

Who's in Control?



Start Talking. Conversation starter for your group.

- Did you ever have plans that got changed by a completely unforeseen circumstance?
- How did you react to that interruption or ruination of your plans?

Start Thinking.

- Read James 4:13-17
- Discuss:
 - We all make plans. We have to or things would be a mess. I had to plan to lead this study today. You had to plan to be here. You have to plan to do a presentation for work or study to pass an exam. You have to plan to have someone pick up your kids from school activities if you can't do it. Making plans is not the problem James is talking about here. The problem is our attitude about the plans we make.
- What attitude about our plans is James targeting here?
- How would you define arrogance?
- Do you think it is arrogant to declare your plans without first actually saying the words, "If the Lord wills"?
 - Some do this. It can get a little crazy when you visit a restaurant and tell the waiter, "If the Lord wills, I'll have the chicken." Or you get up to use the restroom and say, "Excuse me. If the Lord wills, I'll be back in a moment."
 - Is this really what James is talking about?

Start Sharing

- What value do we get from reminding ourselves that our plans ultimately depend on God? Does that change what we do, or how we do it?
- Is James saying we shouldn't make plans for the future? What's the point of making long-range plans if you don't know what tomorrow will bring?
- How does it make you feel to be compared to "a mist that appears for a little time and then vanishes"? Does it make you feel insignificant, or does it encourage you to live in the now, or something else?
 - Think of a teakettle and the steam that comes up from it, he says that's you. We'll see you for one second, then you're gone. And here you are saying, "well here's what I'm going to do tomorrow, in fact here's where I'm going to go and I'm going to spend the next year there." And James is saying, "do you not understand, that is complete arrogance?"
- How do we need to change our habits so that we can hear God's daily guidance and follow it?

Start Doing

- What plans do you have for your life, your family, your home, your business, your church? Talk with God about these, and then listen. What does He think about all this? If your plans involve others, get them in on the prayer, too.
- Is there something God has been nudging you to do for Him that you've been resisting? Maybe you're worried about what people will think, or you might consider the action dangerous in some way. Keep tuning in to God's direction here. Get appropriate advice from others who are close to God, but then dare to do it—in the spirit of James 4:17.

Pray/Recite Ephesians 3:16-21

- 'I pray that from his glorious, unlimited resources he will empower you with inner strength through his Spirit. Then Christ will make his home in your hearts as you trust in him. Your roots will grow down into God's love and keep you strong. And may you have the power to understand, as all God's people should, how wide, how long, how high, and how deep his love is. May you experience the love of Christ, though it is too great to understand fully. Then you will be made complete with all the fullness of life and power that comes from God. Now all glory to God, who is able, through his mighty power at work within us, to accomplish infinitely more than we might ask or think. Glory to him in the church and in Christ Jesus through all generations forever and ever! Amen.'