

Food for Thought

For the week of January 6, 2013

(Questions and Scriptures for further personal study)

1. Over and over again, Genesis has shown us examples of how things unravel when people become tired of following God's plan and start doing their own thing. At times, we all are tempted to do the same thing, especially when God's plan isn't working out the way we had hoped or expected it to. How does James 4:13-17 highlight the danger of letting our own plan for our life supersede God's?

What do the following verses tell us about how to place God at the forefront of any plans we have?

Proverbs 3:5-6

Proverbs 16:3

Matthew 6:31-33

2. Sometimes the issue isn't that we're avoiding what God wants us to do, it's not knowing what God's will is. How can the following Scriptures give direction when God's will isn't clear to us?

Colossians 3:17

1 Corinthians 10:23-24, 32-33

1 Peter 4:10-11

3. Patience can be difficult in that we often don't want to invest the time or energy it takes to become patient. Part of learning this key spiritual skill is enduring frustrations and hardships. What encouragement can be taken from the following verses in terms of being patient and enduring hardships?

Romans 5:3-5

James 1:2-4, 12

How have you seen this progression played out in your life or in the life of someone you know?

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1. Over and over again, Genesis has shown us examples of how things unravel when people become tired of following God's plan and start doing their own thing. At times, we all are tempted to do the same thing, especially when God's plan isn't working out the way we had hoped or expected it to. How does James 4:13-17 highlight the danger of letting our own plan for our life supersede God's?

James 4:13-17

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

What do the following verses tell us about how to place God at the forefront of any plans we have?

Proverbs 3:5-6

Trust in the Lord with all your heart
and lean not on your own understanding;
[6] in all your ways acknowledge him,
and he will make your paths straight. [NIV]

Proverbs 16:3

Commit to the Lord whatever you do,
and your plans will succeed. [NIV]

Matthew 6:31-33

So do not worry, saying, 'What shall we eat?' or 'What shall we drink?' or 'What shall we wear?' [32] For the pagans run after all these things, and your heavenly Father knows that you need them. [33] But seek first his kingdom and his righteousness, and all these things will be given to you as well. [NIV]

2. Sometimes the issue isn't that we're avoiding what God wants us to do, it's not knowing what God's will is. How can the following Scriptures give direction when God's will isn't clear to us?

Colossians 3:17

And whatever you do, whether in word or deed, do it all in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks to God the Father through him. [NIV]

1 Corinthians 10:23-24

"Everything is permissible"--but not everything is beneficial. "Everything is permissible"--but not everything is constructive. [24] Nobody should seek his own good, but the good of others. [NIV]

1 Corinthians 10:32-33

Do not cause anyone to stumble, whether Jews, Greeks or the church of God-- [33] even as I try to please everybody in every way. For I am not seeking my own good but the good of many, so that they may be saved. [NIV]

1 Peter 4:10-11

Each one should use whatever gift he has received to serve others, faithfully administering God's grace in its various forms. [11] If anyone speaks, he should do it as one speaking the very words of God. If anyone serves, he should do it with the strength God provides, so that in all things God may be praised through Jesus Christ. To him be the glory and the power for ever and ever. Amen. [NIV]

3. Patience can be difficult in that we often don't want to invest the time or energy it takes to become patient. Part of learning this key spiritual skill is enduring frustrations and hardships. What encouragement can be taken from the following verses in terms of being patient and enduring hardships?

Romans 5:3-5

Not only so, but we also rejoice in our sufferings, because we know that suffering produces perseverance; [4] perseverance, character; and character, hope. [5] And hope does not disappoint us, because God has poured out his love into our hearts by the Holy Spirit, whom he has given us. [NIV]

James 1:2-4

Consider it pure joy, my brothers, whenever you face trials of many kinds, [3] because you know that the testing of your faith develops perseverance. [4] Perseverance must finish its work so that you may be mature and complete, not lacking anything. [NIV]

James 1:12

Blessed is the man who perseveres under trial, because when he has stood the test, he will receive the crown of life that God has promised to those who love him. [NIV]

How have you seen this progression played out in your life or in the life of someone you know?