

## **James Series – Disciples Give Generously – James 4:13-5:6**

### **SUMMARY:**

This week's sermon was another challenge to us all to align our faith with our actions. In the last few weeks we've looked at how we are to be not only hearers but doers of the Word, how we care for those who are different from us and also how we use our words to encourage and inspire those around us.

This week our reading focused on how we make plans and what we are to do with our finances.

### **As a group take some time to share your reflections from the Sunday teaching.**

- What did you sense God prompting you about?
- What was your key take-away from the message?
- How have you been going at putting that take-away into action?
- What did you disagree with or would like further discussion around?

Whether we recognise it or not, we all plan to some extent. The way we go about making decisions and the choices we make always have a level of thought and considerations to them. This is planning in action. James challenges us to not be boastful in our own plans and instead recognise God's greater plan and control.

### **Discussion Starters:**

*Q. Before getting into the passage, discuss some of the ways you make plans and decisions? What is your process? Either as a community or individually.*

*Q. As a family or individual, how do you go about prioritising where you invest your time, energy and resources?*

*Q: How has God's will influenced the plans you have and have had in your life? How does Scripture influence the things you plan to do?*

*Q. How do you go about engaging with God. What does your "Quiet Time" look like?*

### **Biblical Reflection:**

Do you wonder what the Lord wills for you?

The picture presented here is that life on this earth is short and no one knows the future- especially that of his or her own. Yet, many of us try to guess the future, and even demanding that God blesses our plans! The problem is what is left out and what is often missed; and, that is the question, does this align with His will? The call to us in this passage is that our will and plans must focus on God and His ways-period! Our plans and ways are not sovereign; only He is. As Christians, we must not plan our lives with God as an after-thought, or as if He is not concerned or involved. Rather, all our plans must be prefaced by prayer, seeking Him and His ways.

Read the passage together.

Q: What does James mean when he talks about boasting in your own arrogance? What does it mean to boast in your own arrogance? Have you ever been guilty of doing this?

Q: What attitude about our plans is James targeting here? 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?

### **MIST**

James reminds us that our lives are nothing more than a "mist" and this idea that our lives are brief is found often in Scripture (Ps. 102:11, 103:15-16; Is. 40:6-8, 1 Pet. 1:24). A vapor is short-lived. You see the mist at one moment and a few seconds later it's gone.

Q: What bearing does this have on James' argument here in 4:13-17? Is his goal to encourage or discourage us, and upon what reasoning do you give your answer?

Q: If life is so temporary, why would we even bother to plan at all? (Look at Proverbs 21:30, 19:21, 16:3-9)

### **LORD'S WILL**

God in verse 15: When James says, "If God wills it we will . . . do this or that," he teaches us that the activities and accomplishments of our lives are in God's hands. God governs what we accomplish. Not only are our lives in his hands, our success is in his hands too. "Instead, you ought to say, 'If the Lord wills, we will live and also do this or that.'" On the other hand we can say that if the Lord does not will, we will not do this or that. Notice how James uses the term Lord. This is not only a title but an attitude, a submission to God as the one who rules over our lives.

*In his commentary on James, Douglas Moo warns us of the dangers of simply tacking this phrase on to statements. "'If the Lord wills' can become nothing more than a superficial formula without any real meaning. James, rather, wants us to adopt the attitude expressed by the words as a fixed perspective from which to view all of life - 'if the Lord allows this to happen.' But it should also force us to evaluate our planning from a biblical ethical perspective - 'if this kind of plan is in accordance with the Lord's will expressed in Scripture for his people.'"*

Q: How is saying "God willing" a sign of humility? How can saying "God willing" be a cop-out?

Q: What is the instruction to us in James 4:15 about planning?

### **FINANCES**

In James 5:1-6 we will read about the problem of riches and wealth. When is wealth sin? When are we misusing our wealth and endangering our souls? James is suggesting that if you've been on the receiving end of someone exploiting you financially by this corruption or greed, then James wants you to know that God takes this stuff seriously. God hears those cries and no one is getting away with this sort of behaviour. Therefore, it is also a challenge to us to make sure we are on the other side of this. These rich people are doomed both for how they acquired their wealth and for what they did (or didn't do) with it once they had it. This section gives us a lot to think about. One of the difficult balances in life is dealing with our wealth. We read about people in the scriptures who were wealthy, like Job and Joseph of Arimathea. But we are also aware of scriptures commands warning us against

riches. Jesus said, "Again I tell you, it is easier for a camel to go through the eye of a needle than for a rich person to enter the kingdom of God." (Matthew 19:24)

*Q: What instruction do you receive from James 5:1-6 on how to handle to your wealth?*

*Q: James is telling us that wealth has to be used ethically or else it will testify against us...what does the use of your finances say about you and your values?*

*Q: In what ways can you use what you have to be a blessing to others? In what ways has it been a challenge to you to use your wealth to bless others?*

### **Application Questions:**

Q: What are some ways you can lean on God as you plan for tomorrow?

Q: What are some signs that would show you that you are leaning on yourself more than on God?

Q: What would it look like in your life to give more dependence on God with your plans and future?

Q: What might your 2020 rhythms look like if they were centred on God?

Q: What will your 2020 budget or spending look like? How can you set yourself up to be someone who gives generously and not hoarding wealth?

### **Closing Reflections from Sermon**

#### **1. Inviting God to direct your plans**

When are you inviting God into your plans?

#### **2. Spiritual Health Check**

What areas of your life do you NOT seek God?

Where is God in your EVERY day, week, month?

#### **3. Assessing your use of finances**

Where are your financial priorities?

Are the things you purchase align with your values and beliefs?

**As a community or LIFE group how are you seeking to live out the call to keep God in the centre of your decisions and planning and how will you use what God has given you to invest back into His Kingdom?**

Discuss with your group one thing God has been challenging you on through this sermon and reflection notes. Take time to share how you might respond differently this week and pray for one another.

Encourage members of the group to follow up the next time you meet to see how you are going following through on what God was challenging you about.

DISCIPLES  
JAMES SERIES

1. Disciples hear and obey
2. Disciples love and welcome all
3. Disciples speak from their heart

1

DISCIPLES  
GIVE GENEROUSLY

“HE WHO FAILS TO PLAN IS PLANNING TO FAIL”  
Winston Churchill

BY FAILING TO PREPARE,  
YOU ARE PREPARING TO FAIL  
Cory Martin

2

DISCIPLES  
GIVE GENEROUSLY

<sup>13</sup> 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.”

<sup>14</sup> Why, you do not even know what will happen tomorrow.  
What is your life?

3

DISCIPLES  
GIVE GENEROUSLY

- I AM going to this city...
- I AM going to spend a year there...
- I AM going to make money...

4

DISCIPLES  
GIVE GENEROUSLY

- I AM going to this city...
- I AM going to spend a year there...
- I AM going to make money...  
WHERE IS GOD?

5

DISCIPLES  
GIVE GENEROUSLY

DO WE GET CAUGHT UP IN PRESUMPTUOUS PLANNING?

6

DISCIPLES  
GIVE GENEROUSLY

<sup>14</sup> What is your life?  
You are a mist that appears for a little while and then vanishes.

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DISCIPLES  
GIVE GENEROUSLY

<sup>13</sup> 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.”<sup>14</sup> Why, you do not even know what will happen tomorrow. What is your life? You are a mist that appears for a little while and then vanishes.

<sup>15</sup> Instead, you ought to say, “If it is the Lord’s will, we will live and do this or that.”

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DISCIPLES  
GIVE GENEROUSLY

WHERE IS GOD IN YOUR DAY... WEEK... MONTH... YEAR...

9

DISCIPLES  
GIVE GENEROUSLY

<sup>2</sup> Your wealth has rotted, and moths have eaten your clothes. Your gold and silver are corroded. Their corrosion will testify against you and eat your flesh like fire. You have hoarded wealth in the last days.

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DISCIPLES  
GIVE GENEROUSLY

AS THOSE WHO HAVE,  
WE ARE TO BE THOSE WHO GIVE

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DISCIPLES GIVE GENEROUSLY

1. Inviting God to direct your plans
  - When are you inviting God into your plans?
2. Spiritual Health Check
  - What areas of your life do you NOT seek God?
  - Where is God in your EVERY day, week, month?
3. Assessing your use of finances
  - Where are your financial priorities?
  - Are the things you purchase align with your values and beliefs?

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