

CCC HOW TO FACE YOUR FUTURE P12

Developing a Faith That Works - Part 12

James 4:13-17

We're going to look at James 4:13-17 today and see what James has to say about "How to Face Your Future."

Americans have always been a forward-looking people. An article in U.S. News and World Report said right now we're obsessed with the future. We want to know what's going to happen next, next year, next decade, next century. We're preoccupied with the future. It's amazing how people try all kinds of different things to try to forecast the future: tea leaves, fortune cookies, astrology, palm reading. We try many different ways to get a grasp on the future. We read books, subscribe to seminars that forecast the economic predictions. We attend conferences and

seminars on planning and goal setting. What is the Christian viewpoint toward the future? How am I to relate towards what happens? What should be my reaction to that?

James in this passage we read 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 it's good to plan for your future...but be aware of these three mistakes.

He illustrates the first mistake, *"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."* Now tell me what's wrong with this? Whoever this entrepreneur is he is right on with what he is saying... Listen to the detail in his 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. 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. This person 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. But he's not talking about planning there, 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 in those goals, is this direction for your life, 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 and what in forgetting tells us. He forgot to include God. Therefore his attitude was one of self-sufficiency.

This is what James is talking about. You can be a believer and forget God in your daily life. I know a lot of people who love the Lord with all their heart but when it comes to planning their business or career or their school education they are practical atheists. It's so sad to me to meet somebody who says, "I don't believe in God. I don't believe He exists." But it's even sadder to find somebody who says, "I believe He exists," but then acts like He doesn't exist. He doesn't make any plans involving the Lord. He just goes off on his own as if all depends on him.

You say, "I believe in God." Does He have a say in your business? "I don't believe in mixing business and faith."

All business is God's business if you're a believer. Don't plan without God. That's presumptuous. 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. Whatever He wants me to do is what I want."

Christians for hundreds of years used to write the initials D.V. at the end of their letters. They'd sign their name and then write D.V.. They stood for the Latin phrase "Deo Valente" -- "Lord willing". James says that ought to be our response to life. It's OK to plan but include God in your plans and goal setting.

Proverbs 16:1 *"We may make our plans, but God has the last word."* Man proposes, God disposes. Proverbs 16:9 *"We should make plans - counting on God to direct us."*

Stop praying "God bless what I'm doing". Let me encourage don't pray that anymore. God, I've made my plans. I've worked them all out now You bless them.

Instead pray, "God, help me to do what You're blessing." God is doing a lot of fantastic things in the world. I just want to be in on them. Help me to do what You're blessing.

I don't want my plans. I want Your plans in my life because Your plans will provide success in my life.

Planning without God is the first mistake. You overcome it by including God in your goal setting.

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 tonight much less next year. All we can do is make guesses.

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.

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.

Yes, 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." We're always planning what's going to happen in January and miss Christmas.

Psalm 35:15 *"Lord, my days are in your hands."*

Commitment -- that's what James says. Don't make the mistake of planning without God and don't make the mistake of presuming about tomorrow. 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." Ever met somebody who is always "aiming to do it." They find and allow procrastination to rule their life never to become what God has called them to become. They know what to do but they just can't...

Procrastination is my sin,

It only caused me sorrow

I know I ought to change my ways,

In fact I will – starting tomorrow.

We love to put off. James says that's a trap. Listen this is one of the devils biggest trap to stop the work of the Lord. Just because you know the right thing to do doesn't mean you're going to do it. See many people have this thought if

you asked them, "How do you define sin?" They would say or most people would say, "It's when I think of evil activities or act on them: like committing adultery, cheating, lies, stealing. Yes those are sins and they are called, sins of commission. But there's another kind of sin -- sins of omission. That's what James is telling us in verse 17, *"To him who knows to do good and doesn't do it, it's sin."* In other words, you and I can do nothing and still sin. Why, because there are things I ought to be doing. See, you can be a part of a legalistic church. "I don't drink, smoke, cuss or chew... I 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 it 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.

There are three things you can do with your life: spend it, waste it, invest it. You can waste your life; there are a lot of ways. TV commercials will show you lots of ways to

waste your time, money, life. Or you can spend it. You can spend your life trying to acquire things: fame, pleasure. Or you can invest your life. The best use of life is to invest it on something that is going to outlast your life.

What's going to last forever? The Word of God and people. People will last one of two places for eternity.

Invest your life in things that will last -- the word of God and people. Make it count.

Ask yourself, am I making my life count or frittering it away on non-essentials, things that aren't going to count for nothing tomorrow in God's Kingdom. God says, Make your life count -- do it now!

I can do all kinds of things that keep me from doing those no-no sins but if I'm not doing anything in a positive sense, what does it matter? God said it doesn't!

Whatever you intend to do for the Lord, do it now! Not next week, next month, next year.

Thinking about witnessing to a friend and inviting him to church? Do it now!

Thinking about teaching a class and getting involved in Bible study, a small group? Do it now!

Thinking about starting to tithe and giving? Do it now!

2 Corinthians 6 *"Right now God is ready to welcome you. Today He is ready to save you!"* When is the best time to get it together with God? Luke 12 Jesus told a story that illustrates what James is teaching in this passage of Scripture. He tells the story about a man who is very successful in life but he made a very foolish decision. He made the same mistakes that James talks about -- all three mistakes. He planned without God. He presumed about

tomorrow. He put off doing good. v. 16 *"Jesus told them a parable, 'The ground of a certain rich man produced good crop [literally, abundant crop] and he thought to himself "What shall I do. I have no place to store my crops." Then he said, "This is what I'll do. I'll tear down my barns and build bigger ones. And there I will store all my grain and my goods and I will say to myself, 'You have plenty of good things laid up for many years. Take life easy. Eat, drink, be merry,'" but God said to him 'You fool. This very night your life will be demanded from you. Then who will get all that you have prepared for yourself.'"*

This guy has "I" problems -- all he can see is I, himself. Doing "my" thing for "me". God says, "How dumb that thinking is!" You don't know how long you're going to live. Now don't leave here and get morbid about it. Don't worry all the time, "Am I going to die tonight?" I invite

you to give your life to Christ, live your entire life for Christ till He comes and calls you... The fact is, none of us have any certainty how long we're going to be here.

"Right now God is ready to welcome you. Today He is ready to save you!" For some of you, today is your day to give your life to the Lord. Today, not tomorrow. Not next week. Today!

What are your plans for the future? Have you set days, marked your calendar, scheduled appointments and then prayed, "By the way, God, I want You to bless my life." God says that's practical atheism. The person who acts as if God doesn't exist in his planning is no different than the person who doesn't believe He exists. Does God have a say in your schedule or do you just fill it up? Does God have a priority in your planning or do you just fill it up and give Him some if it's left. Some of your time and money, c

James is saying that none of us have any right to just plan our lives as if God doesn't even care. Check in with Him first. Consult Him.

What have you been knowing that you ought to do and you know is the right thing to do but you've just been putting it off for the Lord? ... You say, "Tomorrow I will or someday I'll get around to it." James says, "Do it now." Right now! Don't wait. You've said, "Someday I'm going to give my life totally to God." Why not today? There's not a better time.

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 boss, the manager of 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. Just say, "Jesus, yes. I want You in my life. I want to be a Christian. Help me with my problems." And guess what, 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 allow Him 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 for my life. 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. Do you know what security that brings into the life of those who really trust in the Lord? 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 become involved with this church. Maybe it's to get help with a problem. 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.