

PREPARING FOR THE NEW YEAR

(Jas 4:13-15)

- A. **The beginning** of a new year is a good time to evaluate our service to the Lord & His church.
1. But as we evaluate our lives & prepare to set new goals, we need to begin at the right point.
 2. Since we are all at different stages in our spiritual lives, it doesn't make much sense to give a one-size-fits-all lesson on new year's resolutions for the Christian.
 3. There just may be a few basic things we need to work on before we can make any progress in our service to the Lord.
 4. So this lesson is designed to help us achieve spiritual goals – draw closer to the Lord – by deciding to do some very basic things first.

5. It sometimes helps to work from the general to the specific.

a. For example, instead of saying we all need to pray & study the Word more, or we should show more interest in each other & in the work of the church, or we ought to teach someone the gospel.

6. Perhaps what we need is something more general; AND as our commitment to the general principles grow, then we can more effectively work-in these specifics.

[The principles in this lesson will help us carry out our good intentions in the coming year, & in doing so we can improve our personal service to the Lord.

WE NEED TO BE SERIOUS ABOUT THREE THINGS.]

I. BE SERIOUS ABOUT TIME

A. **The business** world understands the importance of managing time.

1. Employees are sometimes encouraged to take time management courses.
2. Even the world knows that time is too precious to be squandered, though we see people OTJ doing that very thing all the time.

B. **Jesus had** the proper view of time.

John 9:4 – *I must work the works of Him who sent Me while it is day; the night is coming when no one can work.*

Context: The Jews had just taken up stones to throw at Jesus for declaring Himself to be Divine. But Jesus took time to heal a blind man.

Luke 4:42-43 – Now when it was day, He departed & went into a deserted place. And the crowd sought Him & came to Him, & tried to keep Him from leaving them; 43 but He said to them, *“I must preach the kingdom of God to the other cities also, because for this purpose I have been sent.”*

John 13:1 – Now before the Feast of the Passover, when *Jesus knew that His hour had come* that He should depart from this world to the Father, having *loved His own who were in the world, He loved them to the end.*

1. Jesus wants us to view time as He did.
2. We too are on a time schedule & we must act now in obedience to God!

C. **Who more** than a Christian ought to know the value of time & the importance of managing it wisely?

Eph 5:15-16 – See then that you *walk **circumspectly, not as fools but as wise, 16 redeeming the time***, because the days are evil.

1. Paul exhorted us to be wise in our use of time & not to squander it on unnecessary goals.
2. Time is short & judgment is sure; we have a divine calling & mission on this earth.
3. So we are to be serious in our use of time, which God dispenses in quantities unknown.

Matt 24:37-39 – But as the days of Noah were, so also will the coming of the Son of Man be. 38 For as in the days before the flood, they were eating & drinking, marrying & giving in marriage, until the day that Noah entered the ark, 39 & did not know until the flood came & took them all away, so also will the coming of the Son of Man be...44 Therefore you also be ready, for ***the Son of Man is coming at an hour you do not expect.***

4. Go ahead & make specific plans for the coming year, but seek the will of the Lord in doing so, & then be serious about the time it will take to accomplish those goals – making certain that they do not conflict with a Christian’s spiritual priorities.

[Consider the fact that who we are so far as God is concerned is determined by all the choices we have made about the use of our TIME.

If we waste money we go broke, if we damage friendships we get lonely, but when we squander TIME we give away a part of our lives that we can never recapture – a part of our lives for which we are accountable to God.]

II. BE SERIOUS ABOUT SELF EXAMINATION

A. We often resist doing a self-examination of our lives, but God demands it of His people.

1. People usually look outside of themselves to determine their standing with God, but God looks inwardly, into our hearts.

1 Cor 11:28-29 – But ***let a man examine himself***, & so let him eat of the bread & drink of the cup. 29 For he who eats & drinks in an unworthy manner eats & drinks JUDGMENT to himself, not discerning the Lord’s body.

2 Cor 13:5 – ***Examine yourselves as to whether you are in the faith. Test yourselves.*** Do you not know yourselves, that Jesus Christ is in you? -- unless indeed you are DISQUALIFIED.

2. Why did the Holy Spirit use the words “judgment” & “disqualified” in these verses?
 - a. Because God is continuously examining our hearts, & making a determination regarding our faithfulness to Him.

B. **There are** four simple questions that can help us examine ourselves by God's divine standard.

1. What am I doing right?

a. (1 Thess 1:2-10; Rev 2, 3). This will shield us from discouragement & depression.

2. What am I doing wrong?

a. (1 Cor 10:1-12). We need to concentrate on those areas in our lives that need immediate change.

3. Why do I do the right things?

a. (Matt 6:1-7). God wants us to do the right things for the right reasons; our motives are everything.

4. Am I doing the important things?

a. (Matt 6:33). Do we spend the most precious resource we have on the things that matter most?"

[As we prepare for this new year we need to evaluate what is most valuable to God, & allocate more time & effort to that pursuit.]

III. BE SERIOUS ABOUT OBEDIENCE

A. **Jesus was** serious about His obedience to the Father's will (Heb 5:8-9).

B. **Our greatest** challenge in this year, from day to day, will be in regard to the proper use of our time.

1. "Do we seriously want to serve & obey God with our TIME?"

Hosea 6:4 – "O Ephraim, what shall I do to you? O Judah, what shall I do to you? For **your faithfulness is like a morning cloud, & like the early dew it goes away.**"

2. Will our good intentions toward the Lord fade away as soon as we walk out the door today?

[Will we BE SERIOUS enough about TIME that we will EXAMINE our use of it to see whether or not we are living in an OBEDIENT manner before God?]

CLOSING

- A. **Improvements** in our lives will be forthcoming if we are SERIOUS about what we have studied today.
1. Serious about the proper use of our time.
 2. Serious about examining our lives in light of the truth & wisdom of God's word.
 3. Serious about obeying Him in every respect, even into the dark recesses of our hearts.
- B. **IF we** are SERIOUS then we can begin to make the changes that will draw us closer to God, & to the church, & to the eternal heavenly home promised to the Christian.