

Study Guide | James 4:13-17

I. Bible Study

1. V. 13. - Is James condemning making a profit? Making plans? What exactly is James saying is wrong? Summarize the mentality being condemned in this passage (vv. 13-17).
2. V. 14 - Consider the following analogies for human life: mist (James 4:14), smoke (Psalm 102:3), grass (Psalm 103:15), breath (Job 7:7), wind (Psalm 78:39), dream (Psalm 90:5). What do all of these images suggest about the nature of our life? How does each analogy uniquely contribute to this main idea?
3. V. 15 - Along with James 4:15, read Proverbs 15:22, Proverbs 16:3, Proverbs 16:9, and Proverbs 19:21 (in the ESV translation). Construct a brief biblical approach to planning:
4. Do we literally have to say “if the Lord wills” before every statement about the future? Why or why not?
5. V. 16 - What does it mean to “boast in your arrogance” (ESV)? How might these verses tie back to earlier verses about humility and submission (James 4:6-10)?
6. V. 17 - In your own words, what does James mean by this last verse?



II. Application

Pick a few to consider...

1. What are your plans right now? Anything you're looking forward to or dreading? How can you submit those plans to the Lord? How would that submission change your outlook?
2. Many policies and much of our political understanding is predicated on modeling and forecasting. Is this wise or advisable? Is it wrong to *try to* predict the future?
3. How do you react to this reminder of mortality (v. 14)? Is it helpful? (Needful? Stressful? Depressing? Sad?) How might the brevity of life affect your attitudes, actions, and prayers? How do we keep such reminders in front of us without becoming morbid?
4. Give some examples of bold plans that people make for their lives, businesses, futures, or family goals. What is the danger of thinking like this? What would a humble attitude towards our plans look like?
5. What word would you use to describe your attitude toward the future? How does this passage change your perspective?
6. Personal reflection: Is there something you've been putting off until tomorrow that know you need to do now, something you need to make right *today*?