

## 05.01.11 / James 4:13-17

**Passage Insight**

In the preceding passage, James speaks against putting ourselves in a place of judgment over others. At the heart of this is pride – pride in thinking that we are somehow better than others. Today’s passage carries a similar theme, and the “others” in this case is actually God, for when we presume to plan and orchestrate events apart from the Lord, we betray our belief that our plans are actually better and more suitable for us than God’s plans.

As we begin to take a look at the passage, we see that James is not at all speaking against planning. He’s speaking against arrogance. Planning is simply the medium in question. This, however, begs the question, “What does it look like for a Christian to plan?” Let’s take a look at this.

James is telling us that we need to seek the Lord’s will, not our own, as we look to the future. According to James 1:14-15, our own will leads to death: “But each person is tempted when he is lured and enticed by his own desire. Then desire when it has conceived gives birth to sin, and sin when it is fully grown brings forth death.” In direct contrast to our own will, John 6:40 shows us that the Lord’s will leads to life: “For this is the will of my Father, that everyone who looks on the Son and believes in him should have eternal life, and I will raise him up on the last day.” We see in this that the first step in planning in accordance with God’s will must be following Jesus as Lord. Often, however, we treat God as a consultant rather than as Lord. We will go to him for His opinions, His insight, or maybe even His help, thinking of Him more as our advice line than the authority over all things. Here’s how this plays out. It’s as though we’re saying, “God, what do you think I should do? I’ll take your opinion into consideration when making my decisions . . .”, instead of saying, “God, only You and your ways have any value. Make me like you so that my every move is in line with YOUR will.” When this happens, we find ourselves measuring success in this way:

- Create expectations
- Work to meet our expectations
- If we meet them, we call ourselves successful, taking credit for the success
- If we fail to meet them, we call ourselves unsuccessful, beating ourselves up (or blaming others for our failure)

If we follow Jesus, however, our planning, working, and measuring look very different:

- We believe in the One that God has sent (John 6:40)
- We pray, asking that the Lord’s will be done (Matthew 6:10)
- We take godly action as stewards of the resources God has given us (Matthew 25:14-30)
- We trust the Lord with the outcome

Proverbs 27:1 warns: “Do not boast about tomorrow, for you do not know what a day may bring.” We are creatures, and God is the Creator. When we believe ourselves to be the authors of our lives, to be capable of orchestrating outcomes by our sheer desire to see something happen, we are in essence worshiping ourselves and writing God out of the equation. This is not the mark of someone who believes in Jesus, as we see in Romans 1:25.

Again, in all our planning our focus should be on the Lord’s will, not our own, and that according to John 6:40, the will of the Father is “. . . that everyone who looks on the Son and believes in him should have eternal life, and I will raise him up on the last day.” Our hope for the future rests therefore not in our desires, not in our actions, and not in our plans, but rather in the finished work of Jesus Christ, the Son of God.

**Application Questions / Prayer****Planning In Arrogance**

- 1) What are you planning right now?
- 2) Where are you failing to consult the Lord as you make these plans?
- 3) Who are you trusting when you do this (yourself, someone else, an institution, money, etc.)?
- 4) How would you go about your planning differently if God were to primary in your life?
- 5) How might your plans change as a result?

**Temptation and Desire**

- 1) What is your greatest hope as you plan your future?
- 2) Where is there the possibility for temptation in this, per James 1:14?
- 3) Where are your desires not the desires of God?
- 4) How can your desires be brought in line with God's desires?
- 5) How will your plans change as you desire what God's desires?

**Ignoring the Truth**

- 1) Where are you avoiding doing the right thing in your life right now?
- 2) What are you hoping this sin will provide for you?
- 3) How are you convincing yourself that this is better than the Lord's provision?
- 4) How is the Lord's provision actually better?
- 5) What would need to happen for you to trust Him instead of yourself in providing what's best?

**Sources**

- Prayer
- Pillar