

Sunday, May 3, 2026 pm

**STUDIES IN JAMES (16)**  
**“If the Lord Wills”**  
**James 4:13-17**

Tonight we continue our study through James. In our last lesson, we wrapped up our discussion of “wars” among us. We have been noting wars on 3 fronts: Against God, one another and ourselves. We discussed the solution to avoiding and resolving such conflicts found in vs. 7-10, - we must submit to God, resist the devil, draw near to God, cleanse our hands and purify our hearts, mourn & repent, and then humble ourselves before Him. This will lead to treating one another with kindness (vs. 11-12). Tonight, we will continue with the next section – as we discuss making plans.

**I. Including God in your plans**

- a. Planning is a part of life. We make plans for our careers, our families (marriage, children, etc.), retirement and vacations. We make plans for our homes and many other things.
- b. Planning is good, but there is a right way to plan and a wrong way. That is what James is concerned about. He begins this section by warning about leaving God out of your plans. We will get to that in a few moments, but we want to begin by noting what he said we OUGHT to do: say, ‘If the Lord wills, we will do this or that.’
- c. The importance of planning – planning is an important part of our lives.
  - i. We need to be making plans – they help us anticipate problems as we move ahead and make preparations for the unknown (anticipating crisis). Plans help to give our lives purpose. The one who acts impulsively without planning often finds himself in trouble. Plans are also a mark of maturity as they demonstrate responsibility and forethought. They are a bridge between the present and the future.
  - ii. Proverbs 15:22, *Without counsel, plans go awry, But in the multitude of counselors they are established.* Proverbs 16:3, *Commit your works to the LORD, And your thoughts will be established.* The word *thoughts* implies planning (most versions). Proverbs 16:9, *A man’s heart plans his way, But the LORD directs his steps.*
  - iii. David made plans for the building of the temple, even though he was not the one to build it – because that was God’s will. Nevertheless, he made preparations for Solomon to get started – 1 Chronicles 22:5
  - iv. Nehemiah made plans to repair the walls of the city of Jerusalem. Zerubbabel made plans for rebuilding and repairing the temple after return from captivity (Ezra).
  - v. God made plans – when we think about God’s “plan of salvation” we see planning. As soon as Eve and Adam sinned, His plan was put into effect (Genesis 3:15). Remember that Jesus came at the exact planned time.
  - vi. Jesus while on earth made plans – He made plans to go to certain places, and ultimately as He set His face toward Jerusalem, we see Him making plans.
  - vii. Paul made plans – His preaching journeys were not done without preparations. Acts 15:36 – he consults Barnabas to go back and visit the churches they had helped to establish. (NOTE: This is a text that points to a change in plans). Acts 18:20-21 – being asked by the Corinthians to stay a little longer, Paul declines having plans to be in Jerusalem by a specified time. 1 Corinthians 16:5-9 – he announced his plans to visit the Corinthians again. Etc.
- d. The importance of including God in your plans
  - i. James 4:15 notes that as we make plans we declare, “if the Lord wills”. This is putting our trust in Him and THINKING ABOUT His will as we make our plans.

- ii. Consider the cost of discipleship – Luke 14:28-33 finds Jesus declaring that we need to make plans as we follow Him. Being a disciple is not a flippant decision. Jesus spoke of one intending to build a tower, and of an underdog king preparing for war.
- iii. Being a Christian means that we have the goal of reaching heaven when this life is over – 2 Corinthians 5:9-10 – we make it our aim to be well pleasing to Him. Recall the words of Jesus in Matthew 16:26 Jesus noted, “*What profit is it to a man if he gains the whole world and loses his own soul...*”

## II. Careless planning

- a. Much of what James said about planning here involved the wrong type of planning.
- b. ***He is addressing those who were making plans and did not consider God’s will***
  - i. The tower of Babel – Genesis 11:1-3 – mankind intended to make a tower to the heavens, failing to consider God’s will. He confounded man and defeated their purpose.
  - ii. More than once, kings of Israel and Judah were rebuked for turning to their neighbors for protection rather than turning to God. This never succeeded.
  - iii. The parable of the rich fool – Luke 12:16-23 describes rich man who failed to appreciate the blessings of God in his plans. He likely had enough resources to last his life and beyond. But God required his soul that night.
  - iv. How many today make their plans, sometimes wicked or sinful plans, and at other times they do so not thinking about God? Most of the world is on this path refusing to retain God in their knowledge (Romans 1:28). People that choose careers or relationships based upon purely physical aspects – e.g., a job that takes you somewhere that does not have a faithful body of God’s people; or marrying an unbeliever – cf. 2 Corinthians 6:14, etc.
- c. ***The folly of leaving God out of your plans -***
  - i. You do not know what will happen tomorrow - you cannot predict the future! Man makes plans, but NEVER can he do so with 100% certainty. Things happen – they break without warning, disease can cripple a society or life, etc. Recall again the rich fool. 2 Corinthians 6:2 – *For He says: “In an acceptable time I have heard you, And in the day of salvation I have helped you.” Behold, now is the accepted time; behold, now is the day of salvation.*
  - ii. Your life is a vapor – fragile and will end. Vapor is very temporary.
    - 1. Solomon in Ecclesiastes described our life as a vapor, *grasping for the wind* – some 9 times he used that expression.
    - 2. 1 Chronicles 29:14-15 – David, toward the end of his life as he is preparing Solomon to replace him praises God. In that praise he notes, *But who am I, and who are my people, That we should be able to offer so willingly as this? For all things come from You, And of Your own we have given You. For we are aliens and pilgrims before You, As were all our fathers; Our days on earth are as a shadow, And without hope.*
    - 3. Psalm 39:4-5, David wrote, “*LORD, make me to know my end, And what is the measure of my days, That I may know how frail I am. Indeed, You have made my days as handbreadths, And my age is as nothing before You; Certainly every man at his best state is but vapor.*”
    - 4. Psalm 90:10-12, *The days of our lives are seventy years; And if by reason of strength they are eighty years, Yet their boast is only labor and sorrow; For it is soon cut off, and we fly away. Who knows the power of Your anger? For as the fear of You, so is Your wrath. So teach us to number our days, That we may gain a heart of wisdom.*
    - 5. The truth is, we are all going to die – Hebrews 9:27 and that will be it as far as our life and choices are concerned.
- d. ***Now you boast in your arrogance*** – descriptive of the one who thinks you do not need God (either completely or with certain plans). All such boasting is evil.

- i. How many today make plans thinking only of themselves, or putting themselves first? And when it comes to accomplishments it is about them? They brag about what they have done and want others to know about it.
- ii. In our text, James describes them as *arrogant* (arrogance). The Greek word for arrogant means to be prideful. The word is only used 2x in NT, here and 1 John 2:15 – “the pride of life” which is a lust. The idea is found elsewhere including 2 Timothy 3:1—5 where we find the “list of selfishness”.
- iii. God demands that we be humble – Recall James 4:6 – God resists the proud, but gives grace to the humble. Proverbs 27:1-2, *Do not boast about tomorrow, For you do not know what a day may bring forth. Let another man praise you, and not your own mouth; A stranger, and not your own lips.*

### III. To him who knows to do good...

- a. We conclude this section with an observation we occasionally quote.
- b. We often emphasize sin as things that we do that we should not do. One might “brag” or judge himself as righteous because he is not involved in sinful activities. “I don’t steal, lie, cheat, use profanity, gamble, drink, lust, etc.” Or they might even plug in some of the things they are doing – “I go to church!” “I read my Bible occasionally and I pray”. Etc. BUT, the question is are you doing EVERYTHING you ought to be doing? For many of us there are more difficult things we put off or ignore all together – trying to reach the lost, rebuking a sinning brother, helping someone with an unpleasant need, etc.
- c. Failing to do what you know is right is equally sinful. We call these sins of omission.
  - i. Matthew 23:23 Jesus rebuked the Pharisees because they neglected “the weightier matters of the law”.
  - ii. The parable of the Good Samaritan (Luke 10:29-37) is a powerful example of failing to do good.
  - iii. So is James 2:15-17 – faith without works is dead.
  - iv. Consider Matthew 25:31-46 – where the sheep and goats are separated. The “goats” specifically were condemned for their omissions.
  - v. Finally, remember Matthew 7:21-23 – it is not enough to profess Him as Lord, you must do what He says. Even SOME good deeds are inadequate, when not accompanied by total obedience.

As we have seen in this lesson, plans are important. BUT when we plan, we must always include God in them. Everything we do ought to “if the Lord wills.” And let us not forget the ultimate purpose of these things – we are preparing to meet our God. When we do - what will He say? Think about it!