

**Did You Start?
James 4:13-17**

April 26, 2009

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Text Introduction: We are focused on growing as Jesus did—in wisdom, stature, and in favor with God and others. We have challenged each other to grow in these areas this year. Specifically, we are now focused on different aspects of our physical bodies. I have become increasingly convinced that this is not a complicated subject. It is probably not a subject that demands attention every week for the next three months. Rather, it is just a commitment that we make and stick to that commitment. But, that is precisely where we have trouble, isn't it?

Last week I challenged you with issues regarding your health. I never know exactly how God uses these messages to speak directly to your heart. I can only seek to be obedient and trust God to do the rest. Basically, we said that there is a theological precedent in Scripture to make wise and moderate choices in regard to our health. We indicated that taking care of our bodies is an issue of ownership, relationship, stewardship, discipleship, and worship. Practically speaking, we suggested that we stop comparing ourselves to others, start where we are, and be sensible along the way.

Today, I have a question for you. **Did you start?** We can talk about this subject (or any subject for that matter), but sooner or later, the question is always going to be: “Did you start?”

The book of James is a place in the Bible that gives us a strong word about getting started or not getting started, which we call procrastination.

Text: ¹³ Come now, you who say, “Today or tomorrow we will go to such and such a city, spend a year there, buy and sell, and make a profit”; ¹⁴ whereas you do not know what *will happen* tomorrow. For what *is* your life? It is even a vapor that appears for a little time and then vanishes away. ¹⁵ Instead you *ought* to say, “If the Lord wills, we shall live and do this or that.” ¹⁶ But now you boast in your arrogance. All such boasting is evil.

¹⁷ Therefore, to him who knows to do good and does not do *it*, to him it is sin.

Introduction: All of us have those things that we have to do. For me, that something has always involved a lot of writing. Writing papers, writing sermons, writing articles, and now even a few attempts at writing some books, have always kind of dominated my life. Here is what I have learned so far about these writing projects. The hardest part is starting.

No matter what it is in life, we tend to want to put off getting started. James says, “Get started!” If you want to begin to honor God with your physical health, “Get started!” That’s the message of the day.

Two Major Problems with Procrastination:

Procrastination does not take into account...

The Potential for Continued Procrastination.

The Bible is filled with metaphors to describe the brevity of life.

- James 4:14 calls life a vapor.
- Job 7:7 and Psalm 39:5 calls life a breath.
- Psalm 144:4 calls life a passing shadow.

The greatest reason to start is because we don't know what will happen. If God calls us to do something, today is the day to start. The writer of Proverbs said,

⁶ Go to the ant, you sluggard!
Consider her ways and be wise,
⁷ Which, having no captain,
Overseer or ruler,
⁸ Provides her supplies in the summer,
And gathers her food in the harvest.
⁹ How long will you slumber, O sluggard?
When will you rise from your sleep?
¹⁰ A little sleep, a little slumber,
A little folding of the hands to sleep—
¹¹ So shall your poverty come on you like a prowler,
And your need like an armed man.

What was Solomon saying? If you put something off, you may never get around to it. Actually, a more realistic scenario is not the potential of continued procrastination, but the probability of continued procrastination.

The Power of Conviction.

The Holy Spirit's conviction in our lives is such a powerful thing. The reason that we need to respond when we are convicted is because we have no guarantee that we are going to continue to have that same conviction. Some of you are under very specific conviction about an issue—perhaps in regard to your health, perhaps in some other area. The only safe response is immediate response. James, himself, gives us the best analogy of this principle back in chapter 1. James said if we hear the Word of God, but do not respond to the Word of God, we are like a man looking in a mirror. Turning away from the mirror, he forgets what kind of man he is.

Unmasking our Procrastination

If we are going to get a handle on our procrastination, we are going to have to be honest about our procrastination.

Procrastination is really putting my plans ahead of God's plans.

In the context of James 4, it is the Lord's will that should direct us to those things that we ought to do.

Procrastination is really another way of saying disobedience.

Applying this Lesson to Life

What is God calling you to do today in relationship to these areas?

1. Time spent with God.
2. Talents
3. Tithe
4. Temptation
5. Talking to someone about Christ
6. Turning your life completely over to God
7. _____ ?