

14. Learning to Seek the Will of God

Many Christians make their plans without asking the Lord for guidance. In our study today, we will see that there are many Christians who can go for years without seeking the will of the Lord for their lives. As a result, it is important to help our children realize the importance of being guided by the Lord moment-by-moment. We will only help our physical and spiritual children realize the importance of being guided by the Lord as they see that we seek the guidance of the Lord in our own lives.

James 4:13-14 says, “Come now, you who say, ‘Today or tomorrow we will go to such and such a city, spend a year there, buy and sell, and make a profit’; whereas you do not know what *will happen* tomorrow. For what *is* your life? It is even a vapor that appears for a little time and then vanishes away.” Here, we see how part of the Christians were doing their planning in the time of James. They made their own plans and never asked the Lord if those plans were His will. That same thing happens frequently among Christians today. As a result, James uses their example to give us guidance about the way to help our children learn to seek the will of God moment-by-moment in their lives.

In the first phrase, we see that some of the people, in the time of James, were making plans that would last for a period of a year. It is not wrong to make plans. However, the thing that is wrong is to leave God out of our plans because we do not seek His will. In Philippians 2:12-13, we read, “Therefore, my beloved, as you have always obeyed, not as in my presence only, but now much more in my absence, work out your own salvation with fear and trembling; for it is God who works in you both to will and to do for *His* good pleasure.” As Christians, we see that we are not to leave God out of our plans. As Christians, God is working in and through our lives to carry out His will. We need to continually seek His guidance, so we know His will for our lives. That way, He will be able to accomplish, through our lives, what He has designed us to do.

We also see a second result when people leave God out of their planning. Here, we see that James was writing to people who planned to buy and sell and make a profit. The focus of their planning was the material things of this world. There is no mention of planning for ministry or service for the Lord. Here, we see that it is important to help our children learn to include the Lord in all of their planning so that they make their service for the Lord a key part of their lives. 1 Corinthians 10:31 says, “Therefore, whether you eat or drink, or whatever you do, do all to the glory of God.” Our children will only do all to the glory of God when they include the Lord in their planning.

We are also reminded of the fact that we do not know what will happen tomorrow. Christ gave a parable to give a warning. Luke 12:16-21 says, “Then He spoke a parable to them, saying: ‘The ground of a certain rich man yielded plentifully. And he thought within himself, saying, “What shall I do, since I have no room to store my crops?” So he said, “I will do this: I will pull down my barns and build greater, and there I will store all my crops and my goods. And I will say to my soul, ‘Soul, you have many goods laid up for many years; take your ease; eat, drink, *and* be merry.’” But God said to him, “Fool! This night your soul will be required of you; then whose will those things be which you have provided?” So *is* he who lays up treasure for himself, and is not

rich toward God.” We see that a person who leaves God out of his planning is called a fool. We need to encourage our children to remind others that they have no guarantee they will be alive tomorrow.

We are also reminded that life is like a vapor. It appears for a little while and then vanishes. On a cold morning, you can see your breath for a second, and then it is gone. In the same way, you can see a puff of smoke, and then it disappears. That is what James reminds us our lives are like. Psalm 90:10 points out that even those who live a full life, only live for a short period of time. That verse says, “The days of our lives *are* seventy years; and if by reason of strength *they are* eighty years, yet their boast *is* only labor and sorrow; for it is soon cut off, and we fly away.” People who leave the Lord out of their planning act as though they never expect to die and are unprepared to meet the Lord when the day of death comes.

That is why James 4:15 reminds us, as Christians, of the way we should plan. That verse says, “Instead you *ought* to say, “If the Lord wills, we shall live and do this or that.” Here, we see that we need to realize that our plans will only happen if they are the will of the Lord. Paul gives us several illustrations of the fact that he based his plans on the will of God. In Acts 18:21, Paul told the Jews in Ephesus, “But took leave of them, saying, ‘I must by all means keep this coming feast in Jerusalem; but I will return again to you, God willing.’ And he sailed from Ephesus.” Paul said that he would return again to Ephesus if that was the will of the Lord. Earlier, the Lord had forbidden him to go into the area of Asia, which included the city of Ephesus. Acts 16:6 says, “Now when they had gone through Phrygia and the region of Galatia, they were forbidden by the Holy Spirit to preach the word in Asia.” We see that Paul did not make plans to go to Ephesus since the Lord had forbidden him to go to Asia at that time.

Later, Paul told the Christians in Corinth that he would come to them if that was the will of the Lord. 1 Corinthians 4:19 says, “But I will come to you shortly, if the Lord wills, and I will know, not the word of those who are puffed up, but the power.” Paul also asked the Romans to pray for him to come to them if it was the will of God. Romans 15:30-32 says, “Now I beg you, brethren, through the Lord Jesus Christ, and through the love of the Spirit, that you strive together with me in prayers to God for me, that I may be delivered from those in Judea who do not believe, and that my service for Jerusalem may be acceptable to the saints, that I may come to you with joy by the will of God, and may be refreshed together with you.” Here, we see that Paul wanted to visit the Romans if it was the will of God.

Paul was even ready and willing to die if that was the will of the Lord. Acts 21:12-14 says, “Now when we heard these things, both we and those from that place pleaded with him not to go up to Jerusalem. Then Paul answered, ‘What do you mean by weeping and breaking my heart? For I am ready not only to be bound, but also to die at Jerusalem for the name of the Lord Jesus.’ So when he would not be persuaded, we ceased, saying, ‘The will of the Lord be done.’” Paul did go to Jerusalem where he was bound and imprisoned, because that was the will of the Lord. However, it was also the will of the Lord for Paul to minister in Rome, and so, the prayer of the Romans was answered when Paul arrived in Rome as a prisoner about three years later. We want to show our children, by our example, the importance of seeking the will of God in our own lives.

We go on to see what God says about those who do not seek the will of the Lord in planning their lives. James 4:16-17 says, “But now you boast in your arrogance. All such boasting is evil. Therefore, to him who knows to do good and does not do *it*, to him it is sin.” Here, we see that some of the people, in the time of James, were boasting in their arrogance. The word that is translated “arrogance” speaks of those who boast about their own power and resources. Their bragging words show that they are depending on themselves instead of seeking the will of the Lord. The only other place in the New Testament where this word is used is in 1 John 2:16, where it is translated “pride”. That verse says, “For all that *is* in the world—the lust of the flesh, the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life—is not of the Father but is of the world.” Here, we see that those who are arrogant are controlled by pride. That is why God says that such boasting is evil.

The Lord has called us, as Christians, to do those things which are good in their character and beneficial in their effects. That is why it is so important for us to seek the will of God so that we know what He wants us to do. Our lives are like a vapor and they will be gone quickly. That is another reason why we want to show our children the importance of seeking the will of God throughout the time they are here on this earth. Ephesians 2:10 says, “For we are His workmanship, created in Christ Jesus for good works, which God prepared beforehand that we should walk in them.” This verse tells us that God created us to do good works. God wants both us and our children to have the privilege of carrying out those good works. If we are seeking His will in our lives daily, He will give us the time we need to carry out the good works He has planned for our lives.

In contrast, if we are not seeking to do the will of God each day, we will fail to do the good things God has planned for our lives. In addition to missing out on the blessings the Lord gives us as we do His will, this verse reminds us that it is sin when we fail to do the good that the Lord has planned for our lives. There are two possible things that can happen when we fail to do good. First, we can waste the time the Lord has given to us. Second, we might use that time to do evil instead. Either way, God said that when we know the will of God, yet fail to do the will of God, it is sin.

Here, we see that we want to show our children how to make wise use of their time so that they bring glory to the Lord. Ephesians 5:15-16 says, “See then that you walk circumspectly, not as fools but as wise, redeeming the time, because the days are evil.” We want to help our children learn to make good use of the time the Lord has given them on this earth to carry out the purposes He has for their lives. That will give their lives great meaning and purpose, because they will see the Lord work mightily through their lives to accomplish His purpose. May the Lord richly bless you as you help your physical and spiritual children learn to seek the will of God for their lives.