



SERIES: A SEASON OF HOPE

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Scripture: James 4:7-10

TITLE: Draw Near

2020 has been a year that no one will forget, but for our family, 2020 has been quite the year of blessing. One of the reasons why I feel blessed is because of the amount of time I've been able to spend with my family.

So I've been working throughout the whole pandemic - I spent more time working from home, which has many blessings as well as some challenges. But during this phenomenon, I heard my wife say, "I just don't feel like we've connected for a while." I remember, thinking to myself, "What are you talking about?" "I have been with you 24 hours a day, seven days a week, for going on a month. Outside of running to the store, and running to the office to grab a book or two, I've been with you." She says, "I'm not talking about being by you. I'm talking about really connecting with you. At times, though we're right next to each other, I feel alone."

You know she wasn't wrong, because proximity to someone doesn't mean intimacy.

At the Center for Bible Engagement, we have found out that many people today have feelings of loneliness. We can be sitting right next to someone. We can have 500 friends on Facebook, and 1000 followers on Instagram, but proximity does not equate to intimacy.

Listen to what James says about loneliness when it comes to our relationship with God.

James 4:7-10, ESV. "Submit yourselves therefore to God. Resist the devil, and he will flee from you. ⁸Draw near to God, and he will draw near to you. Cleanse your hands, you sinners, and purify your hearts, you double-minded. ⁹Be wretched and mourn and weep. Let your laughter be turned to mourning and your joy to gloom. ¹⁰Humble yourselves before the Lord, and he will exalt you."

I find it fascinating here, that in James 4:7, James says, "Submit yourselves to God", and in verse 10, he says, "Humble yourselves before the Lord." But then sandwiched in the middle of that is, "Draw near to God, and he will draw near to you".

Though they may be close in proximity because they go to church, or they have a Bible on their desk, or they attend a Christian school, many people still feel distant from God.

The reason is twofold. I think first, it's in what James says – "submit" and "humble". In other words, recognize your need for God. Many people feel distant from God because they have pushed God aside. They run their lives separate from Him. They put God in a Sunday box, but

outside of that hour-and-a-half, life is all about themselves. So they are not humble and dependent upon God, because they are self-sufficient, and they feel lonely.

But the other reason, is what he says in verse 8: "Draw near to God and He will draw near to you." You see, God hasn't moved, and God hasn't changed. God is right where He left you - beside you and inside you, through the Holy Spirit. The question is, are you drawing near to God? In other words, are you pursuing God? Are you talking and communing with God in prayer often? Are you reading God's Word, to hear from Him daily? Are you arguing with God? Are you crying out to God? Are you thanking God? Because if you are near Him, then you are celebrating, and wrestling, and listening to Him.

Today, my challenge for you is this: if you are feeling lonely and distant from God, ask yourself, is it because you are living a life apart from Him, or are you living life just in His proximity, but not engaging with Him intimately?

Regardless of what the answer is, you need to humble yourself, and draw near to Him, and He will draw near to you.

God's arms are open wide, and He has a smile upon His face. Will you wrap your arms around Him, because His arms are waiting for you.