

GLENKIRK CHURCH



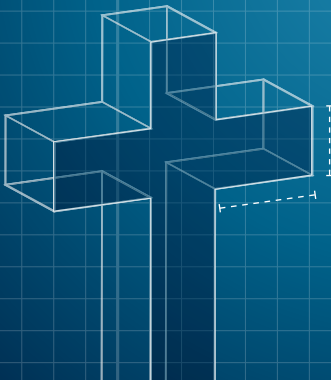
WEEKLY DEVOTIONS

The DEVO

NOVEMBER 1 - 5, 2021

FAITH WORK

the book of
James



MONDAY

James 4:13; Galatians 2:20

Self-sufficiency

How often do we, as Christians, make a plan for a day, month, or year without including God in the picture? I have been guilty of this on my journey.

Today's featured Scripture is James 4:13: *"Come now you who say, 'Today or tomorrow we will go to such and such a city and spend a year there and engage in business and make a profit.'"* It's very easy in life to come up with an agenda and then ask God to bless it and help to make it happen. The question we need to ask ourselves: Is this a God-inspired or me-inspired vision?

One verse I find very convicting is Galatians 2:20: *"I have been crucified in Christ, and I no longer live but Christ lives in me."* The Apostle Paul reminds us here that my wishes and agenda should not be the center of my life but, instead, I am a conduit of Christ in the world. My thoughts, actions, and everything that comes out of me should be because Christ lives in me. If Christ lives in me, then I am His vessel and my vision is centered much less egocentrically. I am now on a mission to fulfill His plans in the world.

This thought can be either intimidating or empowering. One could feel so intimidated because of not being worthy to act as a representative for God. On the flip side, I could feel totally empowered because I recognize I am fueled by God and trust Him completely.

The way of our world is self-sufficiency, which often births pride—more on this in upcoming days. A drive for self-sufficiency can fuel great accomplishments, but the Christian life is most fulfilling when we are in community and relying on each other. Examples of this at Glenkirk include the recent “Hands Together” event, as well as meals delivered to those who are sick or who just got out of the hospital.

QUESTIONS

When considering a plan, do you prayerfully ask God for His input? How does your “self-sufficiency” prevent you from relying more fully upon God? In what areas of your life do you need to surrender your agenda and put God in driver’s seat?

PRAYERS FOR GTI HOPE

Pray that Scripture distribution will begin to pick up for GTi HOPE’s partners. Due to COVID restrictions, Scripture distribution is difficult and slow. Please pray for patience, wisdom, and resourcefulness in how to best accomplish this.

TUESDAY

James 4:14; Micah 6:8; Psalms 39:5; 1 Chronicles 29:15

Humility

James doesn't mince words! In James 4:14, he declares, “*You don't know what your life will be like tomorrow. You are just a vapor that appears for a little while and then vanishes away.*” Talk about putting us in our place!

Yesterday's passage was about planning and self-sufficiency, the latter of which sometimes spawns pride. Today's focus humbles us by making our lives seem small and almost insignificant. Perhaps James does this to get our attention. He sets the tone: “Don't think you are in control because ultimately tomorrow is out of your hands” (v. 14a paraphrased). He then follows with: “You are like a vapor that is around only for a bit and then gone without much of any remembrance” (v. 14b paraphrased). Obviously, this is hard to hear, but too often in our fallenness—we put ourselves at the center of the universe.

There are many paradoxes in the Scriptures—former Glenkirk Pastor Tom Taylor even wrote a book called *Paradox*. In James 4:14 it appears that James is conveying our need to humble ourselves and put Christ at the center because our lives are shorter and less significant than we care to admit. However, conversely, the Scriptures regularly remind us how precious and loved each one of us is. God cares and knows each little detail of our lives; He cares deeply for us. Ultimately, we are Jesus' hands and feet.

This passage reminds me of Solomon's writings in Ecclesiastes 6:12: *"For who knows what is good for a man during his lifetime, during the few years of his futile life? He will spend them like a shadow. For who can tell a man what will be after him under the sun."* This puts us in a place of vulnerability where humility can take shape in our lives. Psalm 39:5 reminds us that truly each man, at his best, exists as but a breath.

Our challenge is to live our lives in the reality of how much God loves us, without raising ourselves up to be at the center of the universe. In the grand scheme of eternity, our earthly lives are like a vapor that will vanish away.

QUESTIONS

Are your plans God-inspired or "you-inspired"? What are some areas you need to let go of, wherein you should leave "being fully in control" to God?

PRAYERS FOR GTI HOPE

Pray for the literacy teachers and church leaders as they prepare to share the light of literacy and the message of peace with tens of thousands of people. Pray for wisdom and protection, and that true love, hope, and peace would overflow from the GTi HOPE literacy teachers and church leaders.

WEDNESDAY

James 4:15; Proverbs 1:7; Proverbs 3:5-6

Discernment

In James 4:15, the penman is very clear and direct: We ought to say, “... I/we will do the Lord’s will.” To do the Lord’s will is all about discernment. Truly listening to God instead of just talking at Him requires taking time to be still in His presence without another agenda.

Proverbs 1:7 declares, “*The fear of the LORD is the beginning of knowledge (wisdom).*” This applies to growing in the practice of godly living, also a platform for discernment. The moral life begins with reverence and humility before our Maker and Redeemer. Discernment is when we don’t lean on our own understanding, but we trust in the Lord with all our heart. When we do this faithfully, God promises that “*He will make straight our paths*” (Proverbs 3:5-6).

A few years back, I approached Pastor Tim Fearer to help me figure out why the Holy Spirit felt so elusive in my life. The Holy Spirit was just not as active and vibrant as I wanted Him to be. So the pastor asked me, “Are you a good listener?” This shook me since I often cut people off, interject myself, and interrupt them. My mind goes so fast that being fully present and listening well can be casualties. This revelation and my continued attention to it led to the Holy Spirit playing a larger role in my life. This paved the way for “*Christ to be in me*” (Galatians 2:20). I became more discerning, and my relationships blossomed instantly.

Romans 12:2 is one of my favorite Scriptures: *“Don’t be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind, that by testing you may discern what is the will of God.”* Discerning requires listening to the Holy Spirit inside you and acting out of a transformed heart and mind. One of the reasons my wife and I love Glenkirk so much is because of the seasoned discerning Christians who worship there. They pray and listen first, then speak after discerning God’s will. What great role models—those following Jesus instead of the ways of a fallen world!

QUESTIONS

Do you slow down enough in your life to truly listen? What are some areas in which you wish you were more discerning?

PRAYERS FOR GTi HOPE

Pray for GTi HOPE’s Live! events that it will be hosting from now until the end of next year. Pray that many people would be blessed in hearing the work that God is doing in India and with GTi HOPE’s local partners. Pray that the Lord would bring those interested in volunteering for GTi HOPE to these events as well.

THURSDAY

James 3:16; Matthew 3

Arrogance

Eight years ago, I was asked by men's ministry to give a testimony of how God was using me in my vocation. Wow! Did God teach me a lesson that day, which also happened to be my birthday! I bragged about my accomplishments, trying to gain the respect of the listeners instead of being a vessel to glorify God. Upon reflection, I now see this as an extremely embarrassing moment since I made it all about me. God has used that moment to teach me and refine me. James 4:16 admonishes its readers, *"But as it is, you boast in your arrogance, all such boasting is evil."*

The mark of a truly surrendered Christian is humility. This is counter to the western world, which builds up professional athletes and public figures, such as politicians, business people, and the wealthy. There is such a desire in our hearts to look up to someone to emulate—but we already know the One whom we should follow. As Christians we are called to revere Jesus Christ alone as the *"Alpha and Omega, the first and the last, the beginning and the end"* (Revelation 22:13). We are to worship and revere Christ alone and no other person!

Matthew 3 shares how John the Baptist prepared the way for Jesus. John knew his role: teaching people to live godly lives and repent in preparation for following Jesus. John initially resisted baptizing Jesus

as he was clearly the lesser of the two. John felt he should be baptized by Jesus instead, declaring, “*I must decrease, so He (Jesus) may increase*” (John 3:30). John embraced being number 2, not wanting the spotlight—this is one platform for true servant leadership.

Are there any ways in your life in which you seek the spotlight? Whom can you point to in your life who is a truly effective servant leader? Reach out to that person and let them know how much you appreciate them. Then see how you can act more like them, more like Jesus Himself.

QUESTIONS

What circumstances in your life have humbled you? What did God teach you through this?

PRAYERS FOR GTI HOPE

Pray for GTi HOPE’s local partners in India. They work with local churches, non-government organizations (NGO’s), and teachers to conduct the ministry’s efforts. Pray for their protection, support, and creativity so that they can continue to bless and bring change to local communities.

FRIDAY

James 4:17; James 1:22-25; Matthew 7:16

Faithfulness

Many Christians are guilty of hearing the Word while not acting on the Word, failing to be doers. This is James's command in James 1:22-25. It is easy to understand why the Millennials and Gen Z can struggle in embracing Christianity—they are inclined as doers, wanting to be part of something meaningful. These two generations respect “walking the talk” and can reject inauthenticity. There are many Christians who are faithful, committed doers. However, so many Christians go to church professing faith while living lives contradicting our professions. James 4:17 admonishes, *“If anyone then knows the good they ought to do and doesn't do it, it is sin for them.”*

If we know what Christ expects from us and we don't do it, that is worse than ignorance. Matthew 7:16 says, *“You will know them by their fruits.”* Our good works are out of our love and obedience to Christ. Christianity starts with an understanding that Jesus paid the price for me and my sins at the cross. The resultant, overwhelming love I receive from Him compels me to show God's love to others. Understanding what God has done via the crucifixion fuels a grateful, giving heart.

For many years, I was a taker. Since I have poured my life into Christ and others, I am no longer just a consumer but increasingly a giver. It is easy to stand on the sideline and use busyness or “I'll get to it later” as excuses. Our call, and privilege, is to be kingdom builders.

“Be doers of the Word of God,
Not simply those who hear.
Be ones who look into God’s Word,
Obey, and persevere.
Be quick to listen, slow to speak,
And slow to anger, too.
Put wrath aside; instead, be meek
And let God work in you.” (Prayer-Warriors.com)

James 2:24 states, “*You see that a person is justified by works and not faith alone.*” Is there something that God is calling you to which you’ve ignored? Act as Jesus’ hands and feet!

QUESTIONS

What is God calling you to do, but you haven’t followed through on doing it? What has kept you from being obedient here?

PRAYERS FOR GTI HOPE

Pray for GTi HOPE’s leadership as they look ahead into the next year. Pray for discernment and direction in how the Lord would like them to conduct ministry in the next year.

Sources

- Prayer-Warriors.com poem can be found at <https://prayer-warriors.com/be-doers-of-the-word-of-god-hymn-lyrics/>

