

Living in The Name of Jesus

February 21, 2007

ILLUSTRATION

Alexander the Great was presumptuous to say the least. He once stood before his subjects and proclaimed that he would conquer the world. But once he gained control of all the nations he knew existed geographers uncovered unimaginably vast areas of inhabited lands he hadn't even know existed.

One of the geographers, supposedly, said: "Man proposes. God disposes."

Alexander's reply was: "I dispose as well as propose."

The retort came quickly: "...God will not suffer a creature with impunity thus to usurp his prerogative."

Within a year Alexander the Great would arrive at Waterloo. (Spiros Zodhiates, *The Patience of Hope*)

James 4:13-17

Now listen, you who say, "Today or tomorrow we will go to this or that city, spend a year there, carry on business and make money." ¹⁴Why, you do not even know what will happen tomorrow. What is your life? You are a mist that appears for a little while and then vanishes. ¹⁵Instead, you ought to say, "If it is the Lord's will, we will live and do this or that." ¹⁶As it is, you boast and brag. All such boasting is evil. ¹⁷Anyone, then, who knows the good he ought to do and doesn't do it, sins.

I. Reasons to avoid presumption for a Christ-follower...

Is it the case that we're guilty, sometimes, of assuming that it's a good thing to plan, plot or propose, or to act or to speak without consideration of who our Lord is? James seems to think it's at least an issue for some of us. Verse 16 that makes me think that he thinks it's always arrogant when we do so.

1. Presumption is arrogant.

- It assumes facts that are not in evidence. (v. 13)
 - We don't know the future state of our world. (v 14a)
 - We don't know the future state of our life. (v 14b)

ILLUSTRATION

In 1923, at the Edgewater Hotel in Chicago a high level meeting was convened by "nine of the world's most successful financiers. Those present were: the president of the largest independent steel company; the president of the largest utility company; the president of the largest gas company; the greatest wheat speculator; the president of the New York Stock Exchange; a member of the president's cabinet; the greatest 'bear' in Wall Street; the head of the world's greatest monopoly; the president of the Bank of International Settlements. "Twenty-five years later...the president of the steel company lived on borrowed money the last five years of his life and died bankrupt. The president of the greatest utility company...died a fugitive from justice, penniless in a foreign country. The president of the gas company...had been declared insane. The world's greatest wheat speculator...died abroad, totally insolvent. The president of the New York Stock Exchange...served time in Sing Sing Penitentiary. The member of the president's cabinet...was pardoned from prison so he could die at home. The greatest 'bear' in Wall Street, the head of the greatest

monopoly, and the president of the Bank of International Settlements...all committed suicide.” (Joel Gregory, *James, Faith Works!*)

2. Presumption is hypocritical. (v. 16a)

- To presume is to assume that while God’s decrees are important for other people they are not necessary in my life.
 - The words *boast* and *brag* were originally used to describe a vagabond or a bum that made his living wandering around presuming on the graces of hard-working people for handouts...
 - Later, as the custom is with words, the words were ascribed to self-styled, untrained faith healers or medicine men who made their living selling worthless cures to the unsuspecting and often highly gullible public.
- To presume is to decide that while other people need to take God’s will into consideration before they speak or act, and should, that we ourselves, for reasons that we have personally created and imagined, have no need to do so.
- - *Other people should avoid cheating on their taxes, but it’s okay for me to cheat.*
 - *Other people should always be truthful, but it’s okay for me to tell a little white lie when the situation calls for it.*
 - *Other people should always put in 40 solid hours of work for 40 hours of pay, but it’s okay if I show up a little late.*
 - *The plumber charges way too much to fix my faucet, but I’m worth every penny I make.*

JOKE

A plumber was called to repair a disposal at a very nice house. When the plumber gave his repair bill to the home owner things got interesting... *You’ve got some nerve charging me \$250 for a 15 minute repair of a garbage disposal. I’m a heart surgeon and I don’t make that kind of money.* The plumber replied, *Neither did I when I was a surgeon!*

3. Therefore, presumption is evil. (v. 16b)

- To boast is to be guilty of making plans to take advantage of someone else’s goodness through a lack of one’s own goodness.
 - It’s true regarding relationships with other people.
 - It’s also true regarding our relationship with God.
- The word indicates an attitude that sees no distinct between God’s will and my will.
- It’s evil to assume that simply because I want to do something that I have the power, ability and opportunity to do, that I am free to do it...

1 Corinthians 6:12

Everything is permissible for me—but not everything is beneficial. Everything is permissible for me—but I will not be mastered by anything.

DISCUSSION

1. Some interpretations infer from James 4:13-17 that Christ-followers should never borrow money, purchase health or life insurance, develop a portfolio, or make any type of concession for one's "earthly future". Do you think such interpretation is valid or invalid?
2. Obviously it isn't wrong to make plans, in fact it's unwise not to (i.e. the principle of counting the cost, Luke 14:28-33). Therefore, how do we: A) avoid the sin of presumption in all of our personal decision making, and B) still plan adequately and responsibly for our future.

II. A reasonable alternative—Living in the Name of Jesus.

- Make only those decisions that you believe God would honor.
- Make only those decisions that you believe and that would honor God.

Colossians 3:17

Whatever you do, whether in word or deed, do it all in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks to God the Father through him.

1. For Me to Live in the Name of Jesus Means... That I Make All of My Decisions With His Approval.

A family who donated to the *Gideons* in my name selected them specifically because they were of the opinion that I approved of the work the *Gideons* do—which I do. They could have donated to:

- *The Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Pastors;*
- *Hunks on Harleys;*
- *Or Old White Guys Who Never Made it to the NBA, Never Will & Never Had a Chance.*

But it's kinda doubtful that they would have donated money to:

- *The National Quilting Guild;*
- *Matrons of the Malls Unite;*
- *Or The Shop With Might, Shop All Night, Shop Until You Get it Right League* in my name.

You can only do something in my name if:

- I like it;
- I'm philosophically aligned with it;
- It's methods represent my character;
- And if it's goals clearly portray my interests.

A. **WWJD or WWJWMTD?**

How can I know whether or not my decisions meet with the approval of Jesus? Have you noticed the number of people who are wearing the **WWJD** bracelets?

I hate to sound so picky about a good thing but the truth of the matter is...I don't really know what Jesus would do in a given situation. He never did quite do things the way most people thought he would.

So rather than ask **What Would Jesus Do** I've taken to asking **What Would Jesus Want Me To Do?** Granted, it doesn't fit on the bracelet as easily and it's harder to remember but it helps me out never the less. There's a second question we can ask as well.

B. **WJET?**

Can I honestly say that Jesus would sign off on my decision or action as being an act that represents him and his standard for life? **WJET—Would Jesus Endorse This?**

ILLUSTRATION

When John Daly agrees to endorse a golf club, in principle at least, he's saying to anyone who's willing to spend their hard-earned money to buy one that this particular club conforms to and is consistent with the standards he holds as a professional golfer. He's standing up for that club. He's giving his approval to our investment. These days you might want to look for a club endorsed by someone else...

The application of course is pretty simple—if our decisions, either to do certain things or not to do certain things, would violate the character of Jesus; if we don't think he would endorse them, then we can safely assume that that decision does not represent a decision to **Live in the Name of Jesus**. If our choices are not things that Jesus would sign off on—do something else.

2. **For Me to Do All in the Name of Jesus Means... That I Make All of My Decisions In His Authority.**

A. **A Name Lends Authority**

If I'm doing something in someone else's name that means that a specified authority associated with that person's name is transferred to me.

ILLUSTRATION—Me and Bill

Imagine this scenario—I have—dozens of times. I walk into my bank with a check for \$1,000,000; a certified check signed by Bill Gates. Since it's Bill let's make for \$5,000,000. 2 or 3 things are going to take place.

- Scene 1—The teller would faint.
- Scene 2—The replacement teller would assume that things were looking up at CBC because my normal deposit is something less than \$5,000,000, but she, being the professional that she is, would soon notice that the check wasn't being drawn on the church's account at all but on the account of the world's wealthiest man, Bill Gates...then she would faint.
- Scene 3—Following a round of smelling salts the teller would credit \$5,000,000 to my account, which would be added to my current balance, and I walk outta there with a balance of \$5,000,313.12. I like it!

There's absolutely nothing required of us to live in Jesus' name that God has not already authorized us to do:

2 Peter 1:3-8

His divine power has given us *everything* we need for life and godliness through our knowledge of him who called us by his own glory and goodness. ⁴Through these he has given us his very *great and precious promises*, so that through them you may participate in the divine nature and escape the corruption in the world caused by evil desires.

⁵For this very reason, *make every effort* to add to your faith goodness; and to goodness, knowledge; ⁶and to knowledge, self-control; and to self-control, perseverance; and to perseverance, godliness; ⁷and to godliness, brotherly kindness; and to brotherly kindness, love. ⁸For *if you possess these qualities in increasing measure, they will keep you from being ineffective and unproductive* in your knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ.

B. A Name Limits Authority

Just as my doing something in someone else's name *lends* their authority to me, it also *limits* authority.

ILLUSTRATION—Me and Butch

If I were to walk into my bank tomorrow with a check for \$5,000,000 signed by Butch Edwards, again 2 or 3 things would happen:

- Scene 1—The teller would still faint.
- Scene 2—The replacement teller, again assuming we'd had a better than average offering because, like I said, \$5,000,000 is a bit more than my normal deposit, would notice the check wasn't drawn on my employer's account but on Butch's account.
- Scene 3—Ed and Butch in jail—together—for a long, long time.

We all need to be reminded that while God isn't a cosmic killjoy, living in Jesus' name means that there are some things that don't belong in our lives.

3. For Me to Do All in the Name of Jesus Means... That I Make All of My Decisions For His Acclaim.

Living in Jesus' name means at least one other thing. It means we have the opportunity to show people the value of being a Christian.

Colossians 3:16-24

Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly as you teach and admonish one another with all wisdom, and as you sing psalms, hymns and spiritual songs with gratitude in your hearts to God. ¹⁷And whatever you do, whether in word or deed, do it all in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks to God the Father through him.

¹⁸Wives, submit to your husbands, as is fitting in the Lord.

¹⁹Husbands, love your wives and do not be harsh with them.

²⁰Children, obey your parents in everything, for this pleases the Lord.

²¹Fathers, do not embitter your children, or they will become discouraged.

²²Slaves, obey your earthly masters in everything; and do it, not only when their eye is on you and to win their favor, but with sincerity of heart and reverence for the Lord. ²³Whatever you do, work at it with all your heart, as working for the Lord, not for men, ²⁴since you know

that you will receive an inheritance from the Lord as a reward. It is the Lord Christ you are serving.

Is there any way for those of us who are Christians to convince the people around us that God is good other than by leading high caliber lives? No.

- Do you know what it means to *glorify God*?
 - The term itself comes from an old word that was used the gold trade industry.
 - Gold used to be measured by the *pinch*.
 - Some of the innovative but less than forthright merchants used to put a pea between their thumb and forefinger, tie a string around it and sleep like that.
 - The result was a permanent but almost unnoticeable indentation in both digits, which allowed them to appear to be taking a pinch of gold while actually taking as much a 50% more; which meant they could then pay for a pinch of gold while getting upwards of a pinch and a half; a dishonest weight.
 - The term *glory* was used to describe those merchants who gave a just weight.
- To glorify God means to provide an accurate assessment of how much he's worth to a human life. It means to show his worth. How can we do that?

A. By Living Honestly

Verse 22 reminds those of us who would live in Jesus' name of the value of basic honesty in the work place: *"Obey your earthly masters in everything; and do it, not only when their eye is on you and to win their favor, but with **sincerity** of heart and **reverence** for the Lord."*

- We don't steal, we don't cheat and we work hard. If we're getting paid for eight hours a day then we put in eight hours of work—maybe even more, but certainly not one second less.
 - Wouldn't it show God's worth to the world if, when companies were looking for employees, they'd want to hire Christ-followers?
 - Wouldn't it glorify God if Christ-followers had the reputations of being such honest people and hard workers that when men and women called the employment offices looking for workers they'd ask if there were any Christians on the list, not so they could avoid us, but because they knew we'd be there on time every day, work hard, and do the job right every time; that we'd admit it when we messed up and do everything in our power to make it right?
 - Wouldn't that be great?
- That's the kind of employee that's living in Jesus' name. Listen up...don't expect your boss or co-workers to believe any of the good things you might say about God, the Bible or your church unless you're an honest employee.
 - The world has a name for Bible-thumping, Scripture-quoting workers who aren't honest on the job—**hypocrites**. You know what? They're right.

B. By Living Heartily

Verse 23 reminds us how important it is to attend even the most mundane of life's chores in Jesus' name: *"Whatever you do, work at it with all your **heart**, as working for the Lord, not for men."*

- It's easy to look at some people and know they're working for the Lord; pastors, teachers, worship leaders and the like.
 - And, to be honest, it's kind of easy, most of the time, for those of us who fill those roles to view what we do as working for the Lord.
- It's less easy for those who perform custodial duties, or spend all morning changing diapers to feel that way.
 - But, regardless of our particular role, if we'll put our heart into it and do it as though it's a personal favor for Jesus, which it is, then the most ordinary or unnoticed thing we do is transformed into an act of worship.

C. By Living Hopefully

Verse 24 reminds us that when we live in Jesus' name, there's a payoff: *"You will receive an inheritance from the Lord as a reward."*

- When life challenges you, and it will; when you don't feel like doing what you know you should, step up to the plate and say, "Jesus, this one's for you."
 - And somewhere along the way, you'll sense him saying, "Thanks. I've got something for you too."

DISCUSSION

1. "Whatever you do, whether in word or deed, do it **all** in the name of the Lord Jesus" (Colossians 3:17), involves my private life as well as my public life; my behavior at home, at work, and on the golf course, tennis court, restaurant, vacation, and etc. Where will your greatest temptation be to live presumptuously rather than to live in the name of Jesus?
2. Are you willing to let the men around you pray with you about bringing **all** parts of your life under the heading of "Living in the Name of Jesus?"