

Placing First Things First

You can give God the time He deserves—and here's how



Are you faithful to God or are you having an affair?

James 4:4 (AMP) says, “You [are like] unfaithful wives [having illicit love affairs with the world and breaking your marriage vow to God]! Do you not know that being the world’s friend is being God’s enemy?”

This is basically saying that when we care about anyone or anything more than God, or when we trust in and lean on anyone or anything more than Him, He is not first place in our lives. In other words, we are unfaithful.

In Matthew 22:37, Jesus says we are to love God with all of our heart, soul and mind. Again, this means we are supposed to put God first in all things. And this is the place He deserves.

I remember a time in my life when I was a very frustrated Christian. Even though I was serving in ministry and teaching the Word to other people, I was unhappy. I experienced guilt and condemnation a lot of the time because I knew I wasn’t spending as much time with God as I needed to. I tried and tried to change, but I couldn’t do it.

I know many Christians have this same struggle. They really want to be closer to God, and when they're around someone who is truly intimate with God, they wish they were like that too. But people who know God intimately didn't get that way by wishing. They spent time seeking Him.

You may be thinking: *Joyce, I really want to seek God. I've tried and tried but I just can't seem to change.* I understand. I've been there. And I want to share a revelation with you that helped me overcome this struggle and develop the habit of spending time with God.

If you keep reading in James, you'll find in verse 6 that God gives us the answer to this problem: His grace. The Amplified version says it like this: "But He gives us more and more grace (power of the Holy Spirit, to meet this evil tendency and all others fully)."

This verse teaches us that God's grace is power to overcome our evil tendencies. This is the practical side of grace. Usually *grace* is defined as "undeserved favor," but it's also the power of the Holy Spirit to enable us to have victory over everything that is not right in our lives. And that's absolutely the most wonderful, powerful message!

We don't have to live in sin because we have the power not to sin. We don't have to be sloppy, half-

hearted or
compromising in our commitment to Christ because this power
can help us
overcome every evil tendency to put other things before God.
And it's
available to us every day to overcome our bad habits and
develop good
ones—like spending time with God.

What's the key to receiving God's grace?
Humility. The second part of James 4:6 says, "God sets Himself
against
the proud and haughty, but gives grace [continually] to the
lowly (those
who are humble enough to receive it)." God gives grace only to the
humble. He frustrates, defeats and opposes the proud (see 1
Peter 5:5).

God showed me that He will not allow me
to succeed through my own efforts and trying. I need to lean
on and
trust in Him. Then, by His grace, I am able to keep Him in
first place
and give Him the glory for every good thing in my life.

As I've experienced a closer relationship with God, I've
discovered many benefits. I'll name a few:

God will complete you and make you what you ought to be.

Your peace and joy will increase.

You will enjoy more of your life.

You will become more like Him in your thoughts and behavior.

Spend time with God. He wants your
attention and to be intimate with you. You can be as close to

Him as you
want to be—by His grace!

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