

m MASTERCLASS | JAMES

DAI LY D E V O T I O N

DAY 18

READ

JAMES 4:7-10

FOCUS

⁷SUBMIT YOURSELVES, THEN, TO GOD. RESIST THE DEVIL, AND HE WILL FLEE FROM YOU. ⁸COME NEAR TO GOD AND HE WILL COME NEAR TO YOU. WASH YOUR HANDS, YOU SINNERS, AND PURIFY YOUR HEARTS, YOU DOUBLE-MINDED. ⁹GRIEVE, MOURN AND WAIL. CHANGE YOUR LAUGHTER TO MOURNING AND YOUR JOY TO GLOOM. ¹⁰HUMBLE YOURSELVES BEFORE THE LORD, AND HE WILL LIFT YOU UP.

REFLECTION from PASTOR AUTUMN IGO

As some of you may know, this past winter my family embarked on the 10-month process of remodeling our home. What this meant was that our contractor ripped off our roof one week prior to the first rain in December and put it back on one week after the last rain in March. Clearly, we have excellent timing. When the first rain came, my husband and I found ourselves quite concerned for all of the goods we had stored in the one standing room of our home...there was a roof over everything but the edges were a bit leaky. So at 10 pm after church one night we drove over to the house with tarps in hand.

Now, some (unkind) people might call me a bit bossy. Some might also apply this same label to my husband...and for at least one of us, the label is true. This makes life "interesting" for us when we try to take on projects together. In this situation, with family peace in view, I announced as we drove over, "Shane, you're in charge of this. You tell me what to do. I'm the helper." He gave me a doubtful look.

All went well as we began our project, and then he started to do things differently than I thought they should go. As I, helpfully, began to offer "advice," he reminded me of my promise in the car. My immediate (and humble) response was, "Yes, but my plan was better than yours!" Shockingly, our marriage survived, he did get the tarp up in spite of my "help," and I will tell you that I am blessed to be married to a very patient man.

You might have caught a glimpse of a problem that God and I have been working through for quite a while—I pretty much always think that I have a better plan. This attitude--the attitude that thinks I'm always right and my way is always best--is the polar opposite of humility, the opposite of the submission that James is talking about. James brackets a group of really difficult instructions in this section with two overarching commands: submit to God and be humble. These two words, submit and humble, are not popular words these days. The reason being, we ALL like to think that underneath it all we are fundamentally GOOD and that we are wise enough to make the best plans for ourselves...so WE should be the ones in charge. But we're really, really wrong.

Tim Keller has a famous quote that says that the Gospel is both the best and worst news we've ever heard. It's great news because in Christ we recognize that we are more loved than we could have ever hoped. But at the same time, it's terrible news because His death shows that we are at the same time more wicked than we ever dared believe. If we were so great and smart all on our own, why would He have had to go to such extreme lengths to save us? The truth is, we, each and every one of us is not great; we are pitiful, wretched, lost, wicked, and yes, evil...it took the death of the only perfect man who ever lived to save us. When we truly recognize the truth of who we are, it should make us mourn, it should make us wail, it should make us long for someone to make us pure and clean. In this state, we find the humility that James is commanding. In this state, we recognize that no plan we come up with could ever match the plans of the One who gave everything to save us.

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DAILY DEVOTION

DAY 18

REFLECTION from PASTOR AUTUMN IGO

A lot of folks would read this passage and think...what a mean God! Why do people have to debase themselves to be accepted by Him? The answer is: it is only when we come to the end of ourselves and recognize that all our plans and pride are only leading us to ruin, that He can step in and lead us to the path of life and fruitfulness He has prepared. We spend all this energy trying to lift ourselves up, to make ourselves higher...and we just can't do it! It's like a child trying to reach under her own arms and lift herself up onto something high to be able to see better. It's impossible! She needs her parent to reach down and lift her up so she can see! This is what God wants for us, to stop trying to lift ourselves and just let Him do it. We can't make ourselves great...our plans will fail, we aren't good enough. But HE can and He will if we will only humble ourselves enough to ask.

QUESTIONS

- IN WHAT WAYS HAVE YOU BEEN TRYING TO FORCE YOUR OWN AGENDA OR PLANS IN THIS SEASON?
- WHAT DO YOU NEED TO DO TO MOVE INTO A PLACE OF HUMILITY AND TRUST IN GOD?