



AWAKEN TO HUMILITY

May 16 | Devotional

Day 1 - Devotion

Imagine it. You walk to the mailbox on a regular Tuesday in your regular routine, just in a bit of a hurry to get to the next thing. You open the all-too-familiar door to the box. Inside you find a rather peculiar envelope. It looks like it may have been stuck in the wrong box, if you're honest. It's linen and fancier than the rest of the sales flyers and credit card application envelopes. It stands out for sure.

Sure enough, your name is written on the outside. It's perfect. So you don't even wait to get inside, you can't hold back your curiosity. As you open the envelope flap to reveal the card inside, you see it.

An invitation.

Your presence is requested. On an ordinary day in your ordinary life. You've been invited.

Maybe you haven't been given an engraved invitation with your name on it, but you have truly been invited. You've been invited into friendship with God. The Creator of the universe requests your presence. He longs to be with you.

Maybe you've never been told this truth and it's hard to wrap your mind around it. Maybe deep down you know it's true and you've just forgotten because the world has been noisy lately. Maybe you know it's true and it's what you've been clinging to. Wherever you are in the process of accepting the Father's invitation, he holds out his hand, waiting for you to come. To draw near. What a humbling reality that the King of Kings invites *you!*

This week's text holds a great deal of truth in it. We'll be looking at some places in our lives where we have chosen friendship with the world over friendship with God. We probably have some confessing and repenting to do. Some places where we need to break up with the world. Some spaces where God's truth needs to shine its healing light.

James doesn't mince his words. In James 4:1-5:6, he makes some bold statements we need to hear as followers of Christ. As we dig into his words this week, let's do so remembering that we've been invited to *come near to God*. Because of Jesus, we are able to draw near to the loving heart of the Father. God's loving kindness leads us to repentance (Romans 2:4). He longs for us to be free from our sin and to be fully devoted to him. Repentance is something we do *with* God, not on our own.

As you read the passage this week, hear God's loving and gracious voice lead you to let go of the ways of the world, and invite you to his table once again. Let's be brave and bold enough to let go of things that can't satisfy and choose to draw near to the Almighty God.

Questions for Reflection:

1. When you think of God giving you an invitation to friendship, what comes to mind? Do you believe that as you draw near to God, he draws near to you? When have you found this to be true?
2. Think of how you would describe "friendship with the world." What does it look like in your own life? Where have you aligned yourself with the world? Where are you choosing friendship with the world over friendship with God?
3. Spend some time in prayer, asking God to prepare your heart for the surgical work he'll be doing this week. Ask him to remind you of his love for you, the grace Jesus gives, and the forgiveness that is yours as his child. Invite the Holy Spirit to "search me, God, and know my heart; test me and know my anxious thoughts. See if there is any offensive way in me, and lead me in the way everlasting" (**Psalm 139:23-24**).

Day 2 - James Study Breakdown

Remember that invitation from yesterday? It's still offered to you. God promises to draw near to you as you draw near to him. His invitation to friendship is open. His love for you is the foundation for the words we'll dig into today.

Take a moment to settle in as we begin. Find a quiet place to be with God. Take a few moments before you begin to read to just be quiet and to remember God's invitation.

Today we're going to dig into this text a paragraph at a time, taking time to allow God to show us where we need to submit and return to him. Take time to read each paragraph slowly, letting it sink in. Ask God to reveal what he wants you to notice in each section and how he's inviting you to respond.

Read James 4:1-3

What stands out to you in these verses?

How is God inviting you to respond?

Read James 4:4-6

What stands out to you in these verses?

How is God inviting you to respond?

Read James 4:7-10

What stands out to you in these verses?

How is God inviting you to respond?

Read James 4:11-12

What stands out to you in these verses?

How is God inviting you to respond?

Read James 4:13-17

What stands out to you in these verses?

How is God inviting you to respond?

Read James 5:1-6

What stands out to you in these verses?

How is God inviting you to respond?

Look back over your responses today. What is the verse that stands out to you the most from James 4:1-5:6? Write the verse below.

Take a moment to write a prayer to God in response to what he's revealed to you through his word today.

Day 3 - Scripture Survey

As we look at **James 4:1-5:6** this week, we want to see what the whole story of Scripture has to say about this week's particular topic. Where else in Scripture do we find this same truth? How do other authors of Scripture support or expand on what James shares in this week's particular passage?

Take a moment first to reread **James 4:1-5:6**. Maybe even consider reading it in another translation on your Bible app.

After you've read through the passage in James, take a few moments to slowly read through the passages below. Take time to note any similarities you find between the passage and **James 4:1-5:6**. Jot those similarities down. Note if there are any questions that arise as you read. Finally, ask, "God, what are you inviting me into as I read and look through these verses?"

Acts 3:19-20

Philippians 2:5-11

Matthew 4:17

Jeremiah 29:13

Romans 2:4

1 John 1:5-10

As you finish today, take a few moments to pray through the "Prayer of Humility" from Francis of Assisi:

O Jesus, meek and humble of heart, hear me.

*From the desire of being esteemed, deliver me, Jesus.
From the desire of being loved, deliver me, Jesus.
From the desire of being praised, deliver me, Jesus.
From the desire of being preferred to others, deliver me, Jesus.
From the desire of being consulted, deliver me, Jesus.
From the desire of being approved, deliver me, Jesus.
From the fear of being humiliated, deliver me, Jesus.
From the fear of being despised, deliver me, Jesus.
From the fear of being rebuked, deliver me, Jesus.
From the fear of being criticized, deliver me, Jesus.
From the fear of being forgotten, deliver me, Jesus.
From the fear of being ridiculed, deliver me, Jesus.
From the fear of being wronged, deliver me, Jesus.
From the fear of being suspected, deliver me, Jesus.*

*That others may be loved more than I,
Jesus grant me the grace to desire it.
That others may be esteemed more than I,
Jesus grant me the grace to desire it.
That in the opinion of the world others
may increase and I may decrease,
Jesus grant me the grace to desire it.
That others may be chosen and I set aside,
Jesus grant me the grace to desire it.*

***Francis of Assisi, Italian monk (1181-1226),
also credited to Rafael Merry del Val (1865-1930)***

Day 4 - Story Work

You have a story of awakening. Maybe for you that looked a lot like James or Paul where Jesus changed everything in your life in an instant. Or maybe you've always had a constant awaken-ing. As you've gotten older, you've had your eyes opened more and more to who Jesus is and how that impacts your life.

Today we're going to continue looking at our own stories through the lens of James. This week's focus will be on how words have shaped our stories.

Reflect on your story using the questions below. Invite God to lead as you look back on the words that have been spoken over you and the words you've spoken over others. Ask him to lead you through the questions with his grace and love.

1. Are there places in the past or currently where I have befriended or am befriending the world? How has that friendship with the world shaped my story?
2. When was the last time I felt the full weight of my sin and the price that was paid for my forgiveness? Take a moment to write a prayer of thanksgiving to Jesus for the forgiveness he's given by dying on the cross.
3. Where have you seen God purify your heart in the past? Is there an area of your life currently, a stronghold perhaps, that needs to be submitted to God? Take a few moments to confess your sin to God, seek forgiveness, and ask him to purify your heart.
4. Where do I best connect with God? How am I drawing near to God? What has drawn me away from God? Are there obstacles to drawing near to God in my life that I can remove? Take a few moments to recall a time when you felt near to God. What was that like?

Day 5: Hear & Do

For this last day, let's slow down and pay attention to what God has been inviting us into as a result of this week's passage. Find a quiet space. Silence any technology around you. Spend some time reviewing your devotions this week. We want to be hearers of God's Word and we want to be doers of God's Word. Jot down your thoughts to the following reflection questions:

As you look over this week, what words, phrases, Scriptures, etc. have stood out to you? What was the most significant thing? Why?

Where else outside of your devo time did you notice "these things" pop up in your week?

What is God inviting you to DO as a response to this week's reflections?

Consider some of these suggestions as possible action steps as you step into living this week's truths:

- Pray (draw near) with your family this week each day before dinner
- Consider how you best "connect with God" by taking this assessment (<https://groupleaders.org/curriculum-feed/spiritual-pathways-activity>). Then find space in your schedule to meet God in the pathway you discover to draw near to him.
- Name the battle within you and share with someone in your life group. Invite them to pray for you.
- Buy someone a meal, a gift card, or some groceries this week as an act of generosity (**James 5:1**).