

INTRODUCTION

1. I would like to invite you to take God's Word and turn with me to James chapter 4 as we look this morning at verses 13-17.
2. In light of our Annual Meeting I want to address a subject for us to consider as we anticipate this new year and what God is going to do.
3. Read James 4:13-17.
4. All of us make plans.
5. Proverbs 16:9 says that "a man's heart plans his way," while Proverbs 19:21 says that there are "many plans in a man's heart."
6. We live every day based on plans we make.
7. But the question is do we include God in our plans?
8. The Bible doesn't prohibit wise planning.
9. In fact it says in **Proverbs 15:22 (NASB)**, "Without consultation, plans are frustrated, But with many counselors they succeed.."
10. The problem that James addresses is the self-confident, arrogant *planning that excludes God*.

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11. This, James calls “sin” in verse 17.
12. It is clear from the Bible that one of the genuine marks of a true believer is his desire to include God in His planning.
13. He lives for the will of God.
14. But that’s not so for the unbelieving.
15. **Proverbs 6:12-14 (NASB)** says, “A worthless person, a wicked man, Is the one who walks with a perverse mouth, 13 Who winks with his eyes, who signals with his feet, Who points with his fingers; 14 Who with perversity in his heart continually devises evil, Who spreads strife.”
16. David said in **Psalms 40:8 (NASB)**, “I delight to do Your will, O my God; Your Law is within my heart.”
17. His life is the opposite of the wicked.
18. In his heart was the desire to “delight” in God and do His will.
19. In **Psalms 143:10 (NASB)** he reveals the desire of his heart when he asks God to “Teach [him] to do [His] will.”
20. In the New Testament, Jesus taught that “whoever does the will of God, he is My brother and sister and mother” (**Mk.3:35, NASB**).

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21. The reason is that only His children do what is pleasing to Him.
22. Jesus even said in **John 7:17 (NASB)** that “If anyone is willing to do His will, he will know of the teaching, whether it is of God or whether I speak from Myself.”
23. The sobering consequences for not doing the will of God will become a reality for so many.
24. Those who thought they were truly born again but left God out of their lives will one day hear Jesus say, “depart from Me, you who practice lawlessness” (**Mat.7:23, NASB**) because “Not everyone who says to Me, 'Lord, Lord,' will enter the kingdom of heaven, but he who does the will of My Father who is in heaven will enter” (**Mat.7:21, NASB**).
25. So the will of God is an extremely important matter to God and it should be for everyone who claims to know Him.
26. Peter exhorted Christians in **1 Peter 4:2 (NASB)** “to live the rest of the time in the flesh no longer for the lusts of men, but for the will of God.”
27. The Apostle John described believers as those who do the will of God lives forever.” (**1 Jn.2:17, NASB**).
28. So as we look at James 4:13-17, we need to understand

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that doing the will of God is a test of genuine saving faith.

29. And a constant disregard for or disinterest in God's will is a certain mark of the presence of pride and possibly the absence of saving faith.
30. If you refuse to submit to God's will then that gives evidence that your life has not been transformed by His saving grace.
31. Now James makes this point by using the common businessman's experience of his day, which is no different than ours.
32. He begins verse 13 with ***the self-confident planner***.

I. The Self-Confident Planner (v.13)

He says, “Come now, you who say, “Today or tomorrow we will go to such and such a city, and spend a year there and engage in business and make a profit.”

James begins this section with language that is of a “brusque tone” (Moo).

He says, “Come now” as to arouse the attention of his readers and to imply disapproval for their foolish thinking.

“Come now,” occurs only here and in 5:1. It’s like James is saying, “Listen Up!” or “Get this!” (MacArthur).

This is not a commendation but a rebuke.

In James’s day there were three kinds of merchants: “the old Hellenistic mariners; sea and caravan traders, and those who combined domestic with foreign trade” (Fritz Rienecker, *The Linguistic Key to the Greek New Testament*, 738).

We know that Lydia was one who dealt in domestic and foreign trade when it says in **Acts 16:14 (NASB)** that “from the city of Thyatira, a seller of purple fabrics.”

We also know that Priscilla and Aquila move with their trade from place to place (Acts 18:1-2, 18).

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“James’s rebuke is not against planning for the future; it is against planning without taking God into account” (Vernon Doersken, James, 109).

So in verses 13-17, James is addressing any one of these merchants but most importantly the itinerant merchant.

This is one who has put his confidence in his planning and not God. He made his plans but excluded God. He is the practical atheist.

Notice 4 things about the self-confident planner:

A. He is Certain of His Planning

He begins verse 13 with two words, “Today or tomorrow.”

He does not begin his planning by prayer or by seeking the will of God or even acknowledging God. He states very emphatically “Today or tomorrow we will go.”

‘Today or tomorrow’ could mean a “two day journey, ‘today and tomorrow,’ or sometimes the thing planned is to start today; sometimes it is to start tomorrow” (D. Edmond Hiebert, James, 274).

B. He is Certain of His Personnel

“We” – He includes more people than himself.

C. He is Certain of His Trip

“Will go to such and such a city”

This “recounts the first stage of their plan...and expresses their self-assured completion of the journey” (Hiebert).

D. He is Certain of His Time

“Spend a year there” is literally “do a year there.”

“It implies more than mere continuance; they intend to use the year actively. They presume that the whole year is at their disposal to use as they decide” (Hiebert).

John Calvin writes, “James roused the stupidity of those who disregarded God's providence, and claimed for themselves a whole year, though they had not a single moment in their own power; the gain which was afar off they promised to themselves, though they had no possession of that which was before their feet” (Calvin's Commentaries: James).

E. He is Certain of His Profit

“Engage in business and make a profit”

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The NKJV reads, “Buy and sell and make a profit”

1. “Engage in business” (emporeuomai) means “to conduct business, to carry on business as a merchant” (Rienecker).

The verb further means “to travel into a region to get into the business there, to travel for trade, and then simply signifies ‘to do business, to trade’” (Hiebert).

2. “And make a profit” (Kerdaino) means “to get gain” (fut.act.ind.). To make commercial profit.

“This states the goal of the whole program” (Hiebert).

Vernon Doersken says, “Evidently the past successes in commercial enterprises gave the merchants James is addressing confidence in their ability to make even more money. In discussing their plans, they treated the future as if they had control over it and it was their property. They had planned the time of departure, the city to be visited, the time to be spent, the business to be transacted, and the profit to be made, all without taking into consideration the providential working of God” (James 109-10).

Again the problem is not their planning per se; it’s leaving God out of their plans. It is presuming on God

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by being confident that their plans will be carried out.

To say "we will" or "I will" is the essence of sin. Note for instance, the "I wills" of Lucifer in Isaiah 14:13, 14: "I will ascend to heaven; I will raise my throne above the stars of God, And I will sit on the mount of assembly In the recesses of the north. 14 'I will ascend above the heights of the clouds; I will make myself like the Most High.'" 1 Timothy 3:6 calls this "pride."

Listen to a famous poem called "Invictus" by William Ernest Henley and listen to how it expresses the same defiant attitude toward God that is displayed here in these itinerant merchants:

"Out of the night that covers me,
Black as the Pit from pole to pole,
I thank whatever gods may be
For my unconquerable soul.

In the fell clutch of circumstance
I have not winced nor cried aloud.
Under the bludgeonings of chance
My head is bloody, but unbowed.

Beyond this place of wrath and tears
Looms but the Horror of the Shade,
And yet the menace of the years
Finds, and shall find me unafraid.

It matters not how strait the gate,
How charged with punishments the scroll,
I am the master of my fate;
I am the captain of my soul.”

Now in verse 14, James show them:

II. The Foolishness of Self-Confident Planning (v.14)

He says, “Yet you do not know what your life will be like tomorrow. You are just a vapor that appears for a little while and then vanishes away.”

In other words:

A. You Have No Certainty of Tomorrow

1. The future is not yours to know

- a) That’s what Jesus told Peter in **John 21** after he was told what death he would glorify God

Peter said, “Lord, and what about this man?”
22 Jesus said to him, ‘If I want him to remain until I come, what is that to you? You follow Me!’” (**vv.21-22, NASB**).

- b) In **Acts 1:6-7 (NASB)**, Luke records the disciples asking Jesus: “Lord, is it at this time You are restoring the kingdom to Israel?” 7

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He said to them, "It is not for you to know times or epochs which the Father has fixed by His own authority."

2. Scripture forbids boasting of tomorrow
 - a) **Proverbs 27:1 (NASB)** says, "Do not boast about tomorrow, For you do not know what a day may bring forth."
 - b) **Matthew 6:34 (NASB)** says, "So do not worry about tomorrow; for tomorrow will care for itself. Each day has enough trouble of its own."

3. Our focus is to be on today

"These businessmen were making plans for a whole year when they could not even see ahead one day" (Warren Wiersbe, James, 131).

So many people live for tomorrow as if they are certain it will come and ignore today and what God requires of them.

In **Matthew 6:25 (NASB)** Jesus said, "do not be worried about your life." In **verse 31** He said, "do not worry" but as **verse 33** says, "Seek first His kingdom and His righteousness." That's all you need to be concerned about—not tomorrow!

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People put off coming to Christ by saying, “Tomorrow” when Paul said in **2 Cor.6:2 (NKJV)**, “Behold, now is the accepted time; behold, now is the day of salvation.”

The second argument James gives for this foolish planning refers to the brevity of life. He says:

B. You Have No Certainty of Life Itself

James says, “You are just a vapor that appears for a little while and then vanishes away.”

In other words:

1. It is temporary

James says it is “just a vapor.”

“Vapor” is the Greek word *atmis*, which means, “steam or smoke.” “The word was used of steam from a kettle or smoke which the wind carried away” (Rienecker).

This is a “puff of smoke” (Doersken).

The Bible uses different terms to describe the brevity of life:

a) “Breath” - **Job 7:7 (NASB)** says, “Remember

that my life is but *breath*.”

- b) “Cloud” - **Job 7:9 (NASB)** says, “When a *cloud* vanishes, it is gone, So he who goes down to Sheol does not come up.”
- c) “Grass” - **Psalm 103:15-16 (NASB)** says, “As for man, his days are like *grass*; As a flower of the field, so he flourishes. 16 When the wind has passed over it, it is no more, And its place acknowledges it no longer.”
- d) “Shadow” - **Psalm 102:11 (NASB)** says, “My days are like a lengthened *shadow*, And I wither away like grass..”

2. It is frail

- a) If we have no guarantee of tomorrow then we must live today to the fullest
 - (1) **Romans 13:12 (NASB)** says, “The night is almost gone, and the day is near. Therefore let us lay aside the deeds of darkness and put on the armor of light.”
 - (2) **2 Pet.3:11-12 (NASB)** [the correct response to the coming Day of the Lord] “Since all these things are to be

destroyed in this way, what sort of people ought you to be in holy conduct and godliness, 12 looking for and hastening the coming of the day of God, because of which the heavens will be destroyed by burning, and the elements will melt with intense heat!"

- b) If we are living our lives to the fullest in godliness we must also hasten to spread the good news of Jesus Christ
 - (1) **2 Corinthians 5:11 (NASB)** says, "Therefore, knowing the fear of the Lord, we persuade men."
 - (2) **2 Corinthians 5:20 (NASB)** says, "Therefore, we are ambassadors for Christ, as though God were making an appeal through us; we beg you on behalf of Christ, be reconciled to God."

Now in verse 15, James gives:

III. What Should Be Considered in Planning (v.15)

He says, "Instead, you ought to say, "If the Lord wills, we will live and also do this or that."

- A. The Lord's Will Must Be Considered in All Our Plans

1. In our prayers

Paul said in his prayer to the Romans he was requesting to “find a way in the will of God to come to you” (**Rom.1:10, NKJV**).

2. In our plans

When he was in Ephesus and they asked him to stay longer his response was “I will return to you again if God wills” (**Acts 18:21, NASB**).

3. In our lives

God’s will for your life is that you be:

- a) Saved (1 Tim.2:4; 2 Pet.3:9)
- b) Spirit-filled (Eph.5:18)
- c) Sanctified (1 Thess.4:3-8)
- d) Submissive (1 Pet.2:13-15)
- e) Suffering (1 Pet.3:17; Phil.1:29-30)

B. The Lord’s Will Must Become Our Will

Jesus is the supreme example

1. He said in **John 5:30 (NASB)**, “I can do nothing on My own initiative. As I hear, I judge; and My judgment is just, because I do not seek My own will, but the will of Him who sent Me.”

2. In **John 6:38 (NASB)** He said, “For I have come down from heaven, not to do My own will, but the will of Him who sent Me.”
3. In **Luke 22:42 (NASB)** in anticipation of the cross He cried out to the Father and said, “Father, if You are willing, remove this cup from Me; yet not My will, but Yours be done.”

Notice:

IV. What Self-Confident Planning Promotes (vv.16-17)

A. Evil Boasting (v.16)

“But as it is, you boast in your arrogance; all such boasting is evil.”

“Boast” (kauchaomai) “can mean ‘to be loud-mouthed,’ or ‘to speak loudly,’ either in legitimate rejoicing (e.g. Rom.5:2-3, 11) or in touting one’s own accomplishments (e.g. 1 Cor.1:19). The context indicates that James has the latter meaning in mind in this passage” (MacArthur).

“Arrogance” (alazoneia) “comes from a root word meaning ‘to wander about’ and reflects empty pretense. It was sometimes used of charlatans who traveled around selling phony goods.

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Taken together, the two words picture someone bragging pretentiously about something he doesn't have and can't obtain. Such is the arrogance, James says, of those who deny the will of God" (MacArthur).

1. Your boasting about a tomorrow that is not promised
2. Your presuming on your own ability to fulfill your plans

Self-confident planning also promotes a...

B. Rejection of What is Right (v.17)

"Therefore, to one who knows the right thing to do and does not do it, to him it is sin."

The "right thing" is the Greek word kalos, which is translated "good" in the authorized. It describes "what is qualitatively good, morally excellent, worthy of honor, and upright" (MacArthur).

1. Believers know God's will and are responsible to obey it

If they fail to obey it, it is sin!

God told Jonah to go to Nineveh and preach to the

Ninevites but instead the reluctant prophet attempted to flee to Tarshish—about as directly in the opposite direction as possible. It was only after Jonah was severely disciplined by God did he finally submit to God’s will.

2. Those who disobey God’s will likewise suffer the consequences

Romans 1:21-24 (NASB) says, “For even though they knew God, they did not honor Him as God or give thanks, but they became futile in their speculations, and their foolish heart was darkened. 22 Professing to be wise, they became fools, 23 and exchanged the glory of the incorruptible God for an image in the form of corruptible man and of birds and four-footed animals and crawling creatures. 24 Therefore God gave them over in the lusts of their hearts to impurity, so that their bodies would be dishonored among them..”

CONCLUSION

1. As believers we are to consider God’s will in all of our plans and we must not assume if we make plans that God will carry them out for us. We must say, “If the Lord wills.”
2. Living in the light of that truth, we must make every

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moment in our life count.

3. We are not promised tomorrow.
4. That is our desire here.
5. As we look to a new year, we have goals and plans but we want to make sure they centered in the will of God.
6. We want to make sure that every plan we make is made according to a sovereign God who rules our lives.
7. So as we anticipate 2009, my prayer is that you will hear this statement “If the Lord wills” before we do anything.
8. Let me ask you a personal question.
9. Are you living like the self-confident planner who excludes God in his plans or are you saying, “we will do this or that, if the Lord wills?”
10. If you’re one who struggles with understanding the will of God, let me help you to understand where it all begins.
11. Jesus came to earth for one purpose — to suffer and die on a cross for Adam’s sin that was applied to you.
12. When Adam sinned in disobeying God by eating of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, the consequences of his sin was passed on to every man.

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13. The Bible says, “the wages of sin is death” (Rom.6:23).
14. Not only did you inherit the consequence but also the “knowledge of evil” that he presently didn’t have.
15. In other words, he had only “heard” about evil but when he disobeyed God, he now had the “experience” of evil.
16. That too has been passed on to every person who would live after Adam.
17. When you come to Christ, you acknowledge that in yourself there is nothing good and nothing by which you can please a holy God.
18. You are wretched both in thought and deeds and God’s moral law confirms it.
19. So you cry out to a holy God to save you—to deliver you from this wretched man—this body of sin—this sin nature.
20. In other words, you repent of who you are and rest totally on the only One who can deliver you from such a state—the Lord Jesus Christ.
21. Jesus said in **Luke 9:23-25 (NASB)** says, “If anyone wishes to come after Me, he must deny himself, and take up his cross daily and follow Me. 24 "For whoever wishes to save his life will lose it, but whoever loses his life for My sake, he is the one who will save it. 25 "For what is a

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man profited if he gains the whole world, and loses or forfeits himself?”

22. Have you denied yourself?
23. Have you taken up the instrument of death—the cross?
24. Have you started following Jesus—not having Jesus as an addition to your life but having Jesus as your life?
25. If not, I want to call you this morning to surrender your life to Jesus as we pray.
26. Let’s pray.