

# JAMES

## LIVING FAITH



### Planning for Tomorrow

James 4:13-17



## Introduction

When you hear references to planning for the future, what do you think about? The calendar app on your phone that is way too full? The financial goals that you previously made, but now in reality they seem too ambitious? The plans for your personal or professional life that you hope (or hoped) to see fulfilled? We all seem to operate with one eye on the present and another eye on the future. Our lives are oriented around planning and preparing for the next day, the next year, the next 20 years.

How often do your plans and goals come to fruition in the manner that you thought they would? If you looked over a list of goals or considered all of the plans that you made in the past, you would see a number of things that did not quite play out like you planned. What does that say about how much control you have over your life? What does that say about how wise you really are? How should this influence your planning for the future?



## Study

*Context:* One of James' purposes in writing his letter was to correct the false assumptions that had developed regarding how the Christian ought to view life in light of the plans and purposes of God. In a few places he particularly referenced how the Christian worldview ought to be distinctly different from the conventional perspectives of the non-believing world. One such place where there ought to be differences is in relation to our plans and our understanding of time—which is in God's hands.

*Structure:*

- I. Self-centered planning (4:13-14)
- II. God-centered planning (4:15-17)



*God-centered planning (vv. 15-17)*

4.) According to v. 15, what is the correct way to approach planning about the future? What does this approach to planning for the future reveal about your submission to God's will and sovereignty?

**APPLY →** What is difficult about having an approach to future plans that is rooted in saying, "If the Lord wills..."? How easily are you able to submit control of your life and plans to God's wisdom and leadership? In which areas can you grow in giving control of your life over to God?

5.) In v. 16 how does James describe boasting about your own plans? Why do you think James would describe this mindset with such strong language? How does James' perspective differ from that of the world?

**APPLY →** When we make plans and fill up our calendars, we have a sense or feeling of importance—whether we feel like we are accomplishing things or we are needed by other people, we feel important. How can you pray for God to work on your heart so that your sense of worth does not rely upon how important you are to others or how full your schedule is?

**APPLY** → The will of God is a concept that many people speak of, but they also have a hard time discerning the will of God for their lives. James wrote in v. 15 that the proper attitude of the Christian when thinking about the future ought to be, “If the Lord wills, we will live and do this or that.” We like to ask, “How do I know the will of God?” Perhaps the better question is, “How do I pursue faithfulness to God regardless of what His will for me is?” Far more than knowing details of how their future was going to play out, James was concerned with faithfulness on the part of his readers to submit themselves (their plans, dreams, wishes, everything) before God. The life humbly submitted before God is the life that will be content before God and his leadership in that life. What are ways that you can prayerfully pursue contentment in God and in His plans, timing, and will for your life?



## Connect

**Gospel Connections.** Part of the difficulty in yielding our lives and our plans to God is that we know that there will be many times where his plans and purposes for our lives are different than ours. There will even be times where his purposes are hard for us to grasp or embrace. Even Jesus faced this difficulty when he was in the Garden of Gethsemane. It was in that garden where Jesus prayed that God would do something—anything—other than the cross, but then he concluded his prayer in humble submission to God and yielding his will to the will of the Father. In his perfect submission, Jesus went to the cross and accomplished the salvation that we all need.

**Whole-Bible Connections.** The book of James is often called, “The Proverbs of the New Testament.” So much of James is filled with wisdom from God for the life lived in submission to God. Proverbs 27:1 states, “Do not boast about tomorrow, for you do not know what a day may bring.” This is the exact line of thinking that James addressed when he said in v. 13: “Come now, you who say, ‘Today or tomorrow we will go into such and such a town and spend a year there and trade and make a profit.’” It is the height of arrogance to think that we are in control of our lives. We are but farmers who plant the seed, but God must send the rain and give the growth. This theme also fits our “Praise Connection” song for this week, “All Glory Be to Christ”:

**Praise Connections.**

**ALL GLORY BE TO CHRIST**

*Should nothing of our efforts stand  
No legacy survive  
Unless the Lord does raise the house  
In vain its builders strive*

*To you who boast tomorrow's gain  
Tell me what is your life  
A mist that vanishes at dawn  
All glory be to Christ!  
All glory be to Christ our king!  
All glory be to Christ!  
His rule and reign will ever sing,  
All glory be to Christ!*

*His will be done  
His kingdom come  
On earth as is above  
Who is Himself our daily bread  
Praise Him the Lord of love*

*Let living water satisfy  
The thirsty without price*

*We'll take a cup of kindness yet  
All glory be to Christ!*

*All glory be to Christ our king!  
All glory be to Christ!  
His rule and reign will ever sing,  
All glory be to Christ!*

*When on the day the great I Am  
The faithful and the true  
The Lamb who was for sinners slain  
Is making all things new.*

*Behold our God shall live with us  
And be our steadfast light  
And we shall ere his people be  
All glory be to Christ!*

*All glory be to Christ our king!  
All glory be to Christ!  
His rule and reign will ever sing,  
All glory be to Christ!*

*Words by Dustin Kensrue, arrangement by  
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