

God Opposes the Proud, but Gives Grace to the Humble

Pastor Mark Johnson on Pride, Dependence, Obedience, Stewardship, and Humble Service

Program Summary

In this Friday edition of Mark & Friends, Pastor Mark Johnson continues James 4 with verse 6: 'God opposes the proud, but gives grace to the humble.' The room-of-friends discussion asks what pride really looks like in ordinary Christian life. Rather than limiting pride to obvious arrogance, Pastor Mark defines it as refusing dependence on God, taking credit for what He has supplied, or choosing my way over His. The group explores subtle expressions of pride in comparison, impatience, parenting, conflict, prayer, success, ministry, use of gifts, witnessing, money, and neglect of Scripture or Christian community. Humility is not a downtrodden view of oneself; it is understanding who God is, who I am, and obeying Him. The program closes by calling believers to use their gifts as stewards rather than owners, seek God's praise rather than human applause, and live as servants who faithfully represent Jesus.

Key Takeaways

Pride is more than arrogance; it appears whenever I refuse dependence on God or choose my way over His.

Everything I can do depends on abilities, breath, opportunity, and provision that ultimately come from God.

Comparison can become pride when I measure my faithfulness against someone else's failures.

Impatience can expose pride when I treat my schedule, priorities, or plans as more important than another person.

Conflict becomes prideful when I excuse disobedience because I believe my feelings or methods are more justified than God's instructions.

Neglecting prayer can imply that I believe I can raise a family, solve a problem, or handle work without God's help.

Neglecting Scripture and Christian community can reveal self-sufficiency rather than humble dependence.

Prayer itself can become prideful when I merely ask God to endorse plans I have already decided upon.

Success is a particular temptation to pride because achievement can make me forget the One who gave the ability to achieve.

Spiritual gifts and ministry influence must be managed as stewardship, with praise redirected to God rather than kept for myself.

Obedience matters more than religious-looking sacrifice; humility listens to God and does what He says.

True humility is not self-contempt; it is knowing who God is, receiving His gifts rightly, and using them for His glory and the good of others.

Scripture References

James 4:5-6, Galatians 6:7, Matthew 7:3-5, 2 Corinthians 10:5, Matthew 6:9-10, Deuteronomy 8:17-18, 1 Samuel 15:22, Matthew 25:21, Proverbs 3:5-6, James 1:5

Quote of the Day

"Humility is obedience to God. I understand who I am and who God is, and I'm going to obey Him."

Broadcast Notes

Dan Long of Springfield reads James 4:6, and Mark introduces the Friday gathering with roughly twenty-five to thirty friends in the downstairs WLUJ studio. Joyce Mancke has prayed for the listeners and the room, while Pastor Mark Johnson facilitates the discussion. Pastor Mark begins by comparing natural laws such as gravity with kingdom principles, including sowing and reaping, before focusing on James's declaration that God opposes the proud. The group defines pride as self-will, self-focus, taking credit, comparison, and refusing dependence on God. Mark Burns offers a personal example of impatience at stoplights, lines, and interruptions, recognizing that impatience can reveal the belief that his schedule is more important than another person. Pastor Mark broadens the application: pride can appear in conflict when believers choose their way instead of God's way, in parenting when they fail to pray, and in neglecting Scripture, church, or Bible study because they assume they can get by without those sources of formation. The discussion then turns to prayer. Rather than merely asking God to endorse an already chosen plan, humility asks

Him what to want and what to ask for. Success is identified as another danger, with Deuteronomy's warning that God gives the ability to produce wealth. Pastors and other visible leaders must also redirect praise to God and ask whether they represented Him faithfully. The closing section emphasizes stewardship: gifts, talents, abilities, and resources belong to God. Obedience is more important than sacrifice, and the praise worth seeking is God's 'Well done, good and faithful servant.' Pastor Mark closes by distinguishing humility from a downtrodden self-image: humility understands who God is, who I am, and obeys Him.

Practical Applications

Before beginning an important task, acknowledge specifically what I need from God rather than assuming I can handle it alone.

Notice one situation where impatience reveals that I am treating my schedule as more important than another person. When conflict arises, ask whether I am following God's way or simply justifying my preferred response.

Pray before responding to a parenting, family, or workplace problem instead of relying only on experience.

Review whether busyness is crowding out Scripture, prayer, worship, or Christian fellowship.

When I pray about a decision, ask God what He wants before asking Him to bless what I have already chosen.

Thank God specifically for the abilities, opportunities, education, resources, and people that contributed to a success.

When someone compliments my work or ministry, receive the encouragement gratefully while consciously giving God the credit.

Treat my talents, money, influence, and opportunities as stewardship rather than ownership.

If fear of rejection keeps me from encouraging or sharing Jesus with someone, ask whether pride is protecting my image.

Choose obedience over a substitute sacrifice that looks spiritual but avoids what God actually asked me to do.

At day's end, ask: Did I live today seeking human praise or God's 'Well done'?

Today's Challenge

For seven days, use James 4:6 as a pride-and-humility check. Each evening ask: Where did I depend on God today? Where did I insist on my own way? Where did comparison, impatience, success, fear of rejection, or self-sufficiency show up? Then choose one concrete act of humble obedience for the next day.

Closing Prayer

Father, You oppose the proud but give grace to the humble. Search my heart and show me the places where I have relied on myself, taken credit, compared myself with others, protected my image, or chosen my way over Yours. Remind me that every breath, ability, opportunity, resource, and good gift I possess ultimately comes from You. When I become impatient, teach me to value people more than my schedule. When conflict comes, help me obey Your way rather than justify my own. Keep me faithful in prayer, Scripture, worship, and Christian community so that I do not drift into self-sufficiency. When You give success, keep me grateful and dependent. Teach me to manage my gifts as a steward, not an owner, and to seek Your praise rather than the applause of people. Give me courage to obey even when obedience costs me comfort, recognition, money, or approval. Help me understand who I am and who You are, and then humbly follow You. May my life hear the whisper of Your pleasure now and, one day, 'Well done, good and faithful servant.' In Jesus' name, Amen.

About Today's Speaker

Pastor Mark Johnson serves at Calvary Church in Springfield and regularly facilitates the Friday Mark & Friends verse-by-verse study through James. A seasoned pastor, teacher, counselor, and storyteller, he brings practical biblical insight to everyday issues of relationships, character, wisdom, conflict, pride, and Christian maturity. In this study of James 4:6, Pastor Mark challenges believers to recognize subtle forms of pride, live in dependence on God, steward their gifts faithfully, and understand humility as obedient submission to God.

About Today's Host

Mark Burns is General Manager of the WLJ Family of Stations and Great News Radio Network and host of Mark & Friends. For decades, Mark has been involved in Christian radio and ministry, with a heart for helping listeners know Jesus and grow deeper in God's Word. Through Mark & Friends, he brings pastors, ministry leaders, teachers, missionaries, authors, and everyday believers around the microphone for biblical teaching, testimony, conversation,

and encouragement. His desire is that each program help listeners learn, grow, and faithfully live out their relationship with Jesus.

Proofread Broadcast Transcript

Reading from James chapter 4, verse 6. But he gives us more grace. That is why scripture says, God opposes the proud, but gives grace to the humble.

That was James chapter 4, verse 6. And that was Dan Long from Springfield. Appreciate him attending with his son, also called Dan or Danny, Danny Jr. Appreciate those two. Oh, magnify the Lord with me.

Let us exalt his name together. It is Friday, finally Friday. Hi everyone, it's finally Friday.

September 25th, 2026. We broke into James chapter 4 last week, and we're going to continue our study verse by verse into this incredible book, inspired by God, honoring to all of us as we want to be faithful followers of Jesus, inspired by the Holy Spirit to do good works. This very day, God has a plan and purpose for you.

And I hope that may be realized if you haven't prayed up this morning or maybe you're here in the re-airing in the evening, there's time to be in the center of God's will. And it always starts with a good prayer time. So ask the Holy Spirit to enlighten your mind and heart as you read scripture or as you tune in today, because I trust there'll be a blessing in store for you.

Our prayer warrior, Joyce Mancke, our station manager here at WLUJ, has prayed for all of you and us in the room. There's almost 25 or 30 of us in the room. Pastor Mark Johnson of Calvary Church is facilitating our discussion.

He's passionate about the book of James, but more importantly, he's passionate about his walk with Jesus, and he wants to follow Jesus and help us all learn to connect with Jesus and his words. So we're going to be looking at or beginning at James 4, verse 6. First of all, I just want to ask somebody in this room, as we look at this passage, there are natural laws in the world. Can anybody name any of those natural laws? What goes up must come down.

Mm-hmm. I always thought morality was a natural law. No matter who you are, where you are, you know the difference between good and bad.

Without the scripture, we get lost in that. Anybody else? Opposites attract. Opposites attract.

I don't know if that's a law or not, but that certainly happens a lot. It is for electricity. What goes around comes around.

You think about things that are just natural in us. We have to have air. We have to breathe.

If you don't breathe, you're going to die. So that's kind of the laws of nature. The laws of nature.

Gravity. Gravity is going to work. Whether you're thinking about it, not thinking about it, it's going to work.

Whether you're young or old, gravity is going to work. It's a law. Let me remind you, there are kingdom of God laws.

Kingdom of God laws override all of the rules. So here's one. You will reap what you sow.

You'll reap what you sow. If you're grouchy, nasty, you're going to reap people being nasty. If you're kind, you're loving, you're going to reap people being kind and loving.

Now that's generally speaking, not always proof positive. Well, it's not going to happen 100% of the time, but you're going to get more of that than you are of the other. If we're obedient to God, we're going to find the blessing of God.

That doesn't mean we're not going to go through a period of time when we don't have a struggle that God allows us to go through. But we walk through those struggles with the confidence that God's blessing will be upon us if we are obedient to Him and we can trust Him. So here's the law of Scripture.

Here's one for today. God resists the proud. He resists the proud.

God opposes the proud. So, what is pride? Anybody want to take a swing at that? It's always seeking yourself first, seeking your own will. Confusing your position in God's.

I liked what he said, confusing your position with God's. That just somehow, that just struck. Living in the flesh.

I think it's a big me, me, me. There you go. Right.

All about me. The New Bible Dictionary puts it this way. Pride refuses to depend on God and to be subject to Him.

But attributes to the self the honor due to God. This figures as the very root and the essence of sin. God gets set aside.

We think we're smarter than God or we're more powerful than God or that we did it. So, if pride was showing up in your life, how would it show up? How does it show up in people's lives? How does pride show up in life? Well, it shows up in my life as, look at them. They're doing this and that and I don't do this and that.

I'm following Christ better than they are. Just comparing. There you go.

Anybody else? We want recognition for things we've done. We want people to look at us. Look what I did.

Achievements that have come but have only come because of the blessings bestowed undeservingly by Him that then I take credit for when they go well. Here's where a basic concept comes into play. What can I do? What can you do without God's help? Nothing.

You can't take your next breath without God's help. Your heart doesn't beat without God holding it in place. There's nothing we can do that doesn't require God participation in what we're doing in life.

When we fail to recognize that, when we fail to see that, so you may talk to somebody who's an esteemed doctor and you'll say, wow, thank you for your work, thank you for your abilities, and they kind of go, yeah, I did this. You know, I worked hard. I studied hard.

I put the time and the effort in. I went to school. I worked hard.

I made myself. I'm a self-made man. Now, without God's help, you're not.

God gave that person the ability to do those things. He gives me the ability to do the things I do. And so recognizing that He is God and even the good things in my life come from Him, even if I've had to work at them, He's given me the ability to work at them.

He's given me the ability to learn. He's given me the ability to do all the things that I do. Anytime I set God out of the picture, I become a person of pride.

How am I going to raise my children? I'm going to raise them with God's help. I'm going to seek God for how I raise my children. I'm going to know I'm dependent on Him.

Pastor Mark, I don't know if this is true of anyone else in this room, but I found, and this was recently, that pride surfaces when I'm impatient. And the root of that is because I think my schedule, my plans, my priorities are more important than the person at the stoplight in front of me that's not moving forward fast enough or the person in line that gets in my way that's slowing me down or the person that's asking me a question and keeping me from the priority that I want to accomplish. So it's evident in me that I think my schedule, my projects are more important than the other person.

So that was a subtle way that God revealed, Mark, that's pride. Anytime you're impatient, you're thinking maybe more highly of yourself. And I thought, wow, thank you, Lord, for that conviction.

I didn't really want. I think this kind of stuff comes down to God revealing things like this to us. But fundamentally, it's any place where I do things my way instead of God's way.

That's a prideful action. We talked last week about conflict. Do I handle conflict God's way or do I handle it my way? Do I think I know more than God? Do I think I'm smarter than God so I know how to handle this? His instruction to me isn't worth listening to at this point in time? Or do I handle it God's way? Can I forgive somebody who's hurt me, somebody who's said something about me? Can I forgive them or go on? Or do I say, nope, God understands.

I've had people tell me, God understands the way I feel. Yeah, he understands you're in rebellion to him. That's exactly what he understands.

He understands you're doing it your way instead of his way. Any place I do something my way instead of God's way is an action of pride. This is any place I begin to see myself as the source of what I have, the source of what I'm doing, instead of seeing God as the source of what I have and the source of my abilities.

That's pride. Anybody else? Well, I'm thinking this verse, God opposes the proud. Wow, you don't want to be a part of anything that God's going to oppose.

And so I think, listening friend, being prideful, God's going to oppose that. And it's not what he wants or desires for any followers of Jesus. So that's just a warning signal for all of us that God will oppose the proud.

I just had one, and that was, you know, and I'm ashamed of this, really, I am. But my neighbors were giving me a whole lot of trouble, and they are not of God's faith. They are anti of our faith, really.

I mean, through the years, more than two years, I found that out. And I found I had to protect myself. It got so bad there.

But I found myself at one point just trying to justify, you know, if I do this really bad thing to them, it would be okay. And I felt like God was saying, would you really feel good and right if you did that? And I thought, well, I have to take care of me. But then somewhere I was allowing myself somehow to be deceived, because really I was thinking wrong there, badly, badly wrong there, where I was thinking about doing bad harm, thinking that is, you know, it's a temptation thing, but it's foolishness, you know.

And I just, it's just something I had to confess, because I have to deal with wicked people where I live. But I don't think you're the only person in the world who's ever dealt with someone who's been mean to them and then had a human thought like that. And I think that's why the Bible reminds us to take every thought captive, turn it back to God so that we can make sure that our pride stays in check so that God doesn't oppose us.

But Kevin, I've been there with you, and I'm ashamed of it too. But know that you're not alone in those sins. Many Christians, I'm going to say this.

This is an accusation against Christians that I'm guilty of. Many Christians act in pride, but we don't think of it as pride. And that's any place where we think we know better than God knows that we can do something that God opposes, and it's going to be okay.

We become prideful in raising our family when we don't pray for them. Think about it. I'm now thinking, I can raise these kids on my own.

I don't need God's help in this. I don't need to pray about this and ask God what to do, how to act. Okay, my daughter's acting up or my son's acting up.

I don't need to ask God what to do. I know how to handle this. That's pride.

I need to stop and pray. God, how should I handle this? How should I go through this? I've got this person at work. How do I handle this? Show me how to be your picture in the middle of all of this thing.

We become prideful when we don't turn to the Word of God and seek the Word of God, when we neglect the Word of God. We're prideful because we think, oh, that's just the Bible. I don't have time for that.

I'm busy doing other things. I don't have time for the Word. That's pride when we do something that ignores where our source is, which is God's Word to bring life to us and conviction to us, and we ignore it.

I don't have to go to church this Sunday. I don't have to go to a Bible study. I'm too busy for those things.

I can get by. I'm still okay with God. That's pride, and God opposes the proud.

When we hold something as of higher importance than keeping my life in alignment with God, that's pride. I just thought of something when you were saying that. It ties in with what we were talking about last week, about you do not have because you do not ask.

And then I'm thinking, okay, so I'm going to go ask God how to do this. And then it hit me one day, I don't even know what to ask for. I need to go to God and go, I'm like Solomon.

I have no idea what's going on. You're going to have to help me. What should I ask you for so that it pleases you and works out in the long run? Because if it's up to me, I'm going to ask for stuff that's probably going to turn around and bite me.

But unlike Solomon, you're actually going to listen, right? Yes, but that's with this humility. God will honor the humility if you go to him humbly like, you know, I really need your help, and I am clueless. So you've got to start from ground zero and teach me even what to ask you.

Isn't pride more or less the core of all sin? Yes. That's the start of original sin. The first temptation was the Satan offering you, you will be like God.

Right. My thought about raising children is, my pride is, I'm never going to let my kids do that. I remember saying that when I had babies and they were toddlers.

We come back to this idea of praying and asking God, what does he teach us to pray? God, let your kingdom come, let your will be done, on earth as it is in heaven. So I come before God many times asking for permission instead of asking God for direction, asking him for something I want instead of asking him for what he wants for me. And all of that is an action of pride.

I'm telling God what I want. I'm telling him what I need. I'm telling him what I expect.

Instead of saying, God, I believe you have the best thing for me, show me the way to your best end. Because oftentimes we'll have our plan laid out and we're really asking God for his endorsement on what we've already decided is the course of action. Well, I would tell you this Mark, success is a real temptation to pride.

God talks about this in Deuteronomy and he says, bless them, he's given them, and he says, my power and strength of my hands have produced this wealth for me. That's the prideful person. I'm successful, my power and the strength of my hands have produced this wealth for me.

But remember, the Lord your God, for it is he who gives you the ability to produce wealth. Even if you're successful in something, he gave you the ability to be successful. And to say, I produced it, is an act of pride.

In James chapter 4 verse 5 it says, Do ye think that the scripture saith in vain, the spirit that dwelleth in us lusteth to envy? Do you think that the scripture saith in vain, the spirit that dwelleth in us lusteth to envy? Meaning we have a spirit in us that lusts to envy? That's the sin nature. And that has already been brought up that Satan's fall and all of our falls is we are prideful by nature. And if that's inherited, we have that from Adam.

It's a temptation pastors better deal with. If you're preaching to a church, the people who are there generally love the pastor. So when the pastor's done preaching, generally what you hear are encouraging words.

Pastor, that was great today. That really ministered to me. That really did this or that for me today.

That really challenged me today. You hear these wonderful things. And if you're not careful, what happens? Oh, I'm something.

I'm something. Now, that doesn't mean you need to go humble your pastor next week. That's his problem.

Pastor, that wasn't so good today. Pastor, I got a list for you. That's not a good thing.

That's not a good thing. But the pastor has to struggle with that to say, when I walk off the platform, my first question is, God, did I say what you told me to say today? When I'm walking through the back, going out to the front, I'm asking, God, did I say, did I say it with the spirit you wanted me to say it? Did I say it in the tone you wanted me to say it? Did I represent you well today? Because anything that we do in that setting that is of any value is because God has directed it to us, not because we've been creative. I see Joyce nodding her head back there.

Wise Joyce, our station manager here, always has good things to say. Did something come to mind, Joyce? No, I'm just listening to him because I was married to a pastor before his death. All of those things come to life, you know.

You do have to be very careful. And one of the things I think that probably would be my pride would be God telling me to do something, and I'm thinking, what's all those people going to say? Or something to that effect, you know, and then you have an excuse in your own mind that you shouldn't do it. And so many times you fail because God has called you to do something.

Yeah, and how many times don't we witness because the rejection, because our pride might be affected or we might feel insecure, and that's because we're thinking more of ourselves. Yeah, you're going to get rejected sometimes, you get used to it. I want to pull us back to this issue of pride, this issue of God opposing.

Like Mark said earlier, we don't want God to oppose us. That opposition comes any place where we begin to think we're the soloist of the church can become prideful. You've got to be careful.

We manage our talents, our abilities, our resources carefully as stewards, not as owners, as stewards of them. And so we manage them understanding that just the way God gave them, He can take them away. He can make them null and void.

So you think about how am I using this gift that I have? What am I doing with it? Am I singing in the local bar and glorifying the world? Or am I singing in the church and glorifying God? And then when I glorify God, am I keeping some of that praise for myself? That's the sin of Satan, begins to keep some of the praise for himself instead of saying, God, this all belongs to you. Well, I was just thinking, the only praise that you really want is the one where God says, well done, good and faithful servant. That kind of praise is okay.

That's the one you want. You don't want the praise from men because that leads you into trouble. That should be the high goal in life.

If you've ever felt the pleasure of God in something you've done, there have been many, many times when, like Mark said, God said, go witness to that person. Go share with that person. Go encourage that person.

And whether it turned out positive or negative, I found myself walking away with God saying, that's what I told you to do. That's what I told you to do. And you get a taste in that moment, serving God, doing something to help somebody, taking food to somebody that needs food.

Whatever it is, you do what God tells you to do and you get a sense of that, a whisper of that well done. And that well done is, I can't imagine what it's going to be like before God to hear well done. And talking about singularity, I'm reminded of when King Saul was commanded to destroy everything and he captured a whole bunch of incenses.

Oh, I brought it back to make sacrifices to God. And God was not pleased with this. The obedience was more important than the sacrifice, even if it's going without this, that, or the other.

That's more important to God than you having stuff, even if you think you're going to use it for Him. Let me rock a lot of people's worlds here that may be listening. Not tithing is pride.

I know better what to do with my money than God knows what to do with it. I earned this on my own. God didn't bless me with it.

All these are mine. God doesn't have any right to tell me what to do with it. All of that is an act of pride.

People make excuses to not do what God has told them to do because they don't trust that God can bless them even more. Listen, when you're walking in obedience to God, He blesses us with things money can't buy. We lose things when we don't submit to God in every way.

Wow, Mark, that's a good, healthy conviction for all of us. And I'm thinking what Tad just said, well done, good and faithful servant. Well, that servant part, you're not usually too prideful if you're a servant or your intentionality is being of service to God.

And the close of this verse in chapter 4, God opposes the proud but gives grace to the humble. That's the position that we should all take, that humility of being that servant, wanting to receive God's praise. Well done, good and faithful servant.

And so I'm looking forward to next week when we start looking at 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.

I think as we go through this day, a point of application for all of us is, are we humbling ourselves and God will give us grace? And are we looking at ourselves as servants? Humility is not some downtrodden attitude. Oh, I'm so worthless. No, humility is obedience to God.

I understand who I am and who God is, and I'm going to obey Him, period. I'm going to obey God. That's humility.

Pride is the opposite of that. I'm not going to listen to God. I'm going to do whatever I want to do.

So don't confuse some downtrodden attitude with humility. No, you can be prideful acting like you're humble. Just use your gifts rightly.

So we use our gifts righteously for the glory of God's kingdom, for the good of others, and we pray for God's blessing to happen through our gifts. All right, listening friend. The gauntlet has been dropped.

We want to be humble, but we want to recognize God does give out gifts and He gives out wisdom, and He desires that we would all walk faithfully following Jesus, representing Him in this hurting world, but you can be His agent of healing and hope and reconciliation, pointing people to Jesus with the wisdom that He's given you and not taking credit for it. If you missed a portion of today's broadcast, want to hear it again or pass it on to a friend or read the transcript or other ministry resources, the scriptures that have been covered or topics for the day or action points or a prayer, stop by GreatNewsRadio.org and WLUJ.org and you can click on the Mark & Friends link and access those resources anytime. Well, thanks for listening.

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

