

## Four Ways to Draw Near To God – Part 1

The Bible is filled with promises. Scripture testifies that God cannot lie and keeps all of His promises. One of the promises that God makes to his people is that if we draw near to him, he will draw near to us (James 4:8). Many Christians do not feel close to God. Sometimes people in the world desire to be close to God, but they are not sure how they should go about getting close to him. Allow me to share four ways that we can draw close to God, and as a result, have God draw close to us. First of all, we must remove sin from our lives. James 4:8 also calls for Christians to cleanse their hands and purify their hearts. God is separated from those who are living in sin (Isa. 59:1-2). All accountable people sin, but not all accountable people are living in sin (Rom. 3:23; 1 Jn. 3:6-9). Those who are living in impenitent sin are not in fellowship with God as they walk in darkness. So long as we have a tight grip on sin, we cannot have a tight grip on our God. In Scripture, the hands metaphorically represent the entire person (Isa. 59:3; 1 Tim. 2:8). When James calls for a cleansing of the hands, he is seeking for a cleansing of the individual life of the Christian. The life must be free from sin, but how can this be done? For those who have never obeyed the Gospel, the first step is to turn to Jesus in obedient faith. Those who believe in Christ, repent, confess Jesus as Lord, and are baptized are promised the forgiveness of sins (Acts 2:38; 22:16). After obeying the Gospel, Christians must walk in the light and confess sins and repent when they fall. Christians strive to be faultless, as we are called to be faithful (Mt. 10:22; Rev. 2:10). Seeking the kingdom first and leaving the world behind is a sure way to draw near to God. Secondly, we must be committed to studying God's Word. Since God communicates to us through his Word, it is impossible to claim to have a relationship with God apart from his Word (Eph. 3:3-4; 2 Tim. 3:16-17). God gave us the Word so that it might save our souls. If we want to draw near to God, we will do it as we heed His Word. The Jews in Jesus' day thought they were close to God, but they rejected the Messiah of which the scriptures spoke. Today, many who never crack open the Bible claim to be close to God, but they too are mistaken. Studying the Word of God involves taking the time to do it and also practicing what we read. We must be willing to stop doing other unimportant things to allow God's Word to penetrate our hearts. This second step goes along with the first step. Either the Bible will keep us from sin or sin will keep us from the Bible (Psa. 119:11). A dusty and unused Bible is evidence that there is great distance between that individual and God. A Bible that is read, reflected on, and practiced is evidenced that someone is inching closer to God every day (James 1:22-23). Any relationship with poor communication eventually breaks down and dies. If we will not listen to God, how can we ever hope to be close to him? God promised to be with Joshua and Israel as they conquered Canaan. However, God's presence was contingent upon Joshua meditating on and digesting the Word of God (Law of Moses), and then walking by faith (Josh. 1:8-9). We will either walk by faith (Romans 10:17) or walk alone. If we want to be close to God, we must study His Word.