

Wednesday in the Word  
Digging Deeper  
September 2, 2020  
James 4:13-17  
No Agenda

It's pretty obvious to many of us that life is short and we tend to live it fairly selfishly. As we grow in Christ we learn the value of other centeredness and have heard it preached through our lessons in James. It is quite common for us to make plans hoping to see some reward, be it monetary or even simply self satisfying. Verse 13. We may even think that since life is a vapour (Gr; Atmis; a mist) we ought to carry out our plans and be quick about it. By the way, has life been like a fresh morning breeze? The Greek word for 'tomorrow' is defined as such. In Jesus, it should be. Verse 14. The meat of this passage implies we ought to check with God to see if our plans fit His will. Verse 15. More on that later. James has taken opportunity to scold us in his letter (see the previous 12 verses) and in verse 16 it seems he is still in the mood to do so. I'm sure we need it. The evil boasting here (Greek; braggadocio) speaks of a self confidence that is hurtful to others. We love to report to others about happy times and circumstances in our lives but we should first consider the effect our news may have on our listeners. They may be suffering heartache and the last thing they need to hear is your triumphant celebration of accomplishment. Not to throw water on your joyful fire but do be sensitive to the needs and condition of others. Here again James has lectured us well on these matters. (All of chapters 2 and 3) I myself have used verse 17 out of context simply because it fits every part of life. Knowing good and not performing it is sin. Here though, the context adds to the flavor of this warning. We can see two "sins of omission" if you will, in today's text. One is skipping God in our decision making process. The other is bragging about our self made "blessing" while ignoring the pain we may cause for our brother or sister. The book of James is continually speaking of our relationships with others. We can comfortably refrain from conflict (Romans 12:18) but we must also consider the stresses and burdens of those around us and how we can best lift others up. (Romans 14:19, Ephesians 4:29)

All that to say this. (This is the 'later' part, mentioned earlier) Should we bring our plans to the Lord for His blessing or should we go before the Lord with no agenda? Is it not best to enter into His Throne Room with an open heart and mind? Would it not be best to ask Him what His plans are and how we might best fit into them? Imagine for a moment that you've created a wonderful way to serve God in some place and time and worked out all the details. You enter in before the Creator and lay your scheme at His feet and ask His blessing. He's loving, benevolent and gracious and He may say something like this... "If that's how you'd like to serve me I will allow it but I wish you'd asked me if I might have made other plans for you." Have you thought about that? God has plans for us that we never even learn of because we've already stepped out on our own. It's right to ask His blessing but it is better to ask His will. Not His will about your plans but His will aside from your plans. We often compare our relationship with God to a subordinate military one. What army private tells his General how the day ought to go? He will instead show up on time and ask for his orders. God's plan may be in direct opposition to yours. Every one of us has some plan for tomorrow. How many of us will ask the Lord, first thing

in the morning, if He has plans that completely alter ours? How do we respond to an inconveniently timed phone call, a day of weather that ruins our plans, a string of red lights and slow drivers when we are in quite a rush, an unplanned visitor dropping by? What about a serious illness, a death, a broken relationship, or 6 months of a mysterious virus and a canceled vacation? When our plans get changed it can be frustrating but when we fully surrender our rights to make plans to God's Sovereign Will and His right to direct our steps we can rest on knowing we are serving Jesus willingly. No personal agenda. He wants us to plan and work and vacation and fellowship and He will bring those things to be. Even more He wants us to rest at his feet and await our marching orders. Your whole tomorrow could radically change to become the most blessed time of life. That was a lot of commentary without scripture. Ready for some?

John 3:30, Proverbs 3:5-6, Isaiah 64:4, 1 Corinthians 15:58, Matthew 6:24, 1 Chronicles 28:9, Matthew 16:24, Matthew 7:21, Galatians 2:20, Jeremiah 29:11, Proverbs 16:9, 19:21, Jeremiah 1:5, Ephesians 2:10, Psalm 138:8, Matthew 6:33, John 5:30, Matthew 26:39,42. Finally, let's consider young Samuel who was but a youth with no plans of his own and was fully open to the calling of God. 1 Samuel 3:7-19. If we are preoccupied with our own concerns we may miss the voice of the Lord who desires to command our path. God's Word is a continuing exercise in watching Him interrupt the lives of His people. Is He interrupting yours?