

Signs of Arrogance

Our previous study in James 4:1-10 concluded with a wonderful and climatic promise: “*Humble yourselves before the Lord, and He will lift you up.*” As we read on in James’ epistle it would appear that he is shifting back to his admonitions relating to specific forms of behavior. Yet, if we read closely—we see that James follows his call for humility with a warning against several sins of arrogance—against attitudes that contradict humility.

Prepare Your Heart: Bow before God and let your heart drink in the truths of His Holy Word.

Read James 4:11-17 from both the NIV and NASB if possible.

1.
 - a. Observe 4:11-12 more closely. What is the instrument for expressing pride and arrogance in 4:11a?
 - b. What is significant about the repetitive use of “brother,” “brethren” and “one another” in verse 11?
 - c. What are we really doing when we play judge in our relationships with others (4:11b)?
 - d. Why could this be considered the ultimate expression of pride and arrogance (4:12)?
 - e. What did the law command regarding our relationship with others? See Leviticus 19:18; Romans 13:8-10 and James 2:8.
2. Ponder the *practical wisdom* in the phrase: “Do not speak against one another, brethren.” (NASB) Write your contemplations below.

7. Spend a few minutes meditating on James 4:11-12 and Ephesians 4:1-3. Consider the relationships in your life where these truths could be applied. What action is God leading you to take this week?

James continues his relentless warning by pointing to another sign of pride and arrogance, using attention-grabbing rhetoric. Thoughtfully **read** and **reread** James 4:13-17.

8.
 - a. What does the person in 4:13 presume about his or her life? (Notice the involvement of speech.)

 - b. Observe the contrast in attitude in James 4:13 and 4:15. What attitudes toward God are displayed in each case?

The way of thinking described in James 4:13 also fails to take into account the fundamental facts about our human existence. **Review** James 4:14—taking time to contemplate each phrase.

9. How often do you think of your life in these terms? Do you see areas in your thinking that do not align with God's Word? Comment as you feel led.

10.
 - a. What are some examples of life decisions we make without including God in the process?

 - b. When is it not necessary to do so? When is it essential?

Pause and Reflect: James says our plans should be wrapped in prayers that seek God’s will (4:15). Making plans for the future without considering that our future is in God’s hands—that every breath we draw is a gift from Him, is arrogance. And so...pull out your calendar and look at what you planned for the next few weeks. Take time to pray through each item. Ask God if there are items he wants you to add or take off your schedule. Humbly commit your future plans to the Lord.

11. a. In contrast to verse 15, note what James’ readers are doing instead (4:16). (The NASB provides a more accurate rendering of the Greek than the NIV in this instance.)
 - b. Why is this way of thinking “evil?”

James sums up his teaching on pride and arrogance with a solemn warning. Prayerfully **read** James 4:17. Although this verse could be applied to any number of situations, James intends this statement be applied to the present context.

12. Explain why knowing what should be done obligates a person to do it. Also consult Luke 12:47-48.

13. What warning, command or truth from James 4:11-17 most resonated with you? How do you need to grow in this area? Write down one or two changes you would like to make in your thoughts or actions, through God’s grace.

James’ epistle is not casual reading—it is intense and intensely practical! As we step back from this passage ... we can also see a wonderful freedom in the truths James is teaching his readers. When we look into the face of our Heavenly Father and see His true character—we can humbly lay down the burden of having to know everything, of having to control everything and everyone. God alone has the first and last word in all things. And the name of that Word is Jesus Christ.