

Southwest Airlines doesn't give seat assignments like other airlines. You probably knew that. Instead, you get a place in line; a long line of everyone who wants that flight. Unlike other airlines which guarantee seats, offer perks for early arrivals, and give better treatment to special class passengers, Southwest treats everyone the same. It takes some amount of humility to stand in a line not knowing what seat you'll get, not receiving any perks, and not getting better treatment for being business class.

Lines are an interesting place to watch people. Some in line will allow others to move up, like in a grocery store checkout and someone has 25 items and you only have one. Some will guard their spot and not let anyone in. Like the people who jump up at the end of a flight and almost rush down the aisle not letting anyone squeeze in from the seats ahead of them. Where's the humility?

For three chapters James had pounded his listeners with God's law, and it was effective. They got the fact they had problems. Then in the second lesson for today he answers an unspoken question, one they likely would've been asking. "What do we do now? We know we've got problems like pride. We get into jealous fights with others that lead to judging others. We almost can't help it." Humility isn't natural. But God's law cuts our hearts and James answers us on what do we do now...

God lifts up the humble
Repenting of everything worldly
Dealing with others in love

Since when did submit become a dirty word? Submission comes with baggage now. People think it's demeaning. They'll claim they're people too. To lower myself below someone else just isn't right. My thoughts and feelings don't take a backseat to anyone. Yet James sets the tone for this entire section by saying, **"Submit yourselves, then, to God."** Remember James is addressing people who have just heard him talk about how dangerous the world is. Now they want to know what to do. James gives them direction.

The disciples were stumped. Without question they had submitted themselves to Jesus. In turn they were doing some pretty cool things like casting out demons. Feeling special the gospel records they saw someone they didn't know doing the same things. Wait a minute, they thought. This person hasn't submitted the way we have. How dare they? Apparently the disciples thought they had the market cornered on God's power? Jesus opened their eyes. **"Whoever is not against us is for us."** Anyone brought to faith in Christ was submitting to Christ and was able to do great things too.

Remember the dangers of the world, self-centeredness, pride, and deception to name a few. Our sinful natures crave the attention, the worldly passions. We love the spotlight. So much so we can get to thinking we've got the market cornered on God. Might we be the only ones that Jesus loves and gives power to? We might point to our church attendance as a good indication of how much we've submitted to God. Don't let sin rule your hearts. I just arrived back from a conference of pastors and teachers from all over our district. Churches from Texas, Oklahoma, Arkansas, and Louisiana all joined together in common faith. I can assure you there's more like us, believers in Christ who know God's power and submit to it. And not just in our church body either. Don't sin by thinking our group of Christians is better than everybody else.

Submit to God. Resist the devil. Come near to God. Wash your hands. Purify your hearts. Grieve, mourn, and wail. In short, **"humble yourselves before the Lord and he will lift you up"**. This is an impressive list of instructions from James. You might be asking yourself, but I thought we couldn't do these things on our own? We can't. But James shares God's grace. **"He gives us more grace. God opposes the proud but gives grace to the humble."** God's grace is where we get the strength to submit, resist, come near, and all the rest. Our humility starts with repentance and God's grace.

First God's grace bends you and me in submission and humility. Then God's grace lifts you and me up. For this purpose Jesus came. We didn't pay for our sins, but Jesus certainly did. He paid in full with his blood so our guilt would be gone, our pride would be crushed, and our punishment done away with. And God accepted it. You didn't pay but you're going to heaven. God didn't forget his expectation of perfection. Rather he lifted us up to a perfect life by his grace. A perfect substitute came to lift you out of the mud and crud of sin to a shining brilliant life in Christ.

Parents give their children gifts for all sorts of reasons and in all kinds. Parents will sometimes get really big gifts like cars for their children. But no parent gives a car as a gift and then expects that gift to be used in a bank robbery. Our God has given us the biggest of gifts, the gift of eternal life. With that gift comes all sorts of other gifts. He hasn't given us those gifts to use for sin, but we do anyway. We can take even our humility and use it for sin, and it usually is directed against other people.

Have you ever gathered in a small group with people you called friends and whispered about the actions of someone else? Claiming shock at what they have done and a statement not just condemning their actions but pronouncing you would never do the same. Or have you been speaking with someone and in a burst of rage put them in their place with shouts? Walking away muttering how you would never want to be like them. Or faced someone who has sinned against you and is asking for forgiveness only to shoot them down and say no way? Forgiveness can only be earned from you after they show themselves worthy. **"Anyone who speaks against his brother or judges him speaks against the law and judges it."** Injuring someone by our loveless remarks and foolish statements is a violation of God's law. By judging others we really are judging God's law. We get to decide what the law is. People will do things our way or they'll have to pay.

Lack of love for people displays a lack of humility. The opposite is true, showing love for people displays humility; God given humility is also God empowered. **“There is only one Lawgiver and Judge, the one who is able to save and destroy.”** God has saved you. God has given you his grace. God has now supplied you with the power you need to fulfill the one great law, love. Love for both God and love for neighbor. With the love that God had for you, you can love others. That’s showing humility by loving others enough to put them ahead of you.

You can see random acts of humility from time to time. A generous driver makes a hole for another to squeeze in. A friend bows out from going to a concert so another can go. A couple sacrifices plans to vacation to be there for a sick child. But you know as well as I do that we still struggle with humility. We overcome by God’s grace and the Holy Spirit grants us true humility. Humbled by God’s grace we turn from everything worldly that seeks to pull us away from God. By God’s grace we also seek to deal with others in love. Humility may not come naturally to us but when the Holy Spirit works it God is lifting up in Christ.