

STUDIES IN THE LIFE OF JAMES

STUDY NUMBER 9 – JAMES 4:13-17

DEVELOP DEPENDENCE ON THE DESIGNER

James is writing to help Christians to grow and to mature and to recognize the principles of that growth in their lives. First of all we were confronted with the test which is designed by God to measure and to produce growth.

Secondly we talked about temptation which is designed by Satan to distract and destroy.

Third we talked about the daily intake of the Word of God to be doers of the Word and not just hearers only so that we can stay on track.

Number four, we talked about love which is pure and unconditional, produced by the Spirit without partiality within the life of the child who is growing in Christ.

We talked about fruit which is the evidence of a relationship with the Lord.

We talked about the tongue. It can only be controlled by the Holy Spirit.

We talked about wisdom which is from above that is pure, peaceable, gentle, and easy to be entreated, full of mercy and good fruits.

Last time we were together we talked about war on three fronts. First of all, each of us has war with the world that's around us. Secondly, we have war with the self that is within us. Third, we have a war with Satan who is against us.

This three-front war is a battle that we all must recognize if we're going to make progress and have victory and grow in our relationship to Christlikeness.

Now I want to take two verses from Romans 12 to set the stage for developing dependence upon the Designer.

Romans 12:1-3

And so dear brothers, I plead with you to give your bodies to God and let them be a living sacrifice, holy, the kind He can accept. When you think of what He has done for you, is this too much to ask? Don't copy the fashions and customs of this world, but be a new and different person with a fresh newness in all you do and think. Then you will see from your own experience how his ways will satisfy you entirely.

God does have a plan and a purpose for each of our lives. We've heard that. We know it but still we fail to consult to be sure that we're living it in this very hour.

And then if all of these things are true, naturally we raise the question: Why are things so rough? Why do we constantly face the challenge of being faithful in the commitment and learning how to be dependent upon the Lord?

Listen to John 16:33, this is just hours before the cross now. Actually these could be the last words that He spoke in the upper room as they're getting ready to go down to the Garden of Gethsemane.

John 16:33

In the world you shall have tribulation.

But then he concludes, "be of good cheer for I have overcome the world."

Now as you know James is pretty hard-hitting so I'm going to try to say it nice. And I'm going to try to say it soft but you're going to be uncomfortable as you take a look at it. Are you ready? Here we go.

v.13 Come now you who are saying, "Today or tomorrow we shall go into that city, and we shall spend a year there and we shall carry on business and make a profit."

Now you're saying "What in the world is wrong with that? It's a guy using his plan and discipline and he's got his calendar laid out before him and he's laying it all out there." We forget that he has failed to consult. And because he has failed to consult he is probably making decisions on his own, independent of anything the Lord would have to say. So you assume at this point that he is not organizing all of these plans with personal, private time of consultation with the Lord. That's behind it and I think you'll see that in just a minute.

Matthew 16:26

For what is a man profited if he shall gain the whole world and lose his own soul? Or what shall a man give in exchange for his soul?

Luke 12:19-20 (the parable of the rich man)

And I will say to my soul, Soul, you have ample goods laid up for many years; relax, eat, drink, be merry.' But God said to him, 'Fool! This night your soul is required of you, and the things you have prepared, whose will they be?'

In other words, God is coming in at the end of it and saying basically, "All that you've been able to accomplish and achieve really isn't going to amount to another because you're dying tonight. You've just gotten to the place where you feel you're independent

and you're capable of handling it all and now BOOM! you're going to die!" Let's don't ever, ever, ever come to the moment of our terminal experience as far as this world is concerned with great regret and great revelation that we did control our lives instead of allowing Him. We did spend all of our energy and effort on things that pass away rather than on eternal things for the glory of God.

Matthew 6:34

So don't be anxious about tomorrow, God will take care of your tomorrow too. Live only one day at a time.

When you recognize that your salvation and your sanctification, being made like Christ, and your ultimate glorification is all in the salvation plan and it's all part of God's responsibility that you recognize that you can really trust Him.

And I think trust becomes an issue at this point because you've had enough experiences where you've been blindsided by things that look like God wasn't in control or He was asleep when it happened or something like that and so you feel justified in taking the reigns into your own hands. Don't do it.

Remember Saul? Samuel said "Wait seven days and then I will come and we'll offer the sacrifice and you'll go into battle. Seven days came, many of the men who were fighting got scared and left and Saul is pressured

to act and he goes and violates the priesthood by offering the sacrifice at the very moment that Samuel comes walking in. The horrible, horrible cost of that ought to cause you to be fearful every day that you're rushing into things rather than letting God lead you. And you're going into it with wisdom that's given by him and in affirmation that the work of righteousness will be peace and the effect of it quietness and assurance forever.

That's all together different than what you have in the picture here. It's someone who's laying out the plans and going for it and living basically a sophisticated atheistic life. Because you don't see God at this point. He's planning it all out.

Henry Jacobsen said it well:

This is sinning through side-stepping of God. It is practical atheism to be planning without taking God into consideration. If we continue to shut God out of our lives, we commit sin.

Charles Ryrie explains that a little bit more. He says:

The flesh then is that old capacity which all men have to live lives which exclude God. In the Christian the flesh is that same capacity to leave God out of his life in actions.

(source unknown)

So James is hitting hard here. But we need to hear it! Where is your passion? Where is your life centered today? Where's your life been centered this last week? How often have you consulted with the Father before you did anything, before you made a decision, before you met someone, before you did this or you did that?

Were you with the Father first so you're at peace as you sit here today knowing that you're here today in the center of His will. This is so critical because if you refuse to hear what I'm saying to you or what James is saying to you, I'll tell you what's going to happen, you're going to end up with wood, hay and straw at the judgment seat of Christ. And when that hits the fire, it turns to ashes. All you've lived for is torched and turned to ashes, burned up and gone. What a tragic thing to have to happen. Sound and fury signifying nothing. Been weighed in the balances and found wanting. Why would we ever want to be content living life like that is what James is saying. And when you're hung up there you're going to make no significant eternal progress. And that's the biggest issue of all.

v.14 Whereas you are not knowing what will happen tomorrow and what character is your life. For you are a mist which is appearing for a little time and then disappearing.

You see, you don't know about tomorrow. Neither do I. This could very well be our last day on earth. We could be called home to glory. Many have been this past year.

Many more will be this next year because we're all terminal.

“You are not knowing what will happen tomorrow and what character is your life.”

And then he wants to describe what he means by that.

“For you are a mist which is appearing for a little time and then disappearing.”

That little phrase *“your life is a mist it appears for a little time and then passes away,”* that's James.

We also see this concept throughout the Bible.

First of all, in 1 Chronicles 29:15:

For we are here but for a moment, strangers in the land as our fathers were before us; our days on earth are like a shadow gone as soon without a trace.

Solomon in Proverbs 27:1

Do not boast about tomorrow, for you do not know what a day may bring.

It was about 2 a.m. in the morning and I got this call and it was from a father of one of the young men in the youth group who had a horrible car accident. There

had been a fatality. When I got to the hospital the father with tears in his eyes says “Isn’t it amazing how a split second changes lives.” We’re just not ready for that. We think others face those kind of things but we never face them and here I was standing and recognizing two things about life. It is short and it’s fragile. And when you deal with it that way then you’re going to say “Because it’s of that nature I must give it to the eternal God who designed me for His own purposes and plan and I will find maximum fulfillment and joy when I turn over completely the reigns to Him and allow Him to lead.”

For you are a mist which is appearing for a little time and then disappearing.”

Well now David confirms this very same truth in Psalm 39. I’m reading from the NET Bible, just a few verses, picking up at verse 4.

Psalm 39:4-7

“O Lord, help me understand my mortality and the brevity of life! Let me realize how quickly my life will pass! Look, you make my days short-lived, and my life span is nothing from your perspective. Surely all people, even those who seem secure, are nothing but vapor. Surely people go through life as mere ghosts. Surely they accumulate worthless wealth without knowing who will eventually haul it away.” But now, O

sovereign Master, upon whom am I relying? You are my only hope!

Then I skipped down to verse 12.

Psalm 39:12

Hear my prayer, O Lord! Listen to my cry for help! Do not ignore my sobbing! For I am dependent on you, like one residing outside his native land; I am at your mercy, just as all my ancestors were.

Just realize there is no tomorrow on God's calendar.

That ought to, with great motivation and intensity this morning for you to understand you have today and that's it. And live in accordance with that in understanding what the Father's plan is. Do it now.

Our key verse for the study.

v.15 Instead you ought to be saying: "If the Lord wills, we shall both live and do this or that."

That's the key verse for the study but it could be the key verse to the whole book. If we could learn together to really implement a program for developing increasing dependence upon the Designer and we could say "You can trust Him!" That would be our byline. And we would back off and we would really truly trust Him in every circumstance.

I discover sometimes when I hear you praying and I see prayer requests, it's requests that are not open ended. It's requests for this, for that, prove You love me by doing this or doing that.

If I'm depending upon the Designer, I'm saying "Oh God, I'm laying hold for the suffering saint but more than what I would ask from a human point of view of alleviating their suffering and healing them" is "God, I want your will. I want Your greater purpose that I do not know right now. And I'm telling You that I'm trusting You fully and completely to do what You want to do in this set of circumstances because You can be trusted. And I'm telling You right now, I trust You fully and completely."

The sin actually that's described here in these verses is the sin of leaving God out of our daily lives and activities. We should be saying "If the Lord wills. Is this what You want from me Lord? I want Your will in the basic decisions." That's all summarized in:

Proverbs 3:5-6

Trust in the Lord with all your heart and lean not on your own understanding, in all your ways acknowledge him, and he will make your paths straights.

Oh, that's wonderful. And yet I've skipped over that so many times and failed to recognize that I was giving my own understanding instead of wanting more than

anything in the world for Him to break through with an expression of His will.

He invited us in Matthew 11:28:

Come unto me all ye who are weary and heavy laden and I'll give you rest. Take my yoke upon you and learn of me, I am meek and lowly of heart.

You see what verse 16 brings to us? Oh that's strong.

v.16 But now you are glorying in your arrogance. All such glorying is evil.

Did you think that maybe God looks down because you're anticipating Him and you're not really consulting with Him, to think that maybe you're arrogant.

Oh man. I wanted to soften that Greek word so much for you. I wanted to make it sound easy because we hate to think of people as being arrogant. But I'm arrogant if I leave God out of the mechanics of my daily life. If I get into a situation where I'm anticipating and calling the shots then I am arrogant from His point of view. And I'm glorying in my arrogance.

Philippians 3

... that I might know Christ and the power of his resurrection in fellowship of his suffering ...

Then he writes to the Galatian church that's so into performance.

Galatians 6:14

... God forbid that I should boast or glory in anybody or anything except the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ ...

Well there it is friends, verse 17. Big and bold.

v.17 Therefore, to the one knowing how to do good, and is not doing it, to him it is sin.

Picky, picky, picky. I did not expect to come this morning and have you call me a sinner because I have been practically leaving God out of the decisions of my life. Now I didn't say that, James did, didn't he? But I want to verify everything that James has to say.

Notice the qualification there. *"To the one [who is] knowing how to do good."* Has James been teaching us to do good? Look at everyone of the messages. How to handle the tests. How to handle temptations. How to be daily in the Word. How to be a fruitful Christian, how to be filled with the Spirit's love. How to have the

Spirit control my tongue. How to live as a man with the wisdom that comes from above rather than my own person wisdom. And how to have successful victory in the war on all three fronts. Every one of those things are statements from James on how to know to be good.

I love to read William Barclay's daily study Bible because he was such a great Greek scholar. And when he gets to this phrase, you're going to need to be ready for this one. This one's kind of tough.

**“To continue now in the self-confident habit of seeking to dispose of one's own life is sin for the man who has been forcibly reminded that the future is not in his hands but in God's.”
(source unknown)**

Want to hear that once more? It's going to take a little bit to absorb it, but get ready.

“To continue now [as a result of what you've just read] in the self-confident habit of seeking to dispose of one's own life is sin for the man who has been forcibly reminded that the future is not in his hands but in God's.”

This is what God hit me with: “To continue to call the shots without consultation is criminal.”

Now I'm not saying that you have this area of your life over here where it's alright for you to call the shots.

No. It's your whole life. You've presented your body a living sacrifice. You gave it all to Him.

It's all a concern to Him, so daily we must consult with Him. You say "But I already know what I'm supposed to do today. I've got a schedule. I've got to do this and I've got to do that." Yes, that is if God allows you to live to get it done. But if He happens to blow the whistle and pull the chain you aren't going to do that tomorrow.

Far better to be in a place to say "God, in the midst of Your will I am called to be at work at 7:30 tomorrow morning, or this morning better yet. And so God, I'm taking these moments to ask You please to be faithful to Your word in directing my life, making me sensitive to the contacts I'm to be meeting, wherever they are, and to reflect the beauty of Christ in my life. May people see Jesus in me."

There you have turned it over then you can deal with the specifics as they come along and the telephone rings or the challenge comes or the opportunity is there, then you're practically outliving what you started with early in the morning so it's not difficult.

Now I want to land on that phrase for a second. Notice what it says "*knowing how to do good.*"

James says "I'm writing to people who know how to do good." And I would say "I am speaking to a group of

people who know how to do good.” Everyone of you who have studied through these eight or nine studies we’ve had in James know how to do good. Now to know how to do good involves 5 things. And I just summarized James for you.

1. “Surrender it all.” If the clarion call of God is to you this morning, do it now. Surrender it all to Him. Lock, stock and barrel. The whole thing. Any concerns you’ve brought, surrender it to Him.

2. Submit daily to His direction, just like I got through telling you. Let Him program your computer first thing in the morning. Get you ready to go. Submit daily to His direction.

3. Focus on obedience. Obedience, obedience, obedience. When the Word speaks do it.

4. Trust Him completely because if there is a delay, if there is something different that comes that you think should be different, leave it in His hands. Don’t you touch it and don’t rush ahead and assume that His delay means that He’s distracted because He’s not. He’s there ready and available when the answer would come.

5. Develop dependence upon the Designer.

I’m saying to you this morning, if you could just follow those simple principles. God is in the process of

making some masterpieces in the class and you are one of them. When you learn how to just trust completely in the Designer who knows your life and He knows what He wants to accomplish through it and also in your life personally.

Now there are four lessons that are there.

CONCLUSION:

What are some of the lessons we can learn from this particular study?

LESSON #1: Life is short and temporary. The question is: Who controls it?

LESSON #2: Trust, obedience, and submission are keys to dependence.

LESSON #3: Resistance to the Father's direction is sin. Partial love is sin.

LESSON #4: An arrogant spirit should not manifest itself among believers.

You see, we want to put that away. We don't want to think about that. But you've got to realize your life is a vapor, it's temporary and you've used another week of it, three weeks of it since we've been together. How are you investing that? Are you spending it with the Lord?

And I'll let old Daddy Bombeck say the only thing he ever wrote. Following Erma's death he writes these words:

In 1947, three or four couples were outside the Lakeside Ballroom in Dayton, Ohio. We were too early to be admitted for the big-band dance, so we all wandered over to the adjoining amusement park.

Not far from the ballroom was the roller coaster. All of the boys began cajoling their dates to ride with them. The girls giggled and said no. It was too frightening, and it would mess up their hair and dresses.

I looked at my date and asked her if she wanted to go. She didn't hesitate. She said, "Sure, I'll go." I was surprised and looked at her again. She was slight, narrow-shouldered, with tiny hands and feet. But she had the greatest smile and laugh. Her smile had a charming space between her two front teeth. I thought, this is some kind of girl!

The Lakeside roller coaster was a rickety old leftover from the Depression. The frame was mostly made of unpainted 2-by-4's. No modern inspection by OSHA would have ever approved this for man's use. . . .

The attendant was an old man in oil-stained bib overalls. He said little, but raised the bar and she entered the seat first, and I followed by her side. The bar clicked in place . . . [and basically they started flying through the air in every direction. He describes every move and how he told her to hang on to the bar

but every time he said that, she'd grab his arm tighter. Then he says]

She kept hanging on to my arm. I was gripping the metal bar so tightly I thought I would bend it. This was some ride. We were thrilled and exhilarated, scared and breathless. . . .

We looked at each other. We didn't speak, but we sensed the ride had changed. The man in the bib overalls was standing by the tapered 2-by-4s. He started to push one from its angled to a straight-up position. The car stopped. I told him the ride was great, but it was too short; we wanted to go on. He raised the bar. She smiled again, I looked at the attendant again. He said, "This is April 22, 1996—your ride is over. I looked over at her seat. She was gone."

(Forever, Erma: Best-Loved Writing From America's Favorite Humorist by Erma Bombeck) Kansas City, MO: Andrews & McMeel/Universal Press Syndicate. Copyright - Erma Bombeck Estate, 1996. pp. 271-3

"Just a few more rolling suns at most, will land thee on fair Canaan's coast."

I trust you will learn today to develop dependence about the Designer so it won't blindside you and you will be prepared for that time when you'll meet the Lord face to face.

STUDY NUMBER NINE - DEVELOP DEPENDENCE ON THE DESIGNER — JAMES 4:13-17

KEY VERSE 4:15

v.13 Come now you who are saying, “Today or tomorrow we shall go into that city, and we shall spend a year there and we shall carry on business and make a profit.”

v.14 Whereas you are not knowing what will happen tomorrow and what character is your life. For you are a mist which is appearing for a little time and then disappearing.

v.15 Instead you ought to be saying: “If the Lord wills, we shall both live and do this or that.”

v.16 But now you are glorying in your arrogance. All such glorying is evil.

v.17 Therefore, to the one knowing how to do good, and is not doing it, to him it is sin.

NOTES

QUESTIONS:

1. Read James 4:13-17 and in your own words pull out the main thought of this passage.

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2. What is the meaning of verse 13?

3. How does James describe our lives in verse 14?

4. What should our attitude be, according to verse 15?

5. Have you ever thought very much about what the Lord's will is for your life?

6. What are your lifetime goals?

7. According to verse 16, is it right or wrong for us to brag about our achievements? Describe an "arrogant" person.

8. Now that we know what is right, what does James say about our failure to do the right thing?

9. Which verse in the study has meant the most to you?

10. What lesson have you learned from this study?

LESSONS FROM THE PASSAGE:

What are some of the lessons we can learn from this particular study?

LESSON #1: Life is short and temporary. The question is: Who controls it?

LESSON #2: Trust, obedience, and submission are keys to dependence.

**LESSON #3: Resistance to the Father's direction is sin.
Partial love is sin.**

**LESSON #4: An arrogant spirit should not manifest
itself among believers.**

ADDITIONAL NOTES:

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