

SELF-SUFFICIENCY: THE BARRIER OF DESPERATION

James 4:1-10

DISCUSSION 1

James says, “Draw near to God, and he will draw near to you.” This is the opposite of what a self-sufficient person does. It is easy to depend on ourselves and selfishly try to meet our own need.

1. How do you think God can use trials, conflict, or suffering to accomplish what He wants in our lives?
2. Take a minute to examine some of the root sources of your desires. How many of them are grounded in God and His Word? How many are born out of your own selfish desires that James 4 speaks of?
3. How do you see the message of self-sufficiency communicated in the news, the media, and the workplace?

DISCUSSION 2

Self-sufficiency is placing our whole dependence and trust in what we bring to the table instead of putting our hope in God.

1. What can you pull out of this week’s passage that motivates you to live with a greater desperation for God? What convinces you that you need to be more desperate?
2. Think of some of the large responsibilities you have or will have in the future, such as a home project, shepherding your children, or navigating a difficult relationship. How much do you depend on your own abilities? How much do you depend on God’s ability?
3. Read 1 Cor. 4:7, James 1:17, John 3:30, Matt. 7:11, and Acts 17:28. How can these passages help us become less self-sufficient?

DISCUSSION 3

The key to exaltation is humility—the way up is actually down.

1. What are some areas in your life where you are actively humbling yourself? What are some areas where you are exalting yourself, focusing on yourself, or preferring yourself?
2. The problem within us is literally ourselves. Our desires get us into trouble all the time. How can you begin to submit your desires to God, so that He would form those desires more into His desires (Read Ps. 37:4-5)?

DISCUSSION 3 (CONTINUED)

3. Self-sufficiency is putting our understanding, desires, wisdom, and abilities above all. How do these Scriptures address self-sufficiency: Prov. 3:5-6, Isa. 5:21, Prov. 26:12, 2 Cor. 3:5, John 15:5, Job 38 & 39?

FAMILY DISCIPLESHIP QUESTIONS

1. How can someone be dependent on God every day? (Read Rom. 11:36)?
2. What is the first thing we should do in times of trouble? What do we sometimes do first instead?
3. Read the following verses and discuss what Jesus did to express His own dependence on His Heavenly Father: Luke 5:16, Mark 1:35, Mark 14:13, Matt. 14:23, Luke 6:12, John 17.
4. Have everyone in the discussion pick one area or person in their life that they are burdened by or afraid about. Spend time praying over each individual family member and his or her burdens. Pray that God would help the individual depend on Him. End by expressing dependence on God through prayer together.

APPLICATION

1. Spend some time this week surveying your life and prayerfully determining if you are more self-dependent or God-dependent. Repent and turn toward the Lord in the self-sufficient areas He reveals.
2. Thank God for all the ways His sufficiency has rescued you from danger, self-destruction, sin, and pain. As you do, acknowledge that His sufficiency is given not out of obligation, but out of loving grace.

PRAYER

Group: As a group, spend some time praying truths from the Scripture over situations that may have come up during discussion. Pray that each individual would grow from self-likeness and into christlikeness.

Personal: Pick one area of your life where you know you are fixed on trusting in your own abilities and strength. Use that as a mainstay in your life to go to God consistently; pray that He would have His way in your life so that you would taste the satisfaction of being a desperate child of God.