

*James – Life after Faith*  
**James 4:13-16**  
**“Putting D.V. on Your Date Book”**

- 1. WHAT IS THE AIM OF YOUR LIFE?**
  - A. To increase their profits**
  - B. To inflate their pride**
- 2. WHERE IS THE ASSURANCE OF YOUR LIFE?**
  - A. Your perspective is too shallow**
  - B. Your path is too short**
- 3. WHO IS THE AUTHORITY OF YOUR LIFE?**
  - A. Only God can give you life**
  - B. Only God should guide your life**

1. There was a time when Christians would sign letters and correspondence with the initials “D.V.” The Methodists were known to put the same letters on posters and flyers advertising their events.

2. What does “D.V.” mean? It is an abbreviation of the Latin phrase, “Deo Volente”, which simply means “God Willing”. No doubt, the practice of using that phrase arose from the passage of Scripture before us.

3. In the latter portion of James 4, Bro. James addresses those who plan their lives without any thought to the will and work of God.

4. If you are not careful, you will live life as a practical atheist. What I mean is that while you may profess a belief in God, you will live your life as if He does not exist.

5. There is nothing wrong with making plans, setting goals, and thinking about the future.

6. The problem comes when you fill in the date book of your life without ever considering the fact that God alone knows the future, and He alone knows what is best for you.

7. With that mind, James teaches us in this text that every plan we make and every path we take ought to be prefaced by the prayer, “Deo Volente” – God willing!

8. There are three questions that I want to draw out from this passage of Scripture. As I pose them to you, ask the Holy Spirit to help you to answer them honestly.

9. Looking at this text, the first question I want to ask is this:

**I. WHAT IS THE AIM OF YOUR LIFE?**

1. Look at verse 13. James says, *“Go to now, ye that say, To day or to morrow we will go into such a city, and continue there a year, and buy and sell, and get gain.”*
2. James calls out those who are planning out the business of their lives, and he challenges them about their plans.
3. This verse is dealing with more than just plans for the future, however. The plans these men were making revealed the ambitions and aims of their hearts.
4. With that being said, what is the aim of your life? What is it you want to accomplish and achieve? The way you plan for your future will be dependent upon whatever it is you are aiming for in life.
5. Notice the aim of these men in this passage. It could be that your aims are similar to theirs. Notice first of all, their aim was:

#### **A. To increase their profits**

1. James addresses a group of business-minded men who looked at a map, picked out a city, and planned to go there in order to do business and make money.
2. Their plan was simple, *“...we will go into such a city, and continue there a year, and buy and sell, and get gain.”*
3. Their whole point in planning this trip and planning their future is found in the last two words of the verse, “get gain.”
4. These men were passionate for profits. Their aim in life was to make the next dollar and to earn more money.
5. There is nothing wrong with making money, but if making money is your only aim; then *you* are wrong.
6. Psalm 62:10 says, *“...if riches increase, set not your heart upon them.”*  
Proverbs 11:28 says, *“He that trusteth in his riches shall fall: but the righteous shall flourish as a branch.”*
7. Someone once said that the greatest lesson he learned from life was that people who set their minds and hearts on money are all disappointed whether they get it or not.
8. Is money your motivation? Is your aim only to get gain? Do all your plans center on profits?

9. Notice something further we see here regarding the aim of your life? These men James addresses in this text were not only aiming to increase their profits, but their aim in life was also:

### **B. To inflate their pride**

1. Jump down to verse 16. James speaks to the same group from verse 13, and says, *“But now ye rejoice in your boastings: all such rejoicing is evil.”*

2. Notice that word “boastings”. It describes “loud-mouthed arrogance”<sup>i</sup>. It is the picture of someone who goes around bragging about all they have done.

3. One writer translates verse 16 this way: “You get a certain pride in yourself in planning your future with such confidence.”<sup>ii</sup>

4. These men James addresses proudly planned all the things they were going to do. Listen to them say, “We *will* go to that city. We *will* set up our business. We *will* make money.”

5. Theirs is a cocky confidence that loves to boast in its own abilities and achievements. They want to succeed, not just for profits, but their own pride.

6. James says, *“...all such rejoicing is evil.”* Proverbs 6:17 says that among the six things God hates, the first is “a proud look.”

7. Proverbs 16:5 says, *“Every one that is proud in heart is an abomination to the LORD...”* In Isaiah 13:11, God says, *“...I will cause the arrogancy of the proud to cease...”*

8. Think about your life. What is your aim and ambition? Is it to make as much as you can, and get as high as you can so that you can then look with pride at all you have accomplished?

9. Lyndon Johnson delivered a speech in 1965 that became known as “the Great Society” speech. After it was over, a supporter congratulated him on the speech saying, “Mr. President, they applauded you 79 times!” L.B.J. answered, “No, sir, it was 80 times. I counted while I was giving the speech.”<sup>iii</sup>

10. James challenges us to consider the aim of our lives by pointing us to those who live life only to increase their profits and inflate their pride.

11. Notice a second question we draw from this passage. Consider not only *what is the aim of your life*, but think also secondly about this:

## **II. WHERE IS THE ASSURANCE OF YOUR LIFE?**

1. James touches on the issues of greed and pride in verse 13, however the real point of this text becomes clear when you move into verse 14.
2. There we read, *“Whereas ye know not what shall be on the morrow. For what is your life? It is even a vapour, that appeareth for a little time, and then vanisheth away.”*
3. The real problem with the businessmen in verse 13 was their presumption about the future. They were absolutely sure about their lives. They had no doubts about tomorrow, and were assured of seeing their plans fulfilled. At least so they thought.
4. The truth James is trying to get us to see here is that we really have *no* assurance regarding our earthly lives. We are not guaranteed another month, or even another moment.
5. In light of this, it is foolish for us to just assume we have a multitude of days ahead of us, and to plan out our lives as if we are guaranteed of living them out.
6. James gives two reasons why we should not be assured about our life here on earth. First of all:

**A. Your perspective is too shallow**

1. In verse 14, James says, *“Whereas ye know not what shall be on the morrow...”* Literally, James says that we cannot know what tomorrow will hold.
2. We can speculate and prognosticate about the future, but we can never be absolutely sure *what* we will see tomorrow; or even if we *will* see tomorrow.
3. Proverbs 27:1 says, *“Boast not thyself of to morrow; for thou knowest not what a day may bring forth.”*
4. I had the date marked on my calendar. On that day, I would be strapped into a 600 hp race car, and take several laps around the Atlanta Motor Speedway at the Richard Petty Driving School.
5. I had lain awake at night, imagining the scouts from different racing teams approaching me with contract offers to drive their cars after seeing my skills behind the wheel.
6. However, when the day came that I had dreamed about, rather than driving a race car, I was riding a hospital bed after having a kidney stone removed.
7. I thought I knew what that day would be like. It was nothing like my dreams.

8. We may think we know what a day is going to look like, but in reality we never know exactly what tomorrow will bring. Our perspective is just too shallow and shortsighted.

9. You cannot be assured about your future, not only because your perspective is too shallow, but notice also that:

### **B. Your path is too short**

1. Look again at verse 14. James says, *“For what is your life? It is even a vapour, that appeareth for a little time, and then vanisheth away.”*

2. Literally, James compares our lives to a mist that is briefly seen, but then dissipates and disappears.

3. We may at times look into the distant future, and make our plans for days that seem so far away, but it is foolish to do so because even if we see those days, they will be here and gone before we even realize it.

4. How many times have you heard someone say, “Where have the years gone?” Or we often say of something in the distant past, “It seems like only yesterday...”

5. What the Word of God is teaching us in this verse is that there is an uncertainty and a brevity to life that should keep us from feeling so assured about our futures.

6. Your path in this world is too short to be presumptuous about where you’re going and what you are going to do with your life. Time moves too fast to fulfill all your plans and dreams.

7. In 2007, a film was released starring Jack Nicholson and Morgan Freeman. The film was entitled *The Bucket List*. In the movie two terminally-ill men try to finish their list of “to-do’s” before they “kick the bucket”.

8. The truth James confronts us with is that we better be careful what we put on our “bucket list” because we will trip over the bucket before we realize we are anywhere near it.

9. In short, we have no assurance of our lives on this earth. We cannot be certain about tomorrow.

10. That leads me to the third and most important question we draw from this text. I want you to consider not only *what is the aim of your life?* And, *where is the assurance of your life?*, but lastly, consider this question:

### **III. WHO IS THE AUTHORITY OF YOUR LIFE?**

1. Bro. James says, "Some of you are making big plans for the future, scheming and speculating about what you are going to do. The problem is; you don't even know what is coming in the future, and your life is nothing but a vanishing fog."
2. In light of that, James gives us some critical instructions in verse 15. He says, "*For that ye ought to say, If the Lord will, we shall live, and do this, or that.*"
3. In other words, in light of all we do not know about the future, it would be wise for us to trust a higher Authority with the decisions and direction of our lives.
4. I believe that this is the single greatest struggle in the life of most Christians today. Will we give the full control of our lives to Jesus Christ, or will we insist on making our own decisions?
5. Is God's perfect will going to guide us or are we going to stumble blindly ahead as if we know better than He does what we need to do?
6. James says what we ought to say is what Jesus said in the Garden of Gethsemane: "...*nevertheless not my will, but thine, be done* (Luke 22:42)."
7. Notice what the Word of God teaches us in this verse about who should be the authority of our lives. Notice first of all that:

#### **A. Only God can give you life**

1. In verse 15, James contends that rather than presuming we are going to live for years to come, or even for another day, we should instead say, "*If the Lord will, we shall live...*"
2. The truth is, if you breathe for another second it is because God gave your lungs permission to do so.
3. Life is gift; not a guarantee, and the only One who can give life is Jesus Christ. In Colossians 1:16 and 17, Paul says of Jesus, "*For by him were all things created...and by him all things consist.*"
4. Oh friend, you may think your life is in your hands, but that is like a rooster taking credit for the sunrise. Your crowing is nothing more than a testimony to the fact that God has done His work.
5. With that in mind, rather than planning out the years of your life as if you can guarantee them, you ought to give what life you *do* have to the only One who knows how much you *will* have.

6. William Phelps was a professor of English Literature at Yale University. Once he came across a very curious answer to a question on his final exam of the fall semester.

7. The student had written, “Only God knows the answer to this question. Merry Christmas.” Phelps wrote on the paper, “God gets an ‘A’; you get an ‘F’ – Happy New Year!”<sup>iv</sup>

8. There are some things that only God knows. One of those is the span of your life. He alone can give you life, and therefore we should say and believe, “...*if the Lord will, we shall live...*”

9. When it comes to the question of who will be the authority of your life, remember that only God can give you life. Further, we are taught here that:

### **B. Only God should guide your life**

1. In verse 15, James contends that rather than planning and scheming our own paths in life, we should say, “*If the Lord will, we shall live, and do this, or that.*”

2. It is only by the will of God that we shall live, and likewise, it should be only *according to* the will of God that we do whatever we do while we live.

3. Here is the heart of what James is getting at in this text. The will of God should be what we pursue while we have the breath to pursue it.

4. This life *is* but a vapor. It is short, but eternity is long. What we do in this short life on earth directly affects what we will experience in the eternal life that is to come.

5. Jesus understood this. Listen to Hebrews 12:2. It says, “*Looking unto Jesus the author and finisher of our faith; who for the joy that was set before him endured the cross, despising the shame, and is set down at the right hand of the throne of God.*”

6. Jesus accepted the Father’s will on earth, and went to the cross, knowing fully that in eternity His death would bring joy both to Himself and to those He had saved.

7. Following His example, we ought to decide that seeking and doing the will of God in this vapor-like life is the wisest thing we can do in light of the glory which is to come.

8. The great Baptist pastor, George Truett, once said, “To know the will of God is the greatest knowledge; to find the will of God is the greatest discovery; to do the will of God is the greatest achievement.”

9. It is really a decision of two wills – two authorities – in your life. You can say with the business men of verse 13, “I will,” or you can say with James in verse 15, “the Lord will.”

1. God is not opposed to plans. He does not expect us to think nothing of our future, or to live as if there is no tomorrow to be reckoned with.

2. However, God is opposed to those whose plans exclude Him and His will.

3. As followers of Christ, we are called to deny ourselves, and to go where we are led and do as we are told by the Lord Jesus.

4. With that in mind, as we seek His direction for our lives in the future, we ought to let the Holy Spirit tattoo the letters “D.V.” on our hearts, and we ought to make no plans without praying, “Deo Volente” – God willing!

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<sup>i</sup> Blanchard, John, Truth for Life, (Evangelical Press, Darlington, England, 1986), p. 313

<sup>ii</sup> Phillips, J.B.

<sup>iii</sup> Popularity Counts, *anecdote.com*, accessed 3/11/10, <http://www.anecdote.com/index.php?aid=6723>

<sup>iv</sup> Q & A, *anecdote.com*, accessed 3/11/10, <http://www.anecdote.com/index.php?aid=3545>