# Draw Near to God: A Life of Repentance

Pastor Mark Johnson on Worship, Prayer, Fellowship, and a Heart Made New

**Pastor Mark Johnson** | Friday, October 23, 2026 | Host: Mark Burns

## Program Summary

In this Friday room-of-friends Bible study, Mark Burns and Pastor Mark Johnson return to James 4:7–10 and explore what it means to submit to God, resist the devil, and draw near to Him as a daily way of life. Pastor Mark describes a pathway of genuine repentance through worship that honors God's holiness, prayer that submits our will to His, fellowship in the body of Christ, listening to the Holy Spirit in agreement with Scripture, and obedience to God's Word. The group discusses the difference between outwardly washing one's hands—turning from sinful actions—and purifying one's heart through confession, prayer, and the Spirit's work. James' challenge to the double-minded invites believers to grieve sin rather than excuse it. The discussion closes with the promise that God lifts up those who humble themselves before Him.

## Key Takeaways

• Submitting to God, resisting the devil, and drawing near to God are ongoing practices, not weekly rituals.

• Worship draws me near as I recognize God's holiness and goodness.

• Prayer invites God's will into the everyday decisions and desires of my life.

• The church is a family of believers, not merely a building or a religious performance.

• Christian fellowship provides accountability, encouragement, service, and mutual care.

• Spiritual guidance should be tested against the teaching of Scripture.

• God gives a full range of human emotions; grief and sorrow can be appropriate responses.

• 'Wash your hands' calls for practical repentance and turning away from wrong actions.

• 'Purify your hearts' goes deeper, asking God to transform motives and desires.

• Double-mindedness means trying to serve God while clinging to worldly priorities.

• Healthy conviction leads to confession and change rather than pretending sin does not matter.

• Humility helps me recognize my own need for grace and become more patient with others.

• James 4:10 promises that God will lift up those who humble themselves before Him.

## Scripture References

• James 4:7–10

• Matthew 6:9–10

• Hebrews 10:23–25

• 1 Corinthians 12:12–27

• John 10:27

• Psalm 119:105

• Hebrews 10:14

## Quote of the Day

“This is not a once-a-week event. This is not a once-a-day event. These are all-the-time events.” — Pastor Mark Johnson

## Broadcast Notes

The opening Scripture is James 4:7–10, read by Tad Jagish, revisiting the same passage studied the previous Friday. Pastor Mark calls submission, resistance, and drawing near a daily walk. Matthew 6:9–10 illustrates worship and yielding to God's will in prayer. Hebrews 10:23–25 anchors the discussion of the church as a mutually supportive family; the group adds that each member's gifts build up the body. Pastor Mark discusses discerning the Spirit's guidance while testing it against God's Word. Participants then consider grief and mourning as appropriate emotions in repentance. The imagery of washing hands points to changed behavior, while purifying the heart requires confession, prayer, and the Holy Spirit. Double-mindedness is exposed through self-justification, gossip, selfishness, and comparing ourselves to others rather than Christ. Pastor Mark concludes that true humility recognizes sin honestly and responds with repentance. Mark closes by encouraging listeners—including those unable to attend church—to draw near to God through His Word.

## ❤■ Practical Applications

• Begin each morning by submitting my plans and reactions to God.

• Use the Lord's Prayer to worship God and yield my will to His.

• Participate in Christian fellowship as a contributor, not merely an attendee.

• Encourage someone in my church family who needs practical care.

• Test any claimed spiritual leading against Scripture and wise counsel.

• Identify one behavior that needs to stop and take a concrete step of repentance.

• Ask God to reveal a motive beneath an outward behavior that needs purification.

• Confess where I have excused gossip, selfishness, or divided loyalties.

• Respond to correction with humility instead of comparing myself to others.

• Pray James 4:8 and draw near to God throughout ordinary moments of the day.

## Today's Challenge

For seven days, practice James 4:7–10 as a daily examination. Each morning, pray: 'Lord, I submit to You. Help me resist temptation and draw near to You.' Each evening, ask: 'What action needs to change? What attitude needs to be purified? Where was I double-minded?' Confess honestly, take one concrete step of obedience, and thank God for His promise to draw near.

## Closing Prayer

Father, I humble myself before You. Teach me to submit to Your goodness and resist whatever draws my heart away from You. Help me draw near not merely through a weekly routine but through worship, prayer, Your Word, and daily obedience. Thank You for the church family and the encouragement, accountability, and care You provide through other believers. Show me where my actions need to change, and give me courage to turn from what is wrong. Purify my heart where selfishness, anger, gossip, pride, or divided loyalties have taken root. I cannot change my deepest desires by my strength alone, so I ask Your Holy Spirit to work within me. Give me a tender conscience, an obedient spirit, and greater patience with others who also need Your grace. Thank You for the promise that when I draw near to You, You draw near to me. In Jesus' name, Amen.

## About Today's Speaker

Pastor Mark Johnson of Calvary Church regularly facilitates the Friday room-of-friends Bible study on Mark & Friends. His teaching connects Scripture with everyday decisions, relationships, character, and spiritual growth. In this continuation of James 4:7–10, he encourages worship, prayer, fellowship, repentance, and humility as practical expressions of drawing near to God.

## About Today's Host

Mark Burns is General Manager of the WLUJ Family of Stations and Great News Radio Network and host of Mark & Friends. With decades of experience in Christian radio and ministry, Mark welcomes pastors, teachers, and everyday believers to conversations that help listeners grow in God's Word and follow Jesus.

## Proofread Broadcast Transcript

We're glad you're here. We're glad you're here. Fellowship is sweeter.

Knowing you're here. It's so good to see you. We hope that it's clear.

Everyone loves you. We're glad you're here. Reading from James chapter 4, verses 7 through 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. That's James chapter 4, verses 7 through 10. And that was Tad Jagish reading for us today.

And if you said, that sounded familiar, like I heard it last week. Yeah, Frank read it last week, but there's so much good content and information and God-honoring conviction and healthy tools for us to navigate through our day with. We're doing it again because Pastor Mark Johnson of Calvary Church has much more to say and share about these verses.

I think they're crucial for us all. Especially last week after we talked about submitting, resisting the devil, and drawing near to God, three things that we should always be cognizant of and recognizing the good character of God. We'll want to submit to Him, and we want to resist the devil, but drawing near to God is one of my favorite passages and concepts.

And I hope today, listening friend, as you tune in, you're going to find yourself drawing closer to God. He loves you, He cares for you, and He has plans and purposes to be realized through you, even this very day. It might be a thoughtful word, a caring remark, a gentle touch, maybe giving a gift card to a senior or a veteran, or just assisting somebody in a simple way.

You can extend God's love and care. And so I pray, I trust that as we pray today, that you'll be blessed through what's shared and said. So Mark, we're reviewing again these verses that we read last week, James 4, 7 through 10.

What are we in for today? Well, we stop and we think about this. Here's the pathway to true repentance, is what we just talked about. So you think about submit yourself to God.

You think about resist the devil. You think about come and draw near to God. This is not a once a week event.

This is not a once a day event. These are all the time events. This is a walk in life.

It's when I'm driving down the street, and something happens that I don't like, and how am I going to act? How do I act at the store when they're not responding to me the way I want them to respond to me when I'm bringing something back to them? How do I want to live my life constantly? Now this aspect of drawing near to God is just too messy and too humbling for some people. They want a nice safe religion. Let me do these three things and those two things, and now I'm okay and I can go about my business.

They want to keep their, what they would say, their dignity about them. They don't want to have this daily aspect of God moving in their life and correcting their life and changing their life. They just want to go through some ritual.

But remember, David was a man after God's own heart. David was both a giant killer and a dancer. He worshiped fully and completely, and he was a man of faith that stepped out and did what God would have him to do.

So how do we draw near to God? Well, let's listen to this scripture, and I want you to hear it. This is Jesus' teaching on prayer. It's in Matthew chapter 6, verse 9. Who's going to read that for us today? I will do that.

Matthew 6, 9. Pray like this. Our Father in heaven, may your name be kept holy. There you go.

One of the ways that we draw near to God and stay near to God is to worship God. Again, not a once a week thing, but we live this life of recognizing and seeing the greatness of God. When we don't revere God rightly, when we don't see Him as holy, when we don't see Him as right, when we see ourselves as in a debate with God about what's right and wrong, we begin to revere things that will destroy us.

We step out from God's protections. Our spirits grow weak from false desire because we're in a wrong place instead of being submitted to God. And so one of the places where we draw near to Him is in worshiping Him.

The next place is the very next verse. Matthew 6, 10. Read that one for us.

Your kingdom come, your will be done, on earth as it is in heaven. This prayer invites God's power into our life and to every area of our life. Let your will be done.

I know I have a will. How many of you in this room have a will? I bet every person listening has a strong will. Strong-willed child, right? My strong will's got me in trouble a lot of times.

I've got to submit that will to let your will come in my life. Let your will direct me. And I've got to listen to Him and listen to His word.

Prayer invites the will and the power of God into our lives. Hebrews 10. Hebrews 10, 23-25.

Let us hold fast to the profession of our faith without wavering, for He is faithful that promised. And let us consider one another to provoke unto love and to good works, not forsaking the assembling of ourselves together as the matter of some is, but exhorting one another and so much the more as you see the day approaching. That's Hebrews 10, 23-25.

Being a part of a church is not like being a part of a health club. It's not like being a part of going to a movie theater. I go to church to be part of the church.

The church is not the building. The church is the people. If the building burns down, the church can still meet tomorrow.

It doesn't matter. The building is not the issue. The people are the issue.

And it's inside of that family of believers that we are held accountable. It's inside of that family of believers that we are encouraged. It's inside of that family of believers that we find new wisdom and we find help.

Many people miss that aspect of what the church is. They think they go there for a performance. They go there to put in their duty.

They go there to go through some ritualistic steps. And they miss the family of God being the family of God that helps us draw near to God. There should be a deep love in us.

Love being defined as wanting the best for others. For the other people that are in my body of believers. My local fellowship.

And they should have that for me. And we find life in that. We should rejoice with each other.

We should mourn with each other. We should support each other. We should be a body of believers showing the world that in spite of all of our differences, Christ unites us.

That's where we find ourselves drawing near to God. You know, Mark, I also think it's important, the reason we go to church is so that we can serve and our gifts can be used to build up that group, that body of believers. So God wants all of us in church because we can add to what's needed in that body of believers.

Mark, none of us are complete on our own. This is what Paul teaches us in Corinthians. You know, he says you're a body.

The body's not made up of an eye. It's not made up of an ear. It's made up of the completeness of the body.

The ear can't say to the body, I don't need you. We need each other, and others need us. And when we come into the body of Christ, loving one another, wanting the best for one another, not jealous of each other's position, not threatened by each other's position, but doing what we can do, it builds life throughout the body.

I wrote down this word earlier, and I want you to share some thoughts on it, that Matthew 6-9 that Liz read, Matthew 6-10 also, it's about a relationship. We worship God, we pray to Him, because we're building that relationship. So talk just a little about the relationship that God offers all of us, because there might be a listener tuned in today that has no concept that they can have a relationship.

That's why we can submit to God, because we know His great character. He's for us, He's good, and we can have a relationship. Our spirit was made to walk in unity with God.

Sin and rebellion of our forefathers broke that bond. And because that bond was broken, the life that we need to live the way God would have us to live was broken. And we are now creatures that are ruled by sin nature.

This is why the work of Christ is so important for us, is because we become a new creation by the power of the Spirit of God moving in us that was made available to us by the work that Christ completed on the cross. And so we need that relationship with God to be more than just a head knowledge about God, but to be a personal walk with God where I talk to Him and where He talks to me. I hear some preachers from time to time say, we've got to stop this whole thing about God talking to us.

Jesus says that the Holy Spirit comes to lead us into all things, to teach us all things. How does He do that if He doesn't talk to us? There's things in my life that the Bible doesn't address. The Bible tells me to marry a woman who is God's servant.

Past that, it doesn't tell me anything. But the Spirit of God does. The Spirit of God leads me.

The Spirit of God directs me and directs me to that right person in my life. You're not going to open your Bible and find the answer to, should I quit this job and take this job? You'll find that when you're walking close to God and you're praying and you're seeking Him and you learn how to hear His voice and to sense His leading. And you will find yourself at times where this other job, that's going to pay more money, the hours are going to be better, and God's saying, no, you don't know what you're getting yourself into.

Don't do that. And you'll sense a check in your spirit. And when you learn how to listen to that check in your spirit, you're safer.

I agree, John. The Lord said, my sheep hear my voice and I know them and they follow me. That tells you right there He speaks to us personally through the Spirit and through the Word of God.

Everything I hear has to be in accordance to the Word of God. So I actually had somebody years ago come in and tell me, God's told me it's okay for me to divorce my wife. And I looked at him and said, God's told you no such thing.

The devil's told you that, but God has not told you that. Well, I'm just not happy. Your happiness is not something that your wife is dependent upon giving to you.

God will give you joy. God will fulfill the need of your heart. So you need to be faithful to what God has called you to do and what His Word has said, not be chasing after happiness someplace where you're not going to find it.

That triggers something that I was thinking earlier. God will draw near to you, and then it talks about being humble, and it brings up the word mourn. And I think with this obsession with, let's be happy all the time, all the time, and then it's like, you have to mourn.

Nobody wants to mourn. And I think that really gets in the way. Right there, that big thing right there is that, oh, we're going to have to be really sad.

God's given us a spectrum of emotions, and they're all appropriate sometimes. If I'm going to my father's funeral, I'm probably not going to be overjoyed in my life. I'm going to mourn.

Now, if I'm going to meet my dad, and he's fixing steaks out on the back grill, and we're going to have a great time, I may be happy about that trip. I may find joy in it. So God's given us all these spectrums of emotions.

They're all supposed to be in right order and right balance. So let me give you one last thing. When we talk about how we draw near to God, Psalm 119 says, Your word is a lamp to my feet and a light to my path.

That's how I draw near to God. What does God's word tell me to do? What does God's word teach me to do? So that's how we begin to walk in this area of drawing near to God. Now, James goes on to point out to these believers, to these Christ followers, that they're in need of some work.

He says to them, Wash your hands, you sinners. What's he saying? He's saying stop doing the things that you have been taught that are wrong. Stop them.

That's what wash your hands means. Yeah, get all the bad stuff out of your life. Get all the negative stuff, all the bad things out of your life.

And there's going to be a point in some of that that you don't understand how that works. But if you get it out of your life, you'll find that it does work. This reminds me of the phrase, Put your money where your mouth is.

Basically, this is like, okay, you claim to be a Christian. You claim to want to serve God. Well, here's your chance.

This is what you have to do. Here's what the Bible tells you to do, or this is what God is telling you to do. Now, do it.

You can't save yourself, but you can obey. If he tells you to do something, stop beating around the bush and making excuses and going, Yeah, but... Suck it up and just do it. I'm thinking this is referring us back to the top of the chapter.

And your question, what is repentance? That's what washing your hands would also mean. Get rid of that stuff. Yeah.

Repent and turn. Turn not just away from the sinful things you're doing, but we turn towards God. We're focusing on the Lord.

If somebody's listening today and maybe they're struggling with something like pornography, that seems to be an epidemic in America today. One of the ways that you would wash your hands of it is you would get yourself, again, accountable to some people, get some men around your life. If you have things in your house that open the door to pornography for you and you cannot stop it, then you get it out of your house.

You get rid of it. Whatever it is, you wash your hands of it. You get clean from it.

You get accountable for it. The next thing is purify your hearts. This is the hardest.

You start feeling the right way about things. Now, that is hard. This takes confession, it takes prayer, and it takes the Holy Spirit.

Amen. And so I begin to say, God, my heart isn't pure. I do have lust in my heart.

I do have anger in my heart. I do have bigotry in my heart. I do have selfishness in my heart that leads to all kinds of things.

I do have this. God, help me because I cannot do this on my own. His Word purifies me.

His Spirit purifies me. But I need to recognize from the Word, I am not that. I'm not that.

God, help me be that. So then he says, you are double-minded. Be careful.

You're double-minded. What does that mean? We are all this way at some point. We are all double-minded.

Yes, we're double-minded. I want to serve God, and I do stupid things. What is it? We have the mind of God, and we have the mind of the world.

We have a mind to serve God. We have a mind to serve ourselves. And so I've got to give up that double-mindedness and recognize that I can't make excuses for these things.

We just don't see it that way. We think it's normal for a Christian to feel the way I feel because we've let each other be our standard. I had a man tell me once, I'm as good as anybody in this church.

I said, you may be, but you're still a sinner, buddy. You're still lost. You're still on the road to hell.

You're still in big trouble. You may have more discipline in your life than every Christian you know. But they are dependent upon Christ, and you are dependent upon your pride.

We can't have the mind of the world and have the mind of Christ. We just don't see it because it's so normal in us. The sin is so normal.

We're so used to it. This is why submission to God is important. It's why resistance to the devil is important.

It's why we need to draw near to God and say, Show me where I'm wrong and where I'm right. Let me hear your voice. Hey, Mark, I'm just going to bring us back just a couple of words because I'm thinking where you said James is writing to believers.

And so would this have been a little bit of a shocker or a wake-up call? Wash your hands, you sinners. Because they probably, like many Christians, maybe we get a little prideful or we get judgmental of others, but he's saying, you sinners. And wouldn't they have like, wow, how dare he calls me a sinner? But then as they think about it, oh, I really am a sinner.

If you go someplace to church and you never get confronted, your toes never get stepped on, you never get challenged, you're probably not someplace where they're preaching the word much. The word is going to challenge you. Somebody asked me, do you worry about insulting somebody by calling out their sin? I said, I worry about standing before God and not calling out their sin.

That's what I worry about. I worry about them standing before God lost because I didn't tell them the truth. So this whole idea that any of us are so righteous that we don't need this process, we've missed it.

One of my favorite scriptures is in Hebrews, and it talks about how we have been made perfect by the blood of Christ while we are being perfected. And you think, how does that make sense? Well, before God, because of the blood of Christ, I can come before him because of his blood, and he will see me through the blood of Christ on my life. That doesn't mean I'm all done yet.

The Holy Spirit is still working in my life. And as soon as we all humbly accept that, then we become more patient with other people's faults. We become more patient with their failings.

We become more patient with the people around us. We look inside of our heart, and we become more open to God speaking to us and talking to us. We're not prideful.

All kinds of things happen to us when we realize we need God's help. As we submit to God and resist and draw near, we'll find inner conflicts, and we'll have to decide what are we going to do with those inner conflicts. Am I going to submit fully to God, or am I not? So let me wrap it up with this.

He tells us to grieve the difference. So I see it, and I treat it like a loss, like you would if a treasure was lost. You would grieve that that's in your life.

You'd be sorrowful for it. And so James gives us the signs of a funeral. This is how you should act and see about the difference between what God would have you to be and who you are on your own, when you see it, when you recognize it.

So let me ask you, what caused you to laugh? He says, turn to mourning. Have you ever laughed at gossip? Yes. Have you ever felt satisfaction with gossip? Remember, we're double-minded.

We need to repent of that. We need to look and say, I'm sorry that I was ever a part of that. Have you ever heard a coarse joke and laughed at it? When you should be mourning, what brought you joy in the past now turns to gloom.

So the world is appealing to our flesh. It is appealing to us, and we like it. But now I see that is in my way from really knowing God and the fullness of his gifts in my life.

Yes. And I mourn that. Oh, listening friend, a lot in this passage, chapter 4 of James, but I'll close out with verse 10.

Humble yourself before the Lord, and he will lift you up. He cares for you. He loves you.

He wants to work in and through you this very day. You need to learn to submit, resist the devil, and draw near to God, and he'll draw near to you. It's a great promise for all of us.

He loves you. He cares for you. And like I said, he wants to work in and through you.

And even today, when you go to work, when you care for your family, when you take a neighbor around the neighborhood or meet up with friends, God will be present as he works in and through you. What a great promise. Thank you, God, for your word.

Thank you, God, for the promises. Thank you, God, for Jesus. Thank you, God, for the church.

So I hope many of you, if not all of you, will be in church this Sunday. And for those of you maybe shut in or incarcerated or you can't get to a church, maybe the radio station and God's word can be a companion to help you draw near to him this very day. Well, thanks for listening.

Thanks for being a part of our Radio Listening family. This is Mark Burns and Pastor Mark Johnson in a room of friends with the Ministry of Great News Media. God bless you, and have a great day, night, and weekend.