

Submit Your Life to God (James 4:7-17)

Disclaimer: this is an automatically generated machine transcription - there may be small errors or mistranscriptions. Please refer to the original audio if you are in any doubt.

Date: 05 October 2025

Preacher: Brett Sanders

[0 : 00] If someone were to ask you, what does it look like to live out the Christian faith?! What does it look like to live out your faith? How would you answer that question for them?

If someone were to genuinely come up to you and said, I want you to explain to me what it means to live out the Christian faith. How would you answer that? How would you explain what it looks like to live out your faith? Maybe say, well, you go to church. Well, read your Bible occasionally. Try to be nice.

And this topic is something that we could go on and on talking about. And much of what James does is as he works his way through this letter, is he fleshes this out for us in many different ways. This is a topic in question that he has been addressing throughout this book up until this point and continues to. He does so by talking about the testing of our faith, by telling us, don't just be hearers of the word, but be doers of the word. He tells us to live it out by not showing partiality that faith without works is dead. He tells us that we should be taming the tongue.

And this is something that we all need to work on because if somebody is able to tame the tongue, then he's able to control the whole body as well. He tells us this by showing us the difference between worldly wisdom and godly wisdom and how those who live out their faith do so by following godly wisdom, by making sure they focus on the things of God. He tells us this last week as we talked about the cause of quarrels and fights among us and how our passions are at war. And I wanted to make something clear that I probably should have clarified more last week with this as well is that when we seek to restore relationships, God has called us to do our part, but that's all that we can do. That's all that we can do is our part to live as God wants us to live to for the relationship to restore. That's ultimately up to him. In fact, in fact, Paul tells us this in Romans 12 when he says, if possible, so far as it depends on you to live peaceably with all as far as it depends on you.

[2 : 15] So he tells us to live out our faith by doing all of these things over and over again. In this book, James has reminded us what it looks like to live out our faith. And in our passage today, one of the things that James does is he kind of begins to bring all of this together for us.

All of these different ways that he's told us to live out our faith, he starts to bring them to a conclusion and starts to give us a summation of what this looks like to live out our faith in the Christian life. And so if you have a copy of God's word today, I want you to, I want to invite you to open with me to James chapter four. And we're going to start where we left off last week in verse seven, and then read through the remainder of James four. And this is what God's word says. It says, submit yourselves therefore to God, resist the devil and he will flee from you. Draw near to God and he will draw near to you. Cleanse your hands, you sinners and purify your hearts, you double-minded.

Be wretched and mourn and weep. Let your laughter be turned to mourning and your joy to gloom. Humble yourselves therefore before the Lord and he will exalt you. Do not speak evil against one another, brothers. The one who speaks against a brother or judges his brother speaks evil against the law and judges the law. But if you judge the law, you are not a doer of the law, but a judge. There is only one lawgiver and one judge who is able to save and to destroy. But who are you to judge your neighbor? Come now, you who say today or tomorrow, we will go into such and such a town and spend a year there and trade and make a profit. Yet you do not know what tomorrow will bring.

What is your life? For you are a mist that appears for a little while and then it vanishes. Instead, you ought to say, if the Lord wills, we will live and do this or that. And if you boast in your arrogance, all such boasting is evil. So whoever knows the right thing to do and fails to do it, for him it is a sin. And so as we look at this passage, there's some clear commands that I want us to see today. There's

some clear commands that we see throughout this that I want to make very prevalent for us today as we look at this passage. And what we see as believers, we are called to live out this Christian life. And to begin with, we are called to live a life that is submitted to God. As believers, we are called to live a life that is submitted to God. It says, submit yourselves therefore to God. Resist the devil and he will flee from you. Draw near to God and he will draw near to you. Cleanse your hands, you sinners, and purify your hearts, you double-minded.

[5 : 11] Be wretched and mourn and weep. Let your laughter be turned to mourning and your joy to gloom. Humble yourselves before the Lord and he will exalt you. James has been calling for his readers to return to God throughout this whole book. To begin with, at the beginning of the message, we said this was how to live out the Christian life. But ultimately, it's the same thing that James is calling us to do here. Living out the Christian life is synonymous with submitting your life to God, living a life of submission to God. Last week, we mentioned it is God's grace that saves, but it's also his grace that allows us to grow in our relationship with him. What James is reminding us over and over again is the impossibility of claiming a life-changing relationship with Jesus without actually having a life change. He's reminding us over and over again the impossibility of saying that you have a life-changing relationship with Jesus, but yet your life has not changed.

James is effectively dismantling the argument of lip service Christianity that wants to jump on board, receive blessing from God, and then run straight back into the old lifestyle.

God's grace prompts repentance in his people. God's grace, when truly understood, is a heart change that will lead to a transformed behavior. But now we get the chance to see how this plays out. The solution to this bitter jealousy that we talked about, the solution to this selfish ambition, this pridefulness, this worldliness, the solution to all of this is submission to God.

It's submission to God. And what we see is that submitting to God is yielding to him, recognizing his just and his rightful rule of our lives. Douglas Moose says it like this. He says, to submit to God means to place ourselves under his lordship and therefore to commit ourselves to obey him in all things. You see, submission for the Christian is not optional. It's not something that you get to choose whether or not you want this part of Christianity. It's not extra credit for those who want to be super spiritual. It's not just for those who are going on the mission field or going into the ministry or just want to do a little bit extra. No, submission in the life of a believer is something that God requires. It's something that he's called all of us to do, to submit our lives to him. It's not something that we get to pick and choose whether we want to do it or not. James has already told us that our conflicts, those conflicts that we talked about in verse one of this chapter, are the result of godless desires not being met. And so what's the solution to those godless desires not being met in these quarrels and these fights? It's submission to God. Albury notes, he says, so the answer is found in submitting our desires to him, giving them over to him, and even asking him not to give us the things that we deeply want when the things we deeply want are selfish.

That last part is hard to hear, right? That last part is difficult for us to hear. Even asking him not to give us the things we deeply want when the things that we deeply want are selfish. So we clearly see that we are to submit ourselves to God. And while this is hard to actually do at times, I think it's something that we can all understand, right? We all understand that we are to submit ourselves to God.

[8 : 58] And this concept, even though it's hard to put into practice at times, it's not really hard for us to wrap our minds around. But yet the next command that we see in here is something that a lot of times is difficult for us to know what to do with. And so all too often we just ignore it, we just push it out of our minds since we don't really know what to do with it. He says right here, he says, submit yourselves therefore to God. We're all clear there. And then he says this, resist the devil and he will flee from you. Resist the devil and he will flee from you. Often is the case that we don't really know what to do with the devil. And so what we'd end up doing is just ignoring the subject altogether. We don't really have a category to place him in, in our, in our, in our minds. And so what we do is we just, just ignore him altogether. The problem is that he's real. And the problem is that that is dangerous to do. Peter tells us that the devil is like a roaring lion seeking to devour. He then immediately tells us to do the exact same thing that James does. Right after telling us that the devil is a roaring lion seeking whom he may devour. Peter tells us the exact same thing that James does. He says to resist him, to resist him, pretending like he doesn't exist, doesn't really seem to be an option that the Bible gives us. It doesn't really seem to be an option that is healthy for the Christian life.

Sticking your head in the sand in the presence of a roaring lion may dull the sound of the roaring lion, but it does nothing to protect you from being devoured. Just sticking your head in the sand, pretending like it's not real, doesn't do anything to actually protect you.

So we must understand that he's real, but we also must understand that we have power over that, over Satan. The devil is neither to be ignored or trivialized, but nor is he to be unduly feared. James tells us very directly, resist the devil and he will what? He will flee from you. Whatever power Satan may have, Christians can be absolutely certain that we have been given the ability to overcome that power. While we may not know exactly how this plays out, what we can be certain of is whatever power Satan may have, Christians have been given the ability to overcome that power. Draw near to God, we are told, and he will draw near to you. And then closing out this section, he says, humble yourselves before the Lord and he will exalt you. Whatever you are submitting to in this life, whatever you are giving your life to, who has the authority to call the shots in your life? Those are questions that we must answer today. Is it God? Is it the devil? I don't really think many of us are actively trying to let Satan have authority over our life, but he's very happy to just let us be when we give other people the right to tell us how we should think or do or feel. Many times we let other people have authority over our lives. We value what they think more than we value what God thinks. We value their opinion, what they may think of us, more than we value what God thinks of us. In fact, Ed Welch, he wrote a whole book on this, when people are big and God is small. And in this, he says, to place ourselves, what he says is this, he says, when we see people as bigger, that is more powerful and more significant than God. And out of that fear that creates in us, we give other people the power and the right to tell us what to feel, to think, and to do. You see, James very clearly here tells us to rightfully submit your life to God.

Give him the authority that he deserves to direct our path. Don't give others that right. Actively resist the devil and he will flee from you. This is what it looks like to be a follower of Jesus.

[13:07] Submission to God. We are to place ourselves under his lordship and therefore to commit ourselves to obey him in all things. Again, this is not optional. We can't call ourselves a follower of Jesus if we're not actually following Jesus anywhere. We can't claim to be a follower of Jesus if we're not actually following him with our lives. We see this play out in many different ways. But the next thing that I want us to see that we are called to do as believers is that we are called to live a life that builds one another up.

We are called to live a life that builds one another up. He says, do not speak evil against one another, brothers. The one who speaks against a brother or judges his brother speaks evil against the law and judges the law.

But if you judge the law, you are not a doer of the law, but a judge. There is only one lawgiver and judge, he who is able to save and to destroy. But you are to judge, but who are you to judge your neighbor?

You see, when you submit your life to God, it will inevitably change the way that you talk to people and it will change the way that you talk about people. When you submit your life to God, as God has called us to do, it will always change the way you talk to other people and it will change the way that you talk about other people. James has already given a very strong warning about the way that we speak to others and the importance of taming our tongue. If you need a refresher on that, just go back and read James chapter three and you'll see it very clearly. But here he brings this to a final emphasis as he warns us about worldly speech. We are to speak in a way that brings, that embraces, we're, when we speak in a way that embraces the things of this world, it has two very negative consequences in our life. When we speak in a way that embraces the things of this world, it has two very negative impacts on our life, negative consequences. The first thing it does is it discourages others. The CSB starts off in verse 11 by saying, don't criticize one another. When we criticize or speak evil against our brothers and sisters, we tear each other down. This not only discourages the person that you're talking to, but it also discourages the, the, the people that, uh, that was not only discourages the person you're talking about, but it also discourages the people that you're talking to because then it discourages them from listening to what you have to say about Jesus. Can you imagine going to someone and talking and gossiping and talking about others and how discouraging that is to the person that you're talking about, but also how discouraging it is for the person who's listening to you and then try to change that conversation to the things of God and then try to change that conversation and turn it around to talk to them about Jesus. It's discouraging all around, but not only is it discouraging to others, but it dishonors God as well.

It dishonors God. When you purposefully go against what God has called us to do, then with or without saying it, you claim to know that you know better for your life than God does.

[16 : 24] When you purposefully go against what God has called us to do, then what you're doing is you are in that moment, whether you're saying it or not, but in that moment, what you're doing is saying, I know better for my life than God does because I'm choosing to follow what I want to do and not follow what God wants me to do. And so we are actively saying that. So whether it's discouraging or dishonoring, we must put these things to a stop in our life. If we are speaking in a way that puts others down, whether it's to someone's face or behind their back, it's usually for one purpose.

It's usually for one purpose when we do that. Well, oftentimes we tear people down in order to build ourselves up. We often tear people down to glorify ourselves. This could not be further from what God wants us to do. God doesn't want us to tear people down and to glorify ourselves.

He wants us to build others up and glorify his name, to point them to him. If you are prone to use your mouth, to tear people down, to gossip behind their back, know that this is not only discourages one another, but it dishonors God in the process. You may think, well, well, I know who I can gossip to and who I can't. I know those close knit people that I can, that I can really share with and they're not going to say anything. So what's the really the big deal about it? It's never going to get back to this purpose. People will never know. The problem is that isn't true. Sin, and yes, gossip is a sin, always has a way of destroying relationships. It always has either a direct or an indirect way of creeping in and causing disunity. As followers of Christ, we are called to live a life that builds one another up and does not tear each other down. And one of the beautiful features of the church is its diversity. The gospel can and should bring people together from all walks of life, from all walks of life that may would never associate. And so the church should be a place where people from all walks of life, whether they wear the same clothes or not, whether they're in the same economic status or not, whether they have the same skin color or not, it should be a place that it brings all people together because this is the beauty of the gospel. The gospel tears down barriers and brings people together. But this beauty, when our eyes are taken off of Jesus, can become a problem very, very quickly. Where there are differences and our eyes are not on Jesus, then all of a sudden comparisons start creeping in. And where comparisons start creeping in and our eyes are not on Jesus, then all of a sudden judgments start creeping in and we start judging one another. And when judgment creeps in and our eyes are not fixed on Jesus, all of a sudden you see divisions start happening within the church. This is where the beauty can become destructive. And may we always keep our eyes on Jesus and speak to each other in a way that would build one another up and that is life-giving and not destroying. The last thing that I want us to draw our attention to this morning is I think one of the most significant in this passage. And that is this, as believers, we are called to live a life that has a sense of urgency. As believers, we are called to live a life that has a sense of urgency.

It says, come now you who say today or tomorrow, we will go into such and such a town and spend a year there or a trade and make a profit. Yet you do not know what tomorrow will bring. What is life? For you are a mist that appears for a little time and then vanishes. Instead, you ought to say, if the Lord wills, we will live and do this or that. As it is, you boast in your arrogance. All such boasting is evil. So whoever knows the right thing to do and fails to do it for him, it is a sin. Now there's obviously some things in this passage right here in this section, like the other sections, that we won't get to fully flesh out. But I feel this idea that life is short and that we should focus on the things of significance.

significance is always present in our minds. I feel like it's something that we can all wrap our minds around. Sometimes it's in the back of our minds, especially when life is busy or when you are younger. And sometimes it's front and center, like when tragedy strikes. And or we just take a moment to think about on the last however many years you've been alive. For me, it's 40. Clay, obviously today is 33.

[21 : 15] But for all of us, when we think back on our lives and we think about where we are now and how fast that time went, I think it reminds us that life is short. And so we should be giving our thing, our life to things that matter. I feel like the older you get, the more you begin to realize it.

The problem is by the time you realize it, you don't have as much time to do something about it. So it's important for us, whether you're nine or 99 today, that I want to make sure that we understand something very clearly in this passage. God has called us to live lives that have eternal significance

in the short amount of time that we are able to live on this earth. God has called us to live lives that have eternal significance in the short amount of time we have in this life.

I think Spurgeon put it beautifully when he said it this way. He says, it is a great folly to build hopes on what may never come. It is a great folly to build hopes on what may never come. It is madness to risk everything on the unsubstantial future. Life is like a vapor.

Sometimes these vapors, especially at the time of sunset, are exceedingly brilliant. They seem to be magnificent itself when the sun paints them with heavenly colors. But in a little while, they are gone. And the whole panorama of the sunset has disappeared. Such is life. It may sometimes be bright and glorious, but it's still only like a painted cloud. And soon the cloud and the color in it are both gone. Therefore, if this life is as unsubstantial as a vapor, and nobody can deny that fact, let us regard it as such. And let us seek for something substantial elsewhere. Unless we purposefully live a life with a view of the next world, we cannot make much out of our present existence.

You see, this is where perspective needs to take place in our life. We need to see our lives as something far greater than just this short amount of time that we have on this earth. James says it's a vapor, it's a mist, it's here today and gone tomorrow. It's just a mist. Have you ever sprayed a spray bottle, and all of a sudden you see the mist goes out, and then all of a sudden it's gone. You spray it, it goes out, and it's gone.

[24 : 01] He says this is like our lives, and yet we focus all of our attention on this short little time that we have on this earth. Francis Chan gives an incredible illustration, and if I thought about it, I may have brought a rope on the stage with me, but one of the things that he does is he goes off to the side of the stage in the sermon one time, and he brings this rope out, and he brings it to the center of the stage.

You get to see the beginning of the rope, but you don't see where the rope ends, and he says, I want you to imagine that this rope is a timeline of your existence. Imagine that this rope is a timeline of your existence. Your life starts when you were born, and then goes on for all of eternity, and then he shows the beginning of the timeline, and in this beginning of the rope, he has this little tiny section on there with like a piece of red tape wrapped around it, and he says this red tape represents your life on this earth. This little section, this little red section represents your life on this earth, and then the rest of it is all eternity, and so you have, you represent this little red part, and then it's tiny in comparison to the rest of eternity. In this small little section, he says, imagine this little section is the time that we have here on earth, and then the rest of the rope is our time in heaven, and he says how foolish it is to spend all of our time living for this red section. How foolish is it to spend all of our time, all of our energy, all of our resources on this small little section. We save all of our life for a little section at the end to spend our lives in comfort. All of our major decisions focus on this small little red area that represents this life. We focus and build our lives around what we can accomplish in this life with no regard to the internal impact that our decisions will make. He says how foolish it is to spend all of our energy, all of our resources, all of our thoughts on how we can make the most of this tiny little section in light of eternity. And if I could plead with you as we look at the bookends of our message today, as we attempt to not only sum up this message, but ultimately sum up the Christian life, this is my plea to you to submit yourself to God with a sense of urgency. Submit yourself to God with a sense of urgency. Don't put it off. None of us are promised tomorrow. Jesus could come back at any time and at any moment we may leave this world. The statistics have not changed. The mortality rate is still holding strong. It's a hundred percent. Unless Jesus comes back, each and every person is going to die one day. And so we must think about how we're going to spend our lives. Our time on earth is a mist. Here for a moment in light of eternity. So we must ask ourselves, what are we giving our lives to?

What are we giving our lives to? What are we going all in on? So the first question that I want to ask you with this is, are you ready for this reality? Have you given your life to Jesus? Part of submitting to God with a sense of urgency is giving our lives to him. Because here's the bad news. The bad news is that each and every person is a sinner. Each and every one of us is a sinner. Whether that sin is lying, cheating, cheating, stealing, murder, whatever the case may be, I think all of us could look at our lives and identify that we are sinners. If you can't, then ask the person next to you.

They'll be happy to identify some areas of sin in your life. Each and every one of us is a sinner. And what the Bible tells us is that sin separates us from God. What the Bible tells us is that sin has put us on a pathway that leads straight to hell and eternity separated from God. That's bad news. And the worst news is there's nothing we can do about that. The worst news is you can't save yourself.

You can't all of a sudden decide, you know what? I'm on this path. I'm going to just on my own accord. I'm going to change paths and I want to go on a different path, God. You can't do that. There's nothing you can do to save yourself. That's the worst news. But the Bible also tells us of some good news. And the good news is that Jesus saw us in our helpless state, in our hopeless state where we couldn't do anything about it. And he left the glory of heaven and he lived the life that we couldn't live, that perfect life that we're called to live, that we can't do because of sin. He lived that life for us. And then he went to the cross and died the death that we deserve. And so that so that those who place their faith and their trust in him can get on a different path. They can now all of a sudden go from death to life.

They can enter into a relationship with God because of what Jesus accomplished on the cross. That's the good news. And the best news is, is if you want to place your faith and trust in Jesus, that's something you can do right now. You can go from death to life. And so for you submitting to God with a sense of urgency, maybe giving your life to him for the first time, it may be saying, God, I can't do this on my own. I need you right now. But for many others in here today, you've already made this decision to follow Jesus. And I encourage you to continue to submit to God with a sense of urgency. For some that may be joining this body of believers. For others, it may be baptism. You've accepted Jesus a long time back, but you've never been baptized. For others, it may be restructuring your life to value the things of God and showing your children what is most important in life. That may be submitting to God with a sense of urgency. For some, I hope and pray it means that we clearly see the life that God has called us to live. And it's a life on mission for him. All of us have this call. Many of us will live this call out in this community for the rest of our lives. Many of us will do that. But I hope and I pray that

God will raise up some from this church who will go to the nations. I hope and pray that God will raise up from this church people who will see around the world that there are people who are lost and dying and going to hell apart from a relationship with Jesus and realize that there is no gospel presence in these communities and say that I can do something about that. That says I can go to the nations and maybe living with a sense of urgency, maybe submitting to God with a sense of urgency means that you're saying I'm ready to go wherever you call me to go, God. And that should be our prayer for each and every person here. Whether that's going across the street or across the world. May we submit our lives to God sense of urgency. May we all continue to submit our lives to God with this sense of urgency.

[31 : 08] Investing in and giving our lives to things that have eternal significance. Where we're not just thinking about this little section that we're here on earth, but we're thinking about our lives in light of eternity. And so my plea for you today is this. To submit your life to God. My plea for myself to daily do this is to submit my life to God with a sense of urgency because none of us are promised tomorrow. And so we want to give our lives to him to do what he's called us to do. That's what it means to live out the Christian life. To submit your life to him. To understand that he is the rightful one.

He's the just one that has authority over our lives. And so however this may look out in your life, what this may look like in your life today, I encourage you to submit your life to God. Father, thank you so very much for all that you do for us each and every day. God, I thank you that you have made a way for our relationship with you to be restored. That we can give our lives to you. That we can do what we were called to do, what we were created to do, and that is to worship you with our lives. And so Lord, thank you for making a way for us to be able to do what we were created to do. Because we understand that's where we find the most purpose and the most significance in our life is doing what it is that you've called us to do. And so Lord, I pray that you would burden our hearts this morning. Reveal those areas in our life where we're not submitting our lives to you. Where we're not saying, God, here's my life, take it and use it. And God, I pray that you give us the boldness and the courage to begin to submit our lives to you. And Lord, I pray that we do it with a sense of urgency.

Knowing that there's much work to be done on this earth. Much work that has eternal significance. Much work that makes a difference, not only in this life, but the life to come. And so God, give us the strength. Give us the boldness. Give us the courage to live for you, to submit our lives to you with a sense of urgency. And it's in Jesus' name we pray. Amen.