

# Tomorrow Isn't Promised

A deeper companion for the week following this message from James 4:13-17.

James 4:13-17 confronts the arrogance of making plans as though life belongs to us. James does not condemn work, business, ambition, or planning itself. He exposes the pride that treats God like an optional extra while assuming tomorrow is ours to command. Against that self-assured posture, Scripture gives a humbler way: remember the brevity of life, become rich toward God, hold every plan with open hands, and learn to say with sincerity, "If the Lord wills." This guide is meant to help you carry that message through the week so that your plans, priorities, and legacy are shaped more openly by the lordship of Christ.

## How to Use This Guide

Move through one day at a time. Read the passage slowly, sit with the teaching, answer the questions honestly, and use the notes section to write prayers, observations, or what the Lord is pressing on your heart.

Day	Focus
1	The illusion of control
2	Being rich toward God
3	What "if the Lord wills" really means
4	The boast of arrogance
5	Doing the good you already know

## DAY 1

# The Illusion of Control

James 4:13-14

## Teaching

James begins with a picture that feels ordinary enough: people making plans, choosing a city, mapping out a year, doing business, and expecting profit. None of that is wrong in itself. The problem is not planning. The problem is planning as though tomorrow belongs to us. James presses on the arrogance beneath the confidence. We speak as if life is ours to schedule, secure, and master, yet we do not know what tomorrow will bring. That is why he asks, "What is your life?" His answer is humbling. Our lives are like a mist, here for a little while and then gone. James is not trying to make us passive. He is trying to make us honest. Human life is brief, fragile, and completely dependent on God.

## Reflect

- Where have I been acting as though tomorrow is guaranteed?
- What plans or assumptions in my life have left little room for dependence on God?
- How does remembering the brevity of life change the way I think about success and control?

## Pray

Lord, forgive me for living as though time belongs to me. Teach me to hold my plans with humility and to remember that every breath, every day, and every opportunity comes from Your hand.

## Practice

Look at one plan you have made for the next week or month and pray through it slowly, acknowledging your dependence on God at every point.

## Notes

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DAY 2

# Rich Toward God

Luke 12:16-21 and Matthew 6:19-21

## Teaching

The sermon connects James 4 to Jesus' warning about the rich fool, the man who built bigger barns and spoke in the language of self-assurance: "I will." His problem was not simply that he had possessions. It was that he built his future without reference to God. He thought he had years stored up, when in fact his life could be required that very night. Jesus' point is not that treasure itself is evil. It is that treasure pursued without God becomes empty, temporary, and ultimately useless. That is why Jesus redirects us. Be rich toward God. Lay up treasure in heaven. Let your heart be anchored in what outlasts this world. James and Jesus together remind us that plans, work, and ambition are only safe when they begin with God at the center.

## Reflect

- What kind of treasure am I most actively pursuing right now?
- In what ways am I tempted to build security apart from being rich toward God?
- If someone looked at my calendar, spending, and priorities, what would they conclude I treasure most?

## Pray

Father, keep me from building a life that looks full on the outside but is empty toward You. Reorder my loves so that my plans, work, and ambitions are shaped first by what matters in Your kingdom.

## Practice

Take one ordinary area such as finances, work, or your schedule, and ask what it would look like for that area to become more openly centered on Christ.

## Notes

DAY 3

# If the Lord Wills

James 4:15

## Teaching

James gives the alternative in one simple phrase: “If the Lord wills, we will live and do this or that.” This is not a slogan meant to be tacked onto plans in a shallow way. It is a posture. It means living with God front and center, not as an afterthought but as the One who governs life, direction, and purpose. The sermon rightly pressed this point: believers are not called to stop making plans, but to make them in conscious submission to God. “If the Lord wills” is what it sounds like when a heart has learned humility. It is a confession that life itself is a gift, and that our plans only make sense when they are offered back to the God who gave us life in the first place.

## Reflect

- Do I treat God as the center of my decision making, or more as someone I ask to bless decisions I have already made?
- What would it look like for me to live the next week with a real “if the Lord wills” posture?
- Where do I most need to move from self-direction to submission?

## Pray

Jesus, teach me to live with open hands. Let “if the Lord wills” become more than words for me. Make it the shape of my trust, my planning, and my obedience.

## Practice

Before making a decision today, pause and consciously offer that decision to God. Ask for His will, His wisdom, and His shaping hand.

## Notes

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## DAY 4

# The Boast of Arrogance

James 4:16

## Teaching

James names the heart issue plainly: boasting in arrogance. That is strong language, but it is necessary. The danger is not only in overt pride. It is in the quieter assumption that our plans, abilities, discipline, or success make us self-sufficient. The world celebrates this kind of self-confidence. Scripture exposes it. Success apart from God is still fragile, still temporary, and still on the clock. The sermon pressed that point by looking at the kings of Israel and Judah, where lives shaped by self-will and disregard for God repeatedly led to ruin. James wants us to see that arrogance is not harmless. It is spiritually dangerous because it trains the heart to admire itself rather than rely on the Lord.

## Reflect

- Where am I most tempted to feel self-made, self-secure, or self-directed?
- How has pride shown up in the way I think about work, achievement, or the future?
- What would it mean for me to measure success less by what I accomplish and more by whether I am walking with God?

## Pray

Lord, expose the arrogance I do not naturally see in myself. Keep me from boasting in what is temporary, and teach me to find my security and significance in You alone.

## Practice

Thank God specifically today for the abilities, opportunities, relationships, and provisions you usually take for granted.

## Notes

DAY 5

# Do the Good You Know

James 4:17

## Teaching

James closes by making the issue personal and immediate. Sin is not only doing what God forbids. It is also failing to do what God has made clear. Once truth has been heard, responsibility has increased. That is why this final verse lands with weight. The right response is not vague agreement or future intention. It is obedience now. The sermon put it plainly: we cannot unhear the word once it has gone forth. If we know that our lives, plans, and futures belong under the lordship of Christ, then the right thing to do is to seek Him, submit our way to Him, and follow Him today. The brevity of life makes delayed obedience especially dangerous. Tomorrow is not promised. But today, by God's mercy, is still in front of us.

## Reflect

- What right thing do I already know God is calling me to do?
- Where have I been delaying obedience by pushing it into an imagined tomorrow?
- What step of response can I take today, not later, to put Christ at the center of my plans?

## Pray

Father, keep me from hearing Your word without responding to it. Give me grace not just to admire what is true, but to obey it. Let today become a day of willing, humble response.

## Practice

Write down one act of obedience God is putting in front of you right now, and take the first concrete step before the day is over.

## Notes

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