

Godly planning James 4:13-17

We humans love to put each other in **categories**.

- Are you loud or quiet?
- Are you sporty or booky?
- Do you love to dance all night at the party or sit and listen to an orchestra play the best classical music?
- Are you a cat lover or is a dog your companion for life? For me it's neither, the goldfish wins every time!

One more.

Are you a **planner**? Or do you just **roll with** whatever is happening in the moment?

At first glance what we have before us in **James chapter 4** seems to be good news for the **disorganised** and the **impulsive**.

Look at verse 13. **Read verses 13 to 14.**

Over the last few weeks, we've seen that **this letter of James** is practical Christianity on steroids.

It helps us live out our Christian faith in the 24/7 nitty gritty of everyday life as we wait to see Jesus face to face in heaven.

It also helps us identify if we have the genuine faith that saves or the false faith that stinks.

So far we've covered loads of topics. These have included how to respond when hard times come in our direction. How to treat the rich and poor. And how to deal with the disastrous situations caused by our runaway tongues.

Today we are **confronted with the future** and, in particular, we are **challenged about the choices** we are making now in the light of what is to come.

Or to put it in the form of **two questions**:

- What should we be doing in life?
- How should we be doing it?

In **verses 13 and 14** we are introduced to the people doing it wrong.

The spontaneous amongst us may like to claim the big problem is that these people are **planners**, and that things would have been so much better if they just wake up in the morning and are carried along by the wind of the moment.

However, this isn't the fundamental issue according to James. No, the mistakes of these people are in **two** different directions.

First, they wrongly think they are in control of their future.

We're told that these people are super confident about tomorrow.

Their **conversation** is filled with **assurance** and **certainty**.

They are the kind of folk who can walk into a room and everyone around them knows who is in charge.

And yet that's the problem. **They may communicate an air of certainty but they have no idea what's in the air!**

They make their plans to go to this city or that city, stay for the time they have predetermined and do all the business they want.

But what's the truth? Verse 14. **Read verse 14a.**

They don't know what's round the corner. Will a car pull out of a hidden junction? Will pipe burst and destroy their warehouse full of stuff? Will the doctor call with bad news from the recent test results?

In short, they arrogantly make plans based on the foolish notion that they are the masters of their fate and the captains of their souls.

Second, they wrongly think that earthly pursuits are the most important.

It's not just **how** they plan for the future, it's **what** they plan for.

Their focus is on doing everything possible to accumulate more stuff in the here and now.

It's not wrong to have possessions but these folk are spending all their time and talents to add to their earthly treasures.

This is **very sad** and **very stupid**.

It's **very sad** because surely there has to be more to life than the dying with the most toys, whatever those toys happen to be.

It's **very stupid** because we have no idea when the end will come.

Or in the words of **verse 14**, "What is your life? You are a mist that appears for a little while and then vanishes."

Or like one of those **fireworks** that will burst into the sky later this evening. Some will be more colourful than others and some will last marginally longer. But none burns for even a minute. All will vanish into the darkness of the sky above.

Or what about the parable Jesus told about the man with all the cash? If you want to read it later you'll find it in **Luke 12:13-21**. But here is the gist of it.

Read Luke 12:16-21.

Why is the man called a fool? It's not because he is rich. And it's not because he is a planner. But because he is a short term planner. He certainly organised his affairs brilliantly if this life is all there is. But here's the truth This life is not all there is. The rich fool never planned for now in the light of eternity. He never got his relationship with God right.

Western culture – life is fragile but live for the moment in the sure expectation that you will be in heaven regardless!

This isn't true. We need to accept Jesus as Saviour before we meet him as Lord.

Weather forecast – short term is mainly right but the long term is a complete guess. This is the **complete opposite** to how Christians live. Our long term is precision perfect, our short term is a complete guess.

Once we have decided to follow Jesus, **how should we live?**

Look at verse 15. **Read verses 15 and 16.**

I'm sorry if you are one of our impulsive friends and you are hoping for a rebuke for the planners.

The answer to **bad planning** is **not no planning** but **godly planning**.

Godly planning means to look ahead with the confidence that the God of the Bible is in charge of everything **and** that his plans are the ones we should prioritise.

Or to put it another way, it is to plan with God at the centre of everything!

Let's start with the liberating truth that God is in **total control**.

There is not just a something at the heart of the universe, there is a someone. That someone is the God who is Father, Son and Holy Spirit.

This God is both **all-powerful** and **all-loving**.

We need the combination of both truths. How horrible to have an all-powerful God who isn't good and how useless to have an all-loving God who is weak.

The God of the Bible **reveals** himself to be both!

He controls every detail of our existence: the big, the medium and the small. That is everything!

He directs everything for the good of his children and the glory of his name. Our good is to become more like Christ.

The truth that God is in total control allows us to make godly plans. That is, because there is a someone at the heart of the universe, we can make decisions for the days, months and years to come. However, we do all this with a vital caveat. We will do this or that only **if it is the Lord's will**.

Some of you will have come across the abbreviation DV in the context of future planning. It's the abbreviation of the **Latin phrase Deo Volente**, which means God willing.

Vicky told me the story of what happened when her mum and dad got married. Her grandfather sent all the invitations back to the printer because DV had been missed out.

We don't have to use the phrase God willing at the end of every sentence but we do have to believe every time we make a decision that every outcome is determined by the perfect will of God.

That's the **how** of godly planning. But that still leaves the **what**. It's one thing to say DV as we look ahead but we also need to make sure our choices are the godly ones.

Are we investing in things that will last forever?

The kingdom of Jesus is impressive and eternal. The kingdom of Lee is cheap and temporary. Let's use our talents and time to invest in eternal treasures! Let's definitely plan for this. Planning is good! Let's make sure it is **godly**. Which means it is **humble** and **holy**.

How does all this help us? Let me highlight **four** ways.

- It helps with our anxiety

What's the cause of so much depression and fear? That we are not in control of the outcome. We're not but God is!

- It helps with our disappointments

What does God will? Not to make us comfortable but to make us more like Christ and to take us to be with Christ. **Do we accept what God wills?**

- It helps with our prayers

We are allowed to say if in our prayers. It is not a lack of faith.

- It helps with our plans

Are we making gospel plans? A plan maybe for us to understand the gospel better or to participate in some activity to enable others to hear about Jesus? Or maybe a plan to help us grow in knowledge or serve in particular way?

Are these plans big enough? We submit everything to a sovereign God but remember he is the Lord God Almighty. Let's dream big as individuals and as a church!

As we finish let me mention the verse we've said nothing about so far. Verse 17. **Read verse 17.**

Why is it here? Just do it. Now that we've heard, let's live it out.

God is not looking for **a nod of approval** or **our applause**. He wants **action**. Let's take him at his word and do what he says. **Let's pray.**