James 4

*“Draw Near”*

**Scripture:** James 4:1-17

**Memory Verse:** *“Therefore submit to God. Resist the devil and he will flee from you. Draw near to God and He will draw near to you….”* James 4:7-8a

**Lesson Focus:** We need to run from evil and draw near to God.

**Activities and Craft:** Coloring Picture, Work Sheet: 3rd – 5th Classroom Discussion

Craft for 1st and 2nd Graders: Draw Near to God Bookmark

**Introduction:**

Several years ago, newspapers carried a story about an elderly lady who lived in the Big Cypress Swamp in South Florida. Her home was an old shack located by a small pond. Every day the lady went out to the pond to draw water. In the pond lived an alligator. Despite the danger, the lady allowed this alligator to live in the pond for years. It seemed tame. She didn’t bother the gator and the gator didn’t bother her.

However, one day while she was drawing water front he pond, the gator swam under the water and then plunged up, finally attacking her. She was hurt badly but she was able to call the Paramedics and when they arrived they gave her the medical attention she needed.

The park ranger told reporters, “Alligators are most dangerous when they lose their fear of humans. By allowing the alligator to remain in your pond, you unknowingly give it the courage to attack.” The lady still lives in the swamp. But there are no longer any alligators in her pond.

**Bible Study:**

1. **The Wrong Desires: James 4:1-3**

Chapter 4 of James starts out by talking about the reason we fight? What reasons does he give?

* evil desires inside of us
* want what others have, jealous
* fight to get what we want
* “pleasures” – we want things of this world that will please us

Finish this sentence:

I would be happy if only I had\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_.

Have you ever felt jealous of someone else?

Have you ever felt selfish?

The reason that “pleasures” of this world are dangerous is that they get our focus off of God and on the world and what we can get. Luke 8:14 when Jesus is talking about the seed of the Word of God falling on soils He says, “*Now the ones that fell among thorns are those who , when they have heard, go out and are chocked with cares, riches, and pleasures of life, and bring no fruit to maturity.”*

James even goes on in verse 3, to say that even when you finally do ask God for those things that you want, you don’t get them. Why? (wrong motives.)

When you ask God for the newest Play Station and don’t get it – is it because God is letting your down?

## The Wrong Friendship; James 4:4-6

James says in verse 4, that friendship with this world makes you­­­­­­­\_\_\_\_\_\_\_(an enemy of God.)

This word “friendship” only appears here in the New Testament. The Greek word describes love in the sense of a strong emotional attachment. In other words they long for the things that this world has to offer. They can’t get it out of their minds.

First of all what is “friendship with this world”?

And secondly, how does that make you an enemy of God?

You guys can watch any commercial or look at any magazine advertisement and you will see that the world is telling you that “you deserve to have everything!” “And that once you have wealth, and things you will be happy.”

1. **Right Attitude! James 4:5-10** We hear a lot these days about having the right attitude. We hear it from our parents, teachers, and coaches. But God says here that the right attitude can only come by dependence!

**1. Spirit Power: 4:5-6a**

What does it mean to depend on or rely on something?

Where does it say that the Holy Spirit has been placed?

Do you guys really understand what the role of the Holy Spirit is in our lives? Explain?

These verses say that God has placed the Holy Spirit inside of us and that the Holy Spirit WAITS for us to be faithful....in other words the Holy Spirit is waiting for us to say, “God I need you!” “God I can’t do this alone?” The minute that we cry out God will be there through the Holy Spirit to help us live the way we should!

What does verse 6 say? (He gives us more and more and more and more strength to fight all of our “evil” desires.) God gives us His grace to live in a world that is fallen. There never is a problem, or situation that God will not give us the grace to handle it. Hebrews 4:16 says, *“Let us then approach the throne of grace with confidence so that we may receive e mercy and find grace to help us in our time of need.”* God’s grace never runs out!

**2. Humility; 4:6b – 8**

How many of you like to be around somebody that is proud? What are they like and why don’t you like being around them?

What do you think that humility is? Look at verse 7a, what does it say? “So humble yourselves before God...” That is humility! Humility is realizing that God is God! God has always put a high priority on being humble. From Genesis to Revelation God says over and over that you must have a humble heart! You must have a heart that knows it needs God! You must have a heart that knows that God is God, and He is awesome and so very powerful and we are just His creation.

Just like a person bows to their King, we bow down before God in our inner man.

Do you remember the story of Jonah in the Old Testament? What did God ask Jonah to do? Did Jonah do it? No, not right away. He did not like what God asked of him because he did not like the people God told him to take the message to. So Jonah did not submit to God but instead ran away.

1. **Resistance: 4:7b-8a**

Do you guys know that the Bible says that we can make the devil run? How do we make the devil run?

From this verse, if you are a child of God, does the devil have any power over us?

“Resist” literally means “take your stand against.” It must be a deliberate and conscientious decision! It is a military term which means to stand against in combat.

This is an awesome verse. All we have to do is:

1. live close to God, depend on Him

and then....

1. resist the devil, and he will flee

Now when you flee from something, do you walk, or trot...no you run with all of your might. When we resist the evil that we are tempted to do with God’s help, the devil has no choice but to get out of there.

How do we “resist” the devil? (Ephesians 6:11) *“Put on the whole armor of God, that you may be able to stand against the wiles of the devil.”* We cannot resist without being prepared.

**4 Draw Close to God:**

Verse 8 tells us to “draw close to God, and God will \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ (draw close to you.”

This is a wonderful promise of Scripture! I heard a saying once that said, “If you feel far from God, guess who moved?” God has always been available! God has always been waiting for our hearts to turn towards Him. And the second that they do God is there! We need to “draw near” to “pursue a love relationship with God.”

How do we draw near – prayer!

I want you to spend time with your leaders today, talking about ways that you can draw close to God. But boys and girls, if anyone in this room has never told God that they needed Him, by asking Jesus to forgive their sins, please talk to me afterwards or to your leader. Do not wait another day! Just as the rest of chapter 4 of James goes on to say, we have to take steps to be right with God. Sometimes we need to be sad, over the wrong things that we have done or said. Don’t put off your relationship with God!

In verse 6, James is quoting Proverbs 3:34 from the Old Testament.

**Conclusion:**

Do you remember the story that we started out with today? The old lady allowed the alligator to live in her pond. She allowed it to stay too close. She felt safe as long as she just let it live in her pond. But was she safe? The danger was too close! That is exactly what James is saying here! You cannot be a friend of the world because eventually it will devour you. We need to resist the world and the devil, and with God’s help watch them run away!

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1. What does the Bible mean when it says that a war is raging inside of us? Do you ever feel like a war is raging inside of you?
2. Is it easy or hard to be a “friend” to the world?
3. James said that we don’t receive what we ask from God because we ask with wrong motives. Give me some examples of wrong motives in prayer?
4. What happens when we stand against the devil?
5. Can you think of one area in your life that you need to take a stand “against the devil?”
6. Why should we humble ourselves before God? How do you do that?
7. Have you ever wondered why you don’t feel God near to you? What did you learn from this passage to help? What should we do when we feel far from God? What promise is given to those who draw near to God?
8. Read Psalm 145:18, and tell us what does the Lord want from us when we come to Him?