

Draw Near to God

James 4:7-10

7 Submit yourselves therefore to God. Resist the devil, and he will flee from you.

8 Draw nigh to God, and he will draw nigh to you. *Cleanse your hands, ye sinners; and purify your hearts, ye double minded.*

9 Be afflicted, and mourn, and weep: let your laughter be turned to mourning, and your joy to heaviness.

10 Humble yourselves in the sight of the Lord, and he shall lift you up.

1. Introduction

1. Draw nigh to God and he will draw nigh to you.

2. This is a principle that God set in place that operates like a law for God's created prize, mankind.

3. We were created in God's image, yet we fall so short in living up to all He has for us.

4. Yet He gives us this principle of life to lift us from the pit we've fallen into: Draw near to God, and He will draw near to you.
 5. Wherever you are, and however far you have drifted from God, when you begin the process of drawing near to God, He will also draw near to you.
 6. We recently preached about the return of the prodigal son, who, while in the pig pen, came to himself, and began his journey of returning to God.
 7. But even though he was in the pig pen at the time he repented, that is when the Father stepped toward His son, making his return a shorter journey.
 8. When we take steps toward God, He takes steps toward us. I want to preach to you this morning on the subject: Draw Near to God
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- II. A better hope, a more excellent was
 - A. Better hope

1. But before we take the first step of drawing near to God, we must see it as the better way that it is.
2. If you don't have hope of a better life, why try something different than what you're doing?
3. Why should I draw near to God and chance a different life? Is there hope of something better? Is there really a better life, or is it just hype?
4. The writer of Hebrews spoke of Jesus and what He had accomplished for us:
Heb 7:16, 19
16 [Jesus] Who is made, not after the law of a carnal commandment, but after the power of an endless life.
5. First of all, Jesus came offering the power of an endless life. Life can be more than temporary, shallow, and meaningless thrills. The power of an endless life is what Jesus brings.

6. And comparing the power of the law and all the commandments that had never actually changed a heart, but just simply pointed out our sins,
the scripture next speaks of the true hope that Jesus brings of change when we draw near to God:
*19 For the law made nothing perfect, but **the bringing in of a better hope** did; by the which we **draw nigh unto God**.*
7. You see with Jesus, it is not just finger-pointing and revealing how bad you are, it is a real hope—a better hope—that comes when we draw nigh unto God.
8. Drawing near to God means God will draw near to you and will bring to you a better hope!
 - B. A more excellent way
 1. It is a better hope, and also a more excellent way for us.

2. Paul had visited the city of Corinth on his second missionary journey and preached the gospel of Jesus Christ to people who had not heard of Jesus before.
3. Not long after Paul arrived, Jesus appeared to him in a night vision and said:
“Then spake the Lord to Paul in the night by a vision, *Be not afraid, but speak, and hold not they peace: For I am with thee, and no man shall set on thee to hurt thee: I have much people in this city.*” Acts 18:9-10
4. Jesus has much people in this city, so preach to them! Regardless of what you see, give them the gospel.
5. If you read the early chapters of Paul’s first letter to the Corinthians, you will see what he saw—the many problems he had encountered in their city among the Gentiles who were coming into the church.
6. There were factions where one group of people thought they were superior to another group; he dealt with their culture

that thought nothing of the sin of fornication and disregarded the importance and sanctity of marriage; some were practicing idolatry and drunkenness, some had been involved in adulterous affairs, homosexuality, extortion, stealing, and some were going to court to sue a brother in the church.

7. Paul had to teach them something they had not heard before: **they which do such things cannot inherit the kingdom of God.**

1 Cor 6:9 Know ye not that the unrighteous shall not inherit the kingdom of God? ...

8. But after hearing the gospel of Jesus Christ, those people received the Holy Ghost and were baptized in the name of Jesus.

9. Now Paul told them it was time to lay down that former life and walk away from it to a new life:

*1 Cor 6:11 And such were some of you: but ye are **washed**, but ye are **sanctified**, but ye*

*are **justified** in the name of the Lord Jesus, and by the Spirit of our God.*

10. So the journey they were on was directed by the Spirit of God and the Holy Ghost was active in making a noticeable difference in their lives.
11. No longer was the carnal, sinful lifestyle their pattern of living, but the Holy Ghost, and fruits of the Spirit, and gifts of the Spirit that ordered their lives.
12. Paul told them, that is the life you want to covet, or desire:
*1 Cor 12:31 But covet earnestly the best gifts: and yet shew I unto you **a more excellent way.***
13. Not only did drawing near to God bring a better hope, drawing near to God is a **more excellent way** than the way you were going.
14. In contrast to all the sins they had been washed, sanctified, and justified from, Paul outlined spiritual gifts—miraculous gifts that the Holy Ghost would impart to them.

15. Miraculous gifts of revelation like: discernment, wisdom, and knowledge.
16. Power gifts like: faith, miracles, healings.
17. And divine communication gifts like: prophecy, the gift of tongues and the gift of interpretation of tongues.
18. They had been in an earthly realm dealing with earthly sins and habits of bondage.
19. Now they were birthed into a holy realm dealing with heavenly gifts, miracles, and the life-changing, ever-present, love of God.
20. This was a **more excellent** way! When you draw near to God, you will find it is a more excellent way, filled with a better hope.

III. Through repentance

A. Woman at the well

1. But you will find that in the process of drawing closer to God, it involves moving further away from something else.
2. We see this in John 4, when Jesus met a Samaritan woman in the Samaritan city of

Sychar. They met at an ancient well that had been dug by the patriarch Jacob 17 centuries before.

3. But there was an obvious culture clash between Jews and Samaritans that had been going on for 500 years and Jews and Samaritans just didn't deal with each other.
4. But Jesus was not inhibited by popular cultural clashes, and stepped right up to the Samaritan woman and asked her for a drink from the well.
5. Jesus had used the well and the water as a conversation starter because he had more in mind than a casual conversation at the water cooler.

B. Living water

1. He quickly turned the conversation from culture, and thirst for water from an earthly well, to heavenly gifts:

John 4:10 Jesus answered and said unto her, If thou knewest the gift of God, and who it is

that saith to thee, Give me to drink; thou wouldest have asked of him, and he would have given thee living water.

2. Living water is what Jesus came to offer. Not just a quick satisfaction of a human thirst, but drink that brings everlasting satisfaction:

John 4:13-15

13 Jesus answered and said unto her, Whosoever drinketh of this water shall thirst again:

14 But whosoever drinketh of the water that I shall give him shall never thirst; but the water that I shall give him shall be in him a well of water springing up into everlasting life.

15 The woman saith unto him, Sir, give me this water, that I thirst not, neither come hither to draw.

3. She was thirsty for the heavenly water and the satisfaction her soul was craving, but

thought she could just simply switch brands without changing her lifestyle.

4. That is when Jesus brought attention to her sin that was standing in the way of her soul's satisfaction.

c. Deal with the sin

1. He told her,

John 4:16 Jesus saith unto her, Go, call thy husband, and come hither.

2. Jesus was aware of the immoral lifestyle she was living in, and because that was stopping her from fully receiving the satisfaction her soul craved, he dealt with her sin first:

John 4:17-18

17 The woman answered and said, I have no husband. Jesus said unto her, Thou hast well said, I have no husband:

18 For thou hast had five husbands; and he whom thou now hast is not thy husband: in that saidst thou truly.

3. She was living in a sinful lifestyle, yet she realized her thirst for the everlasting life that Jesus offered. What is the solution?
- D. Mortify the deeds of sin
 1. First deal with the sin. Jesus did not come only to add a layer of holiness over your layers of sinfulness, he came to wash away the old lifestyle, or as Paul put it—mortify the deeds of the body:

Rom 8:13 For if ye live after the flesh, ye shall die: but if ye through the Spirit do mortify the deeds of the body, ye shall live.

2. Destroy those old deeds.

Col 3:5-7, 10

5 Mortify therefore your members which are upon the earth; fornication, uncleanness, inordinate affection, evil concupiscence, and covetousness, which is idolatry:

6 For which things' sake the wrath of God cometh on the children of disobedience:

*7 In the which ye also walked some time,
when ye lived in them.*

*10 And have **put on the new man**, which is
renewed in knowledge after **the image of
him that created him**:*

3. Come to this well of living water. That invitation is open to each of us, even if we have been going to a different drinking spot trying to find satisfaction from the dregs of a keg.
 4. It is only the living water from Jesus brings the true satisfaction.
 5. There is a river that never shall run dry.
 6. Drawing near to God involves moving away from the old lifestyle of sin toward the image (identity) God intended you to have.
 7. But when you realize it is a better hope, a more excellent way, and living water, the trade is more than worth it.
- E. A different outcome

1. The trade of the old life for a new also brings about a different outcome.
2. Read Ezekiel 18 when you get a chance. It offers an illustration of what a lifestyle change will do for you.
3. The first one noted in this passage is a little unexpected. It speaks of a righteous man who turns away from doing right. We would call him a backslider:

Ezek 18:26-28

26 When a righteous man turneth away from his righteousness, and committeth iniquity, and dieth in them; for his iniquity that he hath done shall he die.

4. First, I'll point out this passage speaks of the punishment for sin as death, and the reward for righteousness is life. And of course, we now understand that is speaking of eternal life with Jesus or eternal death in hell.
5. Living right has its rewards, but if you turn from righteousness back to iniquity, if you

walk away from the only source of forgiveness available, the blood of Jesus Christ, there remains no more sacrifice for sin than the blood of Jesus.

6. That is walking away from forgiveness, walking away from a better hope, walking away from the more excellent way, and walking away from the living water.
7. And instead of drawing nigh to God and Him drawing nigh to you, you are increasing the distance between you and God and drawing near to death.
8. But on the flipside:
27 Again, when the wicked man turneth away from his wickedness that he hath committed, and doeth that which is lawful and right, he shall save his soul alive.
*28 Because he considereth **[he thought it over]**, and turneth away from all his transgressions that he hath committed, he shall surely live, he shall not die.*

9. The joy of repentance is how it will change the outcome for our soul.
10. When “he considereth”, or thinks over the consequence of his sin, a life can turn around by that statement: “he thought it over.”
11. Turning away from transgressions means you are drawing nigh to God and He will draw nigh to you!
12. You see the principle of Ezekiel 18 is summarized in verse 23:
Ezek 18:23 Have I any pleasure at all that the wicked should die? saith the Lord GOD: and not that he should return from his ways, and live?
13. That is an unanswered rhetorical question that assumes the answer, that, no, God does not have pleasure that the wicked will die in their sins.
14. And yes, God wants them to turn from their wickedness and find eternal life through repentance and turning to Jesus.

15. Peter put it this way:
2 Peter 3:9 The Lord is not slack concerning his promise, as some men count slackness; but is longsuffering to us-ward, not willing that any should perish, but that all should come to repentance.

IV. Closing

1. That all would come to repentance and find life is God's plan.
2. The outcome of drawing near to God is that He will draw near to you.
3. But it involves turning away from and increasing the distance between us and the devil, and the sins we once walked in:

James 4:7-10

7 Submit yourselves therefore to God. Resist the devil, and he will flee from you.

8 Draw nigh to God, and he will draw nigh to you. Cleanse your hands, ye sinners; and purify your hearts, ye double minded.

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