰ Humble yourselves before the Lord, and he will lift you up.

God our Father invites us to trust in him.

- 1. He wants us to trust that he will take care of us.**
- 2. He wants us to trust that he will bring us joy.**

The newlyweds look into each other's eyes and the world fades away. They think about each other, they are happy and content. The husband loves the bride, the bride trusts the groom; and all is well. A young boy runs up to his father and is embraced, he looks up into his father's eyes and he smiles. He is safe and protected, happy and blessed. Dad is his hero, and he looks to him, he runs to him. Imagine that level of trust and devotion.

Even if you have never experienced such an earthly relationship, or if your memories of such a relationship are a bit faded, this is the type of bond that daily wants us to have with him. God wants to have a committed, devoted, loving relationship of trust with you. God in his grace sent his son to redeem us from sin, death, and hell. God in his undivided love for you and me has brought us into his family through water and the word. He has blessed us with the gift of faith and now he invites us as his children, as his believers, to daily come into his presence, come near him and learn from him, walk with him, spend time with him, listen to him, submit to him and obey him in love. He invites us to come near to him and he promises to come near to us. In short, **God our Father invites us to trust in him. He wants us to trust that he will take care of us. He wants us to trust that he will bring us joy.**

Consider for a few moments the parable that Jesus taught about the Father with the two sons in Luke chapter 15. Imagine how his heart breaks when the father hears his son ask for his portion of the inheritance and then watches as his dear son runs away from the care and protection and the love that he provides. The boy that he raised and cared for shuns his father's care and love and runs away as far as he could. How the Father's heart must break! Not to mention what the son is doing with the inheritance. The young man runs off merrily and his father is greatly concerned, but not because he is so worried about his money, but he is concerned about his son. The

things he is running after won't bring him happiness. He might be grinning now. He might be having a good time now; but this won't end well

God wants his children trust in him, to love him, to find joy in him. But too often even believers look for joy in all the wrong places, even God's children put their trust in other things. As James writes to these 1st century Christians he conveys the concerns of a loving God. James writes to Christians who were not living out their Christian faith and you can almost hear the Heavenly Father's heart breaking as he considers the way that they were conducting themselves. They were acting as if they had put their trust in the things of this world. In James 4:4, the apostle calls, them an adulterous people, and he warns them, ***“Don't you know that friendship with the world is hatred toward God?” “Anyone who chooses to be a friend of the world becomes an enemy of God.”***

Does it ever happen that the bride of Christ, the Church, loses her focus on her Christ her bridegroom? As time passes by her members are distracted by others around her. She begins to wonder if she would be better off with someone else. She gives her time and attention, her trust and her love, to someone else, something else. Imagine how the heart of Christ breaks when members of his church act in such a way. Imagine how concerned our God is when you and I and others who belong to Christ start to think life would be a whole lot more interesting if we lived liked our neighbor or our friend or the guy at work who seems to have such a good time all the time, and so we buddy up with and get chummy with the ways of this world. We hold the world's hand and laugh and smile as we go down a path that God forbids. We participate in reckless living, or drunkenness, or self-indulgence, in gossip and slander, greed and materialism, in sexual immorality or inappropriate entertainment, and in numerous other worldly ways. We grin about that sinful exchange that took place earlier in the day. We may even laugh and smile as we think about how we got together with the girls and gossiped and spread rumors. We might laugh and smile as we think about the other night when we let loose or the weekend that we gambled away so much money, but it was so much fun.

Make no mistake about it, there are times that each of you, each one of us, embrace the ways of the world instead of the ways of our God. There are plenty of times that we give our attention, our love, and our trust to someone or something else rather than God as we search for joy and satisfaction in the ways of the world; and often we think it's no big deal. We laugh and smile as we think about it. Dear friends, this is not right. ***9 Grieve, mourn and wail. Change your laughter to mourning and your joy to gloom.***

It is certainly not God's will that we should be perpetually forlorn, with heads hanging down constantly, but we should recognize that which is truly pleasing to our God and disavow that which is not what God wants for his children. We ought to

mourn over how upside down our priorities are at time. We ought to grieve over the fact that we are drawn to that which God hates, to lament that we have so easily abandoned the ways and wisdom of our God for the foolish and fleeting things of this world. God is the only one who can bring us lasting joy and yet we run from his love. Dear friends, ***“Humble yourself before the LORD and he will lift you up.”*** He will give you lasting joy.

God wants us to trust in him. He wants to take care of us and tend to our bodies and our souls. He does not want us to jeopardize our eternity, or to use the time that he has given us here to live in wasteful worldly ways. The world around us and the devil himself wants us to. Our enemies pretend to be our friends as they to make us think that we will have a good time if we follow their direction. They grab for our hand, implying that they will take care of us, that they will bring us joy and satisfaction. But our Father knows better, he knows best. He knows that such worldly ways are empty and are a waste of the time and the resources that God has given us. Such wasteful living may cause harm to our bodies our souls or the people around us. Such wasteful living may cause harm to our relationship with our God. Such wasteful living may look colorful and attractive, bright and promising, when painted up by the world but in reality it is an empty path where happiness and satisfaction quickly fade.

And so Christ looks at his bride the church, and in love and concern he calls us to himself. He looks at his individual children who so often have wandered from his warm embrace and although we have so often scorned his love his arms are open wide in mercy. He calls us to repentance, to see the error of our ways, and to come to him. In him there is lasting joy and satisfaction. James 4:6 begins ***“But he gives us more grace.”*** and then goes on to say, ***That is why Scripture says: “God opposes the proud but gives grace to the humble.”*** Despite all our rebellion and sin, God gives us grace, his arms are open even to the prodigal and rebellious and in his great love he promises to take care of us. He promises to protect us and provide for us and to give us lasting joy. Submit yourself under his care, and gladly submit to his will which is given to you for your benefit. Resist the ways of this world. Resist the devil, and he will flee from you. Come near to God and he will come near to you.

The apostle Peter speaks of leaving behind the sinful ways of this world as thankful and obedient and trusting children of God. He writes, ***As obedient children, do not conform to the evil desires you had when you lived in ignorance. But just as he who called you is holy, so be holy in all you do; for it is written: “Be holy, because I am holy.” Since you call on a Father who judges each person’s work impartially, live out your time as foreigners here in reverent fear. For you know that it was not with perishable things such as silver or gold that you were redeemed from the empty way of life handed down to you from your ancestors, but with the precious blood of Christ, a lamb without blemish or defect. (1 Peter 1:14-***

19). Lost and condemned sinners are made children of God, purchased and won to be God's very own not with gold or silver but with the holy precious blood and innocent sufferings and death of our Lord Jesus Christ. Our Lord and Savior, with unwavering love, laid down his life for you and me so that we might be his own and live with him in everlasting righteousness, innocence, and blessedness. Like trusting children who know that they are loved let us run to our God and Savior Let us turn our attention from the misleading and empty ways of the world and instead let us look up to our Father with the eyes of faith trusting that he will care for us and bring us joy. Jesus Christ, demonstrated such unquestionable and unconditional love, when he gave himself up for us, his church, so that we would be his holy bride that dwells with him now and for all eternity. Christ is the groom and we are the bride. Let us place ourselves in his incredible love and trust that he will take care of us. Let us leave our sinful ways behind and walk hand in hand with Christ who loves us, trusting in his care, knowing that he will bring us lasting joy.

⁷Submit yourselves, then, to God...⁸Come near to God and he will come near to you. Wash your hands, you sinners, and purify your hearts, you double-minded. There is a part of every Christian that on more than one occasion wonders, "what if". Our eyes drift and linger on the lives of others and for a time it appears that the grass is greener on the other side of the fence. We allow our hearts to be led astray, our devotion to God wavers, we doubt his love and his ability to bring us joy, and we become what James calls double-minded. As we sit in God's house, or as we go about our day, we wonder what it might be like to just indulge and let loose and live like the rest of the world. But none of that brings satisfaction. God makes that clear in his world through parables and prose, through examples and warnings, he encourages us over and over again to beware and to disavow the ways of this world for they cannot satisfy. Wash your hands of all such desires, purify your hearts from such longings, because it is better in God's house and in his presence.

The grass is plenty green here. You are the bride of Christ. You are the Father's child. Your God takes care of you. He blesses you with his love and forgiveness. He laid down his life for you and prepares a place for you in the paradise of heaven. He forgives and restores, he loves and adores. Come to him freely, come near to him and hear him speak to you of his love and faithfulness. Nestle yourself into his warm embrace and listen to his Word and learn of his holy will. You are his beloved. We do not deserve to be so blessed, but by his grace we are. Therefore, Humble yourself before the Lord, confess your unfaithfulness, but then in faith, look up to your heavenly Father and trust in his love, trust in his care, and know that he will bring you lasting joy. Amen.