

## How Does Faith Work in Relational Conflicts?

- hey guys. Good to see you. Welcome. Welcome. If you are new and I know many of you are, my name is Pastor Mark. I'm the Bible teacher and troublemaker in chief, and we find ourselves today in James chapter four, we're going through a book of the Bible. And what we believe is that God's word is perfect and it always speaks perfectly to our circumstances and it's timeless. So it's always timely for what we're going through. We find ourselves in James chapter four, if you've got a Bible, go there. And the book is written by Jesus' kid brother. So Jesus as God came to the Earth, lived, died, rose, conquered Satan's sin, death held the wrath of God, goes back into Heaven and his kid brother goes out to be a pastor, writes a book of the Bible called James. We call him the blue-collar scholar of the New Testament. he spent a lot of time in the shop with his dad doing construction. he had calluses on his hands, but he had a love for Jesus in his heart. And it's a weird time to be studying a book of the Bible because what is today friends? It's Halloween. It's the weirdest day of the year. We terrify children and then give them candy and say, hey, we have free PTSD and diabetes for you kid, here you go. What a weird day to be a kid. It's just weird, my whole neighborhood is just goblins and witches and spider webs. And I have an HOA and they still allow these things to happen, it's kind of unbelievable. And so we find ourselves looking at God's word on what is an unholiday. A holiday is supposed to be a holy day. What Halloween is, it's a counterfeit. Everything that God creates Satan counterfeits, Halloween is an unholiday. It's an unholy day. It's one of the eight Sabbaths of witchcraft and the occult and demonism. It's a counterfeit of the Sabbath that God made where we're supposed to honor and remember him, Halloween comes from an ancient pagan holiday that was very occultic and involved in witchcraft and druidism, and it was called Samhain, which means the festival of the dead. And so it was believed that the veil between the living and the dead was thinnest on this day. So the spirits of the departed and deceased could enter into our world. And hence get this unholiday, this unholy day, the reasons that people put out jack-o-lanterns and there's nothing wrong with pumpkins, by the way, we are pro pumpkin. I just want to get that out front early. So enjoy your pumpkin spice latte. Jesus made pumpkins, feel free to put it in your drink. So we're pro pumpkin, but a jack-o-lantern is where they would put a scary face on the front of the pumpkin, thinking that it would ward off evil spirits and scare them. So it was their first version of a home security system. In addition, the reason that people dress up and wear masks, it was assumed that if the spirits of the dead, the demons were walking around, if you wore a mask and a costume, they couldn't recognize you. So they wouldn't terrorize and haunt you. In addition, the reason that we have orange and black, orange was the color of harvest and fall colors and black is to denote death. And the reason that we have trick or treating is on this day, people would go around, especially teenagers. They've been naughty for a very long time, and they would terrorize people and do horrible things. So people put out candy to appease them saying, hey, go bug the neighbors. Please leave me alone. And so that's where we get a lot of our traditions. Now, that being said, on this unholy day, this is the day when we really see Hell come up to Earth more than any other day of the year and what we're learning in James, it's just a perfect timing in God's word. Last week, he introduced this theme. We either live Kingdom down or Hell up and Kingdom down, he says is wisdom that comes down from Heaven. And then he says Hell up is Earthly, unspiritual, demonic. Now we

might call them ghosts. And we may even see that there's Casper the friendly ghost. Let me just tell you this. There's no such thing as a friendly demon, there are angels and demons and everything that is demonic is deadly and damnable and destructive. And it's great deception to think otherwise. And so the theme in James three is picked up in James chapter four. And is that you and I, here we are. We live our life on planet Earth. And one day we're going to die and we're either going to go to Heaven or we're going to go to Hell. And in the end, those are the only two cultures that remain. And today you and I make decisions constantly. Do we invite the Kingdom of God or the Kingdom of Heaven down into our life? Or we pulling the culture and the pain of Hell up into our life? It is true that when you and I die, we will either go to Heaven or Hell. But it's true that before then we either bring Heaven down or Hell up into our life, because I love you, I want you to live a Heaven Kingdom down life, not a Hell cursed up life. So where we find ourselves in James chapter four, we're going to go bad news good news. First, we're going to learn about living Hell up, James 4:1-4. So he starts with this great question. "What causes quarrels and fights among you?" When we think of Satan and demons and the Kingdom of darkness and evil unleashed on the Earth, we tend to think of Rosemary's Baby and people with spinning heads and all kinds of shenanigans. And the truth is oftentimes it's just in our relationships. It's just in people, literally just putting Hell in one another's lives. I'm just going to make today Hell for you. And you're going to make tomorrow Hell for me. "Is it not this that your passions are at war within you? You desire and you do not have so you murder, you covet and cannot obtain, so you fight and quarrel. You do not have, because you did not ask. And you ask and you do not receive because you ask wrongly to spend it on your passions. You adulterous people", strong language here, "do you not know that friendship with the world is enmity or hatred or war conflict with God? Therefore, whoever wishes to be a friend of the world makes himself an enemy of God". So he's talking here about living Hell up, Earthly, unspiritual, demonic. You're pulling Hell up into your life, into your marriage, into your family, into your relationships, into generations of legacy. You're giving them Hell and they're giving you Hell and all together, everyone is just living a life that feels like the pains of Hell. And so oftentimes our warfare, our conflict, our spiritual problems manifest themselves in our relationships. This is cause our God is a relational God. You're at Trinity church. The doctrine of the Trinity is there's one God and three persons, father, son, and spirit, that God is by nature relational. And he made us to have a relationship with him and one another. And Satan comes to attack that relationship with God and relationship with others so that life on Earth feels like a little bit of Hell. And he asks the question then, what causes these fights and quarrels? And I know this is an old book. This book is written about 2000 years ago, but do we still have fights and quarrels on the Earth? Yes or no? Oh yeah. We now plugged it into the internet to make sure that it's as painful as possible, that we now have fights and quarrels constantly and we have them globally and we have them incessantly. And he asked the question, what is the root cause? What is the cause behind the cause for the conflicts and quarrels? And what happens is when you and I are frustrated when we're annoyed, when somebody's gotten on our last nerve or just sick of them or done with them. And we're asked that question, we immediately go to our terrible tale. Let me tell it, oh, you want to know? Great. Let me tell you who they are. Let me tell you what they said. Let me tell you what they did. And we just back up the truck. And then we just let everyone know all of their shortcomings, flaws and failures. And what he does here is he doesn't allow us

to answer the question. He has God answer the question. And what God says is before you look at them, look at you. Before you talk about what they contributed, consider what you've contributed, what causes fights and quarrels among you, he says is oftentimes more about what's in here than what's happening out there. And so what happens in every war? This can be a global war all the way down to just a fight between you and a friend or family member or spouse is immediately, the battle lines are drawn. I'm against you. And then the true buildup. We're recruiting people into the fight, you're on my side or their side. And then in the middle, there are always the innocents who are caught in the crossfire. And they're like, why? I'm not on your side and I'm not on their side. You're like well that's great. We'll both shoot you in the middle. And this is the world we live in. This is why there's so much pressure and politicizing and polarizing. And everyone's feeling pressured on every single issue, pick a side, load your gun, join with them, oppose them. And if you're in the middle saying, I'm not sure if either of you are right on this particular issue and you just get shot by both sides. And what he says is that before anything can change out there, some things need to change in here, that the big problem is not just what's going on in the world, that the world is an indicator of what's going on in our hearts. And he says, what causes fights and quarrels within you? he says your passions are at war within you. You desire and you do not have, so you murder. here he uses words passions, and desires. And one of these words is the root word that we get something called hedonism from, hedonism is simply this, whatever feels good, do it, to quote a casino. You do you. That's the phrase. That's the marketing for a casino. That's also the marketing for Hell. Just telling you how this goes. You do you, hedonism is this. If it feels good, do it. If that's what you think, go with it. If that's what you feel, satisfy it. There are two kinds of Satanism. And on this day of Halloween, this might be interesting. One version of Satanism is it's very organized. So they have, you know, witches and covens and curses. All of this is counterfeit of Christianity, Christianity has pastors and churches and blessings, and they have covens and witches and curses. And so there is one form of Satanism that is absolutely organized and is clearly a counterfeit of the Christian Church. The other is something that's very simple and very based. It's simply this, do without wealth is the whole of the law. You want to eat that, eat that, you want to smoke that, smoke that, you want to sleep with them, sleep with them. If you want to yell at them, yell at them. If you want to kill them, kill them. You do you, what feels good to you? What makes sense to you? The passions and desires that are in you. You need to feed them, not starve them. You need to in every way follow them and not lead them. And let me say this, the greatest threat to your life ain't them, it's you. Just consider your life for a moment. The worst days, the worst decisions, there were different people in every one of those, except for one common denominator, you were there. That means that you are the greatest threat to your life. That you are the greatest liability to your joy, that you are the greatest risk to your wellbeing. And before we talk about what everyone is doing out there, we gotta be honest about how we're doing in here. And he talks about our passions and desires. If you do everything that you want to do, you will destroy you. We oftentimes say that Jesus saves us from Hell, which is true. Jesus also saves you from you. And Jesus has saved me from me and it's a full-time job. And when we're honest about our passions and desires, there are things that we want that are pretty disgusting. There are things that if we didn't get caught would be pretty horrifying. There are actions that we would take words that we would say and people that we would kill. If there

wasn't a consequence, and if people were completely guaranteed to be unaware of how we were operating, we would be operating very differently. And what he says is we've got to be honest about what's in here. here's the good news. Once we're honest about what goes on in your passions and our desires and our longings and our loss in our beliefs and our feelings and our brokenness. Oftentimes we're not honest about that because it's very discouraging. here's the good news. God can change all of this. God can take out your old heart and give you a new heart. Take out your old nature, give you a new nature. Take out your old desires, give you new desires. Take out your old spirit, give you the Holy Spirit. Take out the old you, put in a brand new, re-hardwired, upgraded you. And that's exactly what Jesus Christ does. And so what Christianity then becomes, it becomes new passions and new desires. And what I always like to say is Christianity is not about the things that we have to do, but we literally don't want to do, it's about the things that we get to do because the new you, that's what you want to do. And so what he's talking about is before anything changes out there, you need God to change some things in here. He goes on to say, you covet and cannot obtain. So you fight and quarrel. What he says is that a lot of what brings Hell up into our life is selfishness, something good happens to you and that triggers a bad feeling in me and coveting is this. We call it advertising and marketing and social media. He calls it, the Bible calls it coveting and selfishness. He already talked about bitter envy or jealousy. And this is the whole point of social media. Everybody on social media breaks one of the 10 commandments and lies. Nobody ever tells the truth on social media. I've never seen somebody say like, look, I gained 20 pounds. I've never seen that post. You only post your weight loss. Not your weight gain. hey, look at my kids. They're perfect. No, they're not. No, they're not. You've got them on Benadryl. And you took them in for a haircut and you bribed them. And this is not what your family looks like. It's just your phony Christmas card. We all know you're lying. And what we do, we tend to present the best days of our life, not the worst days of our life, so that other people would be selfish and jealous and covetous. And what this leads to is quarreling and fighting. I'm going to criticize you or I'm going to steal from you or I'm going to attack you, or I'm going to be jealous of you. And some of you would still think, and you're adorable, we love you and it's good to have you. You've been lied to, we call it school. And so what they tell you in school is that we're good people getting better. How many of you? That doesn't seem to correspond with reality. You look at the world, are good people doing better? Things are getting better? No, we're bad and getting worse. If anything, I think in school, they should take the evolutionary chart and flip it around. We started as image bearers of God, when it's all done, we're all going to be monkeys at the zoo flinging poo at one another. We're going backward and I'll prove it to you. How many of you are moms in the house? Moms, let me ask a question. Do you have to teach your children pretty much everything? Yes or no? Yes. So you need to teach them to speak? Yes or no? Read and write? Yes. How about walk and talk, be selfish? That's interesting. Just think about why do you not need to teach a kid to be selfish? It's just part of the hardware. It's just in their fallen nature. Right now back in kid's ministry, not your kid, I'm sure it's the first time guests pray for that family. But what's happening right now is there's two kids in a classroom. One in one corner. One in the other. One kid looks over, sees the kid with a truck, walks over. he's grabbing the truck, hitting the kid and walking away with the truck. The only difference between a child and a terrorist is size. That's the only difference. From the earliest days we covet. There's something in here where we have passions and desires. I

win, you lose, you give, I take, I rule, you're ruled over. And he says there's something broken and flawed in here. And it's not the way that God made us. But it's the way that sin has made us. It's corrupted the totality of who we are. And so the point is we don't need God just to make us better. We need God to make us new. And so it's not about self-help, it's about God help. It's not about trying better. It's about God making you completely different. And he's talking here about being honest. We tend to be honest about everybody else, need to be honest about ourselves. He goes on to talk about a Hell up life. He says, you don't ask God. And this is what we often do. We get jealous of what they have. We don't ask him to provide for us. here's the big idea. God's a father. I'm a dad. I got five kids. Love him with all my heart. Two are married. One in college, two in high school. We're kind of in those launch years. And it's actually a really great season. I tend to be a Greenlight dad. My kids would tell you that I say yes way more than I say no. And the only time that I tend to say no is when one of the kids is asking for something that will hurt or harm them. Most of the time, I say yes, because most of the time, what they're asking for is very reasonable and good. Now, as a parent, there are times that you have to say no. How many of you are raising a son? All little boys are suicidal. I don't know why, they just are. They're like, oh, I need to find the sharpest knife and as fast as possible, climb to the highest point in the house and see what happens. That's what they're always doing. So sometimes a kid will ask for something and you say no, not because you don't love them, but because you do love them. And they may think that you're restricting their freedom. But what you're doing is preserving their life. And so what he says is if you think you want something or need something, don't go take it from them or get jealous of them, ask it of him. And God is a loving, gracious, generous father. he already told us in James 1, every good and perfect gift comes down from above. And what he's saying is this, ask God if you think that you want or need something, and if he doesn't give it to you, assume that it's because he loves you and it would harm you. In addition, a Hell up life, he says is one where you are receiving things from God, but you are wasting them on foolish passions and desires. So we've all done this. And this is what people tend to think. They're like, I need more money. And sometimes God is saying, I gave you enough money, you just misspent it. That's why you're short. The concept of stewardship is that God is the owner. And we are the manager of all the things that we have in our life. You have a certain number of days, a certain number of dollars and a certain number of deeds that will become the sum total of your life on planet Earth. Those belong to God and they are managed or stewarded by you. 25% of Jesus' teaching was on stewardship. How to invest your life rather than waste your life. And sometimes what we do, we get jealous because they have things we don't. We get angry at God because we feel like he's failed us. And God wants us to ask, did you ask me? And did I provide? And if I did provide, did you steward what I gave you well? here's what I'm telling you. Some of you have plenty of money. You've just blown a portion of it and put yourself in a painful position. Some of you have plenty of time and energy to do the things that God has called you to do. And the reason that you're burned out frustrated and exhausted is you're doing things that God didn't ask you to do. So, rather than just looking at God and saying, what are you doing, he'd be like I was doing exactly what I was supposed to be doing. I was going to ask you the same question. What have you been doing? And so what we live in is a country where people don't sleep enough. They spend too much, they're exhausted, overworked, burned out frustrated and tired and blaming God rather than asking

God, hey, what am I supposed to be doing and not doing so that I can put the life together that is healthy and pleasing to you. And then he goes on to talk about, and this is strong language. You adulterous people. That's strong language. This is God's summary of life on planet Earth for people who have not yet come into relationship with him through his son, Jesus Christ. So let me tell you how marriage works in Christianity. March 12th, 1988. I met my dream girl. Her name is Grace. We got married. We've been faithfully married for 29 years. Next August will be our 30th anniversary. We've got five kids who've been faithfully married. I love her with all my heart. She's my best friend. Our marriage relationship is what the Bible calls a covenant. It's unique, it's special, it's sacred. I don't have another relationship like it. And the whole reason I'm wearing a wedding ring is to let everybody know I'm in a special, unique covenantal relationship with one girl. And I have no other relationship like it and I'm not looking for any other relationship like it. Her name is Grace, but she is a little Old Testament. Got to make this very clear. So that being the case, our relationship is supposed to be sacred. It's supposed to be intimate. It is supposed to be safe, guarded, and protected. And if I wander outside of that relationship, it's adulterous. Here's the big idea. The Bible says that Jesus Christ is like a groom. That the church is like a bride. And what God wants with you is a covenantal marriage like relationship of fidelity and unity and harmony and loyalty. And here's the problem friends. Most of us want a relationship with God that's friends with benefits. We don't want to be married. Friends with benefits is I get all the benefits that I want from you, but I have no devotion or commitment to you. I'm not going to be exclusive with you. We're going to be open. Today we call this tolerance and diversity. In addition, we like to say, well, you know, I've got other things in my life and people in my life that are a priority to me. And if I find someone that I enjoy more than you, I'm going to dump you because I'm not committed or covenanted to you. It's just convenience with you. Some of you have been in those relationships where you thought you were doing covenant and they were doing convenience and you got heartbroken because I thought we were sacred. No, we're not. I thought we were exclusive. No, we're not. I thought we loved each other. No, we don't. One person is seeking to love. And the other is seeking to use. One is seeking to build a relationship. And the other is just looking for the benefits. And so what God does not allow with you, God will not have a friends with benefits relationship with anyone. He only does covenant. He doesn't do adulterous. And see, we tend to think, oh my gosh, you know, God's got high expectations. he's so controlling. So demanding. No, no, no. We just don't know what love is and he does. Love is exclusive, love is devoted. Love is committed, love is sacred. And so what you can't do is look at God and say, look God, I don't want you to tell me what to do. I don't want you to be in all of my life. I don't want all my friends to know that we have a relationship. You just sort of stay off to the side. When I want you or need you, I will bring you in to benefit me. And then I'll send you back into your appropriate place of obscurity. And what happens in our world is most people, they love the idea of God loves me, oh great. God forgives me. God blesses me. Great. God wants exclusive devotion and obedience from me. No, that's the only kind of relationship that God has is one that is more akin to marriage. And if you don't do marriage relationship and you have anyone or anything else be the priority in your life, God's heart toward it is adulterous. And then he has a strong word. And I'll tell it to you because I believe that soft words produce hard people and hard words produce soft people. And sometimes God gives us hard words because he wants to use them to soften our heart. And what he says is this, you're

either a friend of God and an enemy of the world, or you're an enemy of God and a friend of the world. Those are your only options. So right now you're going to make today the most important decision that you will ever make, the decision that will determine every day and your eternal destiny forever. And that is not, are you going to get in trouble? The question is, who are you going to get in trouble with? The question is not are you in a fight? There is a fight. There is God. There is Satan. There is Heaven. There is Hell. There is truth. There are lies. There is the Holy Spirit. There are demonic unHoly Spirits that ultimately you and I are born in the middle. We're born in the middle of the battle. And the question is not are we in the fight. We're all in the fight. And the decision you've got to make today is God I'm your friend, so that means I'm the world's enemy or God, I'm the world's friend and I'm your enemy. And every one of us makes that decision. And if we don't make that decision, we have made the decision to be an adulterous people, not a covenantal people. This is life Hell up. He says, it's Earthly. Meaning it's devoid of the Kingdom of God. It's unspiritual. It has nothing to do with the Holy Spirit. And it is demonic. And we see this more clearly than ever on Halloween. People are going to be knocking on your door just celebrating darkness, not light, celebrating death, not life, celebrating Satan, not God, celebrating witches, not worshipers. There is an alternative. There is a good news option, that is living life Kingdom down. So James goes on, James 4:5-12. "Or do not suppose it is no purpose that the scripture says he yearns jealously". God's a jealous God. We're gonna talk about that, "over the spirit, the soul that he has made to dwell in us". The deepest part of you is the soul. You don't just have a soul. You are a soul. One day your body goes into the ground and your soul goes to be with the Lord. God is jealous for the inner you, the truest you, the deepest you, but he gives more grace. "Therefore it says, 'God opposes the proud, but gives grace to the humble'". Quotes an Old Testament book, Proverbs 3:34, Peter quotes it as well in Peter 5, "submit yourselves therefore to God, resist the devil. He will flee from you. Draw near to God. He will draw near to you. Cleanse your hands, you sinners, purify your hearts, you double-minded, be wretched and mourn and weep. Let your laughter be turned into mourning, your joy to gloom". We'll unpack all of this. "Humble yourselves before the Lord and he will exalt. You do not speak evil against one another brothers. The one who speaks against a brother". God is a father. Jesus is our big brother. We are brothers and sisters in the family of God. "The one who speaks against a brother or judges his brother speaks evil against the law and judges the law. But if you judge the law, you are not a doer of the law, but a judge". There is only, how many lawgivers, one, and how many judges, one. "He was able to save and destroy". That's Jesus Christ. "But who are you to judge your neighbors?" So what he's talking about here is living life Kingdom down, not Hell up. He told us previously, this is wisdom that comes down from above. And the first thing to living Kingdom down instead of Hell up, in the Hell up life, it's all about you getting to know you. What's your personality. Are you an introvert, an extrovert? Where are you on the Enneagram? I never did figure that out by the way, somebody asked me recently, they said, what number are you? I was like, I don't know whatever Jesus was. I think that makes me an eight. So the way it works is we take all these personality tests and all these skill tests. I'm just learning about me, learning about me, learning about me. You can go all the way through a master's degree and learn nothing about God. You've learned, shots fired, you've learned a lot about you. Is it bad to learn about you? No. But the Bible opens this way, in the beginning, God, you need to start everything with figuring out

who God is. The two most important things for you to learn is, first, who is God? And then who am I? Because if I don't know who God is, I can't even figure out who I am. Cause I'm supposed to compare myself to God. And so what he's talking about here is it starts by getting to know God, figuring out who God is, your creator, your maker, your sustainer, your redeemer. And he says that God is jealous and gracious, little bit concerning news and a little bit encouraging news. So let's talk about this. He says that God is a jealous God. He already told us that we are adulterous and that God is jealous, so is jealousy a good or bad thing? If you're new, this is where we do this together and help me out here. Is it a good or a bad thing? Yes. It all depends, who's jealous about what? Who's jealous about what, if God is jealous, then it must be possible to have a good and godly jealousy. You can have an ungodly jealousy as well. You can have that high control, overbearing insecure boyfriend or husband, send them on Wednesday night. Well, what men to shape it real men. That's why we're there. And so what happens though, is that God denotes a healthy jealousy. Jealousy is what happens when you are in this loving marriage like covenantal relationship and someone does something adulterous and they put someone in your sacred place. So I'll give you an illustration analogy. Grace and I, told ya, faithfully married 29 years. One of my favorite things every week on Sunday nights, most Sunday nights, we get together as a family, the kids come over, they bring their spouses. We do dinner together, pray for each other, you know, share wins for the week, what's God teaching you, hang out. And it's just a little bit of family time to just connect. And so I look forward to it. To me it's practice for Heaven. The Bible says that Heaven is going to be this huge party. And we're all going to sit down and have dinner with Jesus. So we like throwing parties to practice for Heaven. And I like sitting down having family dinner. Now everybody sits down, where do you think my seat is? I have my seat. We didn't vote on it. Nobody sits there every week. I do. It's the head of the table because I'm the husband. I'm the father. Now imagine if, Grace won't do this, I already checked with her. But imagine one night, let's say tonight, we all got together for family dinner and everybody sits at the table and I get my plate. And then I walk in and some other dudes sitting in my chair. I look at Grace. I'm like, who is this dude? She's like, well, you know, in addition to you, I have other relationships. And so for the sake of equality and pluralism and tolerance and diversity, we're going to start rotating different men through. And so you'll get to sit there every sixth week, but there's five other guys. I would be feeling at very least generous, jealous, jealous, jealous, jealous, very jealous, very jealous. Now, would that be bad or good? No. What happened is bad, sweetheart. What I'm feeling is good. You got to get this clear, got to get this clear, got to drive in this lane because that's my family. That's my wife, that's my place. And when you've been displaced, you feel jealousy and it's not because there's anything wrong. It's because there's love. No, no, no. That's my wife. This is sacred. That's my family. This is sacred. You don't belong here. That's not your place. You have no right to displace me. So at that moment I would feel jealousy, and just so you know, that's when I would start doing prison ministry from the inside right there. It'd be like, I didn't know Pastor mark became a chaplain in the penitentiary. When did he do that? It started at his dinner table. How many of you have been in a place where somebody displaced you and took your place and you felt a godly, righteous, jealousy? You're like, wait a minute. God feels that way. Every day with every one. He's saying, I made you, how come I'm not a priority? Our relationship was supposed to be your first commitment. Why are they in my place? Why are you dating an

unbeliever? They don't even know me. You can't even bring me into the relationship because I don't have a relationship with them. God gets jealous when anyone or anything takes his place at the seat of the head of the table of your life. And what God says is stop looking at it from your perspective, start looking at it from my perspective, stop pulling Hell up and putting everything in my seat. Invite Heaven down and put me at my appropriate place at head of the table. Now the good news is he says God is not only jealous, he's also gracious. This is such good news. We all hear this. And if we're honest, we are all guilty of this, someone or something at some point in our lives has taken God's place at the proverbial seat at the head of the table of our life. And what he says is God opposes the proud, but he gives grace to the humble. If you're proud, you look at God and you say, well, we just disagree, I think you're wrong. The Bible's an old book. You've got your opinion. I've got my opinion. You've got your priorities. I've got my priorities. All of that is Hell up because the dominant motif of Hell is pride. Satan fell because of pride. We have pride parades. We should have pride funerals. Our culture considers pride a virtue, not a vice because we're all living Hell up. I was thinking about it. There's a book called "The Book of Virtues". It's a good book. When we try to inculcate values in children, we give them stories to remember and embody the values. So "The Book of Virtues" is about all of the virtues of Western culture summarized in children's tales that you can read to your kids. The book is big and it is good, but it does not include humility because Western people do not consider humility a virtue. We consider it a vice. Pride is the problem. Not the solution. Humility is Kingdom down. The Bible says that our king Jesus, He is humble, that he came from Heaven to Earth, that was humble. He went from being worshiped to being hated. That is humble. He went from having an angelic staff to being a carpenter, that is humble. The Bible says that he humbled himself and he became our servant. Therefore the value of our king and his Kingdom, his humility. And let me just say this. If at any point you disagree with God. If at any point you believe that God is wrong, you have to ask yourself, is he wrong or am I wrong? If you're proud, you will say, I disagree. If you're humble, you'll say, therefore, I'm wrong. Every person and I know many of you are not yet Christians, but you will become today. That's why you're here. Little spoiler alert for the end. Everyone starts by disagreeing with God and his word. We all start with pride. And then what happens is the Holy Spirit changes our heart. And we are not humble people, but we are people who value and pursue humility. And God opposes the proud. If you are proud, you pick a fight with God. No one's ever won that fight. God is undefeated just so you know. And he gives grace to the humble. Now some of you will ask the obvious question, Pastor Mark, what are you doing talking about humility? I am demonstrating the depths of his grace. That's what I'm doing. If a guy like me can talk about humility, it must mean that he gives grace.

- [Audience Member] Amen.

- Didn't need to say it that enthusiastically, though I agree with you and so does my wife. And what happens is when you're humble, you say, God, it's your will, not mine. God, what is your thoughts, not mine. God, what are your desires, not mine. And I will submit and surrender myself to your will for my life trusting that you are good and when I disagree, I am wrong and I will do something bad that will harm myself. And here's the good news. If you want to do what's right, God wants to help you to do it, again, I got five kids. Any one of my kid comes up and

says, okay, dad, I want to do the right thing. Will you help me? Answer? You are now my first priority. God is a father. And if you want to do what he wants you to do, he is very enthusiastic to put grace on you and to help you to do it. So he goes on to talk about this Hell up life being countered by this Kingdom down life, He says first and foremost, he's got a series of commands. Submit yourself therefore to God. And here's the big idea, from this point forward, it's a series of commands. You need to know that our God doesn't give suggestions. We don't have God's 10 opinions. We have God's 10 commandments. And when God gives a command, he expects obedience because he is our creator, He is our Lord. He's going to tell us at the end he's our law-giver and judge, there are two kinds of leadership. There is cooperative leadership and command leadership. Cooperative leadership is where we talk about it and work it out and ask questions and listen patiently until you come to a conclusion that is reasonable and God does this on occasion, in Isaiah, it says, come let us reason together. That's cooperative leadership. When your kids get older, the only leadership you have is cooperative. If they're in their thirties, you can't just spank them. I mean, you can, it's odd, but you should instead reason with them and talk with them. The other kind of leadership is command leadership. And it's where there is more of a sense of urgency. We don't have time to just debate this ad nauseum, you're in harm's way. You need to move. You're going to get hurt. God often uses command leadership. And it's just like a dad who says do this, don't do that. It's like a mom who says, please don't touch that. It's hot. You're going to burn yourself. The reason that they're commanding and they're doing so with the volume is not because they hate you, but because they love you and they know better than you. God is a father who has command leadership. And here's what I believe. I know in my heart of hearts, our God is good. He's good. So when he tells me something that's good. And if I do it, I'm going to cause bad in my life. So he says, submit yourself to God. First and foremost is you need to be under authority. And the problem is, most of us don't want to submit to God. We want to remove God from throne. We want to seat upon it and say, I am a law unto myself. I judge myself. I only answer to myself. My question to you would be, why are you such a good candidate? I mean, you have a three pound brain. Most of us went to public school and we've kind of made a mess of our lives. I'm not sure what the resume that most of us bring here that we're ready to say I would make a good Lord. Jesus Christ is humble. We are proud. Jesus Christ is a servant. We are selfish. Jesus Christ does what's best for us. Why would we not assume and presume that his Lordship is best? He says, submit yourselves to God. Not only that, he says resist the devil and he will flee from you. What he says is this, in your life, there is God and Satan, Kingdom down, Hell up, every day, this vice squeezes and we feel the pressure. And what he says is not only do you need to submit to God, you need to resist the devil. There will be moments, seasons, times, opportunities in your life friend, where literally Hell is going to come up in a search. And you're going to feel this rush of temptation toward sin. This deep, profound gravitational pull toward a lie, where you just want to be bitter, which is the culture of Hell rather than forgiving, which is the culture of Heaven, where you're going to want to be independent and not dependent upon God. When those moments happen, you need to know that that is an occasion of spiritual warfare, but at that moment, Satan and the demonic forces of Hell, they have just decided that they're going to advance on you and surround you very quickly seeking to cause you to align with them against him. And what spiritual warfare is in those moments, it's resisting the devil and submitting to the Lord.

Because in that moment, what Satan wants is he wants you to submit to him and to resist the Lord. That's not the way it works, but the good news he tells us is this. If you will fight the good fight of faith, if you will rule and reign over those moments of passion and desire, eventually Satan will flee from you. He will leave you. He will depart from you. The battle does lift. This is what happened to the Lord Jesus in Luke 4, Satan attacked him and he was absolutely under assault and he resisted the devil and he submitted himself to God, the father. And then it says in 4:13 of Luke, that the devil departed from him until a more opportune moment. Meaning he'll come in a flood. If you hold your ground, he will leave. Then he will look for another opportunity to return, the life is filled with these intense seasons. And when they come, it doesn't mean you're not a Christian. They happened to Christ. It doesn't mean you're ungodly. Christ is our God. And it happened to him. He furthermore goes on and says, draw near to God and he will draw near to you. It's not just enough to run from sin, but to draw near God, guys, we do this in Bible reading. We do this in prayer. We do this in worship. You're doing that right now. You're coming as God's people into God's presence. And in a moment we're going to sing God's praises. That's how we draw near to God. It's surrender. And this is what we do in worship and in prayer, it's the universal sign of surrender. I submit myself to God and I draw near to him. The question is, how will he respond? Now some of you, as we talk about these things, you're consciously aware of your own shortcomings and failures. And I just, I could feel it in my soul. You're like Mark, you said adulterous, I've done adultery. Mark you said friends with benefits. I've done friends with benefits. Mark, you said pride. I've been prideful. Mark, you said independence. I've been independent. Mark, you said, don't be a friend of the world. I've been a friend with the world. You're guilty. You come to the conclusion. You come to the conviction. I'm guilty, now what? If I turn to God, is he going to turn to me? And this is the Bible's language of a word that's very significant, it's called repentance. Repentance is I had my face toward the world and now I turn my face toward the Lord. And I turned my back on the world. And as soon as you turn, guess what, God is right there. It says if you will draw near the Lord, if you will turn to the Lord, the Lord will never turn his back on those who turn their face toward him. Some of you wonder, you're like, have I gone too far? Nope. You turned around. He's been following you. He's right there. I've done so much. I know, it's worse than you think. That's why Jesus Christ needed to die. Your problem is so big that God had to take care of it. You have a God-sized problem you have made. There's a story in the Bible that summarizes God's heart for those who draw near to him, it's called the story of the prodigal son. There's a great dad who's got a bad kid. This is the story of the human race. He's loving, gracious, generous, kind, present. And he's got a very ungrateful entitled kid who is just determined to be an enemy of his father and a friend toward the world. So the son comes to his dad and says, I'd like my inheritance now. Now the way it usually works, you don't get your inheritance until your dad dies. And what he's saying is you're dead to me today. I wish you were dead. I have no use of you. The only reason I endure you is to get the inheritance from you. I want no relationship. You're dead to me. Can I please cash out my inheritance today so I can be done with you? This is what humanity has done to our Heavenly father. The father is gracious and generous. Gives him his inheritance. The kid literally leaves his father, turns his back on the father, becomes an enemy of the father, becomes a friend with the world and just self-destructs his whole life. Now for a while, he's pursuing what James calls his passions and desires. So he's doing all the same stupid stuff we

all do. He's going shopping. He's sleeping around. He's buying drinks at the bar. He's spending time at the casino. He's just doing his thing. And then one day he runs out of his dad's money. And one day his life hits proverbial rock bottom. If you've ever seen an addict or a person that has self-destructed and imploded their life, sometimes you can just look at them. You're like, it's not going so good, is it? You can just see it, he's there. And he realizes the world isn't going to care for me. It's not going to provide for me. It's not going to cause me to live. My only hope is to go back to my father, is to draw near to him. And he's worried. Is he going to reject me or accept me? Is he going to punish me or bless me? And his hope, his greatest hope is he'll make me a servant, give me a low-level job so I can survive. I'm done being a son. Maybe I can come back as a servant. So he starts walking home. And as he's walking home, drawing near to his father, the Bible says that the father runs to the son. Let me ask you this grown men. Do we run? Nope. First of all, it's not dignified. Second of all, we can't. Like I always say, if I drop something, I'm going to order another one online. I'm not going to go pick it up. That's way too much work. What that means is that the father has been looking for his son. And as soon as he saw his son draw near to him, he ran toward his son. You may walk toward the father, but the father runs toward you. And he embraces him and he loves him. He says, my son, not my servant, my son. And he blesses him, hey, give him a shower, dress him up. Let's give him the signet ring of the family. He's back into first status. He's equal to all the other family members and let's throw a party and celebrate. Let's put grace on him. Cause this kid was lost. But now he's found, that's the father's heart toward you. That's the father's heart toward you. Now knowing that's the father's heart toward you, here's the proper response according to James. Cleanse your hands, you sinners, purify your hearts. You double-minded, be wretched and mourn and weep. Let your laughter be turned to mourning and your joy to gloom. When you're in the world, there are things that you're proud of that when you returned to the Lord, you're ashamed of, there are things that you use to post on social media that then you delete, like yeah, I'm not proud of that anymore. What used to cause me joy causes me sadness. What I used to be proud of I'm now ashamed of. That my desires have changed and my allegiance has changed and my life has changed and I'm no longer going to continue to celebrate this Hell up life. I'm going to instead celebrate this Kingdom down life. And what he says is to purify your heart and your hands. The way we showed this in Christianity is baptism. We get things dirty all the time. The one common denominator, whether it's your face or your laundry or your car or your dishes is we tend to clean things up with water. Water is the universal sign of cleansing something that has been made dirty. Now the problem is that you and I, when we sin, we also make ourselves dirty or defiled. And we need to be not only forgiven, but cleansed and made clean. The way we show this in Christianity is Christian baptism. So that's what this is. Here's a baptismal. Some of you are like that's weird, that church has got a hot tub. Nope. That's not what we're going to use it for friends. This is a baptismal and it is water showing that if we confess our sins, he is faithful and just to forgive us all of our sins and cleanse us from all of our unrighteousness. And it shows that our God and savior Jesus Christ lived without sin, died for our sin, was buried, rose, conquering Satan's sin, death, Hell, the wrath of God and cleansing us from all unrighteousness and baptism is showing outwardly what God does inwardly when he makes us clean through faith in Jesus Christ. And so what we're going to do is we're going to baptize some people here in just a few minutes. And if you've never been baptized, today is your day. And so when you're

like, but I didn't come prepared. I know, God knew, if he told you you were going to get baptized today, you wouldn't come. So he's telling you right now, he told us in advance. So we have towels and shirts and a changing room. We are ready for you. And what happens through Jesus Christ. He makes us clean. And even when we get ourselves dirty, he cleans us up. All you got to do is repent. Apologize. God, I'm sorry. I was wrong, you were right. Please cleanse me. I've gotten myself dirty here again. Please send cleansing down from Heaven. I've got myself muddied up in this fallen world. And then he closes with this, "humble yourselves before the Lord and he will exalt you. Do not speak evil against one another brothers. The one who speaks against a brother or judges his brother speaks evil against the law and judges the law. But if you judge the law, you are not a doer of the law, but a judge. There's only one lawgiver and one judge, he was able to save and destroy. But who are you to judge your neighbor?" Here's what he's saying is, here's how the world works. I look down on you. I judge you and I'm talking about you and what you do wrong and what you say wrong and how you're wrong. What he says is if you want to live Kingdom down, stop looking down on them, start looking up to him, stop judging them and know that he is going to judge you, stop talking about them and start talking to him. And what he says is that Jesus Christ alone is able to save and destroy, destroy Hell, save Kingdom of Heaven. And here's how it works as judge. Jesus Christ is the only judge of all of humanity through all of human history. We are all going to die and stand before Jesus Christ and he alone will be our judge. Here's the great grand glorious news. Our king came down and he lived Kingdom down. Our God Jesus Christ lived without any sin. He was all together perfectly pure. He submitted himself to God continuously. He resisted the devil perfectly. He lived in obedience, subjugation and submission to the will and word of God, the father. What we did in the world is we were so offended by him that we opposed him. We arrested him. We murdered him and we crucified him. And what he did is he took our place and he put us in his place. And on the cross, Jesus took death so you could receive life. He endured wrath so you could receive grace. He was rejected so you could be accepted. He tasted Hell so that he could open Heaven. He took away your unrighteousness and replaced it with his righteousness. And Jesus Christ is not only the judge. He used the judge who took your place to be judged in your place. You chose Hell. He chose Heaven. You chose death. He chose life. You chose condemnation. He chose salvation. You chose Satan and God chose you. And his name is Jesus Christ. You don't need to live Hell up. You can live Kingdom down. When you die, you don't need to go to Hell. You can go to Heaven. And right now you don't need to live a life that feels like Hell, you can invite the Holy Spirit to bring the Kingdom down so you can enjoy the eternal life, not the day you die, but the day that you meet Jesus Christ is king and Lord. Amen. So here's what we're going to do, number one, for those of you who are hearing this and Jesus died, Jesus rose, Jesus returned. Jesus is alive. Jesus is coming again. Jesus is judging the living and the dead. And ultimately it's all about you and this relationship with him. So if you are here and you are not a Christian, today, when you hear his voice, do not harden your heart, go to the back, knee with our prayer team, we love you. We want to talk to you. We want you to receive Jesus. We want to give you a Bible. We want to baptize you to show that as Jesus rose, you're going to rise. And as Jesus cleanses, he's made you clean. If there's a stirring in your heart, if there's an openness to Jesus, do not delay. Do not live another day without God ruling and reigning over your life. For those of you who are here and you are Christians, but you've

never been baptized, because you are a friend of the world and you want to have a friends with benefits relationship with Jesus. I want him in my heart, but not my life. I want a private relationship, not a public relationship. You need to know that this is the day that you need to go public with your faith. And I can't think of a better day than Halloween. I can't think of a better day than Halloween.