



Shoe Leather Christianity

A Study on the Book of James

Lesson 4B | June 18, 2015 | James 4:13 –5:6

Lesson Overview

The core of this week’s lesson is warning to planners and those who have accumulated wealth. There is no doubt that America has been more blessed than any nation in modern history. Unfortunately, this has come at a price. America’s history was summed up well in 1702 by the great Puritan minister Cotton Mather who said, “Religion begat prosperity, and the daughter hath consumed the mother.” America became prosperous because of our Christian roots. But in our prosperity, we have forgotten God. By and large, Americans feel both a sense of entitlement and an attitude of self-reliance. One could argue these mindsets are even prevalent in the modern church. These attitudes are basically “Declarations of Independence” from God and leave us weak and ineffective for Kingdom work.

The end of James 4 and the beginning of James 5 warn the planner to avoid boasting and the wealthy to not use their wealth to “lord over” the less fortunate. James is not saying we should not plan and that it is wrong to be wealthy. However, as he often does James’ warnings center on the condition of the heart. When you and I have a heart and mindset that recognize God’s Sovereignty in our lives, we humble ourselves in a manner that acknowledges His control over everything we do. As Proverbs 19:21 says,

Many are the plans in a person's heart, but it is the LORD's purpose that prevails.

As you complete this week’s lesson, consider areas in your life where you are not turning control over to God. If you are in a position of leadership, would those you lead say you have a generous heart?

Series Overview

Success comes from training, not trying. As we study the book of James, we will find a cause and effect relationship with regards to the choices we make in life. There is always a pattern associated with success or failure. The key is to determine areas in our life where we are weak and seek the Lord’s guidance in making lasting changes, not the temporary changes often associated with today’s “boot strap” self-help approaches.

Throughout this series we are going to focus on the following flowchart that represents the “progressive” phases of our Christian life; each phase of the Christian life is associated with the previous phase. **Environment** leads to beliefs; **beliefs** lead to thoughts; **thoughts** lead to actions; **actions** lead to habits; and **habits** lead to **lifestyles**. A phrase to help us remember this progression is *Every Boy Thinks About Hunting Lions*. Try and commit this flowchart to memory as it will be useful throughout the series.



Figure 1: Progressive Phases of the Christian Life

