

JAMES 4:6ff Draw Near to God

Saphir – “not every mystic is a Christian, but every Christian is a mystic” (not just Aaron Ford)
Col 3:1-4 We have a life that is hidden with Christ in God. Eph 1 We have been blessed with every spiritual blessings in the heavenly places... Paul prays that the eyes of our hearts would be enlightened to know the hope of his calling, etc.

These are things that we can't directly point to and quantify, but they are real.
“Draw near to God and He will draw near to you” is one such mystery. It's not clearly quantifiable.

One might ask, “How near am I to God right now? How near is God to me?”

EX: Life360 app – Linda and I have shared locations, so we know where we are. Last week I was on the way home and I told her where I was and she said, “I know where you are.” Spooky, but also comforting if one of us is lost or running late.

EX: God 360 app – Do you know where you are in relation to God, or where He is in relation to you? It can be scary and comforting to know that God invites us to “draw near”. It's not like He doesn't know where we are. This invitation is for OUR BENEFIT. It is also an invitation to do some soul searching

6 But He gives a greater grace. Therefore *it* says, “GOD IS OPPOSED TO THE PROUD, BUT GIVES GRACE TO THE HUMBLE.” 7 Submit therefore to God. Resist the devil and he will flee from you.

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

9 Be miserable and mourn and weep; let your laughter be turned into mourning and your joy to gloom. 10 Humble yourselves in the presence of the Lord, and He will exalt you.

1. DRAW NEAR TO God and He will draw near to you. v.8ff

This is a command with a promise. Think for a moment about the remarkable aspect of the second phrase, “and He will draw near to you.” THAT IS UNIQUE AMONG ALL RELIGIONS. It is mind boggling. What more can God do than he has already done?

Drawing near to God is a source of comfort and encouragement.

Ps 73:25-28

25 Whom have I in heaven but You?

And besides You, I desire nothing on earth.

26 My flesh and my heart may fail,

But God is the strength of my heart and my portion forever.

27 For, behold, those who are far from You will perish;

You have destroyed all those who are unfaithful to You.

28 But as for me, the nearness of God is my good;

I have made the Lord God my refuge,

That I may tell of all Your works.

Ps 16

1 Preserve me, O God, for I take refuge in You.

2 I said to the LORD, “You are my Lord;

I have no good besides You.”

11 You will make known to me the path of life;

In Your presence is fullness of joy;

In Your right hand there are pleasures forever.

There is GOOD NEWS of hope for the double-minded sinner in this passage. You can get back on track by drawing near to God.

There's no formula, but based on what we know of the character of God, for every 1 step we take toward God, He is likely to take 100 towards us. He already bridged the gulf between us by sending Christ and giving us His Word.

To draw near means that we are to develop intimacy with God by abiding in His grace through Christ. It means that we make time with Him a priority.

Some of you are thinking, "I don't know how to do that with God." OK. How do you get close to the special people in your life? Some are thinking, "I don't know how to do that either."

Friends, DRAWING NEAR TO God IS NOT a matter of technique; it's a matter of priority.

How do you get close to anything that you like? You SPEND TIME WITH IT. You make time for it. We MAKE time for who or what is important to us. We figure it out and we make it work BECAUSE WE WANT TO. This is the self-examination part of the verse. We have to ask ourselves if we really want to draw near to God.

Let me suggest three aspect of 'drawing near' as described by David Mathis (Habits of Grace)

Principles of ongoing grace:

1. Hearing God's voice (His Word)
2. Having His ear (prayer)
3. Belonging to His body (fellowship)

PSALM 27 – seeking the face of God

4 One thing I have asked from the Lord, that I shall seek:

HOW WOULD YOUR SPOUSE OR KIDS OR BEST FRIEND COMPLETE THAT SENTENCE ABOUT YOU?

**That I may dwell in the house of the Lord all the days of my life,
To behold the delightfulness of the Lord
And to meditate in His temple.**

Drawing near in a relationship involves honesty and vulnerability. What does that look like with God?

EX: Read the Psalms – it is pouring your heart out to God in times of joy, fear, despair, and confusion.

ADOLP SAPHIR The Hidden Life: Thoughts on COMMUNION WITH God

There is no safety in distance from God.

"Drawing nigh to God" is the most comprehensive expression to describe the soul's attitude toward God. Prayer is the culminating point of this attitude".

Drawing Near to God entails the Coram Deo, or of living "before the face of God".

You could say that this is THE BIG IDEA of the Christian life.

It is a call to TAKE God SERIOUSLY in our lives – in our thinking, our planning, in our affections, and in how we invest our time, talent, and treasure. Whatever, wherever, and whenever we are doing anything, we are doing it before the face of God. To draw near to God is to embrace Him as He is, for who He is, and that means that we must submit to Him as our Sovereign King, who invites us to come before the throne of grace. We draw near to God when we embrace Him as He has revealed Himself to us.

BEWARE OF "I like to think of God as" or in the language of our day "Reimagine God"; those are not helps for drawing near to God. Those ideas teach drawing near to the idols that we have created in our minds to replace God.

To “draw near” to God means that we don’t compartmentalize our lives with the “religious” stuff over here and the “non-religious” stuff over there.

"Drawing nigh to God" describes the central characteristic of the Christian's life. In the meditation of our hearts, in the desires of our soul, in the activities and enjoyments of our daily path, we approach God; for we wish to live before Him, conscious of His presence, in constant dependence and in constant enjoyment of His grace.

Saphir...

And "God drawing nigh to us" is the most comprehensive expression to describe God's dealings with us. The Scripture, is the great, and in many respects the unique, channel of God's communications to the soul; or rather it is central, round which all other divine influences gather.

Prayer and the reading of Scripture are the great means of sustaining and nourishing the inner life, if they are understood in a spiritual and not a mechanical manner. They have no power in themselves but are the means that lead us to Christ.

James is speaking to believers who understand that the only way that we can draw near to God is by and through Jesus Christ. The only other option would be a blameless life and that is impossible. The only safe place for us is close to God – in the arms of the Father, at the feet of Jesus.

The urge to draw near to God tends to come in one of two ways:

- 1) We heed the call and promise of God in this verse and receive them as fresh reminders of the privilege of the life of faith. For all the talk about privilege in our culture today, the privilege that REALLY MATTERS belongs to all who know Christ – not matter your age, sex, nation, race, or tribe.
- 2) We have been drawing near to other things – false gods, idols of the heart- and we are distressed and downcast. They have not lived up to their promises and our hearts are weary and we finally see our need for the living water and bread of life that only comes from Christ.

Either way, the path to drawing near leads us to the finished work of Christ and the soul satisfying person of God as He is revealed IN HIS WORD.

We find that God is the great initiator in drawing near to us. He has brought us to Himself having made peace through the blood of Christ- Col 1:20ff

21 And although you were formerly alienated and hostile in mind, engaged in evil deeds, 22 yet He has now reconciled you in His fleshly body through death, in order to present you before Him holy and blameless and beyond reproach—

Draw near with confidence by faith knowing that Christ has qualified you to come before the throne of grace.

“It is Finished” 1864 James Proctor

Cast your deadly “doing” down—

Down at Jesus’ feet;

Stand in Him, in Him alone,

Gloriously complete.

By His grace, God draws our hearts, and the result is that our hearts want to draw near to Him.

Sound of Music : “There’s nothing more irresistible to a man than a woman who’s in love with him.”

There’s nothing more irresistible to a wayward saint than a God who loves him. Our problem is that we’ve allowed our hearts to move away from God and we’ve forgotten his love or we’ve taken it for granted.

When our souls are refreshed with the love of the Father then we will want to draw near to Him. This is not a passive longing, but rather a focused energy of the soul to seek and draw near to God. We are aware of our need for God and his grace. We become aware of our need to “purify our hearts, to mourn and weep.” Yet in all of this we also find hope because we know that with God all things are possible – we are more loved, forgiven and accepted than we dare imagine.

One of the dangers we face in our church culture is that we may know the doctrine and the right things to say and do without ever DRAWING NEAR TO God.

HOW TO DRAW NEAR –

I’m going to tell you something that you’ve already heard in some way, but the reminder is important.

NEWS FLASH** We draw near to God and He draws near to us through prayer and the Word. There, I’ve said it. You were expecting it and waiting for it. There it is.

But let me tweak it: We shouldn’t approach a “quiet time” as a negotiation with God: “I’ve read 3 chapters (of Leviticus), so now God owes me a great day.”

I’ve already mentioned several quotes from the Psalms which speak of the authors hunger and thirst for God. Their pursuit of God wasn’t negotiation; it was from a heart that hungered for more than what the world can give.

The English Puritans called their morning time with God ***“THE TRANSACTION.”***

What is a transaction? It is a "trans-action," that is, a "cross-action" or an **exchange** in which we feel that we have really crossed the barrier between the human and the divine. We don’t just read verses or say prayers, we seek—and find—the face of God. There is an actual relationship—a communing of hearts and minds in which God gets our love and worship, and we receive his love and grace. Scripture describes this as “tasting and seeing that the Lord is good.” Ps 34

Do you know that reality in your walk with God?

I warned you that every Christian is a mystic, in some way, and many of us aren’t comfortable with that. But we can be if we lean into it. I dare say that it would be a good step toward spiritual and emotional health.

The Psalms and the Valley of Vision are full of such language.

THE AWAKENED SINNER

But although my mind is perplexed and divided,
my nature perverse,
yet my secret dispositions still desire You.

Let me not delay to come to You;

Break the fatal enchantment that binds
my evil affections,

and bring me to a happy mind that rests in You,
for You have made me and cannot forget me.

Let thy Spirit teach me the vital lessons of Christ,
for I am slow to learn;

And hear thou my broken cries.

Never forget this important principle: IF IT’S WORTH DOING; IT’S WORTH DOING _____

v. 10 **Humble yourselves in the presence of the Lord, and He will exalt you.**

We don’t humble ourselves just to get exalted, but it is a surprising result in the economy of God. Not so with the world where being bold and assertive is seen as the way to success.

REALITY CHECK:

Where is God right now? Ps 11: 16 He is in His holy temple and in His presence is fullness of joy

What does he think of you? He delights in us as He delights in His Son, Jesus.

Where is Christ right now? Heb 8:1 – He is seated at the right hand of the Father and he makes intercession for us.

Where is the Holy Spirit right now? Gal 4:6 God has sent forth the spirit of His Son into our hearts, crying, “ABBA! Father”

Where are you right now? Are you drawing near to God or are you stuck in a rut?

If you feel there is a “wall” between you and God, repent. And, if you don’t want to repent, or don’t know what to repent of—*tell Him that!* Be honest about who you are and how you feel. (Trying to hide is useless anyway.) Cry out for the Spirit to make the Father “at home” in your heart

There’s no formula, but based on what we know of the character of God, for every 1 step we take toward God, He is likely to take 100 steps towards us.

Drawing near to God is not a one-time event. It is a lifestyle – both a necessity and a delight.

Draw near to God and He WILL draw near to you.

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