

STUDY 4

DRAWING NEAR

*What a friend I've found
Closer than a brother
I have felt Your touch
More intimate than lovers*

*Jesus, Jesus, Jesus
Friend forever*

Martin Smith, Delirou5? (1996)

For James, intimately relating with God was a deeply personal experience in his own faith – especially as Jesus' own brother. From this, he's inspired to challenge us to draw closer to God for deeper intimacy with Him. Such deeper intimacy leads to a transformation of our relationship with Him, and with others.

Perhaps it is no accident that he invokes his brotherhood with Jesus as he uses the phrase 'dear brother' (Greek: 'adelphoi' / 'ἀδελφοί') 17 times throughout his letter when addressing his fellow-believers? Perhaps it is this intimate brotherhood from which he draws a special confidence that inspires his faithfulness, humility and perseverance – that ultimately saw him surrender his own life for the sake of his own brother and Saviour?

READ TOGETHER

James 4:7-10 (NIV)

So humble yourselves before God. Resist the devil, and he will flee from you. Draw closer to God, and God will draw close to you. Wash your hands, you sinners; purify your hearts, for your loyalty is divided between God and the world. Let there be tears for what you have done. Let there be sorrow and deep grief. Let there be sadness instead of laughter, and gloom instead of joy. Humble yourselves before the Lord, and he will lift you up in honor.

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CONSIDER AND SHARE TOGETHER

Discuss together the following four points (taking turns reading the supporting verses)

- 1. Draw closer to God (James 4:8)** – The sincerely humble will want a closer relationship with God. Imagine the intimacy that grows between us and God – and then each other – when we draw closer to Him.
 - **DISCUSS:** *Read John 4:23–24 and Hebrews 10:22 – what exactly is God looking for in His people?*
- 2. God draws closer to the truly humble (James 4:8)** – One of the great sights we see throughout all the Bible is how God draws closer to those who draw near to Him. Imagine encountering trials and enduring adversity with His power and strength – rather than our own.
 - **DISCUSS:** *Read Jeremiah 29:13 and Psalm 139:24–25 – At first, you may read them thinking of ‘what is required of me to draw closer to God’; but, what do they convey of God’s nature, desire, and heart for us?*
- 3. Resist the devil by choosing Him (James 4:7–10)** – James calls us to actively ‘take a stand against’ the Devil in our personal lives, as well as resist evil when we face it in the world.
 - **DISCUSS:** *Think back to the second Connect Study, ‘Faith & Works Entwined,’ and reflect on the call to submit to God and resist the devil in James 4:7–10. How can this be achieved in both ‘faith and works’ in your personal life – and with your life in the world’s arena?*
- 4. Humbly surrender (James 4:7)** – Surrender is a significant requirement as we ‘live skillfully’ as a Jesus-follower in the world’s arena. This means doing God’s will from the heart in every moment and decision we make whatever the cost.
 - **DISCUSS:** *Read Luke 9:23 and James 4:10 – What do Jesus’ words – later reflected by His own example on the Cross – promise you? What will take place in our lives as we more freely and frequently surrender?*

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EXPLORE FURTHER

Practical advice on prayer (James 5:13-18)

James gives practical advice on how to pray (echoing his brother's teaching on prayer in Matthew 5). He encourages us that the '*prayer of a righteous person is powerful*' (James 5:16). It is beneficial to not just look at the word 'righteous' through a holiness-lens - but to also consider it from the Jewish meaning of 'righteous' as 'Shalom-peace'. That is - being in a 'shalom-peace' relationship with Jesus and each other. This is where His power reveals itself as we pray for our own needs, and the needs of others. **How can you apply James' advice in your own prayer life?**

PRAY TOGETHER

Lord, thank You for Your welcoming heart and arms for my life. Soften my heart and help me surrender more freely and frequently to Your ways. Let Your ways be my ways. I am sorry for the times I instinctively resist You. Teach me the value and freedom of humble repentance. By Your Holy Spirit, give me courage to instead resist the devil, his accusations, and temptations; to seek purity; and be 'one-minded' and consistent in following You. I incline my spirit to You - fill me once again. Amen.

EXTRA RESOURCES

- Daily Devotional: 365-Day Daily Devotional
[God's Message For Each Day: Wisdom From The Word Of God](#) - Eugene Peterson
- Book
[Drawing Near](#) - John Bevere