

## **Sermon or Lesson: James 4:17** (NIV based)

[Lesson Questions included]

TITLE: Sin Of Omission

INTRO: Have you ever gotten up in the middle of the night when your house is mostly dark and tripped on someone's shoes that were left in the walkway from your bedroom to the kitchen or bathroom? Was the owner of those shoes, your spouse, or your sibling, or your child guilty of failing to properly do what is good - to pick up those shoes before going to bed?

Before we start throwing shoes at our family members in condemnation, let's study our passage, where we will see that we believers are likewise guilty before God of frequently failing to properly do what is good.

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READ: James 4:17, with verse 13-16 for context

[Lesson Question: What is seemingly unusual about the principle in this verse 17?]

SECTION POINT: In addition to doing something wrong is a sin, furthermore failing to do the good we know we ought to do is also a sin.

- - Normally, we believers are concerned and focused on refraining from doing evil, but this verse specifies another category of sinning - failing to do good.
  - - This verse establishes the principle and the reality that we can be guilty of sinning through omission - the failure to do good, to do right.
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[Lesson Question: What is the extent of application that this principle is suppose to have in our lives?]

SECTION POINT: The extent of application of this principle is based upon a combination of one's knowledge and circumstances in life.

In the context of this passage, this principle is both specific and generalized:

- - the word "then" makes it specific to the topic of acknowledging the Lord in formulating and implementing plans for one's future;
- - and yet the language used, "the good" (rather than 'what is right' or 'what God says'), makes this also a generalized principle applicable in all areas of one's life.

Because this principle is generalized:

- - it applies to everything that Scriptures say about what is right and what is sinful;
  - - but it also applies to what one's conscience rightly says; (cf. Romans 2:14-15)
  - - this would include one's innate knowledge of right and wrong, good and evil, righteousness and sinfulness.
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[Lesson Question: What kind of impact does this principle have on us?]

SECTION POINT: This principle greatly expands our obligations before God.

- - All of these ways that this principle applies exponentially or extensively increases one's responsibilities and one's guilt for sins before God.
  - - From whatever the source the knowledge comes from, knowing the good one ought to do makes one accountable before God to do what is good.
  - - And the more knowledge one has, the more responsibility and accountability before God there is.
  - - This is an additional standard that God will use to judge us.
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[Lesson Question: What kind of impact does this principle have on our relationship with God?]

SECTION POINT: Failure to do the good we know we ought to do is offensive to God in several ways.

- - When we take no action to do good, we assume no one has been offended.
- But from the immediate context of this passage in verses 13-16, some of the sinfulness being referred to involves offending God:
  - - - - sinful disregard of God; (v.15)
  - - - - relational sin against God; (v.15)
  - - - - offensive sinful perspective of one's life; (v.14)
  - - - - offensive sinful self-sufficient attitude in one's heart; (vv.13,15)
  - - - - offensive sinful self-evaluation and regard of one's abilities; (v.16)
  - - - - offensive sinful speaking about oneself; (v.16)
  - - - - offensive negligence and failure to step into action and do the good God wants and has designated to be done. (v.17)

SECTION POINT: This principle in verse 17 helps us to individually decipher and determine God's will.

- - Because we know from this verse that God wants us to do good in situations we experience in life, it is both a motivating prompt and a useful guide in helping us determine what good action to take and then taking it.
  - - We also know from this verse that standing on the sidelines and watching is not necessarily a secure position before God, who is requiring us to get involved by doing good.
  - - Failure to act in doing good is not acceptable to God as an escape.
  - - Lame excuses, or flimsy rationales, or minimizing, or twisted logic, or indifference, or laziness, or apathy, or denial have no credibility, justification, or acceptance before God.
  - - Our disrupted or broken plans may actually be God's will, so that we are thrust into a situation that is intended by God to present an opportunity to do good.
  - - If we truly seek to know and do God's will, we will embrace and implement this principle. We will heed this continued exhortation in James to put our faith into action.
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[Lesson Question: What kind of impact will this principle have on others around us?]

SECTION POINT: Implementing this principle in our lives will have a beneficial effect on others around us.

- - "...the good [we] ought to do" presumes that the good actions we are to do will be for the benefit of others, and will likely be at a cost to oneself.
  - - Implementing actions that benefit others will naturally have a humbling effect, which is doubly pleasing to God - for the doer and for the receiver.
  - - Implementing actions that benefit others will naturally result in being others-oriented instead of being self-seeking, which is also pleasing to God.
  - - Implementing actions that benefit others will naturally tend to restructure our values in life toward seeing and pursuing the godly philosophy that life is not about what we can acquire along the way, but what good we can do for others along the way.
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BIG IDEA: Failure to do the good we know we ought to do is sinful and is negligent of our duties as believers.

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#### IMPLICATIONS AND APPLICATIONS:

[Lesson Question: What practical steps are necessary in order to implement this principle on a daily basis in our lives?]

Being compliant with this principle of doing the good we know we ought to do:

- - requires daily consciously considering God;
- - requires us to contemplate and evaluate situations encountered in life to determine if we are responsible to get involved or not; we are flooded by potential opportunities every day all day long; for example, should I stop my car and pick up every piece of garbage I encounter every time I am going somewhere?
- - requires alert consistent watching for and recognizing opportunities;
- - then requires listening to our conscience rather than ignoring it and going on with our business;
- - requires suspending what we were going to do in order to accommodate doing what we ought to do;
- - requires exerting extra time and effort that go beyond what we want to do or are planning on doing;
- - requires planning for and allotting extra time and resources in case an unexpected situation arises to do unexpected good;
- - requires exerting risk - our plans may be adversely altered or delayed; our well-being may be jeopardized or possibly adversely affected when we voluntarily step into a hazardous situation to do good;
- - requires additional exposure, lingering around to do good rather than just leave and go about our business;
- - requires more flexibility;

- - requires a character of giving;
- - will impact all aspects of our life, if we pursue this approach to how we respond to circumstances we encounter in our daily life.

Has God been preparing your heart right now to start doing the good you know you ought to do, to put into action all of these required steps? Why not start today, doing the good you know you ought to do?

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Works Cited:

Bible. "The Holy Bible: New International Version." *The Bible Library CD-ROM*. Oklahoma City, OK: Ellis Enterprises, 1988.

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File name: James4\_17-SermonOrLesson.\_\_\_\_ (.htm, .doc, .pdf)

Translation used: NIV, quoted or referred to in various places within this document

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Updated: June 14, 2016