



Helping people encounter God in His Word



For use on Sunday, November 9, 2003

Introduction

30

*Core Competencies
of a follower
of Christ*

10 Core Beliefs

TRINITY
SALVATION BY GRACE
AUTHORITY OF THE BIBLE
PERSONAL GOD
IDENTITY IN CHRIST
CHURCH
HUMANITY
COMPASSION
ETERNITY
STEWARDSHIP

10 Core Practices

WORSHIP
PRAYER
BIBLE STUDY
SINGLE-MINDEDNESS
BIBLICAL COMMUNITY
SPIRITUAL GIFTS
GIVING AWAY MY TIME
GIVING AWAY MY MONEY
GIVING AWAY MY FAITH
GIVING AWAY MY LIFE

10 Core Virtues

LOVE
JOY
PEACE
PATIENCE
KINDNESS/GOODNESS
FAITHFULNESS
GENTLENESS
SELF-CONTROL
HOPE
HUMILITY

This week's Core Competency:

Stewardship

**I believe that everything I
am or own belongs to
God.**

Reality Check: When Life Requires a Balance *Failure of Success . . . When You're "In Control"*

"Ellen, I did it! I just signed Briarmortar! We'll crush the competition in Cleveland now! I know Akron will be ours too," exclaimed Drew into his cell phone. Ellen chimed from the other end, "Drew, if you keep this up you'll have your sales goal by next week. We're just beginning this quarter and business is booming. Great job! I think you are looking at a significant bonus. Where are you now?"

"Oh, I'm on a plane about to take off. I'm on Tamarisk Air, Flight 78, headed to Worcester, PA," said Drew. "I heard that an upstart company, Bevel Brothers, is trying to get in the game. I plan on checking them out to see if they are any real threat."

"Worcester, where exactly is that?" asked Ellen.

"It is just outside Philly," stated Drew.

"We're not established on the East Coast yet, Drew. We don't have the infrastructure plan for expansion there yet," said Ellen a bit concerned.

"Well, I did use that as a selling point to get Briarmortar to sign. I told them they would be partners helping develop the infrastructure on the East Coast," said Drew confidently.

"Aren't you being a bit presumptuous, Drew?" asked Ellen cautiously. "The ink isn't even dry yet on your contract with Briarmortar and you're making assertions that entangle our future with their future. That is not your call!"

"Well, I know that, but hey, it wasn't part of the contract they signed. You know it has to be clearly in print for anything legal to occur. I think they believe the future of our company and theirs is the East Coast. It was just another carrot," said Drew assuredly.

"Okay, Drew, but don't you commit us to something. We need to be certain we can back up what is in the contract," said Ellen sternly.

"No, problem. That is why I'm going to Worcester," said Drew calmly, "I plan to let Bevel Brothers know we have Briarmortar and will set up shop in their backyard or hint that we will buy them out. In either case it will intimidate them. We'll have a foothold in the Philly area within one year and then the rest of the East Coast is ripe. Well, I have to go. They are telling us to shut off our cell phones for the flight. Say, hello, to Jefferson for me and tell him he owes me \$100 on the Colts game."

"Okay, Drew. Call when you get to Philly to let us know where you're staying," said Ellen laughing. "And again, congratulations for the Briarmortar deal."

"Thanks, it's a great start! Now Philly is going to be ours!" said Drew as he hung up the phone.

Four hours later Ellen received a phone call from a Tamarisk Airlines executive. The Tamarisk executive called letting Ellen know Drew Blakemore's commuter plane, Flight 78, went down in a wooded area in Eastern Pennsylvania. From information at the wreckage site, no survivors were found.

Observation

What do you see?

James 4:13-17 *Boasting About Tomorrow*

¹³Now 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." ¹⁴Why, 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. ¹⁵Instead, you ought to say, "If it is the Lord's will, we will live and do this or that." ¹⁶As it is, you boast and brag. All such boasting is evil. ¹⁷Anyone, then, who knows the good he ought to do and doesn't do it, sins.

Proverbs 27:1

¹ Do not boast about tomorrow,
for you do not know what a day may bring forth.

Proverbs 16:9

⁹ In his heart a man plans his course,
but the LORD determines his steps.

Record your first impressions from what you read.

 **Interact with the passages**

- In James 4:13 underline "make money."
- Highlight "do not even know what will happen tomorrow."
- Put a square around "you are a mist" and "vanishes."
- Circle "if it is the Lord's will."
- Highlight "all such boasting is evil" and "knows the good he ought to do and doesn't do it, sins."
- Draw a picture of what these verses are saying about money, planning and God.
- In Prov. 27:1 highlight "boast about tomorrow."
- In Prov. 16:9 highlight "plans his course" and "the Lord determines his steps."

Interpretation

What does it mean?

The presumption that one controls one's own destiny and fortune by carefully laid plans fails to understand that God is sovereign and in control. Only by humbly seeking God's direction and accepting our submissive role to God do we keep from pride and selfish ambition.

Insights

- The "now listen" is a command and is an insistent address like "see here."
- The "will go," "spend," "carry on business," and "make money" are future verbs and indicate the assurance the planner has of their course of action. This phrase is attributed to rich merchants who went on business trips with a worldly mindset.
- The "do not even know" is a present middle voice verb. The present accentuates the

current situation a person finds themselves; in other words, no knowledge of the future.

- The “what” of the question can be translated “of what character is your life,” and implies “is it secure or precarious?”
- The “mist” is a word attributed to steam from a kettle that is quickly blown away.
- V. 15 seems to reflect a pre-Greek philosophy or religion. Secular businessmen would say “if the gods allow.” The difficulty is that James interjects “of the Lord,” instead of “god.” This reference to “the Lord” brings the sovereign and creator God to the verse making the biblical worldview clear that God is in control.
- The “boasting and bragging” referred to is arrogant pride to impress men and the claim cannot be fulfilled.
- V. 17 is odd in that it is a shift to the third person but also has a perfect verb “knows.” This reflects that knowledge is ongoing and continues into the future. Most commentators say this verse was a traditional saying that circulated independently of this context. James ties this saying to bragging so people understand that if they don’t stop bragging and change their worldview they are sinning.

Answering Questions of Interpretation

Does James really have the church business class in view or not? Are merchants in the church making their financial plans without considering God? The previous context chapter 4 refers to “brothers” so how can this new chapter refer to people outside of the church? What do we do with v. 15 and the reference to “the Lord’s will”?

Does James’ corrective to include God in one’s planning appear fatalistic? How is it that people brag and boast about things they do not ultimately control but want to take credit for? Does this give someone the opportunity to blame God if things do not work out? How does one counter the claim that God is to blame if things do not happen according to our plans?

Application

What do I do?

Do I make plans and then ask God to bless it? What is an example of your planning something first and then realizing you did not seek God’s wisdom first? What was the outcome? How can I submit my plans, choices, or life first to God even if I have seen good outcomes from the previous work that I did but did not include Him?

Have I taken credit for something that God has done? What has that been? How did I begin to take pride in something that God did? Did my words or attitudes communicate a boastful pride? Why or why not? What about me makes me want to think of myself more highly than I should when God should get the glory? How can I keep from taking credit for God’s work?

How can I trust that God is trustworthy to control my life? What facts and past experiences give evidence that God has my best interests at heart? Have I continued to allow God to have the control in my life? What areas are struggles for control in my life (i.e. finances, relationships, work, etc.)? How can I continually relinquish control to God and be a faithful steward of what God has graciously granted me? What steps do I sense the Spirit wants me to take? Write them down.

Correlation

How do we work this into our Home Group, Family, youth group, ministry, class, small group?

Core Competency: Stewardship

Creed: I believe that everything I am or own belongs to God.

Commentary: Frank Sinatra is renowned for his rendition of the song “My Way.” This song celebrates fierce independence and an unyielding spirit. And in some circumstances these traits of fortitude and strength are admirable and necessary.

Unfortunately, along with these admirable traits the song also expresses an attitude, which lies within the heart of every person: “I did it my way.”

Adam and Eve while in the Garden of Eden decided to declare independence from God and do things their own way. The repercussion of their actions has alienated all people from God and from one another. This alienation has caused each to believe that they have the right to be the “god” of their own destiny and life without needing accountability to God, the true sovereign and creator.

When we, like Adam and Eve, choose to plan our own course without considering that God is ultimately in control, we take pride in ourselves and neglect our ultimate dependence upon God. This arrogance as James 4:13-17 says is “evil” and “sin.”

Only by humbly seeking God’s direction and accepting our submissive role to God do we keep from arrogant pride and selfish ambition. When we keep God in His proper place, as sovereign, we are accountable to Him as stewards, or managers, of the gifts and life He has given us. The role of a steward is to faithfully oversee things owned by another. When we realize our life and everything in it is owned by God, we keep ourselves from pride in the things we are and have.

Question: Describe a time you recall that you did things your way without considering God. What was the outcome of doing it that way? Why did you choose to do things that way? In what ways can you live out the biblical perspective that God is in control and he has given you the role of steward?

Kid’s Corner – Going, Going, Gone! (Slips of paper as pretend money)

Say: I need 7 volunteers. We are going to act out being a good manager, or steward. A manager, or steward, is someone who watches over someone else’s possessions. I need an owner, 3 managers, 2 bankers, and a tax collector. I’ll read a story and you act it out.

Read: The owner has 12 dollars and goes on a trip. Before he leaves he gives each of the managers 3 dollars. He tells the managers to take care of the money, try to increase it, and make his tax payments. The owner still owns all the money given to his managers. Manager 1 is good. Manager 1 takes 2 dollars and gives the money to Banker 1. Banker 1 takes the money and tells the manager that he will get 2 dollars interest for each 1 dollar given to the bank. Manager 2 is good too. Manager 2 takes 1 dollar and gives the money to Banker 2. Banker 2 takes the money and tells the manager that he will get 2 dollars interest for each dollar given to the bank.

Manager 3 is bad. Manager 3 loses 2 dollars and tries to keep 1 dollar for himself.

One day the taxman comes and asks each manager for 1 dollar for the owner’s taxes. Manager 1 and 2 give the taxman the tax payment. Manager 3 says he has nothing to give to the taxman. The taxman shakes his head and scolds Manager 3, “You are in trouble.”

The owner returns, as the taxman is about to leave. The taxman tells the owner that Manager 3 did not pay the tax. The owner then asks the managers for the remaining money they have. The owner and Manager 1 go to Banker 1 who gives 6 dollars to the owner. The owner and Manager 2 go to Banker 2 who gives 3 dollars to the owner. The owner asks Manager 3 for the money he gave him, but the money is hidden. The owner asks Manager 3 to empty his pockets and finds 1 dollar. The owner takes Manager 3’s dollar to pay the tax and puts him in jail for trying to take his money and losing the rest of it. Which managers were faithful to do as the owner asked?

God wants us to be good managers, or stewards, of the money and gifts he gives to us. He wants us to remember He is the owner of our lives. He wants us to be faithful to do as He asked by watching our lives carefully and using our gifts to help others, which is what God considers growth. Bad managers try to become owners of their own lives and do things for themselves. God says that is sin and punishes those who live for themselves and not Him.



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