

LifeWay Family Bible Series for April 24: The way of the Christian is humility, not pride_41805

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The way of the Christian is humility, not pride

James 4:1-17

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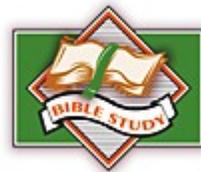
There are many types of pride in the world. There is parental pride a father has for his son when he makes the winning play. There is individual pride in a job well done. There is social pride where community is enriched and preserved. There are many other positive ways to express pride, but another sort of pride eats away at the soul and destroys the body.

Selfish pride forsakes everything good and moral, relenting the self to acquisition at all cost. Selfish pride is more about self-glorification than establishing a moral compass to measure one's self. Selfish pride measures itself against the simple edification of pleasure. If it pleases us, then by all

means, it should be ours. This is the pathway to destruction.

James 4:1-10

In the epistle of James, the apostle clearly remarks on the evils of selfishness and the need for believers to be about humility. In chapter 4, the apostle begins with an exhortation concerning conflicts and disputes. Evidently, turmoil and strife had been raised within the church.



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James clearly explains why he thinks this is happening. “Do they not come from your cravings that are at war within you?” The apostle goes on to describe the greedy spirit of his readers. They were engaging in disputes and conflicts over something they could not obtain, even to the point that James mentions murder.

The language the apostle uses is fascinating. The war being conducted within the church was really the evidence of a much larger war raging within the hearts of the believers. There always is something internal that leads individuals into outward actions. Whether it is good or bad, there rages a battle within each person—an internal struggle over the direction of life.

There are several aspects to this internal struggle we can address. First, every believer must assess the desires of the heart. Desires of the heart lead the way toward internal strife or happiness. If envy and jealousy are allowed to reign within the heart, then the outward behavior will be one of destruction. Trying to obtain the latest technology or style will circumvent everything else in life. Such an obsession will destroy relationships and produce a hole within oneself that never can be filled.

Second, every believer must be able to rejoice with the fortunes of others. From the beginning of the biblical narratives, we discover the story of two brothers, where jealousy and the inability to rejoice for the other leads to murder. As followers of Christ's way, we should be ready to rejoice for those who encounter meaningful opportunities. We should be celebrating others' good fortune. Harboring resentment and jealousy only will lead to destruction, but rejoicing with others leads to a path of peace and righteousness.

Third, every believer must live with humility, not pleasure, as our guide. James warns about a friendship with the world. Again, a serious student of Scripture would do well to remember the context in which James is writing. He writes with a very Jewish framework at the forefront of his thoughts. Hellenism—the Greek way of life—had swept through the region, bringing with it pagan culture and rituals. As Gentiles moved into the church, there was a tendency to bring cultural ideals with them. However, James and the rest of the church's leadership understood the dangers of such theological malpractice. James makes the argument that humility should guide the Christian's way of life, not the seeking out of pleasure.

We live in a world where instant gratification continues to dominate our culture. From cell phones to McDonalds' taking credit cards, we know what we want, and we believe we deserve to have it and have it instantly. This same type of mentality has crept into the church. From books lauding the expanses of our earthly kingdoms to sermons applying band aids to much

deeper wounds, the church is seeking instant gratification. The way of the Lord is the way of Christ. It is a life filled with humility, and the riches associated are not of this world.

Fourth, every believer must reprioritize the desires of the heart to meet the standards of our heavenly existence. James warns against the harmful ways of the world but gives assurance to what lies ahead for the Christians willing to draw near to the Lord. James says, "He will draw near to you."

And there it is. There is nothing more humbling and assuring at the same time than being close to the Lord. His massiveness surrounds us, holding us in his vast expanse and revealing the frailty of our existence. Yet there is something so reassuring about being held close to the Lord that it seems nothing can happen to us as long as God is near.

In conclusion, Christians must understand the danger of self-glorification. Selfish pride can destroy a person from within and bring harm upon the strongest of relationships. The way of the Christians should be a way of humility, which cleanses the soul and fills the heart with peace.

Discussion questions

- ◆ What different types of pride are there?
- ◆ Have you ever exhibited selfish pride? What happened?
- ◆ Is it hard to rejoice in the fortunes of others? Why?
- ◆ How can Christians live in humility?