

James (Part 9) – Arrogance / Humility

Matt Chandler – May 3, 2015

If you have your Bibles, grab them. If you don't have a Bible with you, there should be a hardback black one somewhere around you. I want to encourage you to grab that so you can read along with us. It's hard to believe it's week 9 of our study through the book of James. In fact, we'll finish chapter 4 today. That'll lead us into chapter 5 over the course of the next few weeks, and then James will be over and we'll start our summer series. We'll be talking about that here in Flower Mound at our member meeting tonight, kind of what all that looks like this summer moving into the fall.

For today, let's dive in and knock out chapter 4 of James. There are just a few verses left in this chapter. James has been arguing up until this point that there are really two ways to live your life. There's a way he defined as false wisdom, and that false wisdom was built upon some ideas about who God is and how God behaves, his nature and character, and what's supreme in the universe.

Then James would also argue the other way to live would be a way of true wisdom, and that also has a certain view of God and who God is and how God behaves. What James has been talking about, for the purpose of our time together today, are the walls in the house, and now he's going to talk about the foundation upon which those walls are built.

So as we talk about humility and arrogance today, those two things are the foundations upon which the way we live our lives actually plays itself out. True wisdom is built upon the foundation of humility, and false wisdom is built upon the eroding, brittle foundation of arrogance. So we're going to dive into and get a good look at these ideas in this text. The weight of the text is really a primer on the limitations of man, so you know it's going to be good. With that said, let's look at James, chapter 4, starting in verse 13.

"Come now, you who say, 'Today or tomorrow we will go into such and such a town and spend a year there and trade and make a profit'—yet you do not know what tomorrow will bring. What is your life? For you are a mist that appears for a little time and then vanishes." It

doesn't appear that James is interested in self-esteem. Verse 15: **"Instead you ought to say, 'If the Lord wills, we will live and do this or that.' As it is, you boast in your arrogance. All such boasting is evil. So whoever knows the right thing to do and fails to do it, for him it is sin."**

Now what we see happening in this text is James is going to make some arguments concerning us as opposed to God. His arguments are pretty simple. The first one right out of the gate is that you and I lack knowledge. He's actually very generous in his assessment of our ignorance. He says, "Yet you do not know what tomorrow will bring."

There are two types of people in this, or at least as far as this illustration goes there are two types of people. Some of us have a built-out, written-down plan for tomorrow, and others of us just have an idea of how we want tomorrow to go. Yet regardless of how we're wired, whether we know what time the alarm is going to come up and when our meetings are and what time we're going to eat lunch and how long that's going to take us to digest, and we have all that written down and ready to roll, the truth is all of our tomorrows can be thwarted by outside factors.

We do not know what tomorrow holds. But I think James is being generous here, because if we're honest, we don't know what *today* holds. I don't know what comes after this. I have an idea, but I don't know. My plan is after this we're going to see what the Lord does in our time together, and then I'm going to get in my car and head home. My wife is watching babies over at the Highland Village Campus, and we're going to converge upon the house, and we have lunch plans. We've already talked about that. "Here's what we're going to do for lunch."

I'm going to get there, and we're going to have lunch, and the kids are going to love me. We're not going to have any discipline issues at lunch. They're just going to be glad we're there and that we care for them. We're going to eat lunch, and then I'm going to hang out and get a little bit of rest, and then I'm right back up here at 5:00 for this campus' elder-led prayer, on into member meeting, and then I'm going to go home and get the kids to bed. I'm going to lie in bed with them, and I'm going to encourage them, and it's going to be awesome.

I have no idea if any of that will actually happen. I don't know that I'll make it home for lunch. I've said this to you a lot. I don't ever say it to scare you; I say it because it's reality. There isn't anyone in this room whose whole life can't change with their cell phone buzzing in their pocket right now. We're just fragile. James is pointing this out. He's like, "You don't know what tomorrow will bring." I'm saying he's being generous. You don't know what *today* will bring.

In the middle of this lack of knowledge, he adds the next line. **"What is your life? For you are a mist..."** That word is important in this text. In the Greek, that word *mist* is not like a fog that lingers in the morning. It means vapor or smoke. So think not of fog on the ground for four hours in the morning, but think e-cigarette puffs. Gone. Think of vapor. James is saying not only do you lack knowledge, but you lack power to do anything about what you *do* know.

He starts to unpack this further. **"For you are a mist [a vapor] that appears for a little time and then vanishes."** Here's James' statement about you and me and all of us as created beings: we lack knowledge, and we lack power to do anything about that. So this is you. This is me. That's not a good starting point for swagger. "I'm ignorant and will only be here for a second. Hear me roar." It's kind of a shaky start to bravado.

Now if you take this and compare it to what we know to be true about God in the Scriptures, you see we're even dumber than we thought. Where James is saying, "You don't know what tomorrow will bring and your life is just a mist, just a vapor, just a poof of smoke," God, on the other hand... This has been agreed upon throughout Christian history. God is omnipotent. He is all-powerful.

If you watch movies, there's always this dualistic tendency between God and the Devil. It's this battle. "Let's see who wins." In fact, the deck always seems in movies to be stacked in the Devil's favor. We've talked about this. You just know that when the priest shows up in the demon movie, he's about to get worked. When the priest shows up, you're not like, "Well, it's about to end." You're like, "Oh, this dude is about to get worked," because that's the way it always happens.

In the Bible, that's never how it happens. The demons never argue with Jesus. They never say no to Jesus. In fact, we see, on multiple occasions, demon-possessed men flinging themselves on the ground and pleading with Christ not to destroy them. That doesn't sound like a fair fight. In fact, the battle of Armageddon, the great final battle for victory...

The enemies of the Lord have gathered in the valley of Armageddon, and Christ shows up and says, "I Am." *Boom!* It's over. It's not like the Hundred Years' War. That's not how this will play out. He says, "I Am," and it's over. He's all-powerful.

We also know he's all-knowing. He knows everything. He knows every detail at every level and how all of those details and events form a linear history, a line of events that are all governed by his

power. So not only is he all-knowing and all-powerful, but the Bible also teaches us (this stretches our brains) that he is everywhere at once, and everywhere he is, all of his power resides. This is where he is wholly different than you and me.

Let's have some real talk between us. How many of you have ever stretched yourself too thin, bit off more than you could chew? Anybody just been like, "You know what? I wasn't as equipped for that as I thought"? Well, God has never felt that. God has never gone, "Man, I got in a bit over my head in here in the Middle East. I'm in a lot of trouble right now. Let me pull back and recoup and just focus on this little part of..."

No, he is as powerful and as present in the outskirts of the universe as he is in this room right now, as he is in every little crack and cranny of the universe. He is all-knowing, he is all-powerful, and he is everywhere at once. So if we're like, "I don't know what today will bring, and even if I did I can't really do much about it..."

If that's us and this is God, then I want to say again any kind of ground for boasting or swagger or self-exaltation is foolish. In fact, we are truly a people who cannot see the forest for the trees. We are truly a people who are stuck in the weeds. We cannot see the grand scheme for all the blades of grass, but God can, God does, and God is good.

How do we know God is good? Because we look to the cross. He has come to rescue and ransom us. He has come not to condemn us. The cross is that objective evidence which lays before us on repeat that regardless of what difficulties or pain points have befallen us in this life, we can look to this all-powerful, all-knowing, everywhere-at-once God and trust him, because we see his good work in the cross of Christ. So this is us. This is him.

Here's where I find things break down when you start talking about humility and pride and these things. They're kind of ethereal ideas. If you think about it, humility in and of itself is even difficult to talk about. Can you know that you're humble? If you know you are humble, are you actually humble? What are we to do with humility?

If I ask you, "Hey, what has God been doing in your life? How has he been growing you?" and your response is, "You know what? I just feel a deep-rooted humility taking hold of my life..." Like do you, though? Did you just brag about humility? It's slippery. How do we pursue humility, because in

the pursuit of humility, are we pursuing humility so that we might be seen as humble so that we might be somehow exalted in our humility? It's a really slippery thing.

Then what do you do with the fact that arrogant, pompous blowhards don't think they're arrogant? They just think they're awesome. Isn't this true? Most people don't think they walk in pride. Most people don't think they are arrogant. They just think they're good at what they do. So how are we supposed to navigate this really complex issue of humility versus pride?

Well, I'm going to give you three things, and then we'll dive back into this text and really the weight of the text. How do we pursue humility? I think the three things I want to point out are not only how you pursue humility, but how you also might test your heart to see if you're walking in some arrogance. So here are three ways we pursue humility.

1. *We understand and acknowledge our weaknesses.* In 1 Corinthians, chapter 12, verses 14-20, the apostle Paul talks about how the body of Christ works, and here's what he says:

"For the body does not consist of one member but of many. If the foot should say, 'Because I am not a hand, I do not belong to the body,' that would not make it any less a part of the body. And if the ear should say, 'Because I am not an eye, I do not belong to the body,' that would not make it any less a part of the body.

If the whole body were an eye, where would be the sense of hearing? If the whole body were an ear, where would be the sense of smell? But as it is, God arranged the members in the body, each one of them, as he chose. If all were a single member, where would the body be? As it is, there are many parts, yet one body."

There are several things that are intrinsically built out in Paul's explanation of how the church interacts and becomes a body. Here's one of the first ones: not everyone is everything. That means every one of us has specific strengths and specific weaknesses. Some of us are eyes. Some of us are ears. Some of us are hands. Some of us are feet, but nobody is the entire body.

The implication of that is you're going to need some help. The implication of that is there is a command on the Lord for us to belong to one another. This is why we take membership at The Village so seriously, because without belonging to a place but simply going to a place, you never become the athletic, quick, built-out, missional, God-glorifying athlete God would have you be.

You're like a hand trying to compete in the decathlon. You're not going to do well. You're just not going to do well on the races as a hand. You're not going to be able to throw anything as just a hand. You need the arm. You need the bicep. You need the shoulder. You need the core. You need these pieces. So we come together, and you flank my weaknesses, and I flank yours, and God puts us together for the building up of this body for the glory of his name. When you refuse to enter in, when you refuse to be a part, you weaken yourself and you weaken all of us.

We know and acknowledge our weaknesses. That should set you free. You don't have to do everything. You don't have to be everything. It's right there. You have certain gifts and certain abilities given to you by God, so you're freed up to know what you do well and to do that and not try to do all the things you don't do well. You can let other people who are wired that way do that well. That's how we pursue it. We want to understand and acknowledge our weaknesses.

How do we know if we're already walking in pride? Well, one of two ways. This is the insidious nature of pride. The first is that you're like, "I don't have any weaknesses. What are you talking about? What do you need? Do you need me to lead something, teach something, drive something, greet something, set up something? What do you need, Pastor? I've got you." That would be arrogant.

It also works itself out on the flip side, where you feel like you're so talentless and there's nothing good inside of you that God could ever use. You feel as though your lameness somehow disqualifies you from being used by God in powerful and profound ways. Now a couple of quick things. First, I'm not taking away from you your lameness. It's probably true. What I do want you to marvel at is that God glorifies himself by profoundly using the lame.

Think about it. Who in the Bible could be on staff here at The Village? The apostle Paul isn't passing the background check. "Hey, about these 150 people you murdered. Do you still struggle with that? No? Great then. Work with children." King David? "Hey, brother, you have a woman problem. You seem to sleep around a lot. Is that still a struggle?"

"Uh-huh, sometimes."

"Okay, we're going to have to move on. You are not going to be the next worship pastor here."

The Bible is just filled with broken, messy people, and God enters into that space and makes much of his name. So arrogance is the brother who thinks he is not weak, and arrogance is the brother or sister who feels like they're so weak God can't do anything with them. That's an accusation against God. "God, you are not strong enough, not powerful enough, and not good enough to use me because of my lack of perceived ability." It's foolishness. It's arrogance. So we want to be aware of our weaknesses. We don't want to hide those weaknesses; we want to acknowledge them.

2. *You have to stay curious.* What is curiosity except a playful acknowledgement that you don't know something? Have you ever thought about what curiosity is? "Huh, that's interesting. I don't know about that. Let me learn about that." Curiosity in and of itself is somewhat a medicine against pride. As you grow, you must be careful of losing curiosity, curiosity about the Lord, curiosity about other things. We must be a people who are constantly curious. Pursue and stay curious.

The bent, the draw, as we grow older is to get crusty and less curious. We'll have to fight against it. You see this in Psalm 8, starting in verse 3, when King David says, **"When I look at your heavens, the work of your fingers, the moon and the stars, which you have set in place, what is man that you are mindful of him, and the son of man that you care for him?"**

This is the ESV. The ESV is a word-for-word translation of the Bible. If you have an NIV, a New International Version, that's a phrase-by-phrase translation of the Bible. If you never understood why Christians have multiple Bibles, it's how the translation works. The NIV is a phrase-by-phrase translation of the Greek, and in the NIV it says, "When I *consider* the work of your hands."

So you have David looking up at the stars, and he is considering. He is curious. He is blown away at the immensity of what he sees, and that curiosity has led him to marvel at the majesty and size of God, which has created in him a humility. "When I think of *that*, what am I? When I see *this*, who would I be that you would love me, that you would care for me?" Curiosity is a playful acknowledgement that I don't know something.

So how do you use this as a litmus test of pride and whether or not pride is there? If you're not curious but you like to weigh in even when you're ignorant, where you always have to throw in your two cents when there's an expert at the table... Do you have a friend like this? Like if you're sitting down with a pilot and they're talking about scary moments and cool things that have happened, and you have that friend, or maybe you *are* that guy, who's just like, "Yeah, lift and

thrust. When I was a kid, I'd stick my hand out the window. Is that what it's like? That's what it's like, guys. It is."

You're just like, "Shut up. You're not a pilot. Be quiet. Let the pilot talk. Ask the pilot questions. You have a pilot here." This is it. This is an inability to let someone else be an expert that reveals itself via a lack of curiosity. "Will you tell me more about that? How does *this* work? What happens in *this* case?" That's curiosity. That's, "I don't know. *This* brother knows. Hey, help me understand better." That's humility.

3. *Learn to acknowledge others and what they provide and how they help and serve.* In Hebrews, chapter 10, starting in verse 24, it says, "**And let us consider how to stir up one another to love and good works, not neglecting to meet together, as is the habit of some, but encouraging one another, and all the more as you see the Day drawing near.**"

This has been one of those themes through the book of James, where we'll be able to spot and encourage the strengths of others around us, that we are experts not in how people fall short, but where they excel, where God is at work, and we tell them those things. At this, the idea of acknowledging the strengths of others, even in how we've organized at the highest level at The Village Church, we're trying to show you that no one has all gifts. No one is the king but Jesus.

At The Village Church we have a board of central elders, and then we have three lead pastors. I'm one of three, all with equal votes, all with equal say. My job at The Village Church is the lead pastor of teaching. My primary role at this church is to pray, study, and absorb all I can from all of the different domains. So I'm reading philosophy. I'm getting my hands on anything that would affect worldview.

Then I'm diving into the Bible and prayerfully considering what we need to attack, what we need to teach on, how we need to train, how I can help us, as a body, interact with the world as it currently is. Brian Miller is the lead pastor who sits over all operations. If it has to do with a building, with finance, with communication, if it has an on and off switch, that's Brian Miller. You don't want me in those meetings.

The big joke with the other two LPs is that I can see the skyscraper, but you wouldn't want me to build it. You'd be like, "Oh, a 70-story skyscraper. Awesome." We'd walk into the lobby. "Where are the elevators?" "Dang it! Sorry, guys." So we'd start walking up the stairs. About the fortieth floor

you'd be like, "Hey man, where's the bathroom?" I'd be like, "Aah! Bathrooms." You don't want me in the weeds. You want Brian Miller in the weeds.

Then Josh Patterson is over our staff and over staff development. If there's a more gifted brother on earth, I've yet to meet him. He can teach. He can lead. He can think well with systems. He's a high entrepreneur, high idea guy, one of the best reverse engineers I've ever been around. By having three LPs, here's what we're trying to communicate: there's no king here. If you had any idea how often I lose votes... Everybody in that room can argue as well as I can.

What we're trying to do is show you and live in such a way that's in tune with humility and ultimately true wisdom and say, "Nobody is everything; we need one another." So we need to acknowledge and speak life into and encourage those who have shaped and molded us, who have spoken into us, who have confronted us in love, who have built us up. We need to learn to acknowledge them.

So how do you use this as a litmus test? If you're always the hero and every success is simply because of your hard work, you are arrogant. I didn't put *probably* before that. I didn't put *possibly* before that. I'm telling you, if you wear the cape and everyone should just be grateful for Super You, then you're arrogant and pompous and I feel sorry for the people in your life. No way there's vitality or energy in life when you're the life-sucking black hole of praise that you are. No one is king. *No one.*

If this is true, if this is how we pursue humility and how we see whether or not arrogance has taken root in our lives, how then should we live because of what James is teaching in this text? Well, there are a couple of things to consider. I love how James starts this dialogue. He starts it with a first-century, "Oh, come on, man." He says, "Come now, you who say..." I like that, because he really is like, "Come on, man! Are you serious?"

Here's what we have to do. Is James teaching that we shouldn't have future plans, that we shouldn't make plans, or that when we *do* make plans we had better always have the little caveat, "If God wills" added to our plans? Well, we know James is not teaching that making future plans is sinful or wrong, because the Bible views planning and preparation as a virtue. The Proverbs are filled with the wisdom of planning and executing upon a plan.

So we know planning is not sinful or wrong. If you're a businessman and you have plans to go to Chicago and do some trading, it's not sinful for you to have that on the books. That's not what James is saying. Nor is he saying that every time you ask me about a future event I have to say, "If the Lord wills." So if we go back to the day I have today, and after service you catch me in the foyer and you're like, "Where are you heading, Chandler?" and I'm like, "Lunch, if the Lord wills." I *can* say that every time, but this text isn't a command *to* add that caveat to all things.

So what's happening here? Well, it's interesting. James' point is that since human plans and even our own existence in this world is somewhat insignificant and that we quickly disappear (that's all of us), we ought to take thought for larger matters, matters having to do with faith and submission to the will of God.

James' point is that our future plans, which are right and good, should be informed by, driven by, fueled by, greater reality. It's not that if you have a vacation planned in July that's evil, but rather it's what's driving that vacation, what's driving your business, what's driving your plans that ultimately matters.

If there is a sovereign King of glory who has a mission, who has created us, then who he is and what he has called us to is what drives all of the areas of our lives. James' argument is our faith isn't a privatized, pulled-out, separated-out idea over here, but it's integrated into everything we do and all that we consider and all that we set our minds and hearts to. Colossians 3, starting in verse 1, gives us a great picture of this.

"If then you have been raised with Christ..." If I could simplify that... "If you are a Christian."
"...seek the things that are above, where Christ is, seated at the right hand of God. Set your minds on things that are above, not on things that are on earth. For you have died, and your life is hidden with Christ in God." Look at verse 4. Verse 4 has a key little phrase in it. **"When Christ who is your life appears, then you also will appear with him in glory."** That little phrase is what James is after: **"When Christ who is your life..."**

All of our plans, the fuel, the weight, the drive of all we're doing is Christ who is our life. So when I think about family vacation, I'm driven to get away and get all the hands in the nest with my girl outside of this place with all its busyness, and we're going to get together and reinforce what Josh taught on last weekend out of Deuteronomy 6. Vacation is somewhat rest, but it's more about shaping and celebrating the original discipleship group God gave us, which is the family.

I want to live financially in a very generous way because Christ is my life. I want to love my wife well because Christ is my life. I want to consider my time here, how I steward my influence, what I do with my days, because Christ is my life. It's not, "I have work. I have home. I have my relationship with Christ. I have my hobby. I have my friends. I have my passions. I have Christ." That's not how we're to live, not how we're to consider.

To have areas of our lives by which we say to the sovereign Creator of all things, "No, no, this is mine; I give you your time on Sundays" is the equivalent of you saying to your spouse, "It ain't date night. Leave me alone." That's not how we're to live. "Christ who is my life." All that I do is driven by this reality. Retirement plans aren't bad; 401(k)s aren't bad. In fact, I'm already praying about mine.

I'm not making a joke. I will not hang around here into my 90s. That would not be good for you and not be good for me. At some point, God will raise up a young man who loves him, who zealously loves you, who's ferocious about the Word of God. I'm praying that he's one of your sons and that he'll come to faith in this place and be discipled in this place and go off and make a lot of mistakes somewhere else.

Then we'll bring him back in, and I'll head out as an older man than I am now, and I'll use the last part of my days being a member of this church, gladly under the preaching and teaching of this young man, and give myself over to encouraging and influencing young pastors around the country or world, depending on what the Lord has for me. I've already started asking the Lord to raise up that kid and give me eyes to see him.

There's nothing wrong with that. That is driven by Christ who is my life. So plans aren't a bad thing; 401(k)s aren't a bad thing; retirement isn't a bad thing. They're just driven by Christ who is our life. That's James' argument. Here's the second part of his argument. Look in verse 17. **"So whoever knows the right thing to do and fails to do it, for him it is sin."**

So not only in light of the pursuit of humility and the exposure of arrogance and pride are we to make Christ our life and see all things through that lens, but now what you have here is a relentless pursuit of obedience concerning the revealed ethical will of God. Now if that phrase is confusing, let me try to unpack it some. There are aspects of the will of God that can't be seen clearly. Correct? Let me give you an illustration.

I was training as a pastor in Abilene, Texas. I was working at a church. It was a growing church. It was a young church. I was a utility back. I don't know how else to explain it. I was just kind of doing whatever the pastor needed. I taught college. I trained home group leaders. I wrote the policies and procedures, which our staff would chuckle at the idea of me even having that capacity. Whatever David needed, I would do. "Tell me what to do. I'll go do it." That's where I was training.

A couple of my friends pulled into town. They were friends I'd been doing ministry with, traveling around doing a lot of college events and things like that. They said, "Hey, why don't we start a non-profit and move to Dallas, set it up in Dallas and operate out of there? It's easier to travel out of Dallas, and we're not moving to Abilene."

Something about that resonated with my heart and with my wife's heart, so Lauren and I began to pray, "Father, is this the next step for us? Is this where you would have us go?" I looked all through the Bible. I didn't find Dallas anywhere in there. I looked in the concordance. I looked through the Greek and the Hebrew. I never found Dallas. My crew I was running with was split straight down the middle. I had a group of friends who were like, "Why would you do that?" Then my other group was like, "Why would you not do that?" It was numerically perfectly balanced.

So I'm like, "Okay, what do we do now?" They were two good things. It was not like, "Do I do heroin or do I not?" It was, "Do I serve the Lord *here* in a context that is flourishing or do I step out, move to Dallas, and serve the Lord *here* in a context that has some risk, that's a bit unknown, but I feel somewhat drawn to?" Although I had no peace to stay in Abilene and no peace to go to Dallas. I was stuck.

Then one night I woke up, and the dresser was on fire, except it wasn't consumed, and an audible voice said to me to take off my shoes. No, that didn't happen at all. Here's what *did* just happen, though. My charismatic people finally went, "Finally! Here it comes!" Baptists started getting nervous. Bible Church people already started grabbing their keys, "Come on, baby," and they were going to be out.

My point is it would have been awesome to get some word from the Lord that was just as clear, that some man or woman would have just walked up to me in the store and said, "Man, you need to search your heart on this. I feel like I got a word from the Lord for you. I don't know what it means. Dallas." How awesome would that have been? That would have been incredible. That lady never stopped us. That man never stopped us.

We just prayed, and then Lauren and I resigned from a church we loved and got in our car. All our stuff fit in that car. We drove to Dallas, audibly praying out loud this prayer: "We think you're leading us this way. If you're not, will you protect us? We have not made this move for more money," because it was not more money. It was significantly less money. "We have not made this move for greater platform," because it wasn't a greater platform.

"We feel like..." That's it. It was just kind of a nebulous, "We feel as though you're leading us this way. We've checked counsel. We've checked the Word of God. We've asked community. There's nothing conclusive. We believe you're leading us this way, so we're stepping out in faith. Protect us if we're wrong, because our hearts have always been to serve you."

Now 15 years later, I can look at that and go, "That was the will of God," but with every bit of honesty I have in me, I certainly did not know driving Interstate 20 in this direction. I hoped. I was confident the Lord would accomplish his good purposes, but there could have been wise counsel, and *was* wise counsel, going, "Chandler, God has asked you to provide for your family. What if this fails? What are you going to do then?" "I don't know." We felt pulled.

When this is talking about obedience to the revealed ethical will, it's not talking about those kinds of gray areas, but rather the crystal clear areas. Are we doing the good we know we ought to do? I love James' take on it. He's not saying, "Are you doing things you know you shouldn't do?" No, it's far more invasive. It's far more aggressive than that.

He said, "Are you doing the right things you know you should be doing? Because if you're not doing what you know is right, that's still sin." So much of our mindset is, "Let me not do what's wrong," and James is going, "Not enough. Are you doing what you know is right? Because to not do the good you know you ought to do is sin." This is a relentless pursuit of obedience to the revealed ethical will of God.

Now let's share a moment together. How many of you in this room hear that and go, "Well, I have multiple things I could look back on this past week and go, 'There was a good I should have done and I didn't do it'?" Let this be one of those things that draws us back together as a family and makes us turn our eyes and gaze upon the mercy of God made available on the cross.

One of the things I've said to you throughout the book of James is that James without the cross is a crushing book. James, no matter how old you get, will read your mail and show you your shortcomings over and over and over again. Listen to me. As awful as we think that is, it's a gift that sends us back to our hope over and over and over again, as it clearly is a diagnostic of our inability to do the very thing God has called us to do.

In fact, I'm reading David Brooks' new book. I love David Brooks. He's an op-ed writer for the *New York Times*. He has not professed faith in Christ, but I think he's close. In his new book he talks a lot about humility. He says something like, "Humility is not thinking lowly of yourself, but accurately about yourself. It's an adequate view of your own nature and a realization that you are not equipped to perform the tasks God has asked you to perform."

That's a non-Christian, secular, *New York Times* op-ed writer. Humility is not thinking lowly of yourself, but accurately of yourself with a view of your nature where you understand you are not equipped to perform the tasks God has asked you to perform. The point of the Ten Commandments and the point, in many ways, of the book of James is to reveal to us where we cannot so that we might fling ourselves on the one who *can* and find his grace sufficient for us in the struggle.

In fact, as long as the elders let me say it, I'll say it. Jesus knew what he was buying on the cross, and there has been no buyer remorse. He is not looking to return and go, "Hey, this one is broken. I didn't see it. It was in the box. It looked really pretty. I opened it up and the leg fell off. I don't want it anymore." He knew what he was getting. He knows it's scary to be us. He knows we stumble and bumble. He knows we're fools. He knows we don't even know what's coming later today, and he knows our lives are but a mist, but a vapor. So he has made a way.

The message over and over again is, "Get up. I've got you. Let's go. I knew this was coming. Get up. I paid for that. Yeah, you blew it. Now get back up, because I've covered that with my blood. Yeah, you got confused again. Yeah, you let pride creep in again. I know; I paid for that. Now get up. Let's keep going. I'll get you there. Progress, not perfection. You have my perfection while I move you through progress. Get up. Let's keep running." In a very real way, our Savior saves us and sustains us and encourages us and pushes us on through the finish line of glory.

There will be a day where we no longer wrestle. There will be a day when pride no longer creeps in, but that day is not today. All of this is good news. It might not feel like good news. You might not have a category to define this as good news, but conviction and an awareness of our arrogance is

good news, because it gives us the opportunity to repent of that and quit being the person who doesn't know what's coming later today, lecturing in rebellion against the one who knows all things and is everywhere at once and is all-powerful.

Don't be the 2-month-old demanding that life work your way. May we be a place rooted in humility so that true wisdom might be the walls of this house and all of the fruit of true wisdom might be born among us. Let's pray.

Father, I thank you for an opportunity to let your Word bear its weight on us. I pray, Father, even in this moment that you would increase our ideas, our understanding of our limitations, of where we lack knowledge, of where we lack power. Might we marvel at your omnipresence, your omniscience, your omnipotence. Help us know and understand and acknowledge our weaknesses. Let us be quick to confess.

Reignite a healthy curiosity in us about all things. Help us to acknowledge and make much of others. Help us set our minds on larger matters. Help us be driven by matters of faith and submission to you, and let us be serious about the relentless pursuit of doing what we know is right and forsaking what we know is wrong. We'll stumble. Give us confidence in you, confidence in your grace, confidence in your unwavering devotion to the glory of your name, which translates into a deep, deep commitment to us. It's for your beautiful name I pray, amen.

As I said in the beginning, we're going to end our time together with Communion. We provide Communion primarily for our covenant members, but if you're a guest with us today who's a believer in Christ in good standing with the church you're visiting us from, I want to invite you to the Table with us.

We are brothers and sisters in Christ, heirs of God, co-heirs with Christ, so I want to invite you to celebrate with us. Here's what I would like to ask. If you're not a believer in Christ, if you don't know what to do with this Jesus stuff, if you're not quite sure I know what I'm talking about, will you just abstain? Will you let the elements pass and just kind of watch us rejoice and be glad in the Lord together today?

To give you an opportunity to meditate on what has been said, to confess and consider the seriousness of what we're caught up in today, I've put two questions on the screen behind me, and they're questions I've pulled straight from the message we just heard. They're questions around...*In*

your life, are you failing to set your mind on the larger matters of faith and obedience to God? The second question has to do with...Are you trying in any real way to pursue the ethical will of God?

These are questions you have to answer. They can't be answered corporately. They have to be answered individually. They have ultimately a corporate fruit that's grown, but these are questions you must answer for you. So I want to give you a couple of minutes to consider, to confess sin, to repent where we need to repent, and then I'll be right back up and we'll celebrate the Table together as a family. So let me give you just a few moments here.

I am not naïve. I know that very much in this room there's a slew of us who, if we were very honest today, have a lot to confess before the Lord, a lot of confidence in self, a lot of compartmentalization, where we've cornered the Lord into this specific space, and he gets kind of spiritual time, so he gets Sunday morning, and maybe if something goes bad we ring our bell so he'll come and give us a new pillow or something to eat. We kind of make him that kind of bellhop.

Many of us, that's how we've compartmentalized our lives. It's a posture of arrogance. It's a posture of, "I don't need you except for when I do." It's that the Lord has no sway, no authority, nothing to say in almost every area of your life unless something goes wrong in that area of your life, and then all of a sudden the expectation is he flies in like Superman and fixes it all. Again, that's a horrifically arrogant posture to stand in.

The goal, the hope, is that Christ *is* our lives, and then that informs and drives all that we are and all that we do. Now for those of us who are Christians, we can fall into that just as easily as non-Christians. That's why this moment is so important in the life of the believer. We come in here, and we remember. We gather around the table, and we rejoice in the fact that that inexhaustible well of grace found in Christ did not run dry this week, that the longsuffering mercy and grace of God didn't dry out but is available to those of us who are in Christ.

This is the reminder that even though we have drifted a little bit and even though we have compartmentalized and even though we have told Jesus, "No, you sit there. You stay there. You're not welcomed into this area of my life," this is that reminder that where there is the ongoing ethic of confession and repentance, the peace and the mercy of God floods all of those areas and straightens out those crooked paths. We need only submit and be glad in him.

That's what this little cracker and cup is all about, the fact that that well doesn't run out of grace, not for the repentant. The Bible tells us that on the night Jesus was arrested, he took the bread and broke it and said, "This is my body broken for you. Do this in remembrance of me." After the meal, he took the cup and said, "This is the cup of the new covenant, the blood of the new covenant. Do this as long as you gather."

Father, we thank you for how you read us. We thank you for how you show up as we gather and encourage our hearts and really reveal things about our hearts we weren't sure were there, didn't know were there. I thank you for your kindness in conviction and your kindness in encouragement. I pray that as many of us have conversations we need to have, things we need to confess, encouragement we need to get out later today, you would grant us the courage to do all of those things.

Father, I thank you that you do lead us, you do hold us up, and you do help us. We thank you. We praise you. Father, until we gather again tonight, be honored and glorified. It's for your beautiful name I pray, amen.