

AN EXPOSITION ON
JAMES 4:1-10

PRAYING

ACCORDING TO GOD'S WILL

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Praying according to God's will

-Vlad Ciolan

You wouldn't expect to become physically healthy if you practice an unhealthy lifestyle. Similarly, an unhealthy prayer lifestyle will have consequences for our spiritual health.

An unhealthy prayer life fails to produce answers and also prevents us from fulfilling the desires God has placed in our hearts. Consequently, the frustration and confusion caused by unanswered prayer can hurt us both spiritually and emotionally.

We believe that God answers prayers, so by intentionally developing a healthy prayer lifestyle we can grow in the knowledge of HOW to ask, WHAT to ask and WHEN to ask.

Above all, a healthy prayer lifestyle means a healthy relationship with our God. Not knowing how to pray and what our prayer life should include can be discouraging and may also hold us back from developing a more profound knowledge of God.

We can begin to evaluate our prayer life by asking ourselves the following questions:

What are my expectations when I pray?

Do I pray intentionally?

Do I believe that God is listening to my prayer?

Gaining knowledge of *how* to pray will help us to increase in confidence as we approach God's throne of grace because we can be assured that our prayers will not be in vain.

The purpose of this guide is to understand James' approach to prayer and how this knowledge can be practically applied to our prayer lives.

We know we *should* pray; we know we *need* to pray. It is likely if you were raised in a church background that you grew up hearing the pastor encouraging everyone to pray and to attend prayer meetings.

You will perhaps be aware of an increasing desire within you to develop a lifestyle of powerful prayer but, if you're honest with yourself, perhaps you will recognise that you may not know precisely *how* to achieve this.

As new Christians, we often experience being told to pray, but seldom will people take the time to explain how prayer works and what God expects of us when we approach Him in prayer.

That is not to say that there is only one way in which we should pray. The Bible is full of exhortations to prayer, and Jesus Himself is the best model when it comes to developing a praying lifestyle.

In this exposition of James 4: 1-10, we will focus first on what an unhealthy prayer lifestyle looks like then move on to explore the characteristics of a healthy prayer lifestyle and what benefits this can have.

As you progress through this study, be confident that prayer is one of the most powerful habits we can develop.

PART 1 –

FOUR MARKS OF UNHEALTHY PRAYER LIFESTYLE

James 4:1-6

“1 What causes quarrels and what causes fights among you? Is it not this, that your passions are at war within you?

2 You desire and do not have, so you murder. You covet and cannot obtain, so you fight and quarrel. You do not have, because you do not ask.

3 You ask and do not receive, because you ask wrongly, to spend it on your passions.

4 You adulterous people! Do you not know that friendship with the world is enmity with God? Therefore, whoever wishes to be a friend of the world makes himself an enemy of God.

5 Or do you suppose it is to no purpose that the Scripture says, “He yearns jealously over the spirit that he has made to dwell in us”?

6 But he gives more grace. Therefore, it says, “God opposes the proud, but gives grace to the humble.”

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1. NO REQUEST
 2. WRONG REQUEST
 3. LOVELESS REQUEST
 4. PRIDEFUL REQUEST
-

1. NO REQUEST

*“YOU DESIRE AND DO NOT HAVE, SO YOU MURDER. YOU
COVET AND CANNOT OBTAIN, SO YOU FIGHT AND
QUARREL.” (JAMES 4:2-3)*

One of the primary reasons our prayers are not answered is because we are not actually making prayers.

Rather than asking God, we expect everything to fall from the heavens!

We must realise that all too often, we do not have *because* we do not ask!

As this verse says the response can then be that, *“You do not have so you murder”*.

This is not to say that any of us literally thinks of killing someone when we don't have what we desire. However, it is true that on many occasions we will try to get our needs met *without* bringing them to God.

Our natural tendency is to take matters into our own hands.

We often approach God only as a last resort after our own attempts have failed. When we finally lose hope that we can get what we want on our own we ask God – He becomes our “Plan B” rather than our default.

“We make prayer our spare tyre rather than our steering wheel” (Tim Badal, Village Bible Church)

In our times of need, we forget that our heavenly Father wants us to ASK for His help.

God wants us to run to Him in prayer *every time* we are in need because He loves us. The Father desperately wants us to understand how good and loving He is and to believe that in caring for us He will meet *all* of our needs.

Think about a child who asks for something from his parents; his requests reflect the love and protection that he feels certain of receiving from his parents. A child who knows he is loved will be confident to make *any* request of his parents, and they will be the *first* ones he asks. Coming from a place of firm belief in his parents' desire and ability to provide there will be no limits to what he dares to ask. Consequently, for that child, everything is possible!

If we look at what factors increase the likelihood that we will ask for something from another person we find two factors that will undoubtedly increase our courage to make that request:

1. *THE AMOUNT AND QUANTITY OF RESOURCES THEY POSSESS*
2. *THE DEGREE TO WHICH WE KNOW WE ARE LOVED BY THAT PERSON*

Regardless of what it is we want, we are far more likely to ask for the resources required if we are sure the person we are asking has an abundant supply.

We would surely never fear to ask for anything from those that love us dearly if we are confident they have it to give!

Imagine for a moment that you have a billionaire friend who loves you, authentically and genuinely, with all their heart; would anything hold you back from approaching them to help you obtain or achieve the desires of your heart?

Most likely not, even pride would be no obstacle since, knowing the love they have for you, you would feel no shame at admitting your need for help and nor would you doubt that they would be happy to support you.

Now, let's relate this to our relationship with God - *Our* God!

He is the Creator of the whole universe; the inventor and owner of *everything* we see. With one word He formed the stars, where there was once darkness He brought light, He breathed to life every creature in existence.

He created the night and the day, the skies and seas, the land and plants, the heavens and the earth. God created *everything*, and He created us.

He created you

You see unlike our imaginary loving billionaire who owns a lot and has *some* power, our Heavenly Father not only owns everything but is also absolutely sovereign. God, as the source of our provision, holds *all* the power to distribute whatever we need and His resources are without limit!

Moreover, since God identifies as a *loving* Father to those who place their trust in Him, we have the assurance that in addition to owning everything and having all the power He also unconditionally loves us!

Romans 8:32

“He who did not spare His own Son but gave Him up for us all, how will He not also with him graciously give us all things?”

This means that when we make our requests known to God *if* He says “NO” it’s not because He lacks the resources, ability or desire to provide. We can be confident that God will not refuse our requests to hurt or control us. His actions towards us are always motivated by love. Therefore, a “no” from God is either for our protection or because He plans to give us something even better in the future.

When James writes about *asking* he is actually referring to the action of bringing our request *to someone we know*; someone we are in a relationship with, namely God.

Our prayers are a choice to approach our God and central to this is our understanding of our relationship with him. Do you have full confidence that you are loved by Him, that He desires to bless you and that He knows you and all your needs even better than you do?

Knowing our Father God is the only way we can learn to ask for what we need from the security of our position as children of God

Ofentimes, we know more about the request we bring to God than we know the God to whom we bring our requests!

Notes:

2. *WRONG REQUESTS*

*“YOU ASK AND DO NOT RECEIVE, BECAUSE YOU ASK
WRONGLY, TO SPEND IT ON YOUR PASSIONS” (JAMES 4:2-3)*

The Greek translation of the word “wrongly” is “waste”. Therefore this verse is informing us that we do not receive because we ask for things in order to waste them on ourselves.

This is self-indulgence – spiritual obesity!

If we have become spiritually obese, we find ourselves making requests of God that are more about what we want than what we need. These will be selfish and self-centred requests which rarely have any benefit for anyone else.

Again we see this modelled by parents when they deny their children specific resources because they know their child would merely waste what they requested.

In honesty, I can confess that I once asked God for €1 Million. It was a financially challenging time for me, and I genuinely needed *some* money to pay for essentials, but in my greed, I asked for far more than I needed.

God did not answer this prayer!

Without a doubt, God had €1 Million to give, and he heard my request, but He knew (as did I in my heart) that I wouldn't be responsible with the money. I definitely would have bought what I needed, *but* I'd have most probably wasted the rest of the money.

This scripture is explaining that there *is* a wrong way to ask; when we are motivated by self-indulgence that guarantees the response from God will be a resounding no!

That's why it is of the utmost importance that we honestly evaluate the motives of our heart *before* approaching our loving Father with our desires.

When the motives of our heart reflect the Father's heart, and we align our plans with His will, then we will know what to seek Him for and can be sure that He is able to grant our requests.

Notes:

3. LOVELESS REQUESTS

*“ADULTEROUS PEOPLE! DO YOU NOT KNOW THAT
FRIENDSHIP WITH THE WORLD IS ENMITY WITH GOD?”*

What a statement!

Here James describes *“adulterous people”*, these are some emotive words.

The verse paints a picture of someone who is unfaithful and impure; someone whom we might consider to be disloyal and lacking a desire to be held accountable for their actions.

The truth is that, if we are honest, very often we are the people portrayed in this verse when we attempt to employ prayer as a means for our material gain but neglect to build a deep and intimate relationship with God.

We live in a consumerist world, and if we are not intentionally on our guard it becomes easy to cultivate a consumerist relationship with God. We seek to obtain things quickly, cheaply and with the minimum amount of effort on our part. If we like what God has on offer, we will go to Him, and if at any time His proposal doesn't fit our expectations we will go elsewhere to get what we want.

“What people need to learn in life is how to love people and use things instead of using people and loving things.”

In the same way, as Christians, we need to learn how to love God and use things rather than using God to fulfil our love of things!

The way we use our money, materials, time and talents should demonstrate our love for God – if we only “love” Him as a means to get what we want there is something very wrong in our relationship.

This verse is explaining that we shouldn't expect to have answered prayers if we are not faithful to God, our relationship with Him must come first!

The scripture goes on to explain that by being unfaithful to God we are not His friends and therefore we are His enemies.

I don't know about you, but I do not want God as an enemy!

But we see here that we have a choice: friendship with the world *is* enmity with God - there is no middle ground, so what are we going to choose?

Assuming we choose friendship with God let's take a moment to think about what that looks like:

Friendship is built on mutual trust, this is developed through spending time with each other, getting to know one another and the desire to help and support each other grows from this place.

Friendship requires an investment of our time and energy – there are only so many hours in the day, and we will prioritise the relationships we value most.

To be friends with God, we must, therefore, choose to invest our time, energy *and* emotions into our relationship with Him. Does this mean we only spend time with God, locked in our room?

No, it doesn't!

With any friendship, there is a balance between one-to-one quality time together and also time spent as part of a larger group of mutual friends. As Christians we are called to a *family* of faith, our friendship with God must be our priority and central to everything that we do *but* God has

many “friends” and so we should be investing our time and energy in being a part of this community He has built as well.

As our worth and identity grow through our friendship with God, we will then be not only equipped to walk out our faith but also desiring ever more profoundly to impact the world for Him. Remember that even though we are in the world, we are not of the world; the best way we can ensure that we remain faithful to God while we carry out our part in the Great Commission is to focus first and foremost on our friendship with Him.

To be loved by God and to love God is entirely transformative and this transformation will unquestionably impact our prayer life. If we are coming to God motivated by our love for Him and yearning to be a part of His mission, this will be evident in both our prayer conversations *and* our response to whether or not He meets our requests.

God’s love is the remedy to our fleshly, consumerist nature. The more we fall in love with God, the less our prayer life will be about us, and the more powerful our intercession can become.

*“OR DO YOU THINK SCRIPTURE SAYS WITHOUT REASON
THAT HE JEALOUSLY YEARNES FOR THE SPIRIT HE HAS MADE
TO DWELL IN US?”(JAMES4:5)*

Who is God yearning for?

The spirit He made to dwell *in us!*

God created us with a spirit, and His heart’s desire has *always* been that our spirit would be joined in relationship to His. Worshipping God is what we are *designed* for, and prayer is a vital way to do this!

This scripture is reminding us that the love of God is a jealous love and as such, He cannot bear to share us with the world. When we choose to

run to anything or anyone to meet our needs instead of bringing them to God in prayer, this is the spiritual equivalent of cheating on Him!

By behaving like adulterous people, we are making ourselves His enemy *and* forfeiting the peace, joy and prosperity of our souls that He longs to give us.

The reality is, we can never experience any lasting fulfilment outside of our relationship with God because our need of Him is part of who we are, try as we might it is *impossible* to function to our full capacity without submitting to this foundational truth.

To expect answered prayers without a relationship with God is like expecting a petrol car to run on diesel – the car may start and travel a short distance but you will have destroyed the engine and must then return to the manufacturer for repair.

Pursue God’s friendship, trust Him to mould and shape your heart according to His own heart. Be faithful to Him first and let your prayers flow from this position of loving submission to the Father.

“Worship and intercession must go together, the one is impossible without the other. Intercession means that we rouse ourselves up to get the mind of Christ about the one for whom we pray” – Oswald Chambers

4. PRIDEFUL REQUESTS

“GOD OPPOSES THE PROUD BUT GIVES GRACE TO THE HUMBLE.”(JAMES 4:6)

As a dear friend of mine once said, pride is but another word for independence. When we look at God's response to the first being to act out of pride, we understand that God is *indisputably* an enemy of pride.

The angel Lucifer's plan to ascend to God's throne was born out of his desire to be worshipped as God, he thought himself deserving of God's glory and statute. His unchecked pride caused him to lead a rebellion in heaven, and we know very well how God dealt with this; not only was Lucifer cast out of heaven, he is doomed to the eternal fire!

We know that God will not tolerate pride in the heavens or on Earth as was demonstrated at the time of the Exodus.

There was no ruler greater than Pharaoh in the entire world at this time. He was esteemed as a god by those subject to his rule; he was loved, adored and obeyed without question.

Had Pharaoh understood the majestic glory of the Sovereign God he may have been spared this lesson, but in his pride and arrogance, he thought that was beyond submission to Almighty God. Consequently, Pharaoh found himself in a situation that forced him to acknowledge that there is no God like the God of Israel. Unfortunately, like many sins rooted in pride, there was a great deal of collateral damage on the road to Pharaoh's pride being crushed.

Exodus 5:2 “But Pharaoh said, “Who is the LORD, that I should obey his voice and let Israel go? I do not know the LORD, and moreover, I will not let Israel go.”

As we see how God opposes the proud, we gain a sense of the appropriate response we must have to this sin. It is not to be taken lightly! Pride is insidious, and very often if we look to the root of the sin in our lives, we will find pride there.

A prayer life infected by pride will not bring glory to God. We cannot pray effectively all the time we believe we have any ability to achieve anything of eternal worth independent from God.

"God can never entrust His Kingdom to anyone who has not been broken of pride, for pride is the armour of darkness itself."

Francis Frangipane

Our Father understands the battle we face in admitting our weakness and reliance on Him. He doesn't expect us to even achieve this apart from Him and this position of acknowledging our own short-comings is the platform from which we can pursue a healthy, and robust, prayer life because:

"GOD GIVES GRACE TO THE HUMBLE." (JAMES 4:6)

Notes:

PART 2 –

FIVE HABITS THAT LEAD TO A HEALTHY PRAYER LIFESTYLE

“Submit yourselves therefore to God. Resist the devil, and he will flee from you. Draw near to God, and he will draw near to you. Cleanse your hands, you sinners, and purify your hearts, you double-minded. Be wretched and mourn and weep. Let your laughter be turned to mourning and your joy to gloom. Humble yourselves before the Lord, and he will exalt you.”
(James 4:7-10)

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1. *SUBMIT TO GOD*
 2. *RESIST THE DEVIL*
 3. *DRAW NEAR TO GOD*
 4. *REPENT*
 5. *HUMBLE YOURSELF*
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1. SUBMIT TO GOD

Submitting to God literally means submitting to *His* will.

The best way to discover God's will is to read His Word, the Bible.

To submit to God is to place yourself under His authority – to obey Him.

It is *imperative* that we read the Bible, this is fundamental for our understanding of the character and heart of God. Through scripture, we also gain an eternal perspective which we can apply to our lives and the circumstances surrounding us.

I sometimes ask people "Do you believe *in* God?" and most of the times the answer is "Yes" but then I ask, "Do you believe God?"

You see, believing in God's existence is not what makes us Christians, but instead, we are defined by our belief in who God is

2 Corinthians 2:10

"His promises are YES and AMEN!"

The only being in existence in the entire universe that always keeps all his promises that is GOD! Submitting to God becomes more natural when we know that he is faithful and cannot lie.

However, the only way to know this vital truth is through reading the Bible. I would go so far as to say that it is impossible to fully submit to God without a love of His Word. Submission is unattainable unless we know who we're submitting to well enough to trust them to have our best interests at heart.

This is why, for many people, the idea of submitting themselves to anyone is a very frightening prospect. To give someone else control over us requires us to be completely vulnerable and so we will not be able to do this if we doubt their motives toward us.

The truth is that in life we are always controlled by something, whether we are living for our careers, for family or for the pursuit of recognition, something influences the choices we make. Submitting to God is handing over control to the one that loves us, who always works for our good and will *never* change. Therefore, to submit our lives to something that will inevitably change and fail us is the real risk!

We can also view submission as a threat to our rights, fearing that it will prevent us from living in freedom and undermine our ability to do what is best for us.

But do we really know what is best for us?

Since our desires come from our heart, we must honestly assess how well we can ever understand it

Jeremiah 17:9

“The heart is deceitful above all things, and desperately sick; who can understand it?”

As we read in this verse, the fact is that we do not actually understand our own heart.

As much as we might like to think we know what we need and what is best for us there is enough evidence in each of our lives that our feelings can lead us into all kinds of trouble.

Think about the many times you have been confused and just didn't know what to do or the times when perhaps you made a decision because at the time it felt right and then later on the situation changed and so did the feelings then suddenly you weren't so sure your choice was right after all.

Following our hearts is like submitting to someone who is “deceitful and desperately sick”- would you let a messed up liar call the shots in your life?

God is the *only* one who can see our hearts and understand them, where our hearts can easily deceive us they can *never* mislead our omniscient God.

He created us, He loves us, and He knows us more fully than we even know ourselves.

“A man is not far from the gates of heaven when he is fully submissive to the Lord’s will”

Charles Spurgeon

A lifestyle of submission to God allows us to pray in line with His will.

Notes:

2. RESIST THE DEVIL

The more we submit ourselves to God, the greater our capacity will be to resist the devil.

The best place you can be when attacked and tried by the enemy is under God's protection and in His will.

Note the choice of words, we are to “resist ” rather than “fight” the devil. This depicts a test rather than a battle

Again, the Bible offers us a great wealth of examples about how these tests can occur and what our response should be. Jesus, Job, Peter and Paul are but a few of those whose trials have been recorded in scripture to demonstrate what it is to resist the devil.

An enemy by definition will try to attack.

“Trials should not surprise us, or cause us to doubt God’s faithfulness. Rather, we should actually be glad for them. God sends trials to strengthen our trust in him so that our faith will not fail. Our trials keep us trusting; they burn away our self-confidence and drive us to our Saviour” Edmund Clowney

We know that the devil is a *defeated* foe, he may still prowl like a lion and may even roar like one but the reality his teeth were removed a long time ago!

We are called to *resist* because, in Christ, the battle has already been won.

When Jesus was tempted by Satan, He used the *scriptures* to resist him. He didn't "claim victory" in his own name over Satan but resisted the devil with His Fathers' Word.

In times of testing we should follow his example, let us declare like Job:

Job 19:25-27

**“For I know that my Redeemer lives,
and at the last he will stand upon
the earth.**

**And after my skin has been thus destroyed,
yet in my flesh I shall see God,**

whom I shall see for myself,
and my eyes shall behold, and
not another.
My heart faints within me!”

Notes:

3. *DRAW NEAR TO GOD*

Again we see the paramount importance of our *personal* relationship with God. The promise we can stand on is that as we draw near to God, He *will* draw near to us!

Drawing near to God is a way of life.

Just by attending church this does not necessarily mean we draw closer to God – we may grow in knowledge, but that doesn't automatically mean we grow in wisdom.

Drawing near to God is a process made up of each small decisions we make throughout each and every day to receive God's love, to return God's love and to reflect God's love to those around us.

It is a daily journey on which we will find obstacles, where we will sometimes fall and often become tired and weary, this is why God promises that in this process He will draw near to us as well.

If God asks us to draw near to Him, we know we can and must do this but, as in all things, God wants us to be dependent on Him to achieve this intimate relationship with Him. He promises to draw near to us so that the outcome does not rely on our efforts.

This means that no matter how faltering our steps are, as we make that choice to approach Him we experience the proof of His love in action. Like the father running to meet the prodigal son, God moves towards us offering His mercy, grace and always in readiness to provide all of the resources we could ever need to live as His children once more.

But how do we draw near to God?

Hebrews 12:14

Hebrews 12:14

“Make every effort to live in peace with everyone and to be holy; without holiness no one will see the Lord.”

Holiness begins with our understanding that we *belong* to God and continues in the moment-by-moment process of *setting ourselves apart* for God. Living a holy life will require sacrifice.

We must deny ourselves anything which will hinder our ability to step into His holy presence. This may be a case of turning away from sin, bad habits or ungodly relationships. It may include evaluating how and where we spend our time and talents. Our aim must be that everything we are and everything we do is brought before God and in line with His will.

It is vital to understand the fact that God doesn't expect our perfection before we can approach Him. It is through our position in Christ that we can come before God as we are. Jesus' sacrifice for our sins made it possible for us to come into the presence of our Holy God.

It is in our Father's presence that we find grace and new beginnings when we approach him in prayer He will transform our lives and hearts according to His will.

Go as you are to become as He is!

4. REPENT

Repentance is not achieved through a choice of words.

Saying "God, I'm sorry for my sin" while continuing to live in that sin is hypocrisy.

As James writes: "Cleanse your *hands* you sinners", this shows us repentance involves *action*.

Just as you couldn't clean dirt off of your hands by merely saying you wanted to wash them, so it is with sin. To become clean, you must wash the mud off!

However, the first step to choosing to wash your hands would be to realise they are dirty. Sometimes perhaps this is obvious, you can visibly see filth all over them, but at other times you might consider them clean and miss a microscopic germ that would make you sick for a week.

We need to see and acknowledge our sin, we need to see our wretchedness, and allow ourselves to be washed clean under the waterfall of God's never-ending grace and mercy. Above all we must understand that there is *never* a point this side of eternity where we will be spiritually clean, there will never be a moment where we no longer to repent or where we no longer rely on God's grace

We must also seek to *purify our hearts* because otherwise, we will live as *double-minded* people. We can know what is right and understand (at least in part) how we should live but at the same time find ourselves doing things we know we shouldn't. A double minded person lives a life split between trying to please God and the world, the fruit of this will be the constant frustration of their attempts to live a holy life.

Matthew 6:24

“No one can serve two masters. Either you will hate the one and love the other, or you will be devoted to the one and despise the other.”

We know that our beliefs about who we are will influence how we behave.

Repentance is about focusing on who we are in Christ.

As we fix our attention on Christ, on who He is and so by extension who we are then our behaviour will come as a result of this. We can live in a more Christ-like way *only* out of the overflow of a Christ-centred thought life.

*Repentance is a continual alignment and renewal of
our mind and thinking patterns according to God's
Word*

Repentance is turning your back on sin and face towards God while walking towards His wide-open arms which is why James tells us that when we do this, we can:

"Let your laughter be turned to weeping and joy to gloom" James 4:9

Repentance is a place of joy because it means you are positioning yourself to receive God's grace and to walk once again in relationship with Him.

It is right that we should experience sorrow when we have sinned and fallen short of God's standards. We should never pretend that our sin doesn't matter because we are covered by grace.

However, it is through grace that we can move past this place of weeping and mourning to a place of joy and laughter as we celebrate the freedom we have in Christ. Following repentance and restoration to a right relationship with God, it is entirely appropriate to be thankful, joyful and happy that we are blessed to serve a God who is faithful when we are not.

2 Kings 19:14

Hezekiah received the letter from the messengers and read it. Then he went up to the temple of the LORD and spread it out before the LORD.”

Christians will go through challenging times, as we see in the account of Hezekiah and his response to the impending threat of invasion by the Assyrians, even the most faithful servant of God is not exempt.

When we come before God in prayer as Hezekiah did and lay everything out before him, even in the face of seemingly inescapable odds, repentance and submission to God will ultimately enable us to exchange mourning and gloom for joy and laughter.

5. *HUMBLE YOURSELF*

Humility is the opposite of pride and an attribute after God's own heart characterised by an attitude of absolute selflessness.

We see this nowhere more clearly than at the cross of Calvary where Jesus willingly laid down his life in submission to the will of God so that we might be restored to relationship with the Father.

Humility should not be confused with being a victim, it is not a quality of the defeated. It is also not self-deprecating. The humble person will not be forever putting themselves down but will instead be of a similar mind to this:

“If I could say I am a better man than when I began life in Christ, it would be only because I see more of my own vileness now than I did years ago” G V Wigram

When James tells us that "God gives grace to the humble", he is referring to God's ability to extend His grace to those who recognise their own weakness. The verse is making the connection that grace should elicit humility within the believer and that authentic humility when we approach God will elicit a grace-filled response from Him.

1 Peter 5:6-7a

Humble yourselves, therefore, under God's mighty hand, so that in due time He may exalt you. Cast all your anxiety on Him, because He cares for you...

A healthy prayer life is undertaken from a place of humility where we come before God aware of our own wretchedness, having acknowledged our absolute reliance on Him and in readiness to submit to His will.

This does not mean that we are called to an identity of weakness and inevitable failure but that we know our strength is in Christ and any measure of success we experience is only ever achieved through Christ.

Humility ensures that we are positioned to receive His grace poured out into our lives. It will shape our prayer to be more about Him and less about us as well as helping us to adopt an attitude of thankfulness for all that He has done and all that we know He will do!

John 15:15

“I no longer call you servants because a servant doesn’t know what his master is doing, but I call you friends.”

We come to God in prayer as sons and daughters adopted into His family. We live to serve Him, but our identity is not as His servant, it is as His friend.

Ultimately, having a healthy prayer life; one where you rely on God and approach Him boldly with requests that reflect His will for your life is rooted in having a right understanding of how He sees you:

God is not in love with a future version of yourself; He loves you now!