

THE BOOK OF JAMES

# Faith Works



## **James 4:13-17**

### **Leaving Room For God**

*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.*

*James 4:13-17, NIV*

James had just finished discussing what submission to God looks like. For many of us, we interpret this as a simple explanation to not sin and ignore our fleshly desires. While, this may not necessarily be false, it is limited. Submission to God involves every aspect of our being and our identity. All of our plans, our wants, and our desires are placed in the hands of the Lord. Thus, the idea of tomorrow belongs to God. While we all may make plans or revel in our ability to achieve those plans, God's plans must come above our own. Furthermore, James exhorts us to not boast in our own abilities but in the grace and guidance of God.

## Future Plans In God's Hands

No one doubts that we should plan ahead for our lives. It is reckless to not have some sort of plan for our lives or a direction we are looking to go. However, this plan should at a minimum have room for the presence of God. We can make our own plans and expectations of how we should make a living, but all of us must be okay with God's intervention and radical direction of our plan.

- Where do you see James discussing the future plans of people and safety for careers etc? What is James trying to communicate through verses 13-14?
- What plan do you have for the future, career, marriage, etc? Is this plan based in what you feel and want or God's direction? How do the two motivations differ
- Why can it be a scary thing to have God radically redirect our plans and our safety? Would we be willing to let go of our plans if God called us to?
- What are some of the challenges and pressures in figuring out our future plan with God? What encouragement do you have for others going through the same thing?



## Boasting In Our Own Abilities

For others, though, the plans we have for our lives leave no room for God and we rejoice and celebrate our own skill. Some will hear the calling of God and forever run from those same plans. It isn't a question of what we should or should not do, but rather a failure to trust in the goodness and truth of God. Sin is the abandonment of and treason against God. God calls every person to a specific plan and direction for their lives. It then falls on us and our responsibility to follow God. In pursuit of righteousness, we follow God wherever he leads and boast in the greatness of our God and the path he has for our lives rather than our own skills and abilities.

- What does James mean when he talks about boasting in your own arrogance? What does it mean to boast in your own arrogance? Have you ever been guilty of doing this?
- When have you ever struggled with following the plan that God has set before you? What gave you pause or caution in obeying the thing that God called you to do?
- How do our plans tend to compare with the plans that God sets before us?
- In what ways does following God for our future and security reveal and display the faith we have in our Savior?