

Live Today As If It Were Your Last

James 4:13-17

It was one of the most profound questions I have ever been asked. The setting was a small group of businessmen casually seated in a circle. Without question, each and every one of these men had achieved what most would call the pinnacle of success in his respective field. They reflected on their first big break, and building that dream home that many times exceeded the modest home in which they grew up. They reflected on the success that followed along with the responsibilities, influence, and felt the need to compulsively, “layer by layer” build bigger, achieve more, and exert an even broader influence. Curiously, at the core of the discussion were the underlying conviction and questions regarding the value and motivation behind the lifetime of success.

Then came the question, “Bruce, in your years of ministry have you found as people begin to age and even face the reality of mortality, they change in how they value life? Do most rethink past motivations, reevaluate priorities placed on family, relationships, and the cost of ‘success’?” My answer—a resounding “Yes.” The exceptions are those who live in denial; and a more interesting exception are those few who have demonstrated a mature and Godly Christian walk. They have tended to be more circumspect in the past. This was certainly true of the Apostle Paul, John in New Testament times, and it is no doubt true of most missionaries, pastors, and Godly leaders today. There is something about a life of exposure to the grace, excellence, and love of God that seems to be appreciated and internalized with age and the realization of mortality. Time does affect one’s perspective.

Even knowing it is impossible, it might be helpful if we could push the fast forward button on our lives, to project ourselves into that sober moment of the ill-spoken words, broken relationships, wasted energy, time and money, the should haves, could haves, and pointless desire to go back and “do it right.” Perhaps—just perhaps—we would be more sensitive to God’s will after hitting rewind back to the present. And, perhaps, it is God’s grace that protects us from such foreknowledge. What if the fast forward suddenly stopped on tomorrow? (Would it make a difference?) How would it impact our walk of faith? (Would we trust God or ourselves?) What if the fast forward revealed a terminal illness or an overwhelming crisis? (Would we give up, become bitter, and refuse to trust God’s provision?)

These are extremely important questions when it comes to the practical, day in and day out living of the authentic and personal Christian life. Thankfully we do not have a fast forward button. But we do have invaluable, absolute, and divine insight in living today as if it were our last. God has given His Word on it in James 4:13-17.

LIFE RESPONSE

This week MEMORIZE and MEDITATE on James 4:17; “*Therefore, to one who knows the right thing to do, and does not do it, to him it is sin.*”

1. “Therefore” actually includes everything from chapter one through chapter four. Read through these passages. List as many imperatives as possible.
 - a. Which of these imperatives do you find most convicting?
 - b. What do you see in this passage that would create a sense of urgency? What should be a logical, perhaps eternally consequential question if one does not have a sense of urgency?
2. Consider Job 14:1-12; Psalm 90:1-17 (12); Psalm 139:13-24 in context of James 4:13-14. As you think on these passages, ask God to build into your thinking the temporal nature of life and the urgency of the present.
3. Life as a vapor is very real to each of us regardless of age. Discuss as a family how you can grow to make the most of every moment before God, your relationships with each other, your thought life, and perspective for the future.

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“Care not for the morrow, for ye know not what a day may bring forth.
Perhaps he may not be (alive) on the morrow, and so have cared for a world that does not exist for him.”
- Rabbinical saying, translated by Edersheim, Life and Times

UNIQUENESS OF JAMES

REALITY OF LIFE

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RELATIONAL MANDATE

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RIGHT CHOICES

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