

HOW TO FACE YOUR FUTURE
Developing a Faith That Works - Part 12 of 15
James 4:13-17
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Americans have always been a forward looking people. We have always been we're obsessed with the future. We have 10 days until the 2008 presidential election. And every Newscaster and Pundit are trying to predict who will be the next U.S. President. I am certain that 95% of them will make some prediction blunder. How can be so certain: will last year every one thought that Hillary Clinton and Mitt Romney would be the candidate. Also, none of the so called experts saw Sarah Pallin as a possible running mate for John McCain. Human being have a hard enough time navigating through the present let alone predicting the future.

James in this passage talks about how to face the future. He says there are three mistakes that are commonly made that we should be aware of. He gives us a warning. He says plan for your future but be aware of these three mistakes.

He illustrates the first mistake with a typical conversation between a couple of businessmen. One guy has his MBA from the University of

Jerusalem and the other is the CEO of a Tel-Aviv 500 company.

They're talking and discussing their plans. In v. 13 we drop into their conversation, *"Now listen you who say, Today or Tomorrow. We will go to this or that city, spend a year there, carry on business and make money."* What's wrong with this? People make plans every day. These are just a couple of entrepreneurs, go-getters. There is detail in the business plan; they have it all planned out.

When? Today or tomorrow. Where? This or that city. How long? We'll spend a year there. What? We'll carry on business. Why? Make money.

What's wrong with this? The Bible doesn't condemn making a legitimate profit. The Bible talks a lot about planning too. This man has planned everything. His purpose, the place, the progress. He's got all the bases covered. What's wrong here?

1. James says the first common mistake we make is PLANNING WITHOUT GOD.

There's not a single mention of God in this entire business plan. He knew what he wanted, he knew how to get there, but he didn't check it out with God first. Don't misunderstand. The Bible talks about planning. *"No man*

goes out and builds a house without first considering how much it's going to cost." And the book of Proverbs says over and over again that if I don't plan I'm a fool. It's wise to plan. He's not talking about planning, he's talking about presumption without God. It's great to have dreams, it's great to have goals -- as long as you include God, as long as you pray about it. There's nothing wrong with what he did -- all of these things are fine. It's what he forgot to do. He forgot to include God. His attitude was one of self-sufficiency. Planning without God is practical atheism.

What's the solution? Include God in your goal setting. v. 15 *"Instead, you ought to say, 'If it is the Lord's will, we will live and do this or that.'"* Circle "if".

Have you realized that even the best laid plans of mice and men often fall through? There's a thing called Murphy's Law. If things can go wrong, they will. Count on it! Life is just one big if. Right in the middle of LIFE is IF. Life really is pretty if-fy. I don't know what's going to happen tomorrow, you don't either. I can make an educated guess. But planning without God is presumptuous. The starting point in facing the future is to say, "God, what do you want me to do. What do You want

me not to do." Planning without prayer is presumptuous. He says we should preface all of our planning with the phrase, "if the Lord wills".

Couldn't that become a cliché? Of course. You could trivialize it.

But he's not saying that. He's saying that the whole attitude of our life should be "It's up to God."

2. The second mistake is PRESUMING ABOUT TOMORROW.

Taking it for granted, assuming I'm going to live forever, I've got the rest of my life. v. 14 & 16 *"Why you don't even know what will happen tomorrow. What is your life? You are a mist that appears for a little while and then vanishes. As it is, you boast and brag. All such boasting is evil."* There are a couple reasons we shouldn't presume about the future and assume that we've got tomorrow.

1) Life is unpredictable *"you don't even know"*. None of us know what's going to happen today much less next year. All we can do is make guesses.

No one would have predicted the Rays in World series. Did any financial expert for see the banking failures and bailout for 2008? Life events teach us that you can't presume on tomorrow. We shouldn't let that frighten us, that life is uncertain. Don't worry about it or be afraid. Just let it cause you

to trust God more. Let it cause you to be more dependent on God. You don't know what's going to happen in your life or your business. It just forces you to trust God more. Life is unpredictable.

2) Life is brief. *"you are a mist"* "Mist" in Greek is "atmos" where we get the word "atmosphere". Your life is like fog; it rolls in, in the morning but it burns off by noon. Who knows how long we're going to live? None of us do. How does the Bible describe your life? It uses phrases like a leaf, grass, shadow, cloud, puff of smoke, vapor. I'm only one heartbeat away from eternity. I don't know how long I'm going to live. Life is short. It goes so fast from hot wheels to wheelchair. Diapers - Dignity - Decay. Life's brief. Watch out and don't presume you have the rest of your life. Don't take tomorrow for granted.

Isaiah 56:12 *"`Come,' each one cries, `...Let us drink our fill of beer! And tomorrow will be like today, or even better!'"* Do you know anybody with that kind of attitude? Life is great! Let's party! Let's get drunk! Bring on the beer! The guys who say this have a bumper sticker on their camel: "It's party time in Jerusalem!" Live it up and have fun. We're going to live

forever. Tomorrow's profits will be better than yesterday. I will tell you who has that attitude: the fat cats at fanny mae and Freddy mack. James says that's a dumb attitude toward life. You can't presume that tomorrow is going to be just the same as today. You must plan and save for the bad times that are down the road.

Let me share with you what I think your goals ought to be.

Don't presume on tomorrow. What's the solution? Matthew 6:34 (LB) *"So don't be anxious about tomorrow -- God will take care of your tomorrow too. Live one day at a time."* Live one day at a time, that's how God says to face the future. The future could be overwhelming but fortunately it comes in bite-size pieces, a 24-hour segment at a time. Plan for the future but you can only live now. I can't live the future, I can only live today. Plan for the future but take advantage of the present. "Life is what happens to us while we're planning something else." Instead, include God in your planning and make the most of today. Live life one day at a time.

3. A third common mistake is PUTTING OFF DOING GOOD.

"Anyone then, who knows the good he ought to do and doesn't do it sins." (v. 17) James is talking about the issue of procrastination. "I'm intending to do it."

How do you define sin? We think of evil activities: murder, commit adultery, cheat, lie, steal. Those are sins of commission. But there's another kind of sin -- sins of omission. *"To him who knows to do good and doesn't do it, it's sin."* I can do nothing and still sin. Because there are things I ought to be doing. You can be a part of a legalistic church. "I don't drink, smoke, cuss or chew... run around with girls that do." You don't do anything but you still forget God in your life. Christianity is more than simply avoiding evil. If all that the Christian life was, was a bunch of "don't"s -- don't do this, don't do that, then everybody who is dead would qualify as a Christian, because they don't do anything.

Procrastination is a subtle trap -- it's the land of "Someday I'll..." "One of these days ..." and you never do because we presume upon tomorrow.

"One of these days I'm going to get serious about God. I'm really going to get committed." God says you don't have any guarantee of tomorrow, none at all. The solution is "Do it now". Proverbs 3:27-28 *"Do not withhold good from those who deserve it, when it is in your power to act. Do not say to your neighbor, 'Come back later; I'll give it tomorrow' -- when you now have it with*

you." If somebody comes to you and asks you a favor, don't say "tomorrow -- later". Don't procrastinate. If you can do it now, do it now. The way we face the future is by doing what God has given us to do today! The way we have certainty about tomorrow is obeying God today. The way we know we will have our spouse tomorrow is loving them today. How we keep our house is paying what we can on the mortgage today!

Prayer:

Would you simply pray a prayer like this? Maybe you've never opened your life to Jesus Christ.

Maybe you're not sure you have. Settle it today. Are you absolutely certain if you die you'd go to

heaven? You can be sure. Simply do what the Bible says. Give your life to Christ. He's the

bridge to God. Pray, "God, I want You in my life. I realize You made me for a purpose. I want

to know what that purpose is. As much as I know how, Jesus Christ, I ask You to come into my

life and make Yourself real to me. Help me to understand it more. I want You to be the Chairman

of the Board in my life. I want You to call the shots. Lord, I don't want to do planning without

You. I want to open up my heart to You. Today." The Bible says, "Right now God is ready to

welcome you." Today He is ready to save you. Today's your day. God didn't bring you here by

accident. Today's your day. Say, "Jesus, yes. I want You in my life. I want to be a Christian.

Help me with my problems." He will.

Others of you are saying, "I know I'm a Christian. I know I've got God in my heart." The greatest mistake in life is to forget God, to leave Him out of your life. Even Christians can do that. We can go to church on Sunday, talk about the Lord, and never say "Hi" or "Bye" again, consult Him, or have any reference, much less, preference in our business, our families, our marriage, our schoolwork. Some of you need to pray, "Lord help me not to plan without You. I want You in my plans. I want to know what Your will is. Lord, help me to live one day at a time. Help me to plan for tomorrow but to live in today, to not worry but to trust." The Bible says, "God will take care of your tomorrow too." We don't know what the future holds but we do know who holds the future.

That's security. Maybe you would say, "Lord, help me to stop putting off doing what I know I ought to do." Maybe it's to get involved with a church. Maybe it's to get help with a problem. Maybe it's to change careers. Maybe it's to restore a relationship. I don't know your heart but God does. Today's the day. Don't procrastinate. Say in your heart, "Lord, help me to do what I know is right to do."

Father, I thank You that You are here today. I thank You for your presence and for Your word that it's practical and it applies to our lives in areas we need it most. Help us to trust more, to not depend so much on our own ability and ingenuity but realize that You hold the keys to the future and when our life is in Your hands, that's the safest place to be. Help us to do what we know we

ought to do. In Jesus' name. Amen.