

# COME NEAR

By Karen Little

## SCRIPTURE

James 4:7-10

*Submit yourselves, then, to God. Resist the devil, and he will flee from you. Come near to God and he will come near to you. Wash your hands, you sinners, and purify your hearts, you double-minded. Grieve, mourn and wail. Change your laughter to mourning and your joy to gloom. Humble yourselves before the Lord, and he will lift you up.*

## OBSERVATION

What has the Lord been teaching me lately? Well, to be honest, I have been struggling with my quiet time. It's not that I'm not trying. I'm still reading God's word and praying, but it's just that I am having a hard time quieting my heart to hear from the Lord. There is a lot going on. For one thing, my people are home all the time, and while I love having my kids around and my husband working from home all day, it is hard to get much time alone. There is also a lot to be worried about. Between kids and the dog and what's for breakfast, lunch and supper and what's the latest news and how do I disinfect my groceries and on and on, my mind seems to constantly be jumping from one fear and worry to the next.

In the midst of all that, I have been reading James. The entire book of James has been very convicting for me. Every command that he gives is one that I am guilty of breaking. While it is never a pleasant experience to be faced with my own sinfulness, I am always thankful that the Lord does not leave me floundering in my sin and with my hard heart. He so graciously comes after me time and time again. This time, He used the words of another believer to speak straight to my heart. "Sometimes the act of faith we need to take is surrender." That was what I needed to hear: surrender. Surrender is another difficult concept for me. Why is it so hard for me to surrender? The world would say that surrender means defeat or giving up, but in the Lord's economy, surrender means just the opposite. Surrendering to the Lord brings joy and peace and wisdom and freedom! Surrendering is our first act of faith at salvation. We admit we can never accomplish our salvation on our own and that we need a Savior. We give up control of our own lives and give Him control. But that one-time surrender is not the end; it's the beginning of our journey. We must surrender over and over again as the Lord grows us to maturity. He calls us to surrender our plans and even the plans we have for our children. He calls us to surrender our worries and cares to Him. He calls us to surrender our desires as He longs to give us His own desires. He calls us to surrender our worldly wisdom for His wisdom.

James has the prescription in chapter 4:7-10.

- “Submit yourselves to God.” I looked up the definitions of surrender and submit. Surrender means to stop fighting or resisting; the act of giving the control of something to someone else. Submit means there is a ready recognition of a higher authority—there is no resistance; there is meekness and obedience. Once I had surrendered (stopped fighting), I was ready to submit to God.
- “Resist the devil and he will flee from you.” The enemy would love to keep us full of fear and worry, but we know that God’s word is our weapon against the enemy’s attacks. We can take our thoughts captive (2 Corinthians 10:5). Isaiah 41:10 commands us “Do not fear, for I am with you. Do not be afraid for I am your God. I will strengthen you and help you. I will uphold you with my righteous right hand.”
- “Come near to God and he will come near to you.” James 4:8 is one of my favorites. What a beautiful promise and verse to hold on to! Of course, we know He never leaves us, but we wander away from Him. Yet, He longs to be gracious to us and show us compassion (Isaiah 30:18). All we have to do is take that first step and come near to God.
- “Wash your hands, you sinners, and purify your hearts, you double-minded. Grieve, mourn and wail. Change your laughter to mourning and your joy to gloom.” Once we draw near to God, our sinfulness becomes glaringly obvious. It is our job to confess our sins as the Holy Spirit reveals them to us. When we confess our sins, He is faithful and just to forgive us (1 John 1:9)! It is good to agree with God and grieve and mourn over the sins we have committed.
- “Humble yourselves before the Lord, and he will lift you up.” When we are in the right state of humility before our Holy God, He comforts us with reassurances of His love and grace. He gives us joy even in the midst of trials and He grows our faith (James 1:2-3). He will give us His wisdom to do the next right thing, and He gives us the strength to keep going.

Prayer, along with scripture, is our tool that we have to use against trouble, sickness and sin, but it is also given to us to praise the Lord when we are happy and as a way to discern the Lord’s will for us. So, all those things that are constantly troubling me? I can take them to the Lord in prayer. The Lord is trustworthy! “Is any one of you in trouble? He should pray. Is anyone happy? Let him sing songs of praise... The prayer of a righteous man is powerful and effective.” —James 5:13, 16

## **OBEDIENCE**

1. What do you need to surrender to the Lord?
2. In what area do you need to submit to God?
3. What sins has the Holy Spirit revealed to you that you need to confess and turn from?
4. What thoughts do you need to take captive?
5. What do you need to stop worrying about and instead take to the Lord in prayer?

## **PRAYER**

Lord, You alone are worthy of all of our worship and praise. You are holy and just. You come after us when we are lost and promise to never leave us. You forgive us time and time again and love us even when we are completely unlovable. Lord, we confess that we have not lived how You want us to live and we ask for Your forgiveness. Please help us to submit ourselves to You. Bring scripture to our minds to fight our enemy and take our thoughts captive to do Your will. We know that You alone have the power to heal our sicknesses and take care of all the things that worry us. Remind us to come to You often in prayer and to turn all of our worries into prayers instead. We trust You and we will praise You regardless of the outcome, because we know You have a perfect plan for our lives and for the world. Use us as You will for Your glory. In Jesus' name we ask all these things. Amen.