

## Faith IRL     Real Faith Chooses Humility

South Sub Church | February 22, 2026 | Devotionals from James 4:1-17

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### DAY 1 — GATHER

#### James 4:1–3 “Gathering With Purified Motives”

**James 4:1 (ESV)** *“What causes quarrels and what causes fights among you? Is it not this, that your passions are at war within you?”*

James does not begin with surface-level conflict—he goes straight to its root. He says that conflict among believers grows from conflict *within* believers. Our desires—good desires twisted into demands—battle inside us, and sooner or later, that turmoil spills out into our relationships.

This passage invites us to consider how we **gather**. When God’s people come together, the condition of our hearts matters. We don’t gather perfectly, but we must gather honestly—aware that our motives, desires, and frustrations affect the spiritual climate of the church.

James tells us that unresolved desires do three things:

- they distort our prayers,
- they create frustration,
- and they hinder unity.

He says, “You ask and do not receive, because you ask wrongly, to spend it on your passions.” In other words, our motives shape the effectiveness of our prayers and the health of our community.

Gathering with purified motives means coming before God and each other with humility. It means acknowledging when our hearts are restless, jealous, or demanding. It means choosing surrender over stubbornness.

A church that gathers with purified motives becomes a place where:

- conflicts are softened by humility,
- prayers are strengthened by sincerity,
- relationships are protected by grace,
- and God’s Spirit moves freely.

We don’t gather as perfect people; we gather as surrendered people. We come asking God to align our desires with His will.

**Checkpoint: Gather** Before gathering with others this week, pause and ask God to purify your motives. Surrender any desires that may hinder unity or prayer.

**Prayer** Lord, search my heart and reveal any restless desires that create tension with You or others. Purify my motives so that when I gather with Your people, I bring peace, humility, and a teachable spirit. Amen.

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### DAY 2 — CONNECT

#### James 4:4–6 “Connecting Wholeheartedly to God, Not the World”

**James 4:4 (ESV)** *“Do you not know that friendship with the world is enmity with God?”*

James chooses strong language here—not to condemn, but to wake us up. “Friendship with the world” means aligning our hearts with the world’s values: pride, self-promotion, envy, comparison, and desire for control. These attitudes make intimacy with God difficult.

You cannot walk toward God and cling to the world’s ways at the same time.

But James also speaks one of the most comforting truths in Scripture: **“He gives more grace.”**

God does not merely tolerate our wandering—He pursues us. When we drift, He calls us back. When our hearts grow divided, He offers grace that restores wholehearted devotion.

**Connecting with God** begins with recognizing where our affections have been divided. It means confessing where we’ve allowed the world’s voice to shape us more than God’s. It means letting His grace draw us back into deeper intimacy.

James reminds us that God “opposes the proud but gives grace to the humble.” Pride hardens us, but humility opens the door to connection. When we come before God honestly, He meets us with abundant grace.

**Checkpoint: Connect** Ask God today to realign your affections. Let go of anything that competes for your devotion, and reconnect wholeheartedly with Him.

**Prayer** Father, I confess that my heart is easily drawn toward the world’s values. Pull me back into deeper connection with You. Thank You that You give more grace—grace enough for all my wandering. Amen.

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### DAY 3 — SERVE

#### James 4:7–10 “Serving God Through Humble Submission”

**James 4:7 (ESV)** *“Submit yourselves therefore to God. Resist the devil, and he will flee from you.”*

This section is a masterpiece of spiritual formation. James gives a clear roadmap for restoring spiritual strength and intimacy with God:

- submit to God,
- resist the enemy,

- draw near to God,
- cleanse your hands,
- purify your heart,
- humble yourself before the Lord.

All of this falls under one posture: **humble submission**.

Serving God always begins with surrender. Before we can serve others well, we must serve God with a humbled heart—laying down our pride, our will, and our self-sufficiency.

Submission is not passive; it is active cooperation with God. It is saying:

- “Your way is better than mine.”
- “Your timing is wiser than mine.”
- “Your leadership is trustworthy.”

James promises that when we draw near to God, He draws near to us. When we resist the enemy, he flees. When we humble ourselves, God lifts us up.

Humility is not thinking less of ourselves—it is thinking of ourselves less. It frees us to serve others with sincerity, compassion, and patience.

Imagine a church where believers serve from this posture:

- pride fades,
- jealousy dissolves,
- criticism softens,
- and grace abounds.

This is the kind of serving that transforms communities.

**Checkpoint: Serve** Serve God today through intentional humility. Let your service reflect a life submitted to Him and shaped by His grace.

**Prayer** Lord, I submit my heart and will to You today. Teach me to serve with humility, resisting the enemy and drawing near to Your presence. Lift me up according to Your grace. Amen.

#### DAY 4 — INVITE

#### James 4:11–12 “Inviting Others by Refusing a Judgmental Spirit”

**James 4:11 (ESV)** *“Do not speak evil against one another, brothers.”*

James warns us against speaking judgmentally about others. A critical, condemning spirit tears down community, damages relationships, and misrepresents the heart of God. Only God is the righteous Judge.

If we want our invitations to church to be meaningful and compelling, they must come from hearts free from judgment.

Many people avoid church because they assume Christians are judgmental. James calls us to the opposite—to be people whose words reflect grace, not condemnation.

When we refuse to speak against others:

- we build trust,
- we create safe relationships,
- we reflect God’s kindness,
- and we open the door for others to encounter Jesus.

Our invitations carry weight when those receiving them feel respected, valued, and not judged. A heart free of criticism creates an atmosphere where people feel comfortable exploring faith.

To invite someone to church is to invite them into a relationship with Jesus—and people are far more open when they’ve already experienced His grace through your words.

**Checkpoint: Invite** Before inviting someone to church this week, examine your heart. Ask God to remove any critical spirit so your invitation reflects His love and humility.

**Prayer** Lord, guard my heart from judgment. Help my words be full of grace so that those I invite to church feel welcomed, not condemned. Use my life as a bridge to Jesus. Amen.

#### DAY 5 — GIVE

#### James 4:13–17 “Giving Our Plans to God”

**James 4:13 (ESV)** *“Come now, you who say, ‘Today or tomorrow we will go into such and such a town...’”*

James ends this chapter by addressing our tendency to make plans without God. He is not against planning—Scripture affirms wise stewardship and foresight. What James challenges is presumption: living as if our lives are fully within our control.

“You do not know what tomorrow will bring.”

This truth humbles us. Life is fragile, unpredictable, and fleeting—“a mist.” But this truth also frees us. We do not have to

carry the weight of controlling outcomes. Instead, we can **give our plans to God**.

Giving our plans to God means:

- surrendering our timelines,
- trusting His wisdom over our desires,
- inviting Him into every decision,
- loosening our grip on control,
- and saying, “If the Lord wills...” not out of fear, but out of faith.

This kind of surrender is a form of generosity—because we are offering God something deeply precious: our future.

True generosity begins with an open heart. When we give God our plans, we learn to give others our time, our gifts, and our resources with greater ease.

James concludes by saying that knowing the good we ought to do—and not doing it—is sin. This reminds us that generosity is not optional in the Christian life. God calls us to live open-handed, attentive to His will and responsive to His leading.

**Checkpoint: Give** Offer your plans to God today. Hold them loosely, trusting that His will is good, wise, and perfect.

**Prayer** Father, I give You my plans, my goals, and my future. Lead me in the way I should go. Make me generous with my time, my abilities, and my resources as I trust Your will. Amen.