

The background of the entire page is a black field filled with intricate red ink illustrations of various botanical specimens. These include several types of leaves with serrated edges, some with prominent veins, and clusters of small, round berries or fruits hanging from thin stems. The illustrations are scattered around the central text, creating a decorative border effect.

GOD'S GREAT WORK

— PRAYER GUIDE —

THESE DEVOTIONS

with prayer points are intended to assist believers and churches as they seek Christ personally and corporately for revival and spiritual awakening. The biblical basis for the devotional title and theme is “God’s Great Work,” taken from Matthew 22:37-40, The Great Commandment and Matthew 28:18-20, the Great Commission.

James’ warning to the early church against worldliness in James 4:1-17 provides the biblical backdrop for each of the devotional sections. Each section focuses on various principles related to God’s invitation to experience Him through revival and spiritual awakening. As we unite in the following Scripture passages, devotional thoughts and prayer points, may our prayer be, “Oh Lord, will You begin a work of revival and spiritual awakening in my heart, my family, my church, my state and my nation, so that we may be about Your great work in our world?”

INTRODUCTION

America is in serious spiritual trouble because its moral and spiritual compass is out of control. Sin, evil and darkness abound in families and communities. Many missiologists believe that the American church finds itself ministering in a culture that is gradually becoming similar to the one that was found in the first century. Although many cultural parallels may be found, it is worth noting that the spiritual condition of the American church is very different from that of the first-century church in Acts. The early church in Acts was spiritually alive and vibrant while the modern day American church is largely apathetic, sin-stained, and in moral and spiritual decline.

Because of this, lostness is increasing rapidly as churches and denominations struggle to combat rampant complacency among congregants. With all of the turmoil going on in our world today, this is a generation of people who are restless and in desperate need of the gospel.

God is Squeezing His People

Despite the tremendous need for Jesus in America, it is evident that the American church has turned away from Christ. The American church has committed spiritual adultery with the world. It has become distracted, side-tracked and has forgotten its first love. The blessing of God's presence and power seems to have dried up in many churches as baptisms are down and gospel impact is low in most communities.

But there is great hope on the horizon. Why? Because God's not dead and is pursuing His people. In His pursuit, God is squeezing, chastening and disciplining the church — not only in America, but around the world. He is not pleased with our sin, self-absorption, lack of purity and our disobedience to His commandments. Therefore, unless we genuinely repent and return to Him, He will continue to chastise us until we change or until we harden our hearts to the point that we cross His deadline, sin away our day of grace and miss His kairos or opportune moment for restoration and deliverance (Zechariah 1:1-6; Luke 19:41-44; Hebrews 10:26-39).

God's Mercy through Revival and Spiritual Awakening

God, in His great sovereignty and mercy, has revived His church and sent spiritual awakening in the culture at least four major times in America. The First Great Awakening (1732-1767) shook the foundations of the church and culture in the American colonies at a time when the moral and spiritual climate was at a very low ebb. The Second Great Awakening (1787-1843) came on the heels of the American Revolution just in time to combat humanistic ideologies, which were left behind by the French, and were being embraced in the culture. The awakening's impact was multifaceted and far-reaching with three primary strands of evangelistic expansion — college revivals, frontier camp meetings, and urban and community-wide evangelistic campaigns.

The Layman's Prayer Revival (1857-1859) prepared America spiritually for its greatest challenge since its inception, the great and terrible Civil War. God manifested His presence in a mighty way through Union prayer gatherings which led to evangelistic meetings with over 1 million converts being recorded. The Worldwide Awakening (1901-1910), brought God's people together in united, community prayer and evangelism efforts. It also prepared the way for continued advancement in overseas evangelism and mission endeavors through the American church. Other movements such as the Asbury Revival (1970) and the Jesus Movement (1970-1973) are not considered pervasive revivals or spiritual awakenings like the earlier movements, but they did produce many conversions and sparked evangelistic fervor, especially among young people and on college campuses.

In each of the major spiritual awakening movements, the church was awakened out of its sinful and slumbering state, and it became passionate for Christ and His mission. At the same time, the culture was awakened to its desperate need for Jesus in salvation as people fell under deep conviction of their sinfulness and need for Christ, which resulted in a rapid running of the gospel.

It is only when God's people return to and experience Him in revival that they are in a position to join Him in His great work through the Great Commission and the Great Commandment. Through revival and spiritual awakening, the American church can once again become a mighty army of instruments who love Him with all their hearts, who love their neighbors as themselves, and who are passionate about making disciples of all nations.

Thus, it is safe to say that the overwhelming need of the hour in America is for God's people to unite and seek Him for His mercy toward revival in the church and spiritual awakening in the culture (2 Chronicles 7:13-14; Jeremiah 33:3; Acts 4:23-33). The psalter declares in Psalm 147:11, "The Lord takes pleasure in those who fear Him, in those who hope in His mercy."

JAMES 4

¹Where do wars and fights come from among you? Do they not come from your desires for pleasure that war in your members? ²You lust and do not have. You murder and covet and cannot obtain. You fight and war. Yet you do not have because you do not ask. ³You ask and do not receive, because you ask amiss, that you may spend it on your pleasures. ⁴Adulterers and adulteresses! Do you not know that friendship with the world is enmity with God? Whoever therefore wants to be a friend of the world makes himself an enemy of God. ⁵Or do you think that the Scripture says in vain, “The Spirit who dwells in us yearns jealously”?

⁶But He gives more grace. Therefore He says:

“God resists the proud,
But gives grace to the humble.”

⁷Therefore submit to God. Resist the devil and he will flee from you. ⁸Draw near to God and He will draw near to you. Cleanse your hands, you sinners; and purify your hearts, you double-minded. ⁹Lament and mourn and weep! Let your laughter be turned to mourning and your joy to gloom. ¹⁰Humble yourselves in the sight of the Lord, and He will lift you up.

¹¹Do not speak evil of one another, brethren. He who speaks evil of a brother and judges his brother, speaks evil of the law and judges the law. But if you judge the law, you are not a doer of the law but a judge. ¹²There is one Lawgiver, who is able to save and to destroy. Who are you to judge another?

¹³Come now, you who say, “Today or tomorrow [h]we will go to such and such a city, spend a year there, buy and sell, and make a profit”; ¹⁴whereas you do not know what will happen tomorrow. For what is your life? It is even a vapor that appears for a little time and then vanishes away. ¹⁵Instead you ought to say, “If the Lord wills, we shall live and do this or that.” ¹⁶But now you boast in your arrogance. All such boasting is evil.

¹⁷Therefore, to him who knows to do good and does not do it, to him it is sin.



SECTION 1

— PRAYER GUIDE —

Hindrances to the Vital Spiritual Life in Christ

Before believers and churches can ever experience revival, there must be a keen awareness of their spiritual standing before God. This section's main focus is on identifying major hindrances to the vital spiritual life in Christ using James 4:1-4 for reference. In James 4:1-4, James identifies and rebukes the church concerning its self-centeredness, worldliness and lack of unity. James also points out several root causes for these problems such as envy, prayerlessness and wrong motives in prayer.

In essence, James confronts the church with the desperate need to give careful attention to sinful attitudes and behaviors that can shipwreck their spiritual life and their ability to join God's great work and witness in Christ. As we study, pray and identify these hindrances, may our prayer be like David's in Psalm 139:23-24, "Search me, O God and know my heart; Try me, and know my anxieties; And see if there is any wicked way in me, And lead me in the way everlasting."

DAY 1

HOW “VITAL” IS YOUR SPIRITUAL LIFE?

A few months back I received a call from a retired pastor, associational missionary and former state convention Sunday School revivalist who is 94 years old. He called to affirm the great need we have to unite in prayer for God to send revival to His church and spiritual awakening throughout our land. He told me how the Lord spoke to him following his wife's death about starting a prayer meeting in his home for the purpose of praying for revival and spiritual awakening in America. He obeyed the Lord and since that time, on most Thursday nights, people gather in his home to pray.

He also shared how the Lord had recently led him to schedule and preach a series of revival services at the first church he pastored 70 years earlier. During the conversation, he told of the various ways he was working with others in the area to organize prayer meetings, prayer walking efforts and concerts of prayer that would precede the revival meetings. My heart was encouraged by his call and how the Lord was calling people to seek Him in prayer. More than that, my heart was stirred by the spiritual vitality that was evident in his life. He is a picture of someone who has, through the years, given much attention to ensuring that his walk with Christ was truly vital and alive.

In today's text, James confronts first-century believers with their great need to give attention to living out a vital and real faith before others. The specific need confronted in James 4:1 related to their inability to get

along as believers. The use of the terms “wars” and “fights” together, refers to an overall attitude of enmity, contention, restlessness and lack of unity within the Christian community. James also says that this atmosphere exists “among” the believers themselves. In other words, the vital Christ-life was not radiating from the believers. Rather, a spirit of contention and strife prevailed in their midst.

Today, many believe that the reason the American church is having very little gospel impact is because we are lacking in evangelism, prayer, discipleship, unity, etc., but I believe those issues are only symptoms of a much deeper problem — we have neglected the importance of a vital spiritual life both personally and corporately. Until that changes, we will continue to struggle to live out a vital faith before others, having less and less impact for Christ in America. Is your spiritual life vital and alive in Christ?

PRAYER PROMPTS

- Pray toward a vital and real spiritual life in Christ.
- Ask the Father to restore the vital spiritual life of Christ in your church.

DAY 2

A CONTENTIOUS AND RESENTFUL SPIRIT

In the late 1720s, when religious refugees gathered at Ludwig von Zinzendorf's estate, formerly named Herrnhut, they represented a wide range of beliefs and traditions including Lutheran, Calvinist, German Pietist and Bohemian Brethren. It was not long after the group assembled that conflict arose between groups and individuals over doctrines, beliefs and practices. Soon a spirit of contention and resentment filled the air as love and unity were squelched.

Zinzendorf, aware of the problem, gathered the community together in May of 1727 and addressed the issue head on with a long scriptural lesson on the evils of division and a contentious spirit. The effect was immediately felt as God's Spirit worked among the people. Soon, believers began to repent of their contentious and divisive spirits and even signed an agreement to pursue others' interests above their own. Later, in August, during a special called gathering, revival came to the Herrnhut community and the Moravian church was birthed.

In today's text, James confronts Christians in the first century over the presence of "wars" that were "among" them. The term "wars" refers to actual quarrels, battles or feuds that were taking place among believers. At its core meaning, James uses the term "wars" to convey the idea of a consistent struggle that resulted from individuals who had a contentious or resentful spirit. When people have a contentious spirit, their actions,

attitudes and outward expressions are often filled with bitterness and anger toward people, God or even life itself.

Those who possess this warring spirit are almost always instigators of constant conflict with others. They can never be pleased or content with situations and relationships because their hearts are full of criticism, resentment and bitterness. In the end, the presence of chronic hostility within the body of Christ always leaves behind a trail of broken relationships among warring members and even in the community at large. These broken relationships distract and hinder the work and witness of the church — ultimately quenching God's Spirit and the ability of the church to fulfill the mission of Christ in the community and world. Do you possess a contentious, resentful and warring spirit? Are there believers who have a contentious spirit in your church? If so, what will you do about it?

PRAYER PROMPTS

- Lord, cleanse my heart of any bitterness and anger that lead to a contentious spirit.
- Pray for the Lord to bring any believers in your church who have a contentious, warring spirit to repentance.

DAY 3

AN EXPLOSIVE TEMPERAMENT

Have you ever known someone who is hot-headed? In the past, I've worked with individuals who were calm one minute and then something happened that would send them into an explosive meltdown. Suddenly, their blood pressure would rise, their face would turn red, and their demeanor and speech would become vile and offensive. At that point, they had no patience, no self-control and no concern for the way they treated others. They were ready for a fight with anyone and anything.

In one of the previous churches I pastored, there was a deacon who acted like this. He would get feverishly mad in meetings and often used his tongue to rake people over the coals. Of course, at times he could be kind, helpful and serve others; however, the very next minute he would spew insults at someone whom he believed had crossed him in some way. One Sunday morning after a worship service, he came out the back door of the church and exploded with anger. He said he was so angry he could spit nails — all because the service had gone longer than an hour! He would sometimes get up and walk out of meetings because he was so angry. People often avoided confrontations with him because no one knew how he might respond to certain situations.

In today's text, James calls out believers who display this explosive spirit. The term "fights" refers to someone who has an explosive heart and

attitude. While the previous word "wars" refers to a more chronic warring or combative spirit, this term refers to someone who erupts like a volcano on occasion. However, when they erupt, the outcome is not pretty. They leave behind a trail of broken relationships and become a detriment to an effective gospel witness. Often, at the core of this explosive behavior is a root sin, hurt or problem that manifests itself in certain situations.

A godless and unbelieving world will not be open to Christ as long as Christians behave in this manner. Do you have an explosive temperament? Are people afraid to confront you or disagree with you because of the way you respond? Who have you hurt because of your explosive behavior?

PRAYER PROMPTS

- Lord, forgive me for my explosive temperament.
- Pray that Jesus will give you patience and self-control as you respond to others.

DAY 4

SELF-CENTERED DESIRES

In today's Scripture, James continues his exposure of sinful behavior among believers as he digs deeper to identify the source of such wars and fights. The term he uses is translated "desires," which refers to personal hedonistic and self-centered passions for pleasure. These "desires" are physically, mentally or emotionally driven and can manifest themselves in a variety of ways. Some examples are: attainment of power, fame, prestige, control and the satisfaction that comes from the fulfillment of fleshly lusts and sensual passions. Thus, James confronts individual self-centeredness that is driven by selfish longings and passions.

These unbridled passions can destroy a believer's spiritual vitality and love for Christ. Selfishness takes over as believers succumb to the temptation to satisfy self above pleasing Christ. If a Christian is not careful to keep these desires in check, they will create a fake or pseudo-spirituality that lacks integrity and genuineness. Because of these desires, believers often struggle inwardly with various insecurities, lack of spiritual growth and an unfruitful life in Christ.

Outwardly speaking, self-centered desires cause believers to struggle with personal relationships at home, within the body of Christ and beyond. Self-centered Christians often become instruments of strife

and instigators of wars and fights among others within the church. Why is that? Because pleasing self always comes at the expense of the other party in any relationship.

The apostle Paul was no stranger to the presence of selfish desires that wage war within the believer. In Romans 7:23-25 Paul states, "But I see another law in my members, warring against the law of my mind, and bringing me into captivity to the law of sin ... O wretched man that I am! Who will deliver me from this body of death? I thank God — through Jesus Christ our Lord! So then, with the mind I myself serve the law of God, but with the flesh the law of sin." As believers, we spend our entire lives dying to selfish desires — the key is always Christ. His forgiveness and freedom from selfish ambitions allow believers to walk not according to the flesh but according to His Spirit. How are you doing with that?

PRAYER PROMPTS

- Lord, forgive my selfish, self-centered desires to satisfy my flesh.
- Father, help me to die daily to self that I might walk in the newness of Your life.

DAY 5

LUSTING AFTER WHAT IS NOT YOURS

Have you ever wanted something so badly that you would do almost anything to obtain it? Helen Roseveare, a missionary doctor to the Congo from the 1950s to the 1970s, battled against this temptation during one of her furloughs. Roseveare was a single missionary who was determined that her gender and marital status would not negatively affect her ability to do her job or hinder the level of her leadership status on the field.

During one of her assignments, Roseveare was overlooked and actually demoted because the leadership felt that a married male would serve the hospital better as its director. Roseveare was upset and began to rebel against the new director's leadership. She was hurt because the hospital she had worked so fervently to build was now out of her control. At that point, Roseveare became convinced that her real problem was that she needed a husband who would stand with and by her as a missionary.

Sometime later, Roseveare went on furlough and made finding a husband her primary goal. With little success, Roseveare became desperate and left the mission agency in pursuit of a husband. After a period of failed attempts to secure a husband outside the mission, she ran back to the Lord in repentance and returned to the mission field. Over the next decade, Roseveare endured great hardship and pain as a single missionary but was used greatly by the Lord as an international spokeswoman for Christian missions.

In today's passage, James warns believers that one root cause for their sinful behaviors, which include wars, fights, murder and covetousness, is that they "lust" after things that they do not have. The term "lust" refers to envy and is a strong action. It represents an action of the heart. The term literally means to set one's heart on something so strongly that the person loses all self-control, patience, or ability to wait and obtain that item in a just, right or proper way. The person therefore seeks to secure the thing desired by force, with a total disregard to any morals, boundaries or God's will. This is a dangerous position to be in as a believer, and if not surrendered to Christ, it will destroy a Christian's spiritual life and witness.

Is there something that you are lusting after that has become an obsession in your heart? If so, what will you do about it?

PRAYER PROMPTS

- Lord, forgive me for lusting after _____. It has consumed my pursuits. I surrender this desire to You.
- Father, teach me to be content in You and Your desires, provisions and purposes for my life.

DAY 6

PRAYERLESSNESS

In today's Scripture James continues to drill deep and identify root causes for the lack of spiritual vitality and the worldliness that was causing quarrels and fights among believers. They "did not have" because they were prayerless — that is, they were lacking in dependence on God through a prayer relationship. They were guilty of seeking to acquire things by taking matters into their own hands. The picture here is of a self-centered believer who is impatient and not walking in intimacy with Christ.

The word "ask" in James 4:2 refers to a request of the will. At the core of their self-reliance was no desire to experience God's presence, provision and purposes in their lives through prayer. Instead of God, they were seeking self-centered solutions to problems through fleshly and worldly means. God's intervention in the affairs of the day was neither solicited nor wanted. Their heart pursuits were way off base and became an affront to the Lord. Therefore, prayerlessness doesn't just refer to a lack of prayer, it also refers to the lack of any desire for God and His help or intervention through prayer.

Prior to the 1857-1859 Layman's Prayer Revival, most churches in New York City (like many across America in that day) were struggling to hold their own numerically and spiritually. Prayerlessness abounded in many denominations and churches as spiritual and moral decline was the norm. But everything changed when God intervened by calling His people

to seek Him through united prayer gatherings. God's people suddenly began to depend on Him in prayer — seeking Him, His presence and His help in their time of need.

Thus, one of the great hallmarks of the Layman's Prayer Revival was the presence of a spirit of prayer that prevailed from the start. Union prayer meetings sprang up everywhere. From these meetings, which began in early fall in 1857, evangelistic efforts began to bear unusual fruit. Nearly 50,000 new members were added to evangelical churches in New York City by May of 1858.

Today, God's great work is hindered because of prayerlessness among believers and churches. Are you guilty of prayerlessness? What about your church? Jesus declared in Mark 11:17, "Is it not written, 'My house shall be called a house of prayer for the nations'? But you have made it a den of thieves." What will you do?

PRAYER PROMPTS

- Father, forgive my prayerlessness.
- Lord teach me and my church to pray. Make my church a house of prayer for the nations.

DAY 7

PRAYING WITH WRONG MOTIVES

Motives in prayer are important. In James 4:3, James confronts another worldly hindrance to a Christian's vital spiritual life when he says that believers pray and do not see God answer their prayers because they "ask amiss." The term for "ask" is the same as before — it refers to a deep-seated desire of the will. The term "amiss" refers to the concept of asking with improper or wrong intent. In other words, the motivation behind their asking was a heart that sought to utilize the answer incorrectly.

James drills deeper, exposing their sinful motive when he states, "because," which is purpose-oriented, you want to "spend it on your own pleasures." "Spend" is a monetary term and shows the evil intent of their heart. They were not asking for the sake of God's purposes or glory but so that they might waste what they receive on selfish "pleasures." "Pleasures" is the same root term that is used in James 4:1 and refers to sensual hedonistic pleasures that are enjoyed by the flesh. There was no spiritual motivation behind their requests. They were consumed with satisfying self, and their desire was to use God like a puppet in their pursuit of worldly pleasures.

Three truths about wrong motives in prayer are seen in this verse. First, we cannot manipulate God with our prayers because the Lord knows our hearts and understands our needs, as well as our motives in prayer (2 Chronicles 16:9; Matt. 6:5-8; John 2:25).

Second, frequent unanswered prayers should cause believers to check their heart motives in prayer and their relationship with the Lord. Granted, unanswered prayers can be attributed to the working out of God's timing, eternal purposes, and desires. But, they can also be the result of a believer's sinful motives, behavior and a broken relationship with the Lord (Isaiah 66:18).

Third, we will likely pursue the things we pray toward. Selfish prayers are an indication of a deeper spiritual problem. When our prayers consistently reflect our desire to satisfy self and attain fleshly pleasures, it should alert us to the fact that we have become occupied with living for ourselves and not God. In this state, God's truth is not permeating our lives and our prayers (John 17:17), and trouble is just around the corner.

PRAYER PROMPTS

- Father, forgive me for trying to manipulate You with my self-absorbed prayers.
- Pray that the Lord will help you and your church pray God-centered and kingdom-focused prayers.

DAY 8

SPIRITUAL ADULTERY

When a spouse commits physical adultery, relationships are splintered. If children are involved they are affected by the breach in trust that has taken place. When adultery happens among believers, not only are individual families affected but churches can be as well. Restoration is only made possible through the mercy, forgiveness and power of Christ, but it is usually a difficult and painful process. Most counselors agree that an adulterous affair is usually only a symptom of a much deeper relational and spiritual problem that previously existed between the couple. The same can also be said about spiritual adultery.

In Exodus 32, when Moses came down from Mount Sinai with the Ten Commandments, he was not expecting what was to come. The people had become impatient with Moses being up on the mountain longer than expected. Aaron, Moses' brother, succumbed to pressure from the people and created an idol for them to worship. He collected their jewelry and fashioned a golden calf, which became their god. When Moses came down from meeting with God on the mountain, he found them a corrupted, stiff-necked and unrestrained people who had turned away from the Lord. The Israelites had committed spiritual adultery.

James points out in James 4:4 that the early church was guilty of spiritual adultery with no one being exempt, as both males (adulterers) and females (adulteresses) were called out. The use of this terminology

represents an Old Testament picture of God being Israel's husband and Israel being God's wife. Israel was guilty of committing adultery with pagan deities and idols (Isaiah 54:5). Regardless of whether it was Israel or believers in James' day, the outcome is the same — spiritual adultery creates a breach in our covenant relationship with God, and is oftentimes caused by a distracted, divided, deceived, selfish or prideful heart.

When God's people commit spiritual adultery, they decide to pursue selfish longings as opposed to intimacy and fellowship with Him. In the end, spiritual adultery always produces negative repercussions with believers, families, the body of Christ and the lost world. Only through God's grace, mercy and forgiveness can these repercussions be overcome (Ephesians 1:7; 1 John 1:6-9; Hebrews 9:14).

PRAYER PROMPTS

- Father, forgive me for departing from You in my sin. Please forgive my adulterous heart.
- Pray that the Lord will keep your heart clean and focused on Him and that your church will always be loyal to the Lord.

DAY 9

WORLDLINESS

During the latter years of the Second Great Awakening (1787-1843), revival fires were blazing, and the church was alive spiritually and morally. However, before the beginning of the Layman's Prayer Revival in 1857, all of that had changed. The American church and the culture at large was once again in a spiritual ebb. Church additions rarely surpassed losses in most denominations as spiritual apathy and complacency among congregants increased.

Many factors have been identified as culprits for this spiritual decline. For instance, the conflict over slavery began to occupy the time, energy and resources of most churches during this time period. Also, William Miller's false claims regarding the imminent second coming of Jesus in 1843-1844 distracted large numbers of believers and churches from their mission and purpose. These false claims saw many people lose respect for and confidence in the church and Christianity during the decade of the 1840s.

The most pressing issue was a spirit of worldliness that invaded the church during the period of economic prosperity in America from 1843-1857. Materialism was rampant inside and outside the church. The discovery of gold in California added fuel to the fire of people's preoccupation with the issues and things of this world rather than eternal things. The spiritual famine was great throughout America, leaving a nation ripe for another movement of God.

In today's text, James continues to identify the hindrances that were causing believers to commit spiritual adultery against the Lord. The chief

culprit was friendship with the world, which represented an allegiance to the pursuit of lust, greed and worldly indulgences and ideologies.

To be a "friend of the world" means two things have happened in a Christian's spiritual journey. First, the believer has decided to not love and embrace Jesus as the only God they honor, love and serve. Instead, they have chosen the world and its philosophies, passions and pleasures as their god. Second, they have chosen to become God's enemy. The term "enemy" refers to someone who is actively hostile toward another and their ways, meaning the two parties are in direct opposition. The picture is that of God standing opposite believers on the battlefield in His full battle armor.

Therefore, worldliness is a serious sin. Are you becoming or have you become a "friend of the world?" How about your church? Remember, if God is for us, who can be against us? However, if God is against us, who can be for us?

PRAYER PROMPTS

- Lord, please forgive my worldly pursuits.
- Pray that the Lord will guard your heart and your church from becoming a friend of the world and therefore an enemy of God.

DAY 10

A LACK OF ONENESS

In John 17:20-26, Jesus prays for His followers and those who will believe through their witness. Because of this, Jesus' prayers in John 17:20-26 are long-range prayers, move beyond the immediate, and reach down through all generations of believers through the ages.

In John 17:21, Jesus specifically prays for oneness among His followers "that they all may be one." This oneness is only made possible through the presence and work of God's Holy Spirit. Because of the indwelling Holy Spirit, believers can experience a deeper level of intimacy and purpose through relationships without losing their own identity. This oneness comes from the presence of God's Spirit in their lives and is also manifested through their lives by way of God's Spirit and His mission. Thus, oneness among believers is more than being united in a mission or cause but actually takes place because each believer is "in Christ" (Romans 8).

Jesus also prayed for oneness between believers, Himself and the Father "that they also may be in Us." With this prayer, Jesus prays toward intimacy through relationship with Himself, which will enhance the oneness experienced between believers. In addition, the oneness between believers will also allow for a greater level of oneness with the Father and Son through the body of Christ as the Father manifests His presence or glory through maturing believers' lives (John 17:22-23).

The ultimate purpose of this "oneness" is that the world may "believe" that the Father sent Jesus. The glorification of the Father through the Son, as the kingdom marches forward through the ages, is at the heart of this oneness. Thus, biblical oneness is key to God's mission moving forward through the witness of Christ's followers and His church.

When James confronted believers in James 4:1-4 concerning their selfish, adulterous and worldly behavior, he knew that those behaviors, if left unchecked, would destroy the vital spiritual life of the believers and, ultimately, the oneness of the church body. The final outcome would be that the world would not believe that the Father sent Jesus as Savior and Lord. How tragic! How are you and your church doing regarding oneness? Is the world believing in Jesus because of the oneness of the church in America?

PRAYER PROMPTS

- Father, forgive me for my lack of oneness with You and other believers.
- Pray the church in America would return to the Lord through repentance, revival and in oneness toward spiritual awakening.



SECTION 2

— PRAYER GUIDE —

God's Spirit and His Pursuit of People

When God's people depart from Him in sin, He is never pleased or complacent. Why? Because He is a jealous God who longs for His people to live in intimacy and unhindered fellowship with Him. James 4:5-6 provides the biblical backdrop for this section on the work of God's Spirit and grace in drawing His people and the lost to Himself.

James demonstrates in 4:5-6 that God's Spirit is personal, patient and persistent in His pursuit of His people when they sin against Him. He also shows that God's grace abounds toward those who are humble before Him. In times of revival and spiritual awakening, God apprehends His people and the lost through the gracious, convicting and compelling work of the Holy Spirit. During times of revival and spiritual awakening, the manifestation and work of God's Spirit is always magnified — thus allowing God's great work to rapidly increase.

DAY 11

GOD'S INDWELLING SPIRIT

When John Wesley, the founder of Methodism, encountered a group of Moravian believers on a ship headed to America, he was greatly moved by the simple, confident and heartfelt faith that the Moravians exemplified during a terrible storm. These Moravians were able to worship and pray in the height of the storm, even while everyone else (including Wesley himself) feared that all hope was lost.

While in America, Wesley encountered another Moravian who questioned him about possessing a personal relationship with Christ. Through several conversations he instructed and urged Wesley to pursue inward holiness through a personal relationship with Christ. When Wesley returned to England, he encountered yet another Moravian by the name of Peter Bohler who continued to challenge him concerning the possession of a true faith in Christ.

Then, on May 24, 1738, while reading his Bible that morning, Wesley read 2 Peter 1:4, which further challenged him concerning the truth that believers should be partakers of the divine nature. This cut Wesley to the core as he became convinced that he had no true faith and union with Christ. That evening, while reluctantly attending the Aldersgate Street meeting, Wesley was “strangely warmed” as he surrendered to Christ and was gloriously converted. Wesley could now bear witness to the possession of a genuine faith, where Christ dwelled in his heart and life through the Holy Spirit of God.

Today's passage from James 4:5 points to the key to experiencing a full, meaningful and fruitful life in Christ — God's Spirit “dwells” within every true and genuine believer. The term “dwells” means to inhabit something in such a way that it begins to permeate and govern the thing.

Thus, it is through the presence of God's Spirit that a believer is empowered to live in a manner that is pleasing to Christ. Because of this, a believer cannot sin, stray or become friends with the world without knowing God is not pleased with their heart and behavior.

God's indwelling Spirit therefore becomes the teacher and spiritual compass in every Christian's life. God's presence through His Spirit also brings confidence and assurance in faith and witness. Without God's indwelling Spirit, no confidence, peace and fruit for God's kingdom is ever really secured. John Wesley's life is an example of this very truth. Does God's Spirit dwell in your heart? Are you sure?

PRAYER PROMPTS

- Father, may I walk daily in great faith because Your Holy Spirit lives in me.
- Pray that the presence of God's Spirit in your life will impact others toward Christ.

DAY 12

GOD'S SPIRIT IS JEALOUS

James 4:5 brings to light one of the greatest truths of Scripture: God is relentless in His pursuit of His people, and He yearns jealously for them. The term “yearns” describes a deep longing for someone that is rooted in love. Combined with the term “jealously,” which refers to a passionate, almost fierce, longing or pursuit of something, this phrase gives us a clear picture of the serious nature in which the Lord regards His covenantal relationship with His people. He is their God, and they are His people.

At the heart of this jealous yearning is God's loyal, unfailing and covenantal love. Because of this love, the Holy Spirit tirelessly guards, longs for and pursues a vital, healthy relationship with every Christ-follower. God is not satisfied with partial devotion. He is jealous for the undivided affection and sole devotion of a believer's heart. His Spirit is actively longing for fellowship, devotion, worship and prayer with His people (Hebrews 10:19-25; Isaiah 55:3, 6).

Prior to the beginning of the 1857-1859 Laymen's Prayer Revival, the sin of prayerlessness was rampant among God's people as prayer gatherings were few and far between in most churches. This lack of prayerful dependence on the Lord was being fueled by the economic prosperity that existed during the late 1840s and 1850s in America. However, in 1857, with the threat of Civil War looming on the horizon, coupled with a major banking crisis, that swept through city after city, this sin of prayerlessness began to change.

Suddenly, in the fall of 1857, individuals like Jeremiah Lanphier began to organize prayer meetings in churches. Lanphier was not alone in this call to prayer. Individuals all over the city and in other parts of the nation were simultaneously led by God's Spirit to begin prayer meetings. Although the gatherings were filled mostly with men at first, it was not long before women and youth gathered together in prayer meetings in different communities, cities and parts of the nation. Weekly prayer gatherings turned into daily gatherings as God's people were drawn to unite and pray. God's Spirit was at work pursuing His people and drawing them near through prayer.

Today, will the American church be like the church in 1857 and respond to God's Spirit who jealously yearns for His people to seek Him with all their hearts in united prayer so that He may be found (Jeremiah 29:13)? Only time will tell. What will you and your church do?

PRAYER PROMPTS

- Father, stir my heart to seek You in prayer.
- Pray that a spirit of conviction for worldliness and a lack of hunger for the Lord would fall upon believers and churches everywhere.

DAY 13

GOD'S SPIRIT IS FULL OF GRACE

Notice three truths related to the work of the Holy Spirit's pursuit of people and God's grace that are highlighted by today's verse. First, God "gives" grace to people. The term "gives" cuts to the core of the meaning of God's grace — it is a gift from God (Ephesians 2:8-9). Second, this gift of God's grace is abundant and sufficient for every need we might have because He gives "more grace." God is liberal in His gift of grace (2 Corinthians 9:8). Third, this gift of "more grace" is to the "humble," not the proud. "Humble" refers to believers who recognize their absolute dependence upon God.

The picture is clear — God is willing to give abundant grace to those who humbly ask Him for it (Romans 5:20; 2 Corinthians 12:9). Believers must therefore resist any prideful urge to deal with sinful temptations with their own human or fleshly strength. Why? Because it is impossible for Christians to adhere to God's standards apart from the provision of God's amazing grace. Believers must humble themselves before God and ask the Lord for His grace and help in order to overcome any temptations and worldly lusts they encounter in their daily lives. Only through the abundant grace of God can believers have victory over sin and temptation and live godly and holy lives in Christ.

Robert Pearsall Smith, his wife Hannah Whitall Smith, and the Rev. Evan Henry Hopkins were leaders of the Keswick Movement in the early

1870s. They understood what James is teaching in today's text. At the heart of the Keswick Movement's teaching regarding the deeper or vital spiritual life is the truth that sanctification is as much a gift and work of God's grace as salvation is for every believer. Sanctification is therefore only possible when a believer works out the gift of holiness in their daily lives from their gift of holiness and not toward obtaining the gift of holiness. Thus believers should not strive to achieve holiness but should be humble recipients of God's grace and holiness. This teaching is taken from 1 Corinthians 1:30 and challenges believers toward utter dependence upon God's gift of abundant and amazing grace to live holy lives and overcome daily temptations to sin.

Today the church in America needs revival. It is struggling with sin and needs God's grace in order to overcome its worldliness. What about you? Are you depending on Christ and His grace to live a holy life?

PRAYER PROMPTS

- Father, thank You for Your gift of grace that is always sufficient.
- Pray that you and your church will walk daily in Christ's abundant grace and holiness.

GOD'S SPIRIT RESISTS THE PROUD

In James 4:6, James quotes Proverbs 3:34 when referring to God's attitude toward those who are proud. When believers resist the Holy Spirit's nudging toward confession and repentance of sin, they are essentially saying, "I can do this. I do not need Your help in this matter. I can do this myself, and I have the power to overcome this temptation in my life."

Believers who have this attitude are "proud." "Proud" means being haughty or having an overrated opinion of one's own merits, abilities and means. Because of this less than humble attitude, a proud person often shows contempt toward others because of their self-centered and prideful confidence. This type of arrogant heart, when present in believers, actually lifts itself up against God as His adversary.

What does God think of such an attitude? He "resists" a prideful or haughty spirit. This refers to God's position against a believer who is prideful. The picture this word paints in James 4:6 is extremely vivid. When a believer is full of pride, God takes a stance directly opposite the believer like someone opposing their enemy on a battlefield. A proud believer is therefore not the recipient of God's abundant grace and help.

A number of years ago, I preached a funeral for an elderly member of a church I formerly pastored. The deceased had always been a very humble servant of Jesus. Two of her three daughters, who were

professing Christians, were standing at the graveside near the tent of the funeral home. I stopped to let them know how sorry I was for their loss and how thankful I was that the Lord had worked it out that their mother (in answer to their godly mother's prayers) was able to be with their third sister in an assisted-living situation before their mother's passing. Immediately, my words were met with disdain and contempt as the sisters ranted and raved about how they were the ones responsible for the ideal living situation for their mother and sister — not God.

When I turned and walked away, I heard a commotion behind me. One of the daughters had tripped on a tent peg and fallen and was now verbally fighting with the other sister over whose fault it was. Immediately, my mind went to Proverbs 16:18: "Pride goes before destruction and a haughty spirit before a fall." God's Spirit indeed resists the proud heart. Do you have a prideful heart?

PRAYER PROMPTS

- Lord, forgive my prideful heart.
- Pray for the Lord to bring prideful believers and churches to repentance.

DAY 15

GOD'S SPIRIT SANCTIFIES THE SAINT

In times of revival and spiritual awakening, God is always about the work of sanctifying and preparing His people for greater gospel impact. In today's verse, Paul points to the vital role that the Holy Spirit plays in the work of sanctification in a believer's life. Three important truths surface from this verse.

First, Paul emphatically says "I say then," which constitutes a warning and exhortation to move in a different direction than before. The Galatian Christians were guilty of being at odds with one another. Paul shows them that God has provided a remedy to such fleshly and wrong behavior.

Second, the cure for such behavior is God's sanctifying Holy Spirit. The believer must "walk in the Spirit." "Walk," which is an imperative command, points to the truth that believers need to take seriously their daily life in the Holy Spirit. The term "walk" also points to the reality that it is not just a lackadaisical journey or stroll through life that Paul is describing. This journey in the Spirit has meaning and purpose, and should be intentionally heading in the direction in which the Holy Spirit is moving — toward holiness. To walk in the Holy Spirit means to intentionally surrender, on a daily basis, to the Spirit's direction and control in one's life.

Third, when a believer begins to "walk in the Spirit" they are then in a position to depend upon God's Spirit to enable them to resist worldly temptations from others, their own flesh and those the devil brings their way. Ultimately they will "not fulfill" or submit to the fleshly longings that are encountered because of the sanctifying work of the Holy Spirit.

Reuben Archer Torrey, an apologist and evangelist during the early 1900s, found himself under God's heavy hand of conviction after reading a book by George Mueller. As he read the book, the Lord showed Torrey his need to die to self, to stop trusting in his fleshly abilities and to completely surrender each day to the control of the Holy Spirit in his life and ministry.

The truths that the Holy Spirit revealed to Torrey led to a radical change in his whole understanding of what Christian ministry and life was all about. He turned his back on everything he had previously trusted and learned to step out and obey God for everything. Torrey eventually became the superintendent of Moody Bible Institute and pastor of Moody Church. Later he traveled to many places around the world, fanning the flames of revival during the early 1900s. That's what can happen when believers walk in the Spirit. Is God wanting to set you apart for greater service? Are you walking in the Spirit?

PRAYER PROMPTS

- Lord, sanctify me through Your Spirit.
- Father, teach me and my church to walk in the Spirit.

DAY 16

GOD'S SPIRIT CAN BE GRIEVED AND QUENCHED

In these passages both Isaiah and the apostle Paul pointed to the reality that as Christ followers, we play a key role in allowing God's Spirit and power to freely flow through our lives. Isaiah testifies concerning Israel that they grieved God's Spirit because they rebelled against the Lord. "Grieved" means to hurt or cause pain or sorrow both mentally and spiritually. The Lord was broken-hearted over his people's sin when they rebelled against Him. "Rebelled" refers to Israel's sin of spiritual adultery and disobedience against the Holy Spirit and His commandments. They chose to worship and serve pagan gods as opposed to Yahweh, so the Lord "turned Himself against Israel as their enemy" (Isaiah 63:10).

Paul, in 1 Thessalonians 5:19, commands believers toward behavior that is becoming of a true follower of Jesus when he says, "do not quench the Spirit." "Quench" means to extinguish or put out like a fire the prophetic Word of God by ignoring, disobeying or refusing to listen to Scripture's exhortations and commands (Galatians 5:20). In this text, it is the work of the Holy Spirit that is held back when believers choose not to obey God's Word. This imperative command, combined with Isaiah 63:10, demonstrates the seriousness in which God treats the sins of rebellion and disobedience to His Spirit and His Word. Sins of rebellion and disobedience always hinder God's work through His people.

Pastor James Hall was a chaplain and commander of American soldiers during the Revolutionary War. After the war, he returned to his church in

Iredell County, N.C., with a desire to hear and obey the Lord. Revival soon came to his church, but Hall was not satisfied. He had a kingdom-oriented heart and led the people to pray for revival among all of God's people. In 1801, revival broke out in what is now Alamance County. Hall volunteered and was used greatly by God as an organizer of camp meetings which helped fan the flames of God's work all over North Carolina. Despite the hardship of travel and the demands of organizing camp meetings while also pastoring a church, Hall plunged forward in obedience to the Lord's desires for his life and ministry. Thus, Hall never quenched God's Spirit and work through disobedience and complaint but was mightily used by the Lord during the Second Great Awakening in central North Carolina.

Are you and/or your church putting out the fire of God's Spirit because of willful sin and disobedience to His desires and commands?

PRAYER PROMPTS

- Father, please forgive me for the times I have quenched your Spirit through disobedience and sin.
- Lord, forgive my church for the ways we have quenched Your Spirit.

DAY 17

GOD'S SPIRIT CONVICTS BELIEVERS OF SIN

In one of the united prayer meetings that swept Manhattan and, eventually, the entire country during the 1857-1859 Layman's Prayer Revival, a minister who had been praying earnestly for his prodigal son to repent and return to the Lord stood and prayed aloud for the conversion of another man's lost son. Little did the praying minister know that his own son had stepped into the same prayer meeting. When the minister's son heard his father praying for the conversion of another man's son, he was deeply moved and convicted.

The minister's son left the prayer meeting under conviction and was in distress all night. He walked the streets of Manhattan as God's Spirit worked in his heart, drawing and urging him to return to his first love through genuine repentance. Early the next morning the son surrendered to God's call and returned to his father's home in a broken, repentant state. God was faithful to hear the prayers of the minister for his own son and the Holy Spirit continued His pursuit of the young man until he was restored. The once-prodigal son — now restored — was greatly used as an evangelist during the revival on the very streets he wandered while under conviction for his own sin.

In Psalm 32:4-5, David bears witness to the deep conviction that was present in his life after he had sinned against the Lord. Notice four truths about the Holy Spirit's conviction found in these verses.

First, David acknowledges his understanding that it was God's "hand" that was on him. His sin was first and foremost against God, and it was God's Holy Spirit that convicted him. Second, the conviction was constantly with David as he could not hide from it during the "day" or "night." God is relentless in His conviction and pursuit of His people when they sin. Third, David was sapped of all spiritual and physical vitality. He was overwhelmed with guilt and broken over his sin before God. Fourth, this conviction led to admission, confession and forgiveness, which resulted in a restored relationship with God, deliverance from impending judgment, renewed direction in life, and a renewed joy. All of this was the result of God's mercy and grace that was at work through the Holy Spirit (Psalm 32:6-10).

Aren't you glad that God's Spirit convicts believers of unconfessed sin? Are you under conviction because of unconfessed sin?

PRAYER PROMPTS

- Lord, thank You for Your convicting Holy Spirit and for Your mercy that endures forever.
- Pray toward a spirit of conviction to prevail through God's Spirit in your life and in your church.

GOD'S SPIRIT HELPS IN TIMES OF WEAKNESS

In Romans 8:26, Paul uses the term “likewise” to affirm that just as hope helps a believer through sufferings in this present age, the Holy Spirit “helps” the believer during times when they lack understanding and struggle with prayer. The word “helps” means to come alongside someone in order to render assistance or aid that exactly corresponds to or fits the need at hand.

The term “weaknesses” refers to a lack of strength, wisdom or understanding of how to accomplish, overcome or bear a load or strain. In this immediate context, the weaknesses relate to wisdom, understanding and the ability to pray in present times of trial and hardship. The application is huge for believers who find themselves in situations or circumstances where they do not understand how or what to pray. Notice also that the term “weaknesses” is plural in verse 26. God’s Spirit helps with more than one kind of weakness and in different seasons of weaknesses. The Holy Spirit will come alongside the believer to fashion, filter, direct, guide and even pray for or on behalf of their every need.

During the North Carolina phase of the Second Great Awakening (1787-1843), Samuel McCorkle, pastor of Thyatira Presbyterian Church in Rowan County, was skeptical of the spiritual movements taking place in the camp meetings that were sweeping the central part of the state in the early 1800s. Despite his skepticism, he decided to take some of his parishioners to the Deep River camp meetings that were held in Randolph

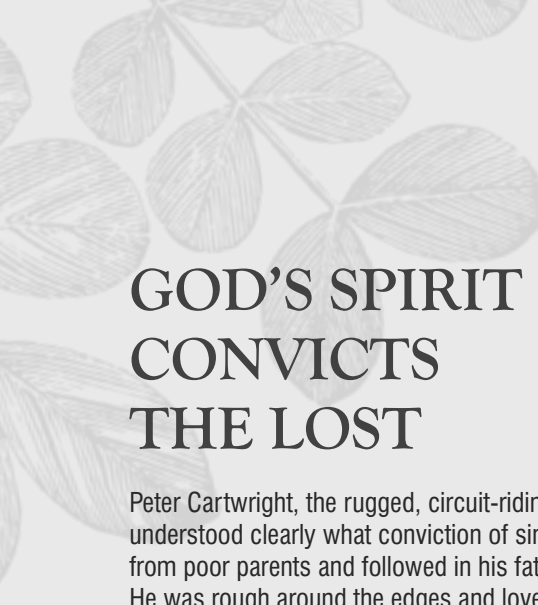
County in 1802. Unsure of what would happen, McCorkle attended the gathering with an open, prayerful and teachable heart.

As God’s Spirit began to move and convict people of sin, McCorkle began to walk through the crowd, observing various people’s responses to the Holy Spirit. As he contemplated the activity of God, McCorkle was summoned to his own son’s side and asked to pray with and for his son, who was crying out to the Lord for salvation. This was the tipping point for McCorkle and in that moment his heart was changed as he knelt and prayed that God would save his son. From that point forward, McCorkle became an advocate for camp meetings and helped fan the flames of revival throughout the area.

Are you having difficulty praying for, understanding, or enduring something? If so, remember that the Holy Spirit helps us as believers in our weaknesses.

PRAYER PROMPTS

- Pray that God would grant you wisdom and help as you pray for revival and spiritual awakening in America.
- Father, teach my church how to depend on Your Spirit to pray more effectively for revival in this time of need.



GOD'S SPIRIT CONVICTS THE LOST

Peter Cartwright, the rugged, circuit-riding Methodist preacher, understood clearly what conviction of sin was all about. Cartwright came from poor parents and followed in his father's footsteps as a young man. He was rough around the edges and loved the frontier life of hunting, fishing and trapping. Cartwright, like many other frontier boys, knew very little about Christianity and was a wicked and wild boy who loved horse racing, dancing and gambling. Cartwright's days rarely included any spiritual formation or cultivation, especially from his dad. In fact, his dad bought him a race-horse which became his great delight for many years.

But Cartwright's mom was different. She often wept and prayed for Peter. She also longed to live in an area with a church nearby. Her prayers were soon answered as a Methodist church was organized in the area and Peter began attending church regularly with his mom. Soon, at age 16, Peter came under strong conviction of his sin. He had periods where he was so distraught over his sin and hell-bound state that he could hardly function emotionally and physically under the weight of God's conviction. Within three months he was converted to Christ.

Cartwright became one of the most famous circuit-riding preachers and church planters of the early 1800s. Cartwright was able to use his rough and gruff past to effectively minister and share the gospel with the pagan frontier culture. The result was that Cartwright became a leading organizer of camp meetings during the Second Great Awakening.

Jesus, in John 16:8 — which is a part of the farewell discourses in John's Gospel — is preparing His followers for His departure and their

mission. In this preparation, He teaches them about the role of the Holy Spirit, who will dwell in them and who will also “convict the world.” “Convict” means to bring to light and expose sin, wrongdoing, evil, fault or error. “World” is representative in this verse of all people generally but is specifically used to represent those who are alienated from God because of their sin.

Therefore, God's Spirit convicts lost humanity concerning “sin.” “Sin” refers to the error of their unbelief toward God. They miss God's mark of “righteousness” through Jesus and His atoning sacrifice for their sin. Because of this, He also convicts concerning God's “judgment” that comes upon them because their sins are not forgiven and covered by the blood of Jesus (John 16:8-11; Romans 3:9-31). Do you weep and pray over the lost like Peter Cartwright's mother did? Maybe God's great work creeps forward in America because the church has little concern for those who are lost in their sin. When revival comes, that will change.

PRAYER PROMPTS

- Lord, forgive me for not being concerned enough for lost people to pray for them.
- Pray that your church will become burdened for the lost and experience revival.

GOD'S SPIRIT CALLS AND SENDS WITNESSES

During times of revival, there is always a dramatic increase in the number of witnesses who are thrust into the harvest. One example of this is the dramatic increase of both lay and vocational ministers that came out of the 1857-1859 Layman's Prayer Revival. As the union prayer meetings spread like wildfire across the United States, so too did the burden for lost friends and neighbors. Christians were suddenly burdened and compelled to bring the lost to prayer meetings and witness to lost friends and neighbors anytime and anywhere.

In Chicago, Dwight L Moody was led by the Holy Spirit to mentor and train young men as lay ministers. Scores of young men were also provided with Christian training through the YMCA, which was actively involved with churches and the union prayer meetings. Many of these young men ultimately became pastors and lay ministers who left their ministry positions to serve as chaplains in the northern and southern armies during the Civil War. Chaplains were instrumental in organizing revival meetings in the camps of both armies with an estimated 300,000 converts being recorded throughout the war.

Notice three truths from Acts 13:2-4 regarding God's Spirit and the sending of witnesses. First, prayer, fasting and worship pave the way for God to call believers to a specific mission. In verses two and three, the use of the terms "ministered to the Lord," "fasted" and "prayed and fasted" demonstrate the early church's devotion to the vital spiritual life both individually and corporately. Because of this, they were in a position to hear and respond to the Lord's revelation and specific instructions regarding the mission. Thus, the Holy Spirit revealed God's plan to separate and send Barnabas and Saul out on mission.

Second, in verse three, the church heeded the call, prepared, commissioned and "sent" Barnabas and Saul "away." This means that the church released or "sent them" to go on their way as missionaries.

PRAYER PROMPTS

- Father, use me as a "sent out" one in lost people's lives.
- Lord, send forth witnesses from our church to the nations.

DAY 20

This moment in the life of the early church is pivotal because it marked the beginning of a concerted effort by the church at Antioch to take the gospel to the ends of the earth.

Third, verse four clarifies that Paul and Barnabas were "sent out by the Holy Spirit." The church at Antioch might have prepared and sent them on their way, but it was God's Spirit who "sent" them "out" on the mission of God. The use of the words "sent out" in verse four literally means to be "sent out" from someone and points to the fact that those sent were intimately related to the Sender. The term also emphasizes the fact that the Holy Spirit thrust them out, thus making the Holy Spirit the chief motivating factor behind their going.

Today, with lostness increasing exponentially, we need a revival in which believers are compelled by God's Spirit once again to witness to their lost neighbors and friends anytime and anywhere. Lord, begin a revival and start it in me!



SECTION 3

— PRAYER GUIDE —

God's Way to Revival and Spiritual Awakening

There is only one way for God's great work in the Great Commandment and the Great Commission to be rekindled in believers and churches — God's way. In James 4:7-17, which provides the biblical basis for section three, believers are given very practical ways to return to the Lord as they are exhorted to be submissive to God, repent of their sin and draw near to the Lord in brokenness, holiness, humility, speech, etc.

These actions allow believers to return to the Lord through a renewed, genuine and vital spiritual life in Christ. This renewed life in Christ enables believers to replace their worldly pursuits of pleasure, self-absorption and worldliness with a passionate desire to join God's great work through obedience to the Great Commandment and the Great Commission. That's what can happen when God in His mercy draws near through revival and spiritual awakening. Are you and your church ready to surrender and experience revival and spiritual awakening God's way? Why or why not?

DAY 21

REVIVAL GOD'S WAY: SUBMISSION TO GOD

The journey to living a holy life begins with submission to God. Part of the issue with worldliness is that believers have gotten their priorities and loyalties confused. James says their first step back to living holy lives is to set their loyalty and focus back on the Lord as the single authority and love in their lives.

The term “submit” is often used to refer to submission to authority in a chain of command, such as in the military. Here, it refers to the idea that believers are to yield to the Lord’s control, advice and commandments. At the heart of this command is the aspect of obedience. This verb denotes an immediate or imperative command that is to be followed. The action is passive, which demonstrates the need for believers to depend on the indwelling of the Holy Spirit for the power to submit to God’s authority and commands. Thus, the believer’s path to a vital spiritual walk with Christ is paved with submission and obedience “to God.” This does not take place in a vacuum, but through a relationship with God as He becomes the believer’s “first love” once again (Revelation 2:4-5).

Fredrick William Robertson (1818-1853), an English pastor, theologian and excellent Bible expositor, grew up in the home of a soldier. His dad served in the Royal Artillery and young Robertson always wanted to follow in his father’s footsteps and become a soldier. Robertson would always listen intently to the conversations that his father and his father’s

friends had regarding their experiences as soldiers. When he was 18, Robertson began to prepare for a future in the army. He trained hard for two years and by the age of 20 was ready for a life-long career of service in the military.

Robertson’s father came to him two weeks before his commissioning and pressed him to pursue a different direction in life. Despite his lifelong dream of becoming a soldier, Robertson yielded with very little resistance to his father’s challenge to become a minister. Robertson soon thereafter entered Oxford University to prepare for ministry and ultimately became a brilliant expositor and a wonderful preacher at Holy Trinity Church in Brighton, England.

How are you doing with God’s call to submit? Revival will never come in a believer’s life or in a church until believers are willing to submit to the Lord’s authority and desires. What will you do?

PRAYER PROMPTS

- Father, help me submit to You daily.
- Pray that the church in America will return to the Lord and submit to Him in revival.

DAY 22

REVIVAL GOD'S WAY: RESIST THE DEVIL

Years ago, during the summer between my junior and senior years of high school, a number of football players decided to enroll in a weeklong football camp at Appalachian State University. We were hoping to improve our skills in our respective positions and also enjoy a week away from small-town life.

As the week began, we started going through drill after drill. This included weights, running the stairs, wind sprints, 40-yard dashes and more. We also met with our position coaches from the university. These sessions were extremely helpful as we learned specific techniques and skills that would help us improve at our positions. As a linebacker, I learned about the hand thrust or joust and the swim technique. Both of the skills were designed to help defensive players ward off potential blockers. The hand thrust was especially helpful to me when I encountered offensive linemen. By the end of the week, everyone was exhausted and sore but grateful for the wonderful opportunity we had to grow and learn from college-level coaches.

In today's passage, James cuts to the chase regarding a believer's role in fighting off temptations toward worldliness, spiritual adultery and self-centered desires. He says the way to respond to such temptations is literally to "resist the devil." The term "resist" means to stand firmly against, to strongly resist an opponent and to withstand without giving up. This imperative verb calls a believer to take immediate action when temptation and sin crouch at the door. The resistance put up by the believer needs to be consistent and firm like the hand thrust or joust is in football. Every believer is responsible to do his or her part to stop the

devil in his tracks. Thus, believers should be involved yet prayerfully dependent upon the Lord in resisting the devil and his wiles, schemes and temptations (John 17:15).

What will happen when a believer takes this kind of firm and decisive stance against the devil? James says that the devil will "flee" from the believer. "Flee" means to depart, take flight or escape from. This type of action makes the cowardly devil retreat. He is a thief, a liar, a deceiver and a con artist and has no real power over a believer who walks in submission and in fellowship with God (John 8:44, 10:10; Revelation 12:9; 1 John 4:4). Through the power of God's Word, His indwelling Spirit and unceasing intimacy with Christ, a believer can actively resist and take a stand against the devil. This is God's way for us to overcome worldly temptations.

How are you doing with resisting the devil? Do you need to actively resist and deliver a hand thrust or stiff arm against the devil and sin today?

PRAYER PROMPTS

- Father, give me the strength to actively stand against and resist evil, sin and the devil.
- Pray that churches all over America will stand against evil, sin and the devil.

DAY 23

REVIVAL GOD'S WAY: DRAW NEAR TO GOD

During the Layman's Prayer Revival of 1857-1859, God drew near to His people and the lost in response to heartfelt, united prayer. During the noon-time prayer gatherings that were held at Burton's Theatre in Brooklyn, crowds gathered outside at least 30 minutes prior to when the meeting was scheduled to start. By noon, the theatre was packed as people filled every corner. Lines stretched out the door and into the streets. People were anticipating, with excitement, God's nearness and work in the prayer gatherings. God's nearness brought extreme conviction on those gathered as many believers were renewed and many lost people were converted during these meetings.

There seemed to be an invisible cloud of God's nearness not only in the prayer gatherings, but up and down the entire east coast — even extending out to sea. Crews and passengers on many ships approaching America, even as far out to sea as 100-150 miles, came under strong conviction from the nearness of God's presence. One ship reported that the entire crew was converted before reaching the harbor. God's nearness brought a seriousness to evangelistic and ministerial work as many young men were called into vocational ministry while attending prayer gatherings. God's nearness also brought an unprecedented degree of cooperation and oneness between believers and denominations.

In today's verse, James declares that the next way to return to the Lord in revival is to "draw near to God." "Draw near" is a command and refers

to an action that is essential if the relationship is to be restored. It means to draw near in the most intimate way. It refers to being so near that a person is standing in front of someone's face. How is this possible with God? The implication is for believers who have sinned to seek God's nearness by seeking His face (2 Chronicles 7:14). When that truly takes place, James declares that, "He will draw near to you." This is a picture of the Lord turning from being against His wayward followers to being with or for them through His manifest holy presence. This is what can happen when God's people draw near to Him in desperate prayer and seek Him in a manner as to find Him in revival — He draws near (Jeremiah 29:13).

I believe that the American church and the American culture are long overdue for God to draw near in revival and spiritual awakening — would you agree? What shall we do?

PRAYER PROMPTS

- Father, forgive me for not drawing near to You in heartfelt prayer with others.
- Pray that you and your church will genuinely draw near to the Lord so that He might draw near in revival.

DAY 24

REVIVAL GOD'S WAY: CLEAN YOUR HANDS

During the early 1970s, revival spread across Canada, impacting many schools, churches and communities. As a result, several Christian schools in Canada sent teams of students to other schools across Canada and the United States to share what God was doing on their respective campuses and in their individual lives. While at Multnomah School of the Bible in Portland, Ore., a revival team of students experienced a mighty move of God. Many students were moved toward genuine repentance for their sins.

The campus was split in its receptivity of the revival movement. Some embraced what was happening and some rejected it; however, no one could deny what happened in the lives of the lost students who were saved and the Christian students who returned to the Lord in genuine repentance from their sins. One student confessed to cheating on an exam while others wrote letters of apology to their parents for their worldly lifestyles. Students who were conceited and rebellious toward professors were suddenly humble before those who were in authority over them. One lecturer reported that the whole atmosphere of the school was changed.

In today's verse, James exhorts believers toward another vital component of revival. Believers must cleanse their hands of sinful deeds through genuine biblical repentance. A lack of clean hands hinders

believers in their ability to draw near to the Lord (Psalm 24:3-4). The term "cleanse" refers to the act of cleaning up their daily conduct. The force of the verb implies the immediate and swift action by believers in this process, but this cannot fully take place apart from the power of God's forgiveness at work through His grace and mercy (Ephesians 1:7).

"Sinners" refers to those who are caught in their sin and have missed God's mark or standard for holiness. They have blended and embraced the world's standard of conduct, which has corrupted their ability to live a holy life before God and others. Thus, God's call in this text is clear — believers must recognize they are sinning against God and therefore stop, deal with and turn away from these sinful acts immediately. Cleaning up one's conduct is a vital part of genuine biblical repentance and a believer's journey toward spiritual renewal in revival. Do you have clean hands? What will you do?

PRAYER PROMPTS

- Lord, clean up my conduct.
- Pray for the Lord to bring the church in America to genuine repentance — to have clean hands before a lost world.

DAY 25

REVIVAL GOD'S WAY: PURIFY YOUR HEART

James commands believers to continue their journey toward holiness in verse eight with the words, "Purify your hearts." "Purify" means to cleanse the heart of any form of sin or defilement. In yesterday's verse, the hands were representative of the outward man. In today's verse, the "heart" represents the inward man.

The heart is the center of human emotions and spiritual life and is vital to a healthy relationship with God. Jesus says in Matthew 5:8, "Blessed are the pure in heart, for they shall see God." Throughout Scripture, believers are urged to protect their hearts with "diligence" (Proverbs 4:23) and David's cry in Psalm 51:10 was for the Lord to create in him a "pure heart" following his sinful acts.

Heart defilement always produces "double-minded" people. The term "double-minded" refers to someone who has divided loyalties and shifts back and forth between two opinions. A double-minded heart is easily led astray from God toward sinful pleasures and idolatry. Because of this, believers who have sinful and disloyal hearts cannot be used to do the work of God. Elijah confronted God's people and prophets on Mount Carmel with this very sin when he said, "How long will you falter between two opinions? If the Lord is God, follow Him, but if Baal, follow him" (1 Kings 18:21). Genuine repentance and forgiveness through

the blood of Jesus is the only way to cure double-mindedness in a believer's heart (1 John 1:7, 9). James' clear, uncompromising call for believers to "purify" their hearts from a double-minded, disloyal or adulterous heart is, therefore, a call to be holy as the Lord is holy (1 Peter 1:16).

With gospel impact at a very low point, the American church finds itself in a seemingly difficult spot. The American culture is rapidly turning away from biblical principles and morals. All the while, the church is struggling with complacency and worldliness as baptisms drop and attendance wanes in the majority of evangelical churches. Why? Because God is not pleased with His people who have embraced the world and have largely become disloyal in their hearts towards Him. This behavior renders much of their service fruitless and, until revival God's way takes place, this will not change. Is your heart pure? What will you do?

PRAYER PROMPTS

- Lord, purify my heart!
- Father, draw Your church in America back to Yourself through genuine repentance that creates pure hearts.

REVIVAL GOD'S WAY: BROKEN OVER MY SIN

Biblical repentance not only involves clean hands and a pure heart, but it also involves brokenness over sin. James uses four imperative commands in today's verse to describe brokenness. "Lament" literally means to experience great hardship, distress and grief over your sinful condition. Because of God's discipline, rebellious believers experience God's heavy hand of conviction, correction and even hardship to expose rebellious and sinful attitudes and behaviors. When believers "lament" they begin to feel the weight of their sin and the reality of their spiritual wretchedness before God.

"Mourn" refers to the outward act of grief and sorrow that fills a person. In this context, it refers to a believer's brokenness over personal or corporate sin that cannot be contained or hidden and is outwardly displayed through physical or emotional means. "Weep" means to wail or cry aloud and refers to someone who is overcome with grief to the point that they are unable to control their emotions. Believers are therefore broken before God's throne and weep over their sin and the spiritual famine that exists because of that sin.

James finishes his vivid description of brokenness when he commands believers to let their "laughter" and "joy" be turned to "mourning" and "gloom." This urgent command brings to light the serious manner in which God views sin. It also shows that believers in that day viewed their

own spiritual condition incorrectly. They were joyful and treated lightly their worldly pursuits, receiving satisfaction and happiness from such pursuits, even as their sins grieved the Holy Spirit.

"Be turned" is a command for believers to make a complete turn from sin. This imperative command is also passive, which explains the use of the word "let" and highlights the need for humble dependence on the Lord to accomplish the change. Believers must come to grips with the reality of their sinful state before God and become genuinely broken and sorry before Him through heartfelt biblical repentance.

Today's verse highlights the serious way in which we as believers must treat our sin. It also demonstrates how serious God is about His call to holiness (1 Peter 1:16). How about you? Do you view your sin in a lighthearted or a serious manner?

PRAYER PROMPTS

- Father, forgive my lighthearted treatment of my sin.
- Pray that your church will become broken over sin in the camp and the spiritual famine in the land.

DAY 27

REVIVAL GOD'S WAY: HUMILITY BEFORE GOD

Over 20 years ago, a group of young army chaplains gathered to humble themselves before the Lord and pray for revival and spiritual awakening among the men and women serving in the American military. This group of chaplains was challenged by a senior chaplain who has been praying for revival in the military for many years. One Southern Baptist chaplain had been praying for revival within military communities for over 40 years! Today, God is beginning to answer those prayers in wonderful ways as troops are increasingly hungry for spiritual truth in their lives. Revival is breaking out in areas such as Fort Leonard Wood in Missouri and Fort Jackson in South Carolina. Over the past couple of years Southern Baptist military chaplains have recorded over 35,000 professions of faith.

In James 4:10, James continues his exhortation to believers to experience spiritual renewal and revival with another imperative command. After believers genuinely repent and return to the Lord they are in a position to experience God's restorative work in and through them. James thus commands believers in today's verse to "humble themselves in the sight of the Lord." "Humble" means to lower oneself to a humble state devoid of any haughtiness or pride.

In this context, the believer is commanded to admit one's spiritual frailty and unworthiness before God. The verb is passive which points to a believer's utter dependence on the Lord for this action to take place. Through God's strength, a repentant believer is enabled to bow humbly before the Lord and admit their utter need for Him to restore their spiritual vitality and worth. They are therefore prostrate before God and totally

surrendered to Him as their God and Master. What happens next is dependent upon God's pleasure and work in and through their lives.

Notice that this act of humility is to take place "in the sight" of God, which means in His presence. The term implies an action that brings two parties together in unity. Spiritual renewal happens because of God and His willingness to draw near to us in forgiveness and restoration. Why? Because God's restorative work is always about God and His glory so that His redemptive purposes and work can move forward through humble and surrendered believers and churches.

Notice God's promise to believers who humble themselves before Him: "He will lift you up." "Lift up" means that God will restore or exalt them to their rightful place of service and ability. This is a promise to restore a believer to usefulness as a witness and servant in God's redemptive work.

Have you humbled yourself in the presence of the Lord lately?

PRAYER PROMPTS

- Father, forgive me for not humbling myself before You.
- Lord, may your church in America humble itself before You so that You may lift it up through restoration and revival.

REVIVAL GOD'S WAY: GUARD YOUR TONGUE AND HEART

As noted when we studied James 4:9, a changed heart should produce a change in the way believers live and treat others. Cleaning up one's conduct and having "clean hands" is often a process in believers' lives as the Lord continually sanctifies them through His Word and truth (John 17:17). In James 4:11-12, James drills deeper into the process of revival as God confronts believers with two specific sins: speaking evil of others and judging others.

First, the command "Do not speak evil" refers to the need for believers to immediately stop the action of speaking against someone. The term "speak evil" describes the hostile act of speaking down to others in a demeaning or slanderous way. Their speech is laced with malice and evil, and is full of criticism. It is also directed toward "brothers" in the faith (James 4:11).

Second, James confronts a judgmental spirit that ultimately produces evil, poisonous and slanderous speech. James reminds believers that there is only one Lawgiver and Judge who is able to know their hearts and therefore deliver a just verdict on the status of the heart. In confronting this action, James goes straight to the very root of the problem: a prideful, judgmental heart that desires control over others by exalting oneself above other people through slanderous, evil speech.

In his typical style, James continues and begs the question, "Who are you to judge another?" (James 4:12). Thus, James points out the following truth: God is just, He is still on His throne as lawgiver and judge, and we have no grounds for usurping His authority by slanderous our brothers and sisters in Christ (Psalm 82:1; 1 Cor. 4:5; James 5:9). These actions ultimately reject the authority of God as lawgiver, judge and the giver of mercy.

As I travel across North Carolina and speak in churches week after week, my heart is often grieved by the way Christians frequently speak against, judge and criticize one another in the body of Christ. This should not be the case — and we wonder why revival has not come to the church in America.

PRAYER PROMPTS

- Lord, forgive the way I speak against, criticize and judge my brothers and sisters in Christ.
- Lord, expose and cleanse any evil and judgmental speech that is destroying oneness in my church.

DAY 29

REVIVAL GOD'S WAY: GUARD AGAINST PRESUMPTUOUS BOASTING

It is a dangerous thing to presume and boast about God's blessings before they are received. Millerism, which began in the late 1830s, is one example of this. Its founder, William Miller, was converted to Christ and began to study the Scriptures on his own. After a few years, Miller became convinced that the return of Jesus was imminent.

According to Miller, Jesus was to return sometime between March 21, 1843, and March 21, 1844. After Jesus did not return during Miller's projected time frame, a new date was set for Oct. 22, 1844. When Christ did not return on that date, most followers left the movement to begin putting their lives back together. Churches and Christian leaders in many areas lost credibility in their communities because of their adherence to Miller's theology and predictions.

James calls believers to account in James 4:13-16 regarding their presumptuous spirit toward life and business. Four truths are highlighted from these verses. First, the use of the phrase "come now" in James 4:13 points to the truth that a presumptuous spirit toward life is a serious matter and believers need to give immediate attention to James' words.

Second, James' use of the words "today or tomorrow we will go" (James 4:13) exposes a presumptuous attitude toward life. The believers were confident they possessed another day and even another year. The use of the phrase "make a profit" (James 4:13) also digs deep into the self-reliant and arrogant attitudes toward the success of future business transactions. In their minds, God was not a factor in the equation for

their future lives in general, and specifically with regard to their success in future business opportunities.

Third, when James comments that their lives are like a "vapor" (James 4:14), he compares their lives to a fog or mist which is short-lived and unpredictable. That's why James exhorts believers to say, "If the Lord wills we shall live and do this or that" (James 4:15).

Fourth, James exposes the root issue at hand: the believers presume upon their future lives because they "boast" in their "arrogance" (James 4:16). They brag, glory or take pride in their own self-confidence and abilities in life instead of God. Thus as believers, they should realize their desperate need to consult, depend upon and receive wisdom from God regarding their future lives. To do otherwise is considered "evil" or wicked behavior (James 4:16).

Do you have a presumptuous spirit toward your future?

PRAYER PROMPTS

- Father, forgive my presumptuous attitude toward my future life.
- Pray that your church will portray a humble and dependent attitude in ministry and in business transactions toward the Lord.



REVIVAL GOD'S WAY: DO WHAT IS RIGHT!

In today's text, James brings his challenge to a close with a final call to his audience to always do what is good and right in the eyes of the Lord. The use of the term "therefore" points his audience back to the commands and truths found in James 4:1-16. Now in James 4:17, with his use of the words "to him who knows to do good," James calls his audience to immediate accountability regarding all that he has shared in the previous 16 verses.

The use of the term "knows" is important and refers to seeing with the mind's eye or one's spiritual eyes (Ephesians 1:18). Thus, the believer's spiritual eyes and understanding have been opened to the true picture of their condition before God.

With his use of the phrases, "and does not do it, to him it is sin," James points out that from this point forward, they will be committing sins of omission — refusing to do and obey the things you know are God's will — if they refuse to obey what they have heard. They have been shown God's will and God's ways and the hour has arrived for them to do what they know is right. To do otherwise is to trample underfoot God's truth and blatantly sin against a holy and righteous God. Beyond that, not obeying would mean missing out on God's redemptive work and the blessings that He desires to bestow upon His followers through the joy of walking with Him in a vital spiritual life.

When Martin Luther stood before the papal powers in 1521 at the Diet of Worms, he made one thing clear — he was not backing down from

standing firmly on God's Word and standing against the ecclesiastical evils and darkness that existed in the church in that day. Luther was determined to obey God and do what was right regardless of the consequences. In doing so, he began the Protestant Reformation. It is amazing what God can do when His people commit themselves to doing what is right in His eyes.

Today, I believe God's great work through the Great Commandment and the Great Commission inches forward very slowly in America because the church in America has departed from the Lord and committed spiritual adultery with the world. Unless we begin to seek His face with all of our hearts through repentance and holy living and begin to do what we know is right in God's eyes, we will never experience God's mercy through revival and spiritual awakening. Yet in all this, we must remember that there is great hope. We serve a God who is jealously pursuing His people. He truly is merciful and full of grace! The question remains: Will we be like Luther and do what we know is right? What will *you* do?

PRAYER PROMPTS

- Father, forgive me for not doing what I know is right in Your eyes.
- Father, please have mercy on me, my church and this nation and please send revival and spiritual awakening — beginning in my heart, my family and my church.

THESE DEVOTIONS

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