

WEEK 11

JAMES 4:13-17

READING PLAN

James 4:13-17
Proverbs 3:27-28; 27:1

Jeremiah 9:17-26
Luke 10:25-37

INTRODUCTION

"It's my life, I'll live how I choose." Though very few Christians would have the audacity to actually vocalize such an attitude, most – if not all – functionally live as though we believe it is true. Often we plan days, weeks, months, and even years out into the future with a great deal of presumption, not stopping to put our plans before God and consider his plans for our lives. In the midst of an autonomous, individualistic culture, we live out of a sense that we are in control of our time and activities.

Here James gives a strong warning to those who think they are in control of their own lives: living in presumption is dishonoring to God and reveals the pride within us. We take God's will for granted by rarely acknowledging him in our life plans, and James will help us see why this is dishonoring to God and exhort us, in light of that, to do what is right.

REFLECTION

¹³Look here, you who say, "Today or tomorrow we are going to a certain town and will stay there a year. We will do business there and make a profit." ¹⁴How do you know what your life will be like tomorrow? Your life is like the morning fog—it's here a little while, then it's gone. ¹⁵What you ought to say is, "If the Lord wants us to, we will live and do this or that." ¹⁶Otherwise you are boasting about your own pretentious plans, and all such boasting is evil. ¹⁷Remember, it is sin to know what you ought to do and then not do it. **JAMES 4:13-17**

Look at v. 13. What kind of attitude is James honing in on and addressing in this verse? Would you say it is an attitude that is characteristic of our culture? Does this attitude characterize you?

In v. 14, James addresses the way we view our own life. Do you function as if you do “know what your life will be like tomorrow”?

What point is James making by comparing your life to a “morning fog”? Do you live as though this is true of your life?

In v. 15, why does James tell us to preface our plans by saying “If the Lord wants us to...”? Is the problem with planning for the future primarily a surface issue (the way we phrase our plans) or something deeper?

How are we able to determine whether God wills something in our lives or not? Do you think we can know God’s will with some level of certainty?

How does v. 17 connect with and complete the idea that James has unpacked in vv. 13-16? In light of what he has already said, what would be the thing you “ought to do”?

Have you ever stopped to evaluate your future plans in light of God's will for your life? Take a moment to make a list of some of your future plans – for this week, this year, or even the next five years. How can you begin to evaluate these plans in light of God's will?

IMPLICATIONS

WINDOWS What does this teach me about God? How does this text show God's attributes, character, cares/concerns, tendencies, etc.? What does this reveal about what He's like and how He acts?

MIRRORS What does this teach me about myself? How does this text show my own attributes, character, likes/dislikes, tendencies, etc.?

PICTURES What does this teach me about the way God and mankind should interact? Look for ways we are to live and respond to God for his glory, our good, and the good of others. Specifically...

Starting today, how should I...think?

...feel?

...act?