

Life Groups Study Guide

August 3, 2014



Circle Maker

If Only

James 4

My friend Brett is a farmer at KCC. He once told me a popular little phrase on farms... "do you know the best time to plant a tree?" I thought he was going to say "spring" or "fall", because winter and summer are too harsh. Instead he said "25 years ago". It took me a second, but the point is profound. Big-beautiful trees just simply take time. They take time to plant, to grow, and to produce fruit. Then he looked at me and said "Want to know the second best time?" He wasn't fooling me this time, I said "yesterday?" - He said "close... today". The reality is that most of us will get to the end of our lives and look back with regret saying "... why didn't I..." What if today we chose to seek God in prayer, and humbly trust him with the results. That's the point of James 4 - to ask God with right motives, and then trust God to provide. James even clarifies (vs. 7-8) what right motives look like - draw near to God, resist sin, etc. If only we would begin today!

Those were the words I received for this week's message and class study lesson.

The truth is, my past few weeks have been so busy, so occupied, that I simply forgot that I was writing this week's study lesson. So, in my haste to catch up, I looked this over, read the entire chapter and the first thing I thought to myself was:

If only I had slowed down these past two weeks and allowed some margin in my life, I wouldn't be sitting here right now wondering what I'm going to write.

Verse 6 says God opposes the proud, well, it occurred to me that while I was not too proud to pray, I was it seems too busy for anything other than quick passing moments with God. Fleeting moments when I really should have slowed down to be with Him.

Let's take a look at verse 9- **Grieve, mourn and wail. Change your laughter to mourning and your joy to gloom.**

Q) What is James talking about here?

Q) What are we to mourn?

Q) How does this line up with a "full" Christian life?

Let's look at verse 8: **Come near to God and he will come near to you.**

Q) With my busy week it only seems appropriate to ask: How do we draw near to God?

Q) If we do draw near to God, what does that look like?

The opening text used these words: **The reality is that most of us will get to the end of our lives and look back with regret saying "... why didn't I..."**

I hear that quite often in secular circles, especially at work. Regret, and what if's...

Q) Is there a place for them in our lives?

Q) Why or why not?

Q) I guess this would be the million-dollar question, one that can take us all night—

What are the regrets you have about why you DID NOT DO SOMETHING?

Q) What are you doing about it?

Q) What are you doing to keep it from happening again?

Will you look back as the end draws near and say "Why Didn't I?"