

Oak Grove Church of Christ Newsletter - 2026.07.26

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Sermon recordings

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Speaker-AM: Patrick Hite

Title: Singing

Recording:

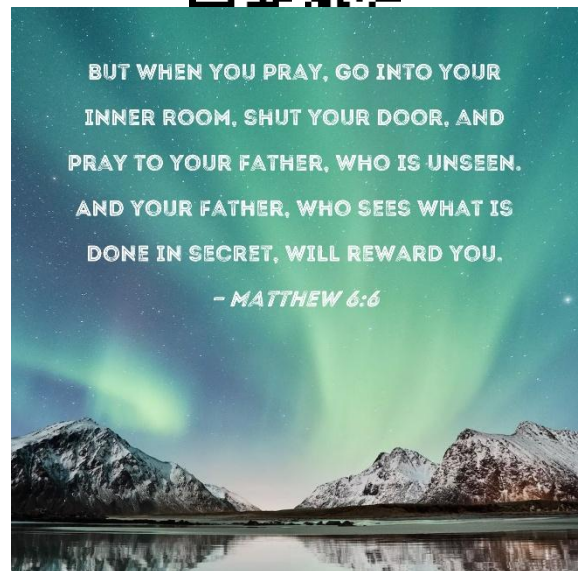


speaking to one another with
psalms, hymns, and spiritual
songs. Sing and make music
from your heart to the Lord.
— Ephesians 5:19.

Speaker-PM: Josh Vinyard

Title: Disciplines of Godly People –
Overcoming Loneliness by Being Alone

Recording:



BUT WHEN YOU PRAY, GO INTO YOUR
INNER ROOM, SHUT YOUR DOOR, AND
PRAY TO YOUR FATHER, WHO IS UNSEEN.
AND YOUR FATHER, WHO SEES WHAT IS
DONE IN SECRET, WILL REWARD YOU.

— MATTHEW 6:6

How to Draw Near to God 1/1/2015 by George Hutto

“Therefore submit 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” (James 4:7-8).

James said, “Draw near to God and He will draw near to you...” (James 4:8). Christians can “get their teeth” into an exhortation like this one. Are there any Christians out there who are not interested in getting closer to God? They might be like Peter on the night he betrayed the Lord: following Jesus, but at a distance. Well, James has pointers, even for the reluctant -right there in the epistle of James.

Prayer

Prayer will bring us close, hopefully even to the throne of God. James opens his epistle with an exhortation to pray for wisdom (James 1:5) and closes with instructions to pray (James 5:15). So many things are there to hinder our prayers: unbridled tongues (James 1:26), prejudices (James 2), indiscrete words (James 3), the market place (James 4:13), and impatience (James 5). Must we be driven to our knees by some personal catastrophe? Voluntarily coming before God is the best way, and if trouble is a catalyst to prayer, it will come - the world is a place subjected to futility (Romans 8:20; Matthew 6:34).

James practiced prayer, so much so that he was known as “old camel knees.” [1] Before his martyrdom, his friends gave him that name for the long hours he spent on his knees. He really was not joking about drawing near to God.

Study

Study of the Word leads to a close encounter with God. “Be doers of the word, and not hearers only, deceiving yourselves” (James 1:22). Doing is the real work; hearing is the easy part, but it is necessary.

An exhortation is implied for those who are not present at the reading and teaching of the Word, for how can one be expected to do what he has not heard? James exposes the shallow faith of some (James 2), but at least they claimed belief. Those not available to hear the Word cannot even claim to be close to God (Romans 10:14).

James said, “To him who knows to do good and does not do it, to him it is sin” (James 4:17). He said, “Pure and undefiled religion before God and the Father is this: to visit orphans and widows in their trouble, and to keep oneself unspotted from the world” (James 1:27). The Lord’s brother was not just giving lip service to being close to God. He probably remembered clearly how Jesus served, blessed, sacrificed, and engaged to help others along in life. Jesus (not to be trite) practiced what He preached. He was the Word (John 1)!

Assembling

Being close to God’s people - assembling - brings one close to God. “If there should come into your assembly...” (James 2:2). Spiritual things happen there, and Christians “incite one another to love and good works” (Hebrews 10:24-25). Shirkers forsake the assemblies, not because the activities are not interesting, but because they are interested in all the wrong things. Spiritual songs and hymns are specified in the Scripture - must we have more? A memorial feast in remembrance of Christ on the cross should hold a special interest. Even the announcements of others’ troubles should move one to bow in prayer.

James speaks of visiting the widows and fatherless, calling for the elders, planning yearlong business trips, and hiring laborers. What kind of people would have been in the assembly with James? Perhaps some had wandered from the truth and were “converted from the error of their way” (James 5:19-20). They would have been reminded of how to be close to God.

James’ words to draw near to God particularly speak of resisting the devil (James 4:7). He speaks of the hypocrites, judges, gossips, and greedy who are not doing a good job of resisting. The devil is having his way with too many of God’s children, not to mention the folks out in the world.

When folks don’t resist, the devil wins. When we put up a good fight, the devil flees, and God is near (James 4:8). It’s that simple.

You might be close enough to God, but most of us are not. Get out your Bible, get on your knees, put on your visiting shoes and work gloves, put up your guard, and open your heart. There are ways to get closer to God, and we can do it.