

James 4:13-17

Discussion Group Questions

June 8, 2008

LESSON 10

Dr. Jerry Nelson

For discussion following the sermon on June 8, 2008

Arrogant Self-sufficiency

“Now listen, you who say, “Today or tomorrow we will go to this or that city, spend a year there, carry on business and make money.” ¹⁴ Why, you do not even know what will happen tomorrow. What is your life? You are a mist that appears for a little while and then vanishes. ¹⁵ Instead, you ought to say, “If it is the Lord’s will, we will live and do this or that.” ¹⁶ As it is, you boast and brag. All such boasting is evil. ¹⁷ Anyone, then, who knows the good he ought to do and doesn’t do it, sins.

Discussion Questions:

1. Is James saying we shouldn’t plan? Why or why not?
2. If planning is not prohibited, what is?
3. What are some of the ways you are most made aware of the brevity of life and the uncertainty of the future?
4. James says that from human perspective, the future and even life itself are uncertain. Most everyone would agree, so what is James’ point?

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2. If planning is not prohibited, what is?
3. What are some of the ways you are most made aware of the brevity of life and the uncertainty of the future?
4. James says that from human perspective, the future and even life itself are uncertain. Most everyone would agree, so what is James’ point?

5. The Bible teaches we are to take the initiative in making a living (2 Thessalonians 3:10) and saving for the future (Proverbs 6:6-11), etc. How does remembering “if it is the Lord’s will” alter our planning for the future? And what does this indicate about our relationship with God?
6. Christians often seek the Lord’s will in the “big” decisions of life. In what kinds of decisions do these verses tell us to seek the Lord?
7. “Boasting” in this context is arrogant self-sufficiency. James says, “such boasting is evil.” In context, what is the boasting about? If we arrogantly make our own plans, what does it indicate about our attitude toward God?
8. What does Matthew 6:25-34 contribute to this discussion? How do anxiety (worry), planning (responsibility) and dependence on God fit together?
9. “If it is the Lord’s will” is not a mantra to say. James calls us to a relationship with God wherein our everyday decisions and activities are part and parcel of that relationship. Illustrate what saying/thinking “if it is the Lord’s will” would look like in everyday life.
10. If we know this (conscious dependence on God) is how we are to think and act and we don’t do it, what does James say?

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