



5.1.11/James 4:13-17

Materials Needed

None!

Read James 4:13-17

Now listen, you who say, "Today or tomorrow we will go to this or that city, spend a year there, carry on business and make money." Why, you do not even know what will happen tomorrow. What is your life? You are a mist that appears for a little while and then vanishes. Instead, you ought to say, "If it is the Lord's will, we will live and do this or that." As it is, you boast in your arrogant schemes. All such boasting is evil. If anyone, then, knows the good they ought to do and doesn't do it, it is sin for them. (NIV)

Discussion:

Can you think of a time where you were really excited to play outside and all of a sudden a thunderstorm moves into town and your plans get rained out? Maybe you were going to go to the park with some friends, or play in a soccer game and next thing you know . . . the sky is completely dark and it's pouring! This is one example of how God sometimes has different plans than the ones we make for ourselves. In today's passage, James warns us that we should be careful of holding on too tightly to our plans and to remember that God has the ultimate control over lives.

Questions:

1. In this passage, James gives an example of the kinds of things we say about our plans. "We will go to this or that city . . . carry on business and make money." He later says that what we SHOULD say about our plans is "If it is the Lord's will, we will live and do this or that." Do you think that God doesn't want us to make plans for our lives? *No! The problem isn't the planning, but planning as if God were not there and as if WE control our own lives.* God wants us to have goals, and obtaining those goals takes planning. (Ex- If you want to be a doctor, you have to go to medical school and take tests.) What is the right way to plan things for our lives? *Pray to know what God wants for you. Pray that what you are doing will bring glory to His name and not your own. Be willing to accept that the things you want for your life may not be the things that GOD wants for your life.* Give an example of a plan that did not turn out the way you thought it would. *If children have a hard time, point them to the discussion about a rained out game.*

2. Why would someone leave God out of their plans? Look at the last part of the passage and see what James calls our plans. *Arrogant schemes!* Sin in our heart, which many times shows itself as arrogance or pride, leads us to believe that we have control of our lives and that we don't need to consult with God about what He wants for us. Why do you think James calls our boasting (or bragging) about our plans evil? *Because then we are not only fooling ourselves into thinking we have control over our lives but we are telling our friends and families about the plans we've made apart from God. When we do anything apart from God, we are destined to fail. Bragging about our plans or accomplishments also take the glory away from God. Sin is what separates us from God, so any action that is selfish and removes God from the focus of our actions is evil.*

3. We know that when we have a relationship with God through Jesus Christ, there is nothing that separates us from God. Through Christ's work on the cross, we are forever reconciled to God the Father. And as we look to Christ for how relationship with the Father should look, we see that even Jesus, who was fully God and fully human, submitted to God's will for His life. Read Matthew 26:36-42. (Familiarize the children with the story of Christ in the Garden of Gethsemane before He was crucified.)

Then Jesus went with his disciples to a place called Gethsemane, and he said to them, "Sit here while I go over there and pray." He took Peter and the two sons of Zebedee along with him, and he began to be sorrowful and troubled.



Then he said to them, "My soul is overwhelmed with sorrow to the point of death. Stay here and keep watch with me." Going a little farther, he fell with his face to the ground and prayed, "My Father, if it is possible, may this cup be taken from me. Yet not as I will, but as you will." Then he returned to his disciples and found them sleeping. "Couldn't you men keep watch with me for one hour?" he asked Peter. "Watch and pray so that you will not fall into temptation. The spirit is willing, but the flesh is weak." He went away a second time and prayed, "My Father, if it is not possible for this cup to be taken away unless I drink it, may your will be done." (NIV)

God's will for Jesus was for Him to die on the cross to destroy our sin. In this passage from Matthew, how do we see Jesus doing exactly what James tells us we should do? *Jesus prays often and honestly to God. He is open and honest with the Father. It is ok to be open and honest about your feelings with God! But ultimately Jesus says "not as I will, but as you will." Jesus has no expectations about what is to happen and humbly releases all control and authority to God the Father.*

Reflection/Prayer

We will always fight the battle of our will vs. God's will. But when we release our will to the Father, we find peace. God will never abandon you, and His unending love will carry you through all the events of your life, no matter what road you're traveling on.

Pray as a group and throughout this week that you would relent to the Holy Spirit and allow Him to shape and guide your decisions, large and small. Remember that even Jesus, who was fully God, prayed that the Father's will would be done, and not His own. Pray that you would learn to trust God to be in control of your life, and that you would become less arrogant, believing you are the one in charge. Thank God for being a GOOD and LOVING Father, who has and always will provide for your every need. And if there is anyone in the group who wants to know more about following Jesus, invite them to ask their parents more about this!