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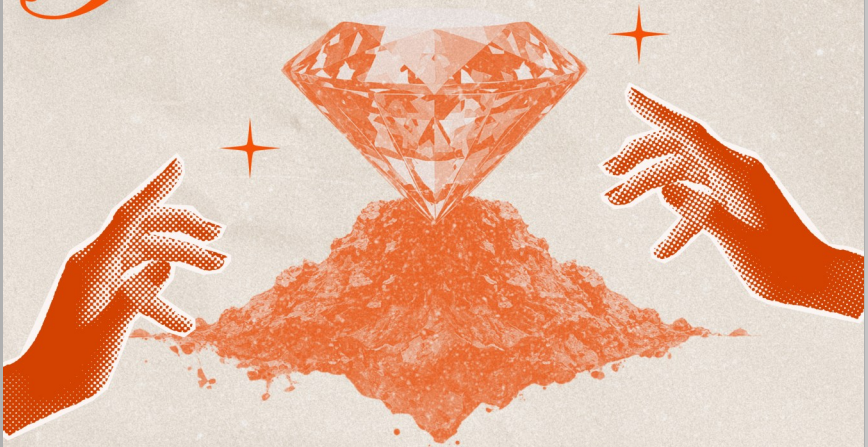
...FOLLOWING GOD, LOVING OTHERS...



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MAURICE REFORMED CHURCH
JANUARY 2026 SERIES

GENUINE



A STUDY OF JAMES



WITH PASTOR JEREMY



Daily Devotionals
Week of January 18-24

SUNDAY, JANUARY 18

Genuine | Study of James

[James 4](#) – Genuine Relationship With God

1. W_____ c_____ q_____ a_____ f_____?

2. A g_____ r_____ w_____ G_____
i_____ s_____

3. A g_____ r_____ w_____ G_____
f_____ H_____ w_____

Sermon Doodles & Illustrations

Monday, January 19

James 4:1-2 | What Causes Fighting?

Have you ever witnessed a fight in the church? One time as I prepared for a sermon years ago, I looked up weird reasons why churches argue or split. Here are some that made the list. Should the people be allowed to bring DEVILED eggs to a church gathering? Along the same lines, arguing if it should be called a pot luck or pot blessing? Keeping with the food theme, whether we should have gluten free bread for communion or not. Thankfully, we have not had those discussions at MRC, but I'm sure it wouldn't take too long for us to think of a time when the church was not getting along.

James addresses this as we start out chapter 4. We just finished reading about how living in the wisdom from above will give us a harvest of righteousness and now we are talking about fighting, which does not feel like righteousness. James says that the reasons there are fights in church is because there are worldly passions warring against the wisdom from above. Oftentimes in church the fight happens because things don't go the way we want them to. Selfish desires and jealousy lead to arguments and those are the same words that are used to talk about worldly wisdom. That is why it is so important that we pray for wisdom from above to help us walk through these disagreements well.

All too often when there is an argument in a church, people leave when they don't get their way. One thing we need to be cautious about as a church is to make sure we remain on the side of wisdom from above. It's not about us being right, it's about the church remaining faithful to God and following His lead and not the lead of anyone or anything else. Next time when you find yourself in a fight with someone, I encourage you to pause and invite all parties to seek God in prayer and listen to His wisdom.

SONG :

“Common Ground” - Matt Maher & Dee Wilson

KIDS QUESTION:

Why do you fight with others? Do you want YOUR way?

How do you solve a fight? Why should you pray about it?

YOUTH AND ADULT QUESTION:

Share a time when your selfish desires led to an argument.

Did you ever fix that argument? Why is it a good decision to pray when people disagree?

PRAYER:

Lord, we know that You hold all truth. Forgive us when we demand our own way. Help us to seek Your wisdom.

[illegible]

Tuesday, January 20

James 4:3-4 | What Causes Division Between You and God?

If I were to ask you, “What separates us from God?” what would you say? I’m guessing most of us would say that sin separates us from God and sin is anything that is against God’s divine direction and truth. What causes you to sin? I know we are all practically perfect in every way, but on that rare occasion we do sin, what is at the root?

In our passage today James continues briefly with the issue with unanswered prayer and then talks about the division in our relationship with God. The answer for unanswered prayer is that we ask with selfish motives. We ask for God to make our desires happen rather than pray according to God’s desires. James can’t hold it in at this point & calls the people an adulterous generation, which simply means they are cheating on God by being intimate with the world. Christians, we are living in sin or choosing sin at anytime are telling God a relationship with Him is no longer what they want and instead they want thrills that come from following the world. James wants his readers to know and I want us to know, that any sin is a big deal. Wanting what makes us feel good instead of following what God desires is not just a small oopsie. We are committing adultery against God, we are cheating on him for the enjoyment of ourselves. This should not be!!

A genuine relationship with God does not contain a life that is following the desires of this world. Jesus told the woman caught in adultery to go and sin no more and the same challenge is for us today. We are to desire to go and sin no more. In 1 Corinthians we are told that God will always give us a way out of temptation. ALWAYS! A genuine relationship with Jesus Christ has every opportunity to live for God and not for this world. Let’s live in that power today!

SONG :

[“Invitation Medley: Turn Your Eyes Upon Jesus/I Have Decided/I Surrender All” - Anthem Lights](#)

KIDS QUESTION:

What does it mean to go and sin no more? Does God always give us a way out of temptation?

YOUTH AND ADULT QUESTION:

How does it feel to think about cheating on God and committing adultery against Him? Would you feel the same way against your spouse or person you are dating?

PRAYER:

Lord, we are sorry for when we cheated on you by wanting the temporary thrills of this world. Lord, may we always look for a way out of sin.

[illegible]

Wednesday, January 21

James 4:5-6 | Do You Know About Grace?

The first verse in our passage today talks about God yearning jealously over the spirit that dwells in us. We don't often talk like this today, but James is trying to help us understand that God's desire is for us to love and worship him. When we choose to love and worship ourselves or others it causes the division we were talking about yesterday. In short, the heart of God is for His people to make Him the Lord of their lives.

Verse six then shows us that God extends grace. Again, James uses similar words with pride and humility. Earthly wisdom is found in pride and will be opposed by God, while wisdom from above is found in humility. As we follow the earthly wisdom of God and surrender our lives to Him we experience the undeserved grace from our Creator.

These verses remind me of my favorite acrostic of the GOSPEL. GOD created us to be in a relationship with Him. OUR sins separate us from God. SINS cannot be removed by good deeds. PAYING the price for sins Jesus died and rose again. EVERYONE who trusts in Jesus alone has eternal life. LIFE with Jesus starts now and lasts forever. Where are you on your gospel journey? Do you know that God created you with a desire to be in a relationship with you? Do you realize your selfish desires separated you from God? Do you confess and believe that Jesus Christ died and rose as a payment for your sin? Are you living under this grace right now? It truly is amazing grace, may we share it with others.

SONG :

“Amazing Grace” - Reawaken Hymns

KIDS QUESTION:

What is grace? How have you been shown grace?

YOUTH AND ADULT QUESTION:

How would you define grace? What does God's grace mean to you?

PRAYER:

Lord, thank you for such amazing grace. May we live free in
Your grace today.

This image shows a single sheet of white paper with horizontal blue or grey ruling lines. The lines are evenly spaced and run across the width of the page. There are approximately 20 lines visible. The paper appears to be a standard notebook page or a sheet of stationery designed for writing.

Thursday, January 22

James 4:7-10 | Draw Near to God

This passage has a lot of one liners that are easy to quote, but combine to show us what a genuine relationship with Jesus Christ looks like. First, we submit ourselves to God. This statement is written with the previous statements in mind. As believers we no longer are under the rule of our sinful desires, but we are under the rule of God most high. Second, we are encouraged to resist the devil. We know from experience that this is not possible in our own strength, but when we quote scripture and are led by the Spirit, we are able to resist him and he will flee from us like he did to Jesus in the desert.

The next phrase is a beautiful picture of a relationship, draw near to God and He will draw near to you. The closer you are with someone the more intimate the relationship and the more you know one another. The more we lean into God and His truth, the more He shows Himself to us and the better we know Him.

The next phrase talks about being cleansed. These next phrases deal with sin and the seriousness of sin. Sin makes us dirty both inside and outside. We are not to live a lifestyle that wants one foot in the world & one foot in the body of Christ. We are to be fully committed and to do that we must not laugh off our sin, but we must humble ourselves with weeping and mourning over our sin and find freedom there. It is in our honest confession where we find that God exalts us.

In short, a genuine relationship with God weeps over sin, sits under the authority of God, and boldly resists the devil. How do you handle sin? Do you laugh it off as no big deal, do you justify it by saying you are only human, or does it bring you to tears that you committed adultery against God with your words, actions or thoughts? How do you feel about being under the authority and direction of God? Are you committed to God alone as you are committed to your spouse?

SONG :

“Draw Me Close” - Shane & Shane

KIDS QUESTION:

What is your relationship with God? How do you get closer to Him?

YOUTH AND ADULT QUESTION:

What does it look like for you to draw near to God? How do you view your sin?

PRAYER:

Lord, break our hearts for what breaks Yours. As we draw near to you, may our heart beat in tune with Your will.

[illegible]

Friday, January 23

James 4:11-12 | What Does It Mean to Judge?

Have you ever heard the question, who made you judge and jury? Often this statement is questioning your position to determine what is right or wrong and what punishment should be given because of the perceived action. Not many of us are in places of authority to hand out final judgment and punishment for actions that are done. As parents in our family we do have the position of authority to hand out discipline to our children when they are not obedient to the expectations we have put out. Is there any other place where we have that same authority?

I want us to read our passage today again in light of the whole chapter and book. Much of what James writes is to the brothers & sisters in Christ and again here we see that James is reminding us who is the one who holds the final judgment. It is not you or me, but it is God who will determine what is right and what is wrong. I want to encourage us to not misread this passage. James is not telling us to be quiet for the truth. James is not telling Christians that they have no voice against sin, but it should be a voice that is filled with love, grace and mercy pointing to Jesus rather than condemnation and punishment. When fights happen, it is easy to villainize the other person. This should not be inside or outside the body of Christ. Our hearts should always be for others to be made right with God.

Have you ever spoken poorly of someone who you have argued with? Have you found yourself sitting in the place of judgment over them rather than desiring for them to see the truth of God in the situation? In many of these situations we must be open to reason and see where we might not have it exactly right either. You and I are not the final judge, and I am very thankful for that. I would not like to sit in the place of deciding who did everything right and who didn't. Our job as Christians is to love other wells and point them to Jesus. When others choose not to see the truth, we must still love them instead of speaking poorly of them.

SONG :

[“Heart of Worship”](#) - Grace City Music

KIDS QUESTION:

Do you love others that you do not agree with? How can we love well?

YOUTH AND ADULT QUESTION:

How can you handle disagreements well?

PRAYER:

Lord, help me to love others even when I don't agree with them.

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Saturday, January 24

James 4:13-17 | What Controls Tomorrow?

I love to plan things, especially vacation. Obviously, with planning things like vacation, you have to act as if you are going. You book the flights, the hotels, and the activities in the expectation that you will be at those places on those days, but did you know that you can't guarantee that you will be there? For some people they will pay for the trip insurance to protect their investment, but in the end, it is God who holds the days in His hands.

James reminds his readers that they are not in control. It seems as if they have gotten comfortable in their lives and are excited for what might be to come. They are looking to travel and possibly make some good investments and end up ahead in their finances. They are looking forward to those moments where the money will come and they can use it. Again, James reminds them that the attitude to have is to say if it is the Lord's will. James is not against planning or looking ahead to what might be in the future, but we are not to be arrogant about it like it is a sure thing. No one knows what tomorrow may bring. It may be our last and all of the plans and the money we laid up will do us no good.

How do you view the future? Are you a planner? Are you convinced that nothing will happen and that everything will take place? Whether it is 2 years from now or 2 hours from now, I invite us to humble ourselves knowing that anything can happen at any time. We do not hold our destiny in our hands; no, the Lord of the universe knows our days and if our last day is tomorrow then our last day is tomorrow. Nothing we have planned or nothing we desire will change that God holds all of it. Let's humble ourselves under the plan of God today.

SONG :

"Be Still My Soul" - Norton Hall Band

KIDS QUESTION:

Who holds your future? Is it okay to make plans?

YOUTH AND ADULT QUESTION:

How do you view the future? How does it feel knowing God's will is going to happen?

PRAYER:

Lord, as we draw near to you, may we look to the future more and more as You see it. Teach us to desire Your will over our own.

[illegible]