



COMMUNITY GROUP DISCUSSION QUESTIONS


1 **Human ambition (a good thing) can quickly turn to human arrogance (an evil thing).** What is the difference between ambition and arrogance?


 Read the following verses Ecc 9:9-10, Col. 3:23-24, Pr 12:11, Romans 15:20-21, Luke 12:15-21

2 **How can planning for the future be wise?** How can it become sinful? What is the difference? Is James condemning planning in James 4:13-16? Why or why not?


 Use the following passages to build a framework for planning that honors God. Prov 6:6-11, 16:3, 16:9, 21:5, Matt. 6:33-34. What other passages come to mind?


3 **The detailed plan in James 4:13 is the work of a practical atheist.** Though he may believe in God, he thinks and plans and lives his life as if he doesn't exist.

 This type of person often compartmentalizes their life finding a slot for God alongside all their other pursuits. How is this different from the life of faith that James describes in verse 15?


 Examine your thoughts in preparation for a week or a new season, in what areas of your life are you most prone to live like a practical atheist?

4 **An alternate form of a godless view of the future is an extreme pessimism towards our sin.** "Come now, you who say today or tomorrow, I'll never be able to have victory over this sin or that sin." This is not a form of humility. It is just as proud as planning for success apart from God. How is this a proud statement in light of what James says in 4:15-16? Consult Romans 8:9-11 for help.

 Are there any sins that you view pessimistically? Confess your lack of faith to the group and ask for prayer that God would give you both victory and hope in His gospel.

 "Take heed of base despair; Oh, I shall never overcome this sin and that. I shall not be able to get the victory over sin, and I shall not be able to suffer. No. Why are the promises? and why is Christ in heaven?" - Richard Sibbes


5 **In 4:17, James defines sin as "knowing the right thing to do and failing to do it."** Thomas Cranmer wrote, "we have left undone those things which we ought to have done; And we have done those things which we ought not to have done;" The first are sins of commission, the second sins of omission. Why are sins of omission so much easier to downplay than sins of commission?

 What sins of omission does Jesus condemn in each of the following scenarios? Which is most convicting to you?


The Parable of the talents - Matt 25:14-15, 18, 24-28


Good Samaritan - Luke 10:30-33, 36


The Least of these - Matt 25:41-46

 What are some specific struggles in your life in terms of scriptural commands you tend to ignore?


6 **James shows us in 4:14 that we can learn to humble ourselves when we think about the future by acknowledging our ignorance "you do not know" and our frailty "you are a mist."**


 Essentially, James is here taking aim at the human tendency to think we are in control. What kinds of bad effects does a godless sense of self-sovereignty have in our lives?

 In what ways were your moments of anxiety or frustration last week connected to things you did not know or could not do?

 How is the infinite wisdom and power of God a rest and encouragement to your soul? Take time to praise God for his omniscience and omnipotence as a group.

7 **Do you think you should actually say the phrase "if the Lord wills" every time you talk about the future?**

 Even if it's not necessary to say it every time, how can you work to cultivate that kind of dependence on God in your own life and thinking?

 What is it about God's will for us that can give us both confidence and rest?