

Message #15**James 4:13-17**

There is a specific group that exists in business, in government, in communities, in schools and in churches. The group is typically given the title “the long range planning committee.” Typically, it is their responsibility to look ahead at the future needs of something and ascertain information about what needs to be done in the present. Then they take that information and present it for consideration to a board or to a CEO.

There is a long range planning committee that is very dangerous. In fact, you are on that committee. Whether or not you realize it, you on the long range planning committee of your own life and it is possible for you to actually think in ways that are evil and sinful.

For example, would you say that right now you are living your life in evil sin? Now probably most of you are saying what kind of crazy question is that. I don’t go out and get drunk. I am not immoral. I do not steal. I don’t lie. I don’t cheat. I don’t murder people. I am not living my life in evil sin. I am trying to watch what I say.

Many Pharisees thought the same thing, but frankly they lived life on their own terms and made decisions without one thought about God. The people were religious; the people worshipped God but they were living their lives like some practical atheist and James said that is evil sin.

Making any plans without God is evil sin. No matter how well-planned or organized, it is evil sin.

What James says here is this:

BELIEVERS WHO MAKE FUTURE PLANS WITHOUT CONSIDERING THE SOVEREIGN WILL OF GOD ARE ACTUALLY COMMITTING EVIL SIN.

Future plans are subject to change. We should never make any future plans as if we are in complete control of things. We must always think in terms of allowing for God’s sovereignty. He controls everything so to plan anything apart from Him is evil.

God should be part of our lives and planning every day. Our dependency should be on Him every day of our lives and we should want Him controlling every aspect of our lives.

Notice how **verse 13** begins, “come now.” This is a way of saying you need to pay close attention to this.

Now there are four different concepts James presents:

CONCEPT #1 – People who talk about future plans without God are positive planners and are systematic thinkers. **4:13**

Here is the way successful people think and plan and talk. Four facts are brought out about them:

Fact #1 - They pick the right time to go. **4:13a**

The words “we will go” are definite words. They had a definite plan. They are picking their time. They do not consult God, but their plan was to make a move today or tomorrow. Obviously they sensed the need to get moving. To them the timing was right and the timing was now.

Fact #2 - They pick the right city to go. **4:13b**

They had obviously picked some city. The pronouns “such and such” are definite demonstratives. They had picked a specific city and could point to it on a map. They probably analyzed traffic in and out of the city and they had done their marking research and they were ready to make the move.

Fact #3 - They stay the right amount of time to have the business succeed. **4:13c**

They had planned this out to the very year. They had done enough research to know that if they stayed in that specific city a year, they would succeed. Their plan was go to this city and invest a year in this business endeavor.

Fact #4 - They plan to make their profit. **4:13d**

This of course was what this was all about. They are going there to make a profit. This is the whole reason for this move. They are moving to make a profit.

Now there is no hint that any of these business people are putting God into the formula.

They are making their plans and they are carrying out their plans. They had made their worldly plans and to them the future looked rich and bright. They had just left out one thing—God.

Heinrich Meyer, who wrote a commentary on the Greek text of James, said they were aiming for “carnal security” (*James*, p. 140). They had carefully calculated all their moves. They would have been rated high on Wall Street. They would be viewed as business winners. They are progressive and they are expanding and they are investing. **But there was one big problem. The problem was they left out God.**

CONCEPT #2 – People who make future plans without God don't know future truth. **4:14**

It doesn't matter how smart, bright, successful or shrewd one may be, there are three future realities that they don't realize. They overlooked three realities.

Future Reality#1 - They did not acknowledge God in their plans.

The verse begins in Greek with a relative pronoun that is translated “you” in English, but it actually refers to people such as you. These were people who were telling others they were right with God, yet when it came time for them to make their plans, God was not even taken into consideration. To make any plan without acknowledging God is foolish.

Future Reality #2 - They did not know what their life will be like tomorrow. **4:14a**

The word “know” is an interesting and rare Greek word James uses. It is a word that means to know in the sense of having an understanding of something (G. Abbott-Smith, *Greek Lexicon*, p. 174).

These people saw themselves as real achievers and James says with all your planning you have no clue as to what tomorrow will even be like. Proverbs 27:1 says, “Do not boast about tomorrow for you do not know what a day may bring forth.”

I don't care what the plan, it is always tentative and it is always subject to the sovereign will of God. We don't know what tomorrow will bring. We don't know what will happen in the next 10 minutes. A person's dreams can vanish overnight. **Wise are those people who keep God in everything, including their daily and future plans.**

Future Reality #3 - They did not know how long they had to live. **4:14b**

James said these people were making their plans and had no clue how long God would even let them live. In fact, James says life is like a vapor. It appears for a moment and then it is gone.

Now the word “vapor” referred to a vaporous mist that could be sensed in the dry Palestinian air. Water would form in the air, but they quickly disappear. James is saying our life is like that. Our life is like steam from a kettle or smoke from a fire which is quickly carried away by the wind and gone.

Job called our life a mere breath (Job 7:7). David called our life nothing but grass and a flower that flourishes for a moment and then is gone (Psalm 103:15-16).

Anyone who has any sense knows life is brief. Now what James says is that life is like a vapor that appears and “then vanishes away.” Those words are a passive participle, which means something from the outside causes the life to vanish and that something is God.

God is the one who gives life and God is the one who takes life and if you leave God out of your life, you are foolish.

Steve Jobs has been described by some of the best business adjectives in the world. His worth today would be over 30 billion dollars. He has been described as an entrepreneur, business magnate, inventor, industrial designer, chairman and CEO. He was so successful that he said when it comes to God I am not a theist or atheist but 50-50. He was on top of the world, but what he didn't know is that at age 56, he would be dead. He had it all and then it was all gone.

There are many people who invest their entire life to accumulating great wealth for retirement. Then they retire and die. What good was the investment? Leave God out of the investment and it is no good at all.

Let me give you a couple of names and see if they mean anything to you.

William Kelly and Henry Bessemer. Do those names mean anything to you? In 1855 they discovered that iron mixed with oxygen produces steel. In 20 years they became two of the wealthiest men in the world. Practically speaking, they owned the steel industry. They were the big names in the world. Kelly lived to be 77 years old and Bessemer lived to be 85. They really made it. Now they are both gone and it seems odd that we don't even remember their names.

Leave God out of your plans and leave God out of your life and you will end up nothing more than a vapor.

CONCEPT #3 – People who make future plans with God are wise talkers and thinkers. **4:15**

A key to proper life is never lose track of the sovereignty of God. This is the key to coping with life.

James says when you make business plans you better keep God right in the center of those plans. Wise are those who realize God's sovereign will reigns over everything.

This will be the conviction of the hearts of people right with God. They will realize that if the Lord wills, it will happen. If the Lord wills, we will do this or that.

Now the implication is that we need to "do this and that." In other words, we cannot sit down and do nothing and expect God will prosper us. However, in all of our work, we must leave room for the sovereignty of God.

Do you see what is said in this verse? "If the Lord wills, we will live..". Do you understand that? Our very life is from God. The fact that our heart beats is from the Lord. This is true concerning our physical life and it is also true concerning our spiritual life. We live if the Lord wills it. We sure don't have life by our will. We have it by His will. Wise people understand that.

CONCEPT #4 – People who make future plans without God are evil boastful sinners.

4:16-17

Truth is in James day, people didn't think like this and they didn't talk like this. They were proud, arrogant boasters. They never thought about God's Word or will. It was all about them.

There are a lot of people like that. There are many arrogant, evil, boastful, obnoxious people who never consult God. They never pray and they never even bring Him into their plans about anything.

They live in a state of ignorance and arrogance. They think they are calling the shots. They have no sense that God is sovereign.

This kind of person is evil.

In **verse 17**, God says therefore, the one who knows the right thing to do, but does not do it; he is committing evil sin. Do you see that? If you leave God out of any plan, it is sin.

Now there is nothing wrong with careful planning. In fact, a wise man carefully counts the cost. There have been those in history who did keep God first and did succeed.

Three names of people who did succeed and did put God first were Milton Hershey, R. G. Letourneau and James Kraft.

But as God's people we must always purpose to keep God first in everything. We need to talk with Him and commit our ways to Him and He will direct our paths.