



## THE BOOK OF JAMES

### SECTION THEME

In this section, James is going to address the humility we must have when it comes to our plans and dreams for the future. There is an arrogance, whether blatant or out of ignorance, that we can have when we decide that our plans for the future are completely in our hands and our control.

### GO DEEPER

Learn more about planning for tomorrow in the following Bible verses.

Proverbs 16:9; Luke 12:22-26;  
Matthew 6:33-34

**What do these verses say about our plans and God's plans?**

**Next time your plans fall through, how might these verses help you?**

**Is there a way for us to make our plans more in line with God's plans for us? How would you do that?**

### JAMES 4:11-17

**11** Do not speak against one another, brethren. He who speaks against a brother or judges his brother, speaks against the law and judges the law; but if you judge the law, you are not a doer of the law but a judge of it.

**12** There is only one Lawgiver and Judge, the One who is able to save and to destroy; but who are you who judge your neighbor?

**13** 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."

**14** 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.

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

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

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

## DIGGING IN

- Making plans is not the problem James is talking about here. The problem is our attitude about the plans we make. **What attitude about our plans is James targeting here?**
- **James talks about “arrogant schemes.” How would you define arrogance?**
- **Do you think it is arrogant to declare your plans without first actually saying the words, “If the Lord wills?”**
- Some do this. It can get a little crazy when you visit a restaurant and tell the waiter, “If the Lord wills, I’ll have the chicken.” Or you get up to use the restroom and say, “Excuse me. If the Lord wills, I’ll be back in a moment.” **Is this really what James is talking about?**
- It’s really about asking: God, Am I really in submission to your will? Am I comparing myself to other people who I consider more arrogant, that I’ve overlooked my own arrogance?...OK Lord, I recognize that my life is in your hand. Every breath is a gift from you. So I surrender it to you now. What do you want me to do?
- **What value do we get from reminding ourselves that our plans ultimately depend on God? Does that change what we do, or how we do it?**
- **How does it make you feel to be compared to “a mist that appears for a little time and then vanishes”?(Verse 14) Does it make you feel insignificant, or does it does it encourage you to live in the now, or something else?**
- Verse 17 raises some questions. **First, what does it mean? How would you put that in your own words?**
- **Now what is it doing here? Does it go with the previous section about making plans? Or should it be put with the next chapter about rich people?** (Note that the chapter divisions were not in the original text.)
- **How would the original readers of this epistle feel about what James says in verse 17?**

## 5 MARKS FOCUS: SHARE YOUR STORY

Take a moment to reflect on a time in your past when you made plans. Were you motivated by carrying out those plans? Did you consider the Lord and his will for you and those plans?

If you did, what did that look like?

If you didn’t, how might you have done better to consider the Lord’s will in your life?

### USE THE 2 OF THE FOLLOWING APPLICATIONS IN YOUR WALK THIS WEEK:

**Prayer:** What plans do you have for your life, your family, your home, your business, your church? Talk with God about these, and then listen. What does He think about all this? If your plans involve others, get them in on the praying, too.

**Chart:** Look back through your life and choose 1 to 3 plans that you made long enough ago to see them develop. Then trace the development of those plans. Did things turn out as you wanted or expected? How did you interact with God through all of that? Did He lead in a certain way and then change directions? Map this process out as creatively as you can, and then examine that *map* of your life. What can you learn from that?

**Seek counsel:** As you consider plans for the future, find a wise Christian friend to consult with. Pray with them and ask their advice on determining the direction where God might be leading you.

**Dare:** Is there something God has been nudging you to do for Him that you’ve been resisting? Maybe you’re worried about what people will think, or you might consider the action dangerous in some way. Keep tuning in to God’s direction here. Get appropriate advice from others who are close to God, but then dare to do it—in the spirit of James 4:17.

### LAST WORD

Sometimes we live as if God does not exist. We conduct our business day to day without thinking a lot about what God wants. We make our plans based on our hopes and dreams, not God’s. We may have a rather moral code of conduct, but we’re not responding to God’s daily guidance.

That’s a problem, says James. A few verses earlier he was urging his readers to “submit yourselves to God” and to “draw near to God and He will draw near to you.” That humble attitude of submission is crucial if we’re going to live for Him in this world. Living in constant communication with Him is necessary if we’re going to be flexible enough to change our plans based on His desires.

**How do we need to change our habits so that we can hear God’s daily guidance and follow it?**