



Dr. Mark L. Bailey

'If the Lord Wills' Is a Great Way to Live!

Like most people, I expect to have a future. That may not seem like a presumptuous statement, but in light of Chuck Swindoll's powerful message, I am amazed at my presumption!

How do we as followers of Christ strike a balance between presumption on one hand and apathy on the other? Here are some ideas that may help you, built off his key concepts.


The first is *readiness*. This refers not only to the need to be in right relationship with the Lord, but also to the need to practice daily faithfulness and obedience to Christ so that my life is in order in case I don't have a tomorrow.

Second, there is *dailyness*. Along with what I said above, I am thinking here of Jesus' call to take up our cross daily and follow Him.

A third way to balance life is through *revelation*. Certainly this involves the priority of God's Word in our lives. Our calling and task have been revealed to us in Scripture. We are a people under the Great Commission. We don't have to sit around in a lawn chair in the yard, wondering what to do next to try and fill life with meaning and purpose.

Dr. Swindoll is always relevant when he comes to speak to us, but this message is particularly spot on as we continue to struggle through an economy that is causing all of us to reevaluate life's priorities. I pray that the truths contained in these pages have stirred within you a renewed desire to make sure your life is well-lived in Christ's service. This is the purpose of *Veritas*—to be a tool in your hand to help you put God's Word to work in your daily life.

Our commitment to help you be at your best for the Lord is only right, because it is your prayers and financial support of Dallas Seminary that enable us to prepare godly leaders like Chuck Swindoll. Thank you for partnering with us in this work.


Dr. Mark L. Bailey, President
Dallas Theological Seminary

VERITAS

Equipping Christians to live by truth—
veritas—from God.

Don't Save the
China & Crystal
for Later!



A Call to Live Life to the Full in 2010

By Dr. Charles Swindoll

DALLAS THEOLOGICAL SEMINARY



Dr. Charles Swindoll

Dr. Charles Swindoll serves as Chancellor of Dallas Theological Seminary and is the Bible teacher of the worldwide radio ministry *Insight for Living*. He is also the founding pastor of Stonebriar Community Church in Frisco, Texas. Dr. Swindoll served as the senior pastor of a church in Fullerton, California, for 23 years prior to moving back to Texas.

Dr. Swindoll's missionary passion is to train men and women for ministry worldwide while meeting the spiritual needs of the local community. He has published numerous best-selling books dealing with all aspects of Christian life.

This message is taken from a chapel address that Dr. Swindoll delivered to the Dallas Seminary faculty and student body.

Don't Save the *China & Crystal* for Later!



DR. CHARLES SWINDOLL *is a long-time friend not only to the ministry of Dallas Theological Seminary, but also to each member of the Seminary's worldwide family. He came to our campus in January 2009 to deliver an incredibly timely New Year's message—one that you will find to be just as relevant and helpful in 2010. In his unmistakable style, Dr. Swindoll calls us to strike a biblical balance between boredom and undue tentativeness in living out our lives and the kind of presumptuous planning that leaves God and His will out of the picture.*

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Veritas is a publication of Dallas Seminary for our valued friends and partners, designed to provide biblical encouragement and instruction in keeping with our strong commitment to minister to those who stand with us in prayer and financial support. We are pleased to present the messages of outstanding leaders and Bible teachers who speak during chapels and at other events, as a way of bringing you "on campus" with us and giving you the benefit of their insights. *Veritas* is also available online at our website, www.dts.edu/media/veritas.

I have lived long enough, and have ministered for enough years, that I am not saving anything for later, including the good china and crystal! Cynthia and I break it out now for every special event, such as losing a pound or getting the sink unstopped. When it comes to living life to the full, if it's worth seeing or hearing or doing, I want to see, hear, and do it *now!*

I am trying very hard not to put off, hold back, or save anything that would add laughter and luster to my life. Every morning when I open my eyes, I tell myself that this is a special day.

Don't Let Boredom Define Your Days

It's always amazing to me that there are folks who say they are bored with life. The classic example is that fellow from California who felt bored and said one day, "Enough is enough! I'm tired of just sitting around. What I need is a little adventure." So he tied 42 helium weather balloons to a Sears lawn chair and lifted off. True story! He had a pellet gun with him to handle the elevation issues.

Before he knew it, he had soared to 16,000 feet and had his breath taken away at that altitude. He wasn't the only one surprised. A pilot for Southwest Airlines radioed the tower and said, "Some guy in a lawn chair is floating across the sky." The guy started shooting out the balloons, which allowed him to land about 45 minutes later in Long



Beach. That bizarre experience got him on *The Tonight Show* and a Timex watch, and he quit his job to go on the road delivering motivational speeches!

"Why did you do that?" was the common question that everyone asked him. He replied, "I had to do something. I couldn't just keep sitting there." What a terrible way to live, and what a terrible way it would be to spend this new year that stretches out ahead of us—just sitting around, wondering and waiting for something to happen.

Wisdom from God's Word

Now lest you think this is a message about just lowering your head and charging like a bull into 2010 without stopping to lift your head and look around, let me give you the Scripture text I want to talk about from James 4:13–15:

"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.' Why, 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. Instead, you ought to say, 'If it is the Lord's will, we will live and do this or that.'"

As we set out on our journey for this year, there are some dangers lurking that the Bible warns us about. Several that come to mind are the danger of walking in the flesh instead of in the Spirit; walking not by faith but by sight, which opens us to all kinds of problems; and trying to plan every little detail of our lives and forgetting the most important part of all—praying for God's direction according to His will.

This passage from James speaks to us with such relevance because most of us are experts at trying to remove obstacles from the path ourselves rather than waiting for God to open doors and make our path straight. The chances are good

that your worry list is longer than your prayer list. We get all worked up about some big thing on the horizon, and there's a strong probability that it will never happen. Your and my worst worries and fears are never realized.

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We serve a God who has put our lives together from start to finish. He is not finding things out along the way. Our times are in His hands—some of you are learning that better than others.

Three Timely Reminders

While we are still taking in the fact that this is a new year, I have a few timely reminders for you, based on three simple principles from James 4:13–15. I love this passage of Scripture. It's a great reminder, not just at the beginning of a new year but anytime, of how easy it is to play God, especially when we get a little theology under our belts. It's easy to think we have God figured out.

I remember when the great pastor Donald Grey Barnhouse of Philadelphia stood before his congregation with a Bible in his hand and took questions from the audience. On one occasion a young man asked, "How could the children of Israel be 40 years in the wilderness, and their shoes and clothes never wore out and they never went hungry?"

Dr. Barnhouse had a one-word answer: "God!" The questioner quickly responded, "Oh, now I understand." Barnhouse replied, "No, you don't, son. Nobody understands this."

Don't Follow Your Own Rules

Here's the first reminder James gives us: Don't follow your own rules (v. 13). If we are not careful, we will do that. Here are our rules. First, we choose our time, today or tomorrow. Then, we select our location and decide on the length of our stay. We will "spend a year there," so our life is really organized. Then, we arrange our activities and will "make money"—definitely not a guarantee in this economy! But this is exactly what we do in our unguarded moments. We tend to plan too many details and set those plans in concrete.

A stark reminder of such moments came for all of us on the tragic morning of 9/11. I read later that 12 investors met on the 101st floor of the World Trade Center's South Tower on Monday, September 10 and agreed to meet early the next morning and carry out a certain plan. They came early on 9/11 . . . but they never made it out of the tower. You do not know what your life will be like tomorrow. Nor do I. Suddenly, it makes sense. James, writing way ahead of his time, wisely reminds us that we are just a mist, a vapor.

Only God Knows Tomorrow

James is not criticizing good planning; the book of Proverbs talks about organizing your life. But James is warning us to stop the kind of planning that arrogantly leaves God out and assumes we are the



masters of our fate (v. 14). Never forget it: We don't know what our life will be like tomorrow, let alone a year from now.

Shakespeare writes in Hamlet, "If you can look into the seeds of time and say which grain will grow and which will not, speak then to me." Most folks yearn to hear what tomorrow holds. Some people guide their lives by the stars. Well, the stars don't know either!

I have a friend who lives in the Santa Barbara Canyon. He said that when a recent fire hit in his area, it came like a 50-miles-per-hour flood of flames. He looked up, saw the smoke, and started making a list of what he wanted to take. He had his dog next to him as he was putting the list together when the flames arrived. He got out of there with three things: his car, his dog, and the list.

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God knows tomorrow.*

What do we do in the face of tomorrow's uncertainties? One thing we need to do is to keep reminding ourselves that only God knows tomorrow. We have a church in Frisco, Texas, filled with people who don't know what this new year will hold, and I'm one of them. A great number of white-collar workers have found themselves unemployed. They weren't expecting that, but it happened. The same is true in your church.

The global economic crisis is providing all of us with an unforgettable lesson on the fragile nature of finances. As analysts have been picking through the ruins of the financial collapse, they have been dusting off old-fashioned words like "greed" and "moderation." Some are just now realizing that a functioning economy is held together by a thin web of trust.

If you doubt that, visit a country in which you have to pay

bribes in order to get action and you must count your change after every purchase. The same week that global wealth shrank by \$7 trillion, Zimbabwe's inflation rate hit 231 *million* percent. In other words, if you had \$1 million in Zimbabwe on Monday, by Tuesday it was worth \$1.50. We have no idea of what tomorrow will bring.

James 4 also teaches that we have no assurance of a long life. I had preached this many times before I ever let the text say what it is saying. I have found that the pauses in verse 14 are as powerful as the words. We are just a mist . . . appearing for a little while . . . and then we vanish. Poof. We are gone like a person's warm breath on a cold morning. Life is brief.

Respect Your Master's Will

Instead, we should say, "If the Lord wills, we will live."

In my ministry, I now bury people who are younger in age than ever. I can't recall how many 40- and 50-year-olds I have buried in the past two years. The last two were 27 and 21. It's a remarkably startling reminder that we should say, "If the Lord wills, we will live."

We need to respect our Master's will. The word "Lord" reminds us that He is our Master. There is a will that we need to respect. This act will guard us from pride.

There is also a destiny we need to remember. This will guard us from presumption. Work hard and give it your best. Give it everything you've got, because there is a destiny that you need to remember.

Live, for Goodness' Sake!

Here's the last lesson I want to leave with you from James 4. You may read what has gone before and say, "Wow, I'm not getting out of bed tomorrow!" No, there is also a life you need to realize, which guards you from procrastination.

For goodness' sake, live! The late Jim Elliot put it this way: "Wherever you are, be all there. Live to the full in every

situation that you believe to be the will of God.” Don’t put it off! Live life to the fullest! It’s a wonderful way to go through the new year. There is so much more to do than tying helium balloons to a lawn chair.

I read a moving story recently. *My brother once opened the bottom drawer of his wife Jane’s bureau and lifted out a tissue-wrapped package. It was an exquisite silk, handmade piece of lingerie with a trim cobweb of lace. The price tag carried an astronomical figure and was still attached to it. Jane had bought it the first time they went to New York eight or nine years ago, but she never wore it. She was saving it for a special occasion.*

“Well,” my brother thought to himself, “I guess this is the occasion.” He took the lingerie and put it on the bed, along with the other clothes that we were taking to the mortician. His hands lingered on the soft material, and then he slammed the drawer shut and said, “Don’t ever save anything for a special occasion.”

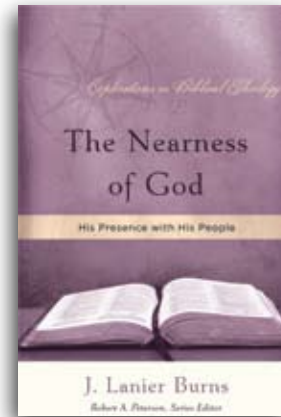
*Don’t ever save anything
for a special occasion.*

Every day you are alive is a special occasion. I remembered those words through my sister-in-law’s funeral and the days that followed as I helped my brother and my niece attend to all the sad chores that follow an unexpected death. I thought about them on the plane ride home from the Midwestern town where they live. I thought of all the things she hadn’t seen, heard, or done. I thought about the things that she had done, without realizing they were all so special.

I am still thinking about my brother’s words to this day, and they have changed my life.

Let’s remember that true story throughout 2010.

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***Let a seasoned
and insightful
member of the
Dallas Seminary
faculty show
you the glorious
privilege and
reality of God’s
personal presence
that we enjoy
today as believers
in Jesus Christ!***

This important book by Dallas Seminary professor Dr. J. Lanier Burns is both encouraging and insightful because it sheds light on a wonderful but neglected biblical theme—God’s presence among His people.

Taking as his starting point the Incarnation of the Son of God as revealed in John 1:14–18, Dr. Burns discusses the presence of the Word, the “walk” of the Old Testament patriarchs, the visual fire and cloud as symbols of God’s presence, and the presence of the Name of God. The Israelites were blessed with a city and a temple, but they became oblivious to the Glory in their midst. So God promised a New Covenant, sealed by the accomplishments of Christ and the indwelling of the Spirit. This enables us as believers today “to enter the Most Holy Presence of God.”

In all of this, Dr. Burns seeks to demonstrate the truth of the personal presence of God—a wonderful reality that the world denies. *The Nearness of God* will bolster your faith!