

He Knows Our Tomorrow

5 Cautions About Planning Our Future

James 4:13-16

1. Predicting Our Tomorrow Is Uncertain (13-14a)

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"— ^{14a} yet you do not know what tomorrow will bring.

2. Valuing Our Achievements Is Temporal (14b)

^{14b} What is your life? For you are a mist that appears for a little time and then vanishes.

3. Depending On God's Will Is Practical (15; cf. Eph 5:17)

¹⁵ Instead you ought to say, "If the Lord wills, we will live and do this or that."

How do we know God's Will?

- God Wills For Us To Be Saved (2 Pet 3:9; Mt 18:14)
- God Wills For Us To Be Sanctified (1 Thess 4:3)
- God Wills For Us To Be Under His Control (Eph 5:17-18)
- God Wills For Us To Be Obedient (1 Pet 2:13-15)
- God Wills For Us To Endure Hardship (1 Pet 3:17)
- God Wills For Us To Be Thankful (1 Thess 5:18)

4. Boasting About Ourselves Is Evil (16; cf. Prov 16:18; Dan 4:30-31)

¹⁶ As it is, you boast in your arrogance. All such boasting is evil.

5. Omitting Right Choices Is Sinful (17)

¹⁷ So whoever knows the right thing to do and fails to do it, for him it is sin.

Conclusion:

- God's will includes saving us to live for Him for eternity when, on our own, we barely know how to plan for our lifetime.
- Choose God's will. Conform your life's plan and purpose to God's good and perfect path.
- Not doing what we know is right is still a sin.

Discussion:

- Share a time when major plans were thwarted. What lessons did we learn about the will of God?
- How do we make the adjustment from making plans for our life apart from God and making plans for our life depending on God's will? How do we know when we're including God's will in our plans? How does this change our attitude?
- Can we sin by not actually doing a sinful action? How? What righteous act have we been omitting?

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Introduction:

- Congraduation!!
 - Last week we celebrated the graduation of our 2nd, 5th, 8th and 12th graders.
 - Before the first day of school, I would always have difficulty sleeping because I always worried about the next school year.
 - We're nervous – but God has something important planned for us.
- Some are starting a career during an economic slow down. We've had these plans after finishing college only to realize fewer businesses means fewer jobs.
- We may have had great plans for our family, then we are hit with a tough medical affliction or a debilitating physical trauma.

5 Cautions About Planning Our Future

- An atheist says there is no God
- A practical atheist lives as if there is no God
- My heart aches for those who have turned away from God thinking they have better plans for their lives than He does.

1. Predicting Our Tomorrow Is Uncertain (13-14a)

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"— ^{14a} yet you do not know what tomorrow will bring.

- James is relating to the familiar mindset of Jewish traveling businessman who is plotting out which towns he will go on what day and how much profit he will make.
- We try to control what will happen in the future
- "today or tomorrow" – when – making immediate plans
- "such and such a town" – where – which villages and towns to go to
 - Aquila & Priscilla were a couple in business
 - Pontus to Rome, Rome to Corinth (Acts 18:2-3), Corinth to Ephesus (Acts 18:18-19), Ephesus to Rome (Rom 16:3-5) and Rome to Ephesus (2 Tim 4:19) (Homer Kent, *Faith That Works*, pl 160)

- “spend a year” – how long – anticipate peak seasons
- “trade and make a profit” – what
- “Yet you do not know what tomorrow will bring”
 - We met with our financial advisor over the phone last week. He told us that no one could see the stock market drop 34% since Covid19.
 - We didn’t know Covid would strike in the midst of a building program and that the local school we counted on to meet at is following the rest of the school districts in not renting to anybody
- This doesn’t mean we shouldn’t plan for the future.
 - We should put away money in savings and retirement
 - We should save for the kids’ college fund
 - We should have retirement
 - We should invest wisely
- What James is denouncing is planning our life without God
 - Ie/ High School graduate – is this your time to flee from God?
 - Ie/ Are you successful at work to a point where you’re giving more credit to yourself than to God?
 - Ie/ Are you frustrated in your love life that we think ignoring God is a better alternative
- Our world changes as rapidly as a **virus** spreads
- Our country repels at the quick spread of a viral **video** of police brutality
- Regions of our country are decimated by **fires** moving as fast as the windstorms that propel them
- **Hurricanes** can devastate several states and countries in a moment taking away what takes years to rebuild
- A family’s life is changed at the blink of an eye when it is run into by another **car**
- And we think we know the future?

2. Valuing Our Achievements Is Temporal (14b)

^{14b} *What is your life? For you are a mist that appears for a little time and then vanishes.*

- What is our greatest pursuit in this life?
- What is our greatest issue in this life?
- What is our greatest passion in this life?
- What do we define ourselves by in this life?
- Our life is a **mist**. A **vapor**.
 - King David compares his life to a ...
 - **Shadow** (Ps 102:11)
 - **Smoke** (Ps 102:3)
 - **Handbreadth** (Ps 39:5) = the span of your hand
 - **Grass** (103:15) – withers then dies

- In comparison to our eternal life in Christ, our life without Him is quick and ephemeral.
- It's as quick as the steam that escapes your morning coffee
- Or the vapor that blows out of your tea pot during a furious boil
- Remember sports?
- I like sports, but I don't remember who beat the Niners in the Superbowl (at the moment, I'm drawing a blank).
- Remember when the Warriors and the Giants were good? That was gone as quickly as Kevin Durant ruined his knee.
- Remember when life was simple in kindergarten? Milk, graham crackers and a midday nap? Vaporized!!
- Remember when Whitney Houston ruled pop and Kobe Bryant ruled the court? Fame is quick and life is short.
- My kids were shocked when Cameron Boyce from the Disney Channel died.
- **Life that ends at 9 or 99 is still a vapor in light of eternity.**
- Here today and gone tomorrow
- Of for those who are balding: "Hair today and gone tomorrow"
- We pass up on God for a short-term date that ends badly
- We ignore God's call and misspend our life in selfish indulgences
- We define ourselves through **money** (economy tanks)
- We define ourselves through **work** (we're replaced by 25 year olds)
- We define ourselves through **parenting** (the kids graduate and move out)
- We define ourselves through **social media** only hate ourselves when our post isn't liked enough
- Our **Tweets** only last 280 characters (doubled from 140 recently)
- Our **Tik Tok** lasts 5 seconds
- Our **Term Paper** that we spent a month writing is now forgotten by our teacher when the semester ended
- **Why do we evade finding our eternal value in our relationship with God and try to define ourselves through temporal values: our relationships, our jobs, our hobbies, our accomplishments, our posts?**
- Ie/ When Santa Rosa burned, the families that lost their stuff learned how temporal things are.
- Ie/ When a loved one is dying, we value what is most important – God and the people we love.
- Walter Henrichsen (*Disciples are Made not Born*) was an engineer who realized the bridges he built would only last a few hundred years. But what really mattered was eternal: God, His Word and the souls of people.
- "Jesus did not die for institutions, but for people. Programs, organizations, causes – all are temporal. Never use people to further institutional goals; use institutions to help invest in people. You will find it easy to become enamored with your own program or cause, and recruit others to make it a success. The work of the Lord is not building institutions, but redeeming people. People and the Word of God last forever. Immerse yourself in Scripture

and give your life serving others. ... Jesus never tried to articulate such a definition; He simply said that He came to seek and save the lost."

— **Walter A. Henrichsen**, **Thoughts from the Diary of a Desperate Man: A Daily Devotional**

Jethro's encouragement to Moses:

Through Heaven's Eyes by Stephen Schwartz from "The Prince Of Egypt" (1998)

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=oG0a9WFkgzU>

So how can you see what your life is worth

or where your value lies

you can never see through the eyes of man

you must look at your life

look at your life through heaven's eyes

3. **Depending On God's Will Is Practical (15)**

¹⁵ *Instead you ought to say, "If the Lord wills, we will live and do this or that."*

- **The counter measure to ignoring God in our life plans and purpose, is to rest in His will**
- James is not saying don't plan. If we fail to plan, we plan to fail.

Ephesians 5:17 Therefore do not be foolish, but understand what the will of the Lord is.

How do we know God's Will?

a. God Wills For Us To Be Saved (2 Pet 3:9; Mt 18:14)

2 Peter 3:9 ⁹The Lord is not slack concerning His promise, as some count slackness, but is longsuffering toward us, not **willing** that any should perish but that all should come to repentance.

Matthew 18:14 ¹⁴Even so it is not the **will of your Father** who is in heaven that one of these little ones should perish.

b. God Wills For Us To Be Sanctified (1 Thess 4:3)

1 Thessalonians 4:3 For this is the **will of God**, your sanctification: that you should abstain from sexual immorality;

c. God Wills For Us To Be Under His Control (Eph 5:17-18)

Ephesians 5:17-18 ¹⁷Therefore do not be unwise, but understand what the **will of the Lord** is. ¹⁸And do not be drunk with wine, in which is dissipation; but be filled with the Spirit,

d. God Wills For Us To Be Obedient (1 Pet 2:13-15)

1 Peter 2:13-15 ¹³Therefore submit yourselves to every ordinance of man for the Lord's sake, whether to the king as supreme, ¹⁴or to governors, as to those who are sent by him for the punishment of evildoers and for the praise of those who do good. ¹⁵For this is the **will of God**, that by doing good you may put to silence the ignorance of foolish men—

e. God Wills For Us To Endure Hardship (1 Pet 3:17)

1 Peter 3:17 ¹⁷For it is better, if it is the **will of God**, to suffer for doing good than for doing evil.

f. God Wills For Us To Be Thankful (1 Thess 5:18)

1 Thessalonians 5:18 ¹⁸in everything give thanks; for this is the **will of God** in Christ Jesus for you.

- The Word of God explicitly tells us what His will is. If we fulfill what Scripture says, then we can make whatever choices that don't violate God's Word and righteousness.
- **James is saying don't plan outside of God's will.**
- Ie/ Every **Mission trip** I've been on never goes according to plan. You prepare the best you can and leave the rest to God's will.
- Ie/ **Day Camp** was being planned until Covid hit – now we finished our Virtual VBS
- Ie/ This **building program** has been a lesson on God's will
 - We started in San Mateo, moved to Burlingame, moved to San Bruno then to Belmont.
 - We moved here in 1992 when we weren't looking to buy a church property
 - It wasn't my will to move from San Bruno – it was clearly God's will
 - God got us here with \$100,000 down and a mortgage we paid off in 2010. Another church offered to pay the full \$960,000 asking price in cash. Yet God opened the door for us.
 - We started talking about the building remodel 20 years ago. An architect who doubled as a Jr High Camp director drew up plans. We halted because \$1.5 million was very expensive 20 years ago. We looked for other properties. Warehouse spaces were difficult to convert use permits for churches because of the loss of tax revenues by the city. So we restarted this building plan 5 years ago. We got the building permit 2 weeks ago. Then Covid hit.
 - Do we keep going? God has opened every door. When He closes it, we will know. We have meetings after meetings with board being on pins and needles – watching the economy, consulting experts, praying, seeking God's wisdom. This is all about God's will.
- I thought I'd go to Bible College immediately after H.S. – but after contending with my dad, it wasn't God's will. I spent time at UCSD because it was God's will for me to learn a great deal when my goals and aspirations were suspended. He showed me His will has a greater purpose than my short sighted plans for my life.

¹⁵ *Instead you ought to say, "If the Lord wills, we will live and do this or that."*

4. **Boasting About Ourselves Is Evil (16)**

¹⁶*As it is, you boast in your arrogance. All such boasting is evil.*

- “boast” = self glorification
- How the mighty have fallen!
- O.J. Simpson – the greatest running back. Michael Jackson – the greatest pop star.
- Powerful moguls and celebrities fell in the #metoo movement
- Statues of Sir Francis Drake or General Robert E. Lee or Thomas Jefferson have been taken down

- C. S. Lewis described pride as the complete anti-God state of mind. (*Mere Christianity*, p. 94)

Proverbs 16:18 **Pride** goes before destruction, and a **haughty** spirit before a fall.

Daniel 4:30 [Nebuchadnezzar:] “Is not this great Babylon, which I have built by my mighty power as a royal residence and for the glory of my majesty?”

Daniel 4:31 ³¹While the words were still in the king’s mouth, there fell a voice from heaven, “O King Nebuchadnezzar, to you it is spoken: The kingdom has departed from you,

- Nebuchadnezzar is then drawn to the ground like an ox grazing from the floor for years until he submitted to God after rebelling against Him

- God will humble us like Nebuchadnezzar if we don’t humble ourselves to God and His will

5. **Omitting Right Choices Is Sinful (17)**

¹⁷*So whoever knows the right thing to do and fails to do it, for him it is sin.*

- It’s one thing to commit an act of sin, but it is also a sin to omit doing right.
- Sins of Commission – commit an act of sin
- Sins of Omission – neglect doing what we know is right
- Standing by when someone is being murdered, assaulted, humiliated or demeaned is a sin even though you didn’t do it. You didn’t stop it.
- I applaud those who want to stand up for the underprivileged and underserved. It’s our responsibility to see God’s justice and mercy proclaimed.
- But we can’t just talk about civil justice. We can’t be silent about the justice Jesus bore on the cross for us. And the mercy and forgiveness He extends.
- It’s not right to give a partial message of justice and forget the complete message of the Gospel’s forgiveness and righteousness.

Conclusion:

- God’s will includes saving us to live for Him for eternity when, on our own, we barely know how to plan for our lifetime.
- Choose God’s will. Conform your life’s plan and purpose to God’s good and perfect path.
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Discussion:

- Share a time when major plans were thwarted. What lessons did we learn about the will of God?
 - Maybe during this Covid period, we've learned something about God's will.
- How do we make the adjustment from making plans for our life apart from God and making plans for our life depending on God's will? How do we know when we're including God's will in our plans? How does this change our attitude?
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