

WEEK 10

DRAWING CLOSE TO GOD

WEEKLY BIBLE READING:

James 4:1-10 (NIV)

¹What causes fights and quarrels among you? Don't they come from your desires that battle within you? ²You want something but don't get it. You kill and covet, but you cannot have what you want. You quarrel and fight. You do not have, because you do not ask God. ³When you ask, you do not receive, because you ask with wrong motives, that you may spend what you get on your pleasures.

⁴You adulterous people, don't you know that friendship with the world is hatred toward God? Anyone who chooses to be a friend of the world becomes an enemy of God. ⁵Or do you think Scripture says without reason that the spirit he caused to live in us envies intensely? ⁶But he gives us more grace. That is why Scripture says: "God opposes the proud but gives grace to the humble."

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.

DRAWING CLOSE TO GOD
James 4: 1-10
DAY 1

WHAT SEPARATES YOU FROM GOD?

James 4: 1-3 What causes fights and quarrels among you? Don't they come from your desires that battle within you? You want something but don't get it. You kill and covet, but you cannot have what you want. You quarrel and fight. You do not have, because you do not ask God. When you ask, you do not receive, because you ask with wrong motives, that you may spend what you get on your pleasures.

As I write this, our nation is celebrating its 237th birthday. While that is not a great length of time in comparison to other countries in the world, it is still the longest running democracy the world has ever seen. That is a fact that the people of the United States of America take a great deal of pride in. As a nation, we are a free people. Immigrants that come here from former socialistic countries marvel at our abundance, and that we can travel from one end of the nation to the other without permission from the government.

To be sure freedom is a wonderful thing to celebrate, but is it entirely good for us? Think back with me to the beginning of time. In the Garden of Eden, Adam and Eve had more freedom than you will ever know. They had no Federal or State governments passing laws to dictate their actions. They only had God and He had only 1 rule; don't eat the fruit from the tree of the Knowledge of Good and Evil. It seemed simple enough. It was just a single rule that God asked them to obey. Yet I have always found it interesting that they fixated upon that one rule. Eve had already discovered that the fruit from that tree looked really good. How many times did she wander over to that tree to look at it? Did the serpent really have to try that hard to get her to take a bite?

Look at the first sibling rivalry. Cain's job was to grow crops and give some to God in thanks for His providing all of the ingredients needed to produce that crop. Yet Cain felt that his brother Abel's offerings were more appreciated than his. He allowed that feeling to build and build until he stood over the bleeding body of his dead brother.

David walked with God. There is not another man in the Bible who is described as being a man after God's own heart. What a privilege it would be if that were how others knew me. Yet, when he looked down from his palace at Bathsheba sunbathing, all of that honor and integrity went right out the window. When Nathan confronted David with his sin, he told the king how God had already given him a nation. What need was there to steal another man's wife?

On the day that you were created, God gave you freedom. There was nothing that forced God to grant you that freedom. You have the ability to choose not only if you will have a relationship with your creator, but the quality and depth of that relationship. You can choose to have absolutely nothing to do with God, you can allow Him to be your sole motivation for living or you can choose any relationship with God between those extremes. You can choose to pay attention to Him one day a week, you can serve him all of your days, or you can have anything in between.

Unfortunately one the maxims of freedom is that one must accept that consequences of that choice. Adam and Eve chose to believe the serpent's words and faced banishment from the garden. Cain chose his attitudes and was banished from his lands and family. David chose to take Bathsheba and never knew another moment of peace. That is exactly what James is saying in today's verses. He lists some of the consequences of our own self-centeredness. In other words, when I look at only myself and what I want, what are the consequences that follow?

What are the reasons for all of the conflicts and arguments in this world if it is not selfishness? Think of the last argument that you had in your family. Wasn't the root cause of that conflict the fact that someone wasn't getting their way? No one is immune from this. We like to think we are, but that old selfish tendency is always revealing its ugly head. There have been times when I was in the midst of a decision to relocate my family or find another job. To be honest, during that time I was resentful of my employer for putting me through that. My thoughts kept slipping into the mode that obviously the company wasn't thinking of its employees when they decide to relocate across the

country. They're not the least bit concerned with what they were putting me through!
Do you see how self-centeredness sneaks in?

So what happens if you allow this attitude of self-centeredness go unchecked? According to verse 2, James says that it eventually leads to murder. Now I really don't think that suddenly you are going to become an axe murderer. I believe that you have to look at murder in the broader sense that Jesus talked about in Matthew 5: 21, 22 in the NIV, where he said, **“You have heard that it was said to the people long ago, 'Do not murder, and anyone who murders will be subject to judgment.' But I tell you that anyone who is angry with his brother will be subject to judgment. Again, anyone who says to his brother, 'Raca,' is answerable to the Sanhedrin. But anyone who says, 'You fool!' will be in danger of the fire of hell.”** If you believe that you are the center of the universe, then others around you get treated with contempt. After all, those people don't always agree with you. Most of them are too busy looking out for themselves.

Even your prayer life can be tainted with self-centeredness. The next time you have a time of prayer, notice how many times the words, “I” and “me” are used in your prayers. Now I know that if you think about it, you won't do it. You will probably pray the most unselfish prayer of your life. At least that is how I would do it. James here is describing the reason why God doesn't answer most prayer. It is because you want what you want and expect that God wants the same thing. Isn't that at the root of what James is saying here? You don't get what you ask from God because you ask from the wrong motives. When you pray, remember who you are addressing, the creator of the universe. You need to always be willing to defer to His wisdom in your prayer life.

We'll be talking about how to gain a closer and more intimate relationship with God this week. This is only the first step.

STUDY QUESTIONS:

1. Why is the freedom we have a dual edged sword when it comes to our walk with God?
2. When was the last time selfishness entered into your family relationships?
3. Relate a time when you allowed self-centeredness escalate a dispute with another person.
4. Spend some time in prayer right now without using the words “I” or “me.”

DRAWING CLOSE TO GOD

James 3: 1-10

DAY 2

CHOOSE YOUR FRIENDS WISELY

James 4:4-5 You adulterers! Don't you realize that friendship with this world makes you an enemy of God? I say it again, that if your aim is to enjoy this world, you can't be a friend of God. [5] What do you think the Scriptures mean when they say that the Holy Spirit, whom God has placed within us, jealously longs for us to be faithful?

I have always been a fan of books about warfare. I can never leave a new book by Tom Clancy at the bookstore. Dale Brown and W.E.B. Griffin books line the bookshelves of my den. Almost the entire set has been read through at least twice. Though I am a fan of that genre of book, I have never felt “led” to serve time in our military. For those of you who have served, I am sure that you will tell me that the military of real life is not a lot like that of the books that are out there.

That fact, however, is not true of the great spiritual warfare that all of us are involved in. Yesterday, you were reading about warfare that exists within yourself. Today, you will be reading about warfare that exists between this world's system and the kingdom of God. Tomorrow, you will read about warfare that exists between yourself and God.

As a reminder of what we have talked about before, when the Bible talks about the world in this sense, it is defined as all that is hostile, rebellious and opposed to God. It is the system of thought that we are all exposed to that actively opposes all that is God. Warren Wiersbe in his Bible Exposition Commentary describes people under the world's influence as those who are always at war with themselves because of selfish desires. They never enjoy life. Instead of being thankful for the blessings they do have, they complain about the blessings they do not have. They cannot get along with other people because they are always envying others for what they have and do. They are always looking for that "magic something" that will change their lives, when the real problem is within their own hearts.

To a certain extent, that description is talking to each one of us. There is no one immune to the world this side of heaven. It would be really nice if we could follow God wholeheartedly all of the time. It just doesn't happen for any of us. We follow the world when we start to value such things as money, lands, position, cars, popularity, recognition, the opposite sex, possessions, honor or fame. So let's take a look at what James says in this important section of scripture and try to get some strategies for shaking the world's influence in our lives.

The first thing that leaps out at me when I look at this passage is the description that James uses to describe me. He calls me an adulterous person. Now you have to admit, this is not a description that fits very well with any of us, but it does get your attention. Obviously, James is speaking of adultery in a spiritual sense. I am sure that you are familiar with the term in a marital sense. It means that once you are married, you are to save yourself for the spouse that God has joined you to. Well spiritually, when you

decided to follow Jesus, God describes that relationship in the same sense. In fact, Paul describes the church as the Bride of Christ (2 Corinthians 11: 2.) You are promised to one husband (Christ). When you start fooling around with the world, that is what James is describing as spiritual adultery.

So what does James mean for you to be a friend of the world and are therefore an enemy of God? The issue here is with the focus of your life. It means that you seek the things of this world so much that you will deceive, lie, cheat, and steal to get them. You actively seek out the fleshly pleasures and partying spirit of this world.

I don't know about you, but I find a great deal of comfort in verse 5. James is telling you that even when you get involved in behavior that is not glorifying to God, He doesn't abandon you or walk out on you. When does the Holy Spirit yearn over us with jealousy? The Holy Spirit is always yearning over us and He is always jealous over us, even if we turn away from Christ and become a friend of the world. Even if we become adulterers, the Spirit of God does not cast us off and turn away from us. He loves us and cares for us and wants to deliver us. He yearns and longs for us with deep, intense jealousy, yearns and longs for us to return to Christ, and give Him our full devotion.

So how do you defeat worldliness in your life? The first step would be to confront it one day at a time. Each day brings forth new temptations that need to be addressed by themselves. You cannot ever think that you have conquered worldliness and can, therefore, move on to something else. As soon as you ignore it, worldliness will start creeping back into your life.

The second step is to begin each day by dedicating your actions and attitudes to God for that day. Ask Him to reveal to you attitudes that come up that do not glorify Him. Worldliness will never glorify God, so if you seek God's glory in everything that you think and do, you will keep yourself free from it.

Finally, be sensitive to the Holy Spirit who is working in your life at all times. When you began a life of following God, He gave you His Holy Spirit to live in you. You can choose to remain sensitive to that Holy Spirit or you can choose to ignore Him. One of the qualities of a person who is sensitive to the Holy Spirit is that they listen to that spirit as he warns us that we are getting into worldliness and cautions us to watch out.

It's important to God that you stay walking with Him and stay focused. You are important to your heavenly Father and He wants to do great things through you, if you will just let Him. Remember your mother always said that you should choose your friends wisely. This is never more important than when you are speaking in spiritual terms.

STUDY QUESTIONS:

1. As you look at your life this past week, how close were you to the world?
2. How did it make you feel when James called you an adulterer?
3. Did you begin today by dedicating your life and your actions to God?
4. Are you praying right now to be sensitive to the Holy Spirit today?

DRAWING CLOSE TO GOD
James 3: 1-10
DAY 3

OBEY IS NOT PIG LATIN

James 4:6-7 But he gives us more grace. That is why Scripture says: "God opposes the proud but gives grace to the humble." Submit yourselves, then, to God. Resist the devil, and he will flee from you.

Actually I am not the first person to think that the word "Obey" sounds like Pig Latin. Actually that idea comes from an old Bill Cosby routine. He was talking about what husbands and wives remembered about the wedding vows. He said if a husband were called upon to remember the vows that he promised on his wedding day, most likely he would remember the words love and cherish. If you ask the wife what part of the vows she remember, she will say, "I remember the word, obey, and he better continue to obey if he knows what's good for him." We all smile at those words but the reality is that the word obey does have some negative feelings attached to it.

I suppose it goes back to our childhood memories. It is sometimes a word that is associated with parents and punishment. That could explain why some people look at the word so negatively. Of course that perspective does change when one gets to be a parent. I recognize that there are times when obedience is a key to your very survival. When you see your child running towards the street, you want him to listen to your warning, process that warning and give instant obedience lest he be hurt by the car coming towards him.

To some people, obedience means having no fun. Billy Joel once wrote a song called, "Only the Good Die Young." The song was sung about the fact the Mr. Joel believed that good, Catholic girls had no fun. Hollywood has always honored the rebel as being young and adventurous. With the entire world speaking out against obedience, it is not hard to imagine why most people feel that a life of obedience is something close to slavery.

With that in mind, let's turn our attention to today's scripture passage. The key idea in verse 7 is submission to God. The Greek word that James used there is HUPOTASSO. The word is a combination of 2 separate words in Greek. The first, HUPO, means underneath or below. The second, TASSO, means to set or to arrange in an orderly fashion. It is the idea that you voluntarily place yourself in a position that is underneath God. It is just another way of saying obedience.

It is interesting where obedience took some Bible characters. For Abraham, it meant almost sacrificing his son. For Jonah, it took him to the Assyrian capital of Nineveh. Probably the most dramatic example of obedience is found in Matthew 26: 39, **"He went on a little farther and fell face down on the ground, praying, 'My Father! If it is possible, let this cup of suffering be taken away from me. Yet I want your will, not mine.'**" It was obedience that took Jesus to the cross. It was out of Paul's obedience that he got his experience. **"Five times I received from the Jews the forty lashes minus one. Three times I was beaten with rods, once I was stoned, three times I was shipwrecked, I spent a night and a day in the open sea, I have been constantly on the move. I have been in danger from rivers, in danger from bandits, in danger from my own countrymen, in danger from Gentiles; in danger in the city, in danger in the country, in danger at sea; and in danger from false brothers** (2 Corinthians 11: 24-26 NIV)." Not exactly a week at Club Med is it?

So why would anyone possibly want to make a decision to submit to God? Is it because God is bigger and will hurt you if you don't? Perhaps it is because He is your God and Savior. Bill Hybels, in his book, *Descending Into Greatness*, talked about 3 reasons for obeying God.

The first one was that submitting to God would protect you from hurting yourself. That idea is easy when you consider how much trouble you can get into when you are unrestrained. Think about it. Would you ever do what is right if the Holy Spirit weren't prompting you? Paul was quoting various Old Testament writings when he said, **"There**

is no one righteous, not even one; there is no one who understands, no one who seeks God. All have turned away, they have together become worthless; there is no one who does good, not even one. Their throats are open graves; their tongues practice deceit. The poison of vipers is on their lips. Their mouths are full of cursing and bitterness. Their feet are swift to shed blood; ruin and misery mark their ways, and the way of peace they do not know (Romans 3: 10-15 NIV)." That is a pretty heavy-duty description of what man is like without God.

The second reason that Bill Hybels gives us for submitting to God is that it keeps you from hurting others. It is God's will for you to think of other people before you think about yourself, to love your spouse as you do yourself, to honor your parents and to watch out for the poor. Remember the example of Jesus in how He dealt with the people around Him. You get the idea.

The last of Bill Hybels' reasons for submitting to God is that it keeps you from wasting your life. You only get one shot at life. You can live for yourself and buy your toys, or you can allow God to use you to make an impact on those around you. You can party and have a good time or you can change the world. You can watch TV or you can witness to your neighbor and get to spend eternity with him.

Submitting to God demands trust. There is no way that you can submit to God without it. You must understand that God knows all things, that He can see your future as clearly as you can see the page of this Bible Study. It is not easy to trust God and submit. No one likes to be uncomfortable, but following God is not always comfortable. Submission may mean that you have to be without a job for a while. Submission may mean that you have to relocate to another city. Submission may mean going through pain. One thing is certain, submission is the only way you will ever see the power and working of God through your life.

STUDY QUESTIONS:

1. If you took a look at your life in the past week, how would you rate your submission to God on a scale of 1 to 10?
2. Describe a time in your life when you did not submit to God and it hurt you.
3. Describe a time in your life when you did not submit to God and it hurt someone else.
4. Do you really believe that in submitting to God you stand the best chance of living an exceptional life?

DRAWING CLOSE TO GOD

James 3: 1-10

DAY 4

LIVING IN GOD’S NEIGHBORHOOD

James 4:8-9 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.

Yesterday, we were talking about what the women’s movement in this country call the “S” word. To the radical feminist, the mere mention of the word, submission, carries such negativity that they don’t even want to say the word. Today, we will be talking about the “R” word, repentance. I say that because it is a word that is rarely used in today’s church. You will never see it on the sign out front, you will never find it used in

a yellow page ad. That is probably because people just don't think of themselves as needing to repent of anything.

According to the Barna Organization, out of the top 10 reasons people choose a particular church, 8 of them have nothing to do with what is preached or taught. All 8 reasons can be summed up in how the church makes them feel. Now I'm not saying that is a bad thing. It's just that churches tend to keep things upbeat and positive and topics like repentance don't seem to fit in as well. So the topic just doesn't get discussed much. All you have to do is to go back 20 or 30 years and repentance was the main theme coming from most pulpits in America. In fact, in a lot of churches across this country, it was the only theme. The preacher would list all of the sins committed, tell everyone they were rotten and the people's heads would be nodding in the affirmative.

Today, if a pastor attempted to do a little pulpit pounding, I don't think that he would meet with the same response. First the response would be, "I'm not that bad," followed by a mass exodus for the door. That's because we as a people know what "bad" looks like. We see it everyday in the newspaper and on TV. Compared to that, we don't look so bad. The only problem with that assessment is that God's standard is not the same as we get in the newspaper or on the television.

When you look at the ministry Jesus had during his short stay on earth, what was the first thing that he told the people? That's right, He told them to repent (Mark 1: 15). What was the main message of Jesus' forerunner, John the Baptist? Once again the answer is "repent." Yes Jesus did use words of comfort like Mt. 11: 28, but more often than not, he was in their face challenging them to be all they could be for God. Jesus set the sin bar high when he said, "**For I tell you that unless your righteousness surpasses that of the Pharisees and the teachers of the law, you will certainly not enter the kingdom of heaven** (Mt. 5: 20 NIV)."

Now the Pharisees and Rabbis were known for their outward devotion towards God. The whole Pharisaic movement started as a result of the Maccabean kings drifting away from

God. Pharisees were about 2 things, the paying of the tithe and the following of the entire Mosaic Law together with all of the oral traditions. The people gave the Pharisees a lot of admiration and respect in Jesus' day. You can almost hear them gasp at Jesus' words here. Then 28 verses later, Jesus does it again, when He says, "**Be perfect, therefore, as your heavenly Father is perfect** (Matthew 5: 48 NIV)." Now you want to scream, "Time out here," because you realize that perfection is not attainable. You would be right in that except that you have to take into account the blood of Jesus Christ.

Now in every doctrine class that I have ever taken, it has been taught that Jesus death on the cross paid the penalty for all of my sins. Notice how I underlined the word "all." I believe the Bible teaches exactly that. Having accepted Jesus' sacrifice as a free gift (Eph 2: 8,9), there is no more sin in my life. As Paul said to the church in Rome, "**There is now no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus** (Romans 8: 1 NIV)." So if that is the case, why do I have to worry about repentance? If I have no more sin, then what is there for me to repent?

Well let's say, I travel down a city street at 60 miles an hour and notice a flashing red light behind me. Even if someone else pays my fine, the violation is still there. The penalty is gone but I still have to live with the consequences of my actions, especially when next year's auto insurance bill gets here. The same is true of your sin. The penalty has been paid, but not the consequence. Sin is usually defined as rebellion against the rule of God in your life. When you rebel against God, it strains your relationship with Him. The Bible says that God cannot look upon sin.

Repentance in the Greek means a changing in the innermost consciousness. In other words, the Greeks writers saw repentance as having the ability to see your actions the way God sees them. Repentance never involves self-loathing or guilt. It involves insight and great understanding. Rather than being depressed over my inability to follow God, I can praise Him over His great love and forgiveness. I can stand in awe of God and praise Him.

So how do you know when you have truly repented? I ran across these 4 ideas in an article by James MacDonald in Men of Integrity magazine. He says that you can know that you have truly repented when you quit rationalizing. Rationalization of my behavior is just another word for deception. True repentance only happens when you say, “I have sinned against you, no “because,” no “but,” and no “please understand.”

Secondly repentance truly happens when there is genuine sorrow. There must be a sense of brokenness before a righteous God. When there is, repentance has taken place.

Thirdly, there should be open confession. When you have wronged someone, you have already gone to that person and have asked for their forgiveness. Repentance has occurred when you can admit your sin to an accountability partner.

Finally, repentance occurs when there is restitution. You do whatever can to be done to restore what you broke when you blew it. Sometimes that is not totally possible, but you do it to the best of your ability. You need to do what you can to make it right on the horizontal level after its right between you and God.

STUDY QUESTIONS:

1. Take some time in prayer to allow God to reveal any sin currently in your life.
2. Did God reveal anything that you need to repent of?
3. If that sin is against another, are you willing to ask forgiveness from that person?
4. Are you willing to make restitution for anything you have done?

5. Are you thanking God for his healing and grace right now?

Drawing Close To God
James 4: 1-10
Day 5

IT'S HARD TO BE HUMBLE

James 4: 10 Humble yourselves in the presence of the Lord, and He will exalt you.

I have often taught about the need for Christians to be humble. Even earlier in this devotional series, we talked about what it means to put another's interests ahead of our own. For that is what humility really means. I know that is not what the world thinks. They think humility is the same thing as a doormat; something you step on to get where you are going. As you saw in Philippians 2, the true example for humility was Jesus Christ, Himself. Paul describes the emptying of Christ in intimate detail; how He became obedient even to being crucified on a cross.

In all of the verses of that chapter, you never see the word "easy" used once. There is nothing easy about a lifestyle that puts others first. Yet the rewards are great. Paul teaches about the same relationship that James teaches in today's verse; the very fact that the creator of the universe, in the end, will exalt the person who humbles himself. To that end, Paul said, "**Therefore God exalted him to the highest place and gave him the name that is above every name, that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, in heaven and on earth and under the earth, and every tongue confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father** (Philippians 2: 9-11 NIV)."

While the 2nd chapter of Philippians gives us the doctrine, today I want to delve into the 13th chapter of John to see the practical application of the principle of humility. I want to see how Jesus worked this into His everyday life.

Read with me the first 4 verses of the chapter, **“It was just before the Passover Feast. Jesus knew that the time had come for him to leave this world and go to the Father. Having loved his own who were in the world, he now showed them the full extent of his love. The evening meal was being served, and the devil had already prompted Judas Iscariot, son of Simon, to betray Jesus. Jesus knew that the Father had put all things under his power, and that he had come from God and was returning to God; so he got up from the meal, took off his outer clothing, and wrapped a towel around his waist (John 13: 1-4 NIV).”** These verses are often overlooked. Look at them again and let them sink in. The principle here is that Jesus did the things that He did because He thought the way He thought. Notice how the word, “Knew” is used again and again. You do the things that you do because you think the way you think. You will never **do** anything different from the way that you **think** deeply. If you want to correct wrongdoing, then you have to attack it by altering the way you think deeply. Solomon said the same thing in Proverbs, **“For as he thinks within himself, so he is (Proverbs 23: 7 NASB).”**

So what things did Jesus know in the first 3 verses of John 13? He knew that the ministry portion of his life was coming to a close. The second thing that Jesus knew was that He loved His disciples deeply. Verse 3 tells us that Jesus knew where He had come from and where He was going. Actually that is the same place, the throne room of God. The very next word in verse 4 is the connecting word, “So.” That’s how I can say that it was the things that Jesus knew deep down in His heart that motivated Him to do His next great act. Why would John take such pains to tell us the first 3 verses if they weren’t important?

There is no information in the Bible describing what Jesus looked like while He was here on earth. Did you ever wonder why that is true? I believe it was because his physical

attributes are of no importance. There is a lot of space in the Bible given to how Jesus thought. That is because it is extremely important. If you want to act like Jesus, you have to learn how to think like Jesus.

The next 14 verses describe how Jesus rose and washed everyone's feet. Now Bible scholars will tell you that this was the normal job of a slave. Everyone in that room knew that the job needed to be done. It's just that the disciples were too busy arguing about who was going to be the greatest in the coming kingdom. They were also looking to someone else, lower than themselves, to do such menial tasks. Imagine their horror when their Messiah, the long awaited hope of Israel, took off his outer garments and began washing their feet.

Jesus' point is given to us in verse 14 & 15. Everyone who considers himself a disciple of Jesus Christ is told to do likewise. The next part of the last evening is given to Jesus predicting His betrayal and sending Judas out to do his dirty work. Jesus then gives His disciples something that will change the world. He said, "**A new command I give you: Love one another. As I have loved you, so you must love one another. By this all men will know that you are my disciples, if you love one another** (John 13: 32, 33 NIV)."

There has been a lot of debate as to what Jesus meant by the words, love, as I have loved you. Some have pointed to His upcoming sacrificial death. I think that is a wrong conclusion because the disciples weren't with Him on that subject. Whenever His death came up in the conversation, the disciples were always either confused or denying the accuracy of His words. Jesus usually spoke to where His listeners were. I don't think that this occasion was any different.

It's kind of like the man who was talking to his friend. He said, "My friend, if you had \$2 million and I had nothing, would you give me \$1 million?" To which the friend replied, "Of course, I would." The man then said, "Friend, if you had 2 BMW's and I had no way to get around, would you give me one of yours?" The friend again replied that he would.

Finally the man said, “Friend, if you had 2 shirts and I was naked, would you give me one?” The friend didn’t say anything, but there was a look on his face like he was in a perplexing quandary over the question. The man said, “Friend, you just told me that you would readily give up \$1 million and a BMW, what’s so hard about a shirt?” The friend said, “I actually own 2 shirts.”

I could walk up to each one of you and tell you that I love you enough to die for you. While that is nice sentiment, it is really no big deal. How likely is it that I will ever have the chance to prove it to you? Not a real big chance, is there? If, however, I washed your feet, what would that tell you?

My brothers and sisters, humility is found in the little things. It is found in the way each of us serves the others. One can see it every day as you weed the gardens around the church property. It is found in the friendly greeting and handshake on the front steps. It is found in the hundreds of works of service done everyday in our midst. Remember that when you do even the small things, you are doing the work that Jesus Christ would be doing if He were here.

STUDY QUESTIONS:

1. Since we talked about putting the needs of other before your own several weeks ago, so you see any improvement in your life since then? How?
2. What practical ways do you show that you have love for others?
3. How do you serve the needs of the Body of Christ on a weekly basis?