

I can always tell when I'm not getting enough sleep. You probably know it for yourself too. Others around us certainly can tell. Kids, your parents know it. Cranky, not listening, angry all the time. Without sleep we're no fun to be around, snapping at people, and in general people steer clear. But a new attitude shows with just a good night's sleep. Rested and ready to be pleasant with people. We smile, we walk tall, and we interact with people in a generally positive manner.

God sees sinners in this world acting like people without sleep. They're grumpy, doing their own thing, and selfishly not paying attention to anyone around them. They might be rude and snappy. Sinners are no fun to be around. Sinners are nowhere near God, they want nothing to do with him, and they don't have a healthy attitude.

To cure that sinful attitude will take more than a good night's sleep. It requires an entirely new attitude which no one can get themselves. It's something that only comes from God and it only comes through Christ. James warns earlier in his letter about falling in love with the world and a sinful attitude. He makes the assumption that those warnings have an effect. People want the "so what", they want to know what to do. The second lesson is the "so what". If you would like to you can follow along in the Bibles as we take a look at these verses.

### **The repentant sinner's healthy new attitude**

You've probably seen, maybe even participated in, tug of war. Two groups grab hold of opposite ends of the same rope. Each team is trying to pull the other across a middle line to win pulling against each other in opposite directions. When one side gains the advantage automatically the other side loses ground. **"Submit yourselves, then, to God."** Submission means God has the advantage and we lose ground. You acknowledge God has authority over your life and you're accountable to him. Your ears and eyes open to God's Word. He steers your choices, he sets the limits, and you give up control.

It sounds bad, submitting to God. We don't want to submit to anyone or anything. Submission is like admitting defeat. Submission means our way of doing things will be lost. It sounds like slavery. God wants this perfect attitude and probably won't let me do things that make me feel good. Acknowledging that God is the one I'm accountable to means he gets to say when what I do is wrong. His limits seem harsh. The attitude he's looking for, no fun.

James continues pulling on God's side of the tug of war rope. **"Resist the devil, and he will flee from you."** For as much as we think about resisting God's control, we don't want to be controlled by the devil either. But if you resist God you're really giving in to the devil. When the devil attacks and you go along with the temptations you're pulling the tug of war rope away from God towards yourself and your sinful attitude. God delivers you from these attacks and temptations. Those that know Jesus Christ as Savior have the strength to resist the devil. Submitting to God means resistance of the devil and strength to stand up to his frequent attacks. Resistance of the devil means preparing for a fight. We may have lost a time or two in past. But resistance doesn't come from us, but from our victory in Christ.

In Jesus no one is turned away from God. God draws near to us. We approach in acknowledgement of our unworthiness and helplessness. The God of grace gives pardon, peace, and glory to unworthy sinners like us. **"Come near to God and he will come near to you."** This is promise and invitation. Christ won. In the tug of war between Satan and God, God wins. If Christ has won then we can submit to God, let him guide our ways, and follow his Word. We have a healthy new attitude that can resist the devil because the Word of God has him fleeing.

We all know that the outside of our bodies can get dirty. But so can the inside. And no amount of washing will ever clean inside your body. The Bible says we're spiritually dirty outside and inside with sin. But we can't wash with soap and water. We wash with Christ. **"Wash your hands, you sinners, and purify your hearts, you double minded."** Washing the hands is cleaning the outside. Jesus washes sin away and now with our healthy new attitude we want to wash those sinful activities of our past away too. All the evil we've done is cleaned up and scrubbed away in Christ. The sinful actions we once were drawn to, no longer.

Outward cleansing still misses the inside which is filthy with sin. Naturally we're double minded. Sundays we talk, smile, and interact like good Christians should. But outside those doors at times it can seem like a layer of goodness is peeled away and we act completely different. Our hearts engage in all sorts of evil. We lie, cheat, and steal. We sin in thoughts just as much as actions. We've set up a wall between our Sunday selves and our every other day selves. Sunday's good feeling without giving up the feel good stuff the rest of the week.

In his grace God accepted a payment Christ Jesus made. It was a payment for sins, but not his own. He hadn't done anything wrong. These sins were from a whole world full of people who may have looked one way on the outside but inside were sinful through and through. Jesus made that payment on the cross for you and me. So now in the eyes of God, each and every one of your sins is gone. The guilt is gone. The need to be punished is gone. The penalty of hell for sins is gone. God's grace credits Christ's perfect life to you. God is waiting like the father on the hill waited for his lost son to come home. God runs to you, throws his arms around you, and brings you back into the family. His love purifies your heart. He removes the separation that splits Sunday you from every other day you. Once the inside is purified, the outside shows humility you didn't know before. **"Humble yourselves before the Lord, and he will lift you up."** God has lifted you up and will continue in Christ.

Sometimes it happens without us realizing it. We laugh at the misfortunes of others. Where does that come from? Where do we get the idea that someone else's problems are funny? Or worse we might think our own sinfulness is funny. We might think we got away with something. We enjoyed the pleasure of sin and no one knew it and now we're home free. We're laughing and joyful over sin.

In Christ our attitude shifts. Now we find the forgiveness of sins. We find one who earned it for us, gave it to us free, and wants no payment in return. God lifts us up in Christ and we find joy. God comes to us and makes himself near to us. Christians see a change in their reactions to sin. Where once there was laughter, now there's mourning. Where once sinful actions were joyfully celebrated, now they're thought of with gloom. James said it would happen. **"Grieve, mourn, and wail. Change your laughter to mourning and your joy to gloom."** Real repentance is emotional. It affects the whole person. Our sins against God aren't funny, their offensive. That affects our reactions to them.

Must Christians be sad and in mourning all the time? Of course not. Our sin is something to grieve. But Christ is victorious. Through him we've won. We're with him and we're looking forward to heaven. Instead of dwelling on the sin, we look at the forgiveness Christ wins for us and gives to us and we're joyful and positive. When we do sin, we recognize it as something to stop. We repent and change our actions and attitudes. And then we live in the grace of God which guarantees us forgiveness. We're in the Lord, and the Lord is lifting us up.

If you've been feeling a little grumpy or angry lately, try getting a little more sleep. If you've been giving in to the devil and find your hands stained with sins it's time for an attitude change. You need a healthy new attitude that comes from Christ Jesus. It leads you to submit to God, resist the devil, and come near to God in his Word. It means washing your hands of sin, purifying your hearts, and humbling yourself before God. It means grieving over sins committed and mourning and wailing for having offended him. It means a healthy new attitude that is only found in Christ.