

James

A STUDY ON THE BOOK OF JAMES

UPSTATE GROUP MEMBER GUIDE

WEEK 9 - *JAMES 4:13-17*

LEADER NOTES

It is human to plan and to look to the future. However, Christians look to the future with a different perspective. We pull out our calendars knowing that in every plan we make we are ultimately not in charge. God may give us tomorrow, or next month, or next year, or he may not. So we live in the present knowing that God is in charge and that changes everything about tomorrow.

Please continue to complete the Gospel Connection's and Conversations form. You can find the form [HERE](#).

You can find other sermons from our Teaching Pastor's [HERE](#).

SCRIPTURE

TAKE THIS TIME TO STUDY THE BIBLE TOGETHER. REMEMBER, THE GOAL IS NOT JUST TO CONVEY INFORMATION, BUT TO HELP PEOPLE IN YOUR GROUP LEARN TO READ THE BIBLE FOR THEMSELVES.

THE POINT

WE MUST LIVE MORE CONCERNED ABOUT GOD'S WILL THAN OUR DAYS.

James 4:13-17

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"— 14 yet you do not know what tomorrow will bring. What is your life? For you are a mist that appears for a little time and then vanishes. 15 Instead you ought to say, "If the Lord wills, we will live and do this or that." 16 As it is, you boast in your arrogance. All such boasting is evil. 17 So whoever knows the right thing to do and fails to do it, for him it is sin.

The Holy Bible: English Standard Version (Wheaton, IL: Crossway Bibles, 2016), James 4:13-17.

STUDY NOTES

James now turns his focus to “today and tomorrow” for the rest of chapter 4. His goal isn’t to tell us how to specifically plan for today and tomorrow, but rather to find those plans being formulated from the right foundation (God). In these 4 verses, James points out God’s concerns should be the driving force for our plans—not our concerns. The person who remains steadfast (1:12) is the one who alters and plans with God at the forefront.

There’s a temptation in this passage to read James as saying we shouldn’t plan. That isn’t the case, however. James is less concerned with our specific plans and more concerned with where they originate. The person who makes plans for today, tomorrow, and years from now without any regard for God and God’s concerns, is the person who looks more like one who’s friends with this world (4:1-5) than with God.

Our world begs us to make plans that begin and end with “me, myself, and I” in terms of concerns. These plans look like being more concerned with my next career move, my next house purchase, car purchase, next income bracket, next whatever else you want to put in the blank. Notice a theme there with worldly plans? They never end, there is always something more. James points out in verse 14, though, that the person who makes such plans needs to realize those plans are not in their control. You may plan for “next” from a worldly perspective, but you may not even see the rest of the day to pursue it. We cannot even assume what will happen today, much less tomorrow. In fact, we aren’t even guaranteed our next breath (14b). For the Christian, we have the freedom in Jesus to not be enslaved to such a life.

How shall we plan then? We plan with God in mind and in focus (4:15, 17). We plan with “activity that is humbly dependent on God” (Platt). Make plans, have dreams, but have them rooted in the desires that honor God. These are the plans that look forward and plan for eternity, rather than the rat race of the moment.

For more resources, click [HERE](#).

QUESTIONS FOR DISCUSSION

- *What is the danger in planning for days/times that aren't guaranteed?*
- *What does God being in control mean for our plans?*
- *How does God's sovereignty affect your view of life?*
- *How can you make your plans dependent upon God?*
- *What needs to change in your life right now to live a life dependent upon God?*
- *Does your life point to eternity or to this world?*
- *How can this group help you to depend upon God?*