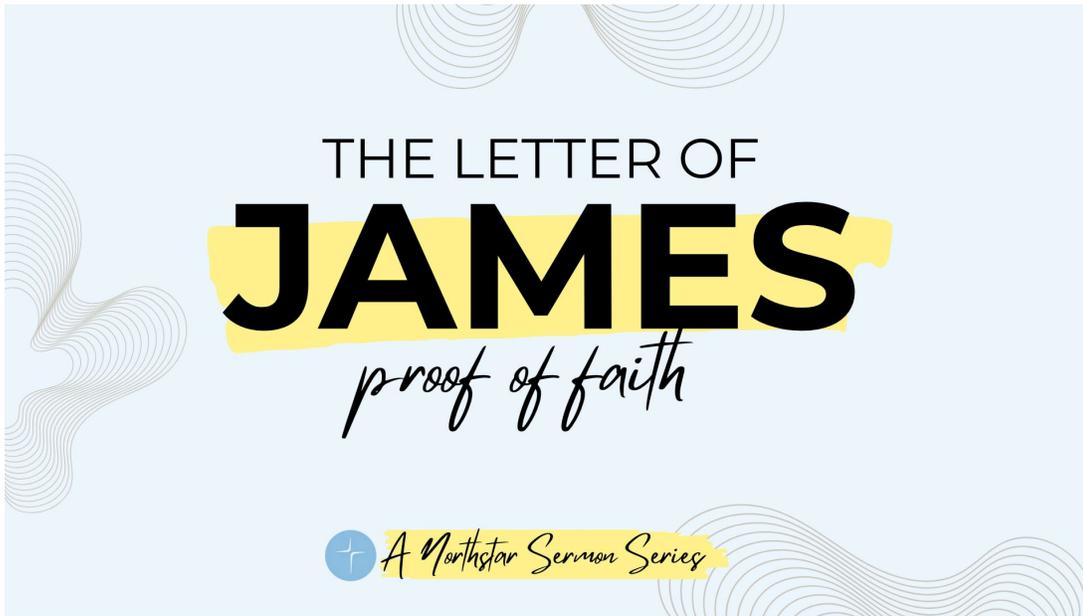


James 4:13-17 - The Audacity of Planning

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INTRO

Planning. Strategic thinking. Productivity. How many of you have bought an app or use a planner that is supposed to enhance your organization and thinking? Do you use the Reminders app on your phone, or do you go old school with a list? Those of you in business... what systems, websites and tools does your company use? Slack? What CMS? What CRMs? Salesforce?

The productivity market is over \$100 billion annually. People are capitalizing on our need to simply get things done.

- Productivity software.. Estimated **\$110B global market in 2026**, Projected **\$195B by 2031**
- Productivity apps... **~\$12B in 2025**
- AI Productivity Tools (fastest growing)... **~\$10B in 2024**, projected **~\$116B by 2034**

- Physical tools - like journals, planners, calendars (and all the stickers and pens to go with them)
- Marketed self-improvement - TED talks, courses, influencers ~\$45B annually

All of this designed to help us and our companies, churches, homes **to manage our todays and tomorrows!** We are obsessed with being in control and steering our lives. We are willing to pay money for anything that promotes our progress, accomplishment and growth.

So today's text in James... it stuns us.

TEXT

"Come now, you who say, "Today or tomorrow we will travel to such and such a city and spend a year there and do business and make a profit." Yet you do not know what tomorrow will bring — what your life will be! For you are like vapor that appears for a little while, then vanishes.

Instead, you should say, "If the Lord wills, we will live and do this or that." But as it is, you boast in your arrogance. All such boasting is evil. So it is sin to know the good and yet not do it." (James 4:13-17)

The stages of their planning:

1. Intent - "we will travel"
2. Destination - "to such and such a city"
3. Length of stay - "spend a year there"
4. The what - "do business" (make widgets)
5. The purpose - "make a profit"

Stages of Planning in v13

- Intent - **"we will travel"**
- Destination - **"to such and such a city"**
- Length of stay - **"spend a year there"**
- The what - **"do business" (make widgets)**
- The purpose - **"make a profit"**

"Come now" - here and in 5:1 - only place in NT. An urgency to their understanding is implied. The **"now"** is emphasized. *Now* is the time to understand, to respond, to adjust. Resolve NOW to receive this truth and align your life with it.

James also seems to be repeating the point and power of one of Jesus' parables. Look at Luke 12:13 -

Someone from the crowd said to him, "Teacher, tell my brother to divide the inheritance with me." "Friend," he said to him, "who appointed me a judge or arbitrator over you? "

Let's stop for a moment. Jesus' words here... they are essentially where we left off in James last week. Sean concluded with v12:

"There is one lawgiver and judge who is able to save and to destroy. But who are you to judge your neighbor?" (James 4:12)

As we've consistently pointed out in our study, **James mirrors Jesus' teachings**. James is dialed in to helping his scattered congregation **apply** Jesus' words to their lives.

Let's continue...

[Jesus] then told them, "Watch out and be on guard against all greed, because one's life is not in the abundance of his possessions." ("To make a profit" in today's passage...)

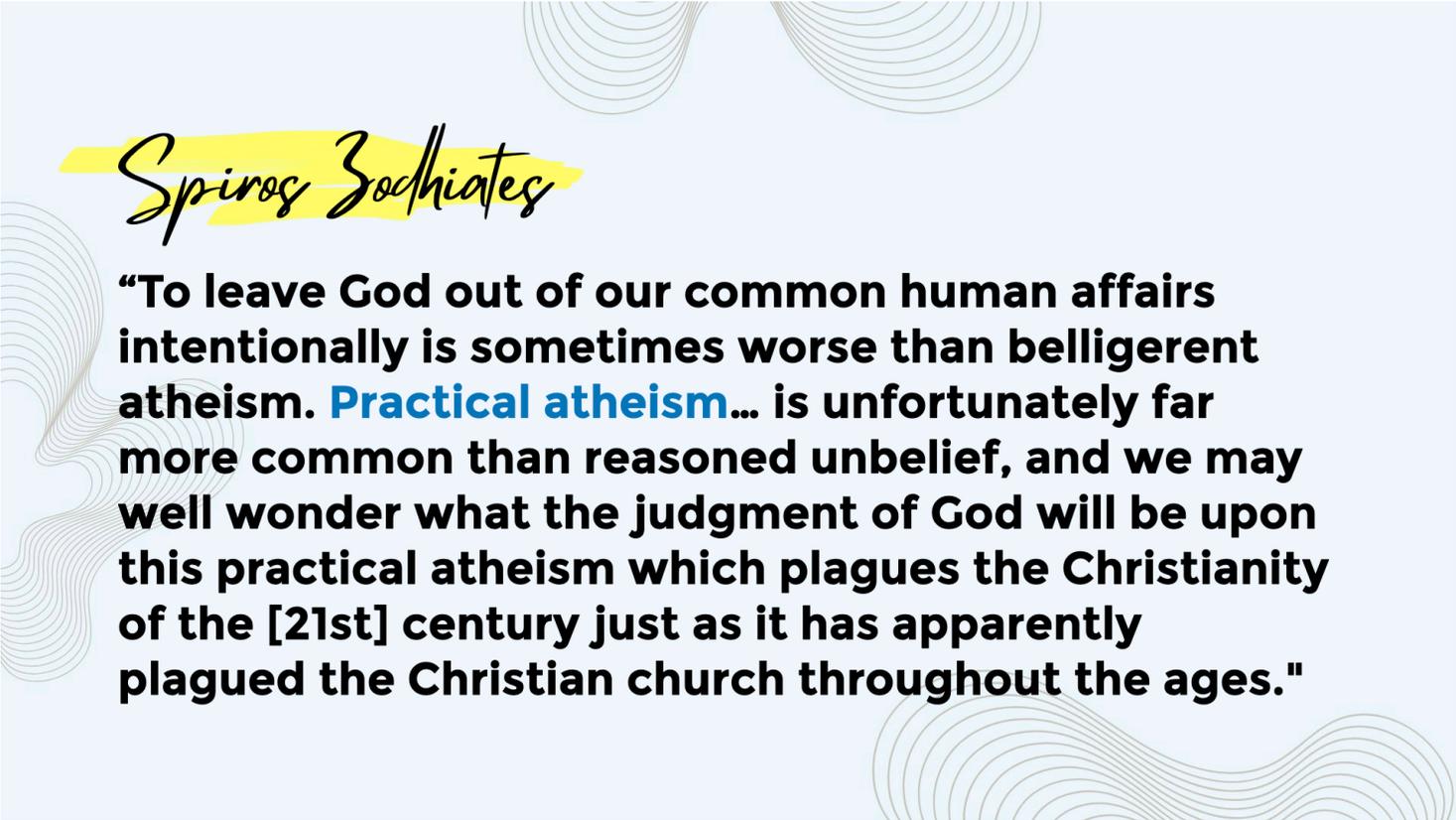
Then he told them a parable: "A rich man's land was very productive. He thought to himself, 'What should I do, since I don't have anywhere to store my crops? I will do this,' he said. 'I'll tear down my barns and build bigger ones and store all my grain and my goods there. Then I'll say to myself, "You have many goods stored up for many years. Take it easy; eat, drink, and enjoy yourself." '

"But God said to him, 'You fool! This very night your life is demanded of you. And the things you have prepared — whose will they be? '

"That's how it is with the one who stores up treasure for himself and is not rich toward God." (Luke 12:13-21)

The **sin of presumption** infects much of our planning and strategy. This effective exclusion of God from the affairs of our lives is practical atheism. Zodiates said that "practical atheism... is far more common than reasoned unbelief."

"To leave God out of our common human affairs intentionally is sometimes worse than belligerent atheism. Practical atheism... is unfortunately far more common than reasoned unbelief, and we may well wonder what the judgment of God will be upon this practical atheism which plagues the Christianity of the twentieth century just as it has apparently plagued the Christian church throughout the ages." (Spiros Zodiates)



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“To leave God out of our common human affairs intentionally is sometimes worse than belligerent atheism. **Practical atheism... is unfortunately far more common than reasoned unbelief, and we may well wonder what the judgment of God will be upon this practical atheism which plagues the Christianity of the [21st] century just as it has apparently plagued the Christian church throughout the ages.”**

Even in our churches, there's a "church growth" industry. Do these things, and you'll grow your church!

James introduces a heart-stopping and planner shredding uncertainty. He introduces a spiritual virus into the mainframe of our productivity servers.

"Yet you do not know what tomorrow will bring..."

“Don't **boast** about tomorrow, for you don't know what a day might bring.” (Proverbs 27:1)

Planning with disregard for God's sovereign will is a disaster in the making. Adhering to rigid plans in spite of hints, checks, warnings and counsel otherwise is unwise. We do this personally. We do this in society. In business. And in the church.

"...what your life will be!"

James sobers us up. We are a vapor. A mist. Our very lives and health are sustained by God Himself. ***We live in constant presumption.*** James will invite them to a better way of thinking, but let us stop here for a moment.

Suppose you were to die today.

What have you been putting off? What have you been presuming you had more time for?

"Seek the LORD while he may be found; call to him while he is near." (Isaiah 55:6)

"But encourage each other daily, while it is still called today, so that none of you is hardened by sin's deception." (Hebrews 3:13)

"See, **now is the acceptable time; now is the day of salvation!**" (2 Corinthians 6:2)

There is an indispensable NOW to things of the Spirit. Do not wait. Do not put off. Do not presume. It is why James began this section with "**Come now.**"

**I can't.
Jesus can.
I surrender.
God, save me.**

**God, I realize afresh that I am a sinner.
I have tried to live by my own wits, my own will, and
my own strength. I repent.
I need Your promised grace and full forgiveness.
I believe Jesus died for my sins and rose again.
I admit my sin and place my full trust in Jesus alone.
I know that my works cannot save me.
Please save me, forgive me, and make me new.
I surrender my life to You.
In Jesus' name, Amen.**

***"For everyone who calls on the name of the Lord
will be saved." (Romans 10:13)***

"Instead..."

James said that we should say, "If the Lord wills, we will live and do this or that."

This is not a formula or empty magic phrase to recite. "Lord willing, and the creek don't rise..." You can't simply attach words to your plans and baptize them thinking you're safe from arrogance and presumption. James here is talking about an attitude in addition to humble confession. *"I've made plans, but my hands are open, and my heart is ready to adjust if God redirects."*

"To live in the recognition that God - not the human being - is in control is to choose a Christian life of humility before God." (Ralph Martin)



Ralph Martin

“To live in the recognition that God - not the human being - is in control is to choose a Christian life of **humility before God.”**

We should tread lightly in planning. There is a thin veil between our planning and our boasting about tomorrow.

Questions to ask:

- Is our planning a declaration of our defiance?
- Is our planning a rejection of God's guidance?
- Does our planning reflect apathy, indifference or unbelief about relying upon God?
- Does our planning reveal a dependence on God's enablement?
- Is our planning saturated with gratitude and humility?
- **Are we willing to place our planning before God and seek His pleasure?**

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The converse of **not boasting** about tomorrow is found in Matthew 6:34 -

"Therefore don't **worry** about tomorrow, because tomorrow will worry about itself. Each day has enough trouble of its own." (Matthew 6:34)

"But seek first the kingdom of God and his righteousness, and all these things will be provided for you." (Matthew 6:33)

Matthew 6:33 is Jesus' antidote to both worry and irreverent planning.

Principle: Put God's kingdom squarely in the center of your plans.



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The Sin of Omission

"So it is sin to know the good and yet not do it."

That's a powerful verse. It not only speaks to those who have been living in presumption. It speaks to a broader issue of proactively living for God.

"They cannot take refuge in the plea that they have done nothing positively wrong; as Scripture makes abundantly clear, sins of omission are as real and serious as sins of commission." (Douglas Moo)

Douglas Moo

“They cannot take refuge in the plea that they have done nothing positively wrong; as Scripture makes abundantly clear, sins of omission are as real and serious as sins of commission.”

The person who knows the good and resorts to inactivity will be held as accountable as the person who embraces an active bad. We cannot plead ignorance. Knowledge of right to be done obligates us toward righteous action.

“And that servant who knew his master’s will and didn’t prepare himself or do it will be severely beaten.” (Luke 12:47)

How to Plan Righteously:

1. **Trust that God has a plan, and it's better than yours.** Seek to know Gods plans in scripture and align your life accordingly.

“For I know the plans I have for you” — this is the LORD’s declaration — “plans for your well-being, not for disaster, to give you a future and a hope.” (Jeremiah 29:11)

2. **Recognize that we all have *ultimate* motives in our planning.**

"A person's heart plans his way, but the LORD determines his steps." (Proverbs 16:9)

"The heart is more deceitful than anything else, and incurable - who can understand it? I, the LORD, examine the mind, I test the heart..." (Jeremiah 17:9-10)

3. **As best you can, identify your desires, motives and wishes. Then in humility, lay out your plans before God in prayer.**
4. **Filter your plans through prayer and counsel. Listen. Ask for advice.**

"Plans fail when there is no counsel, but with many advisers they succeed." (Proverbs 15:22)

5. **Be willing to release your plans if God redirects. Some of the best moments in life result from God's gracious interruptions.**
6. **Make sure your plans involve doing proactive good.**
7. **Proceed in joy and love.**

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What are you planning today?

What is on your to-do list? In your Reminders app? Have you bathed your simplest plans in prayer? Have you invited God into your todays and tomorrows?

Make Jesus the central piece of your plans. God made your salvation the central piece of Jesus' death and resurrection -

"He made known to us the mystery of his will, according to his good pleasure that he purposed in Christ as **a plan for the right time** — to bring everything together in Christ, both things in heaven and things on earth in him." (Ephesians 1:9-10)

Mark on your howdy card your next step.

Resources:

- [*The Epistle of James*](#), by James Adamson (New International Commentary on the New Testament; Eerdmans: 1976)
- [*The Letter of James*](#), by Douglas Moo (The Pillar New Testament Commentary; Eerdmans: 2021)
- [*James: Faith that Works*](#), by Kent Hughes (Preaching the Word Commentary; Crossway: 2015)
- [*James*](#), by D. Edmond Hiebert (Moody Bible Institute: 1992)
- [*The Message of James*](#), by J.A. Motyer (The Bible Speaks Today Series; IVP: 1985)
- [*Faith, Love, and Hope: An Exegetical Commentary on James*](#), by Spiros Zodhiates (AMG Publishers: 1993)