



Just Grow Up!

James - A Manual for Maturity

Facing the Future Fearlessly

1. Read James 4:13-17. Is this passage saying that it is wrong to make plans for the future? What is it saying? How can you know if something that you want to plan in the future is God's will? Do you think that God has a specific will for every decision you make?
2. Have you ever made plans for the future and had them fall completely apart? Share what the situation was. How did you respond to the fact that they failed? Do you think God was involved in some way? Why or why not?
3. Pastor Rick said that there are three areas of our lives that we should test to determine if God is first in our lives, what are they? How does knowing the five purposes that God wants us to accomplish in our lives help in making the right decisions in these three areas?
4. We know that when we do what God has said not to do, that it is sin. According to verse 17 in James 4, what else is sin? The first type of sin are sins of commission, the second type are sins of omission. Do you think there is any difference, as far as our walk with God is concerned, between the two? If we need to confess to God when we commit sins of commission, do we need to confess when we commit sins of omission?
5. God says that our lives on earth are "but a vapor". What should that mean to us as Christians? How should that knowledge affect our behavior? What are some ways in which we can regularly remind ourselves of this truth? What is something you know you should be doing in your service to God that you have been procrastinating?

ANSWERS

1. This passage is not saying that it is wrong to make plans for the future, it is saying that as you make plans for the future, always keep in mind whether or not it would be God's will for you to do what you are planning. We should always be willing for God to change our plans if He has something else in mind for us. The way that we know that something is God's will is from His word. If God's word specifically speaks to something we are doing, then whatever it says is God's will. Example: We can know it is not God's will for us to have sex outside of marriage, ever. It would not be God's will for me to purchase a new car if doing so would prevent me from giving generously to God's work. If we are planning to do something that God does not forbid us to do, then we can assume it is God's will unless He steps in and makes it plain that He wants us to do something else. We also need to keep in mind that God is just as concerned with why we are doing something as He is with what we are doing. If God says that there is something that is right to do, then doing that is always His will.
3. The three areas are: Where I choose to go; What I choose to do; and How I view money. Knowing the five purposes that God wants us to accomplish makes the above decisions easier because we know that if where I choose to go, what I choose to do, and how I view my money is going to keep me from accomplishing one of those purposes and hurts my ability to be like Christ, then my decision is sinful.
4. 4:17 tells us that if we do not do the things God tells us we should do, that it is also sin. Example: If I am unwilling to forgive someone when they offend me, that is sin. These sins of omission are no different than when we do what God says not to do. So one-half of our sin is doing what we shouldn't and the other half is not doing what we should. Both types of sin blocks us from having a good relationship with God and we need to confess both types when we offend God by sinning.
5. Obviously God is telling us in view of the fact of eternity, our lives are very, very, short. This should cause us to realize that the most valuable thing we possess is time and we should make sure that we are not wasting our time on earth. We should be using all of our time in ways that honor and glorify God.