

Text: James 4:13-17

Title: "Lord Willing..."

Introduction: When I was in 8th grade, I made my career decision. I knew what I wanted to be! I had a great science teacher that year and I always wanted to be on TV! No, wait, they are connected... I wanted to be a meteorologist! I thought that it was great learning about the different air currents and barometric pressure and weather patterns and I thought that would be really cool to try to predict the weather...

I'm glad that I didn't go that direction, because I would have spent a lot of time in school trying to learn how to predict the weather...

I'm amazed at the technology of collecting data and learning about how the earth works when it comes to weather, but as far as that technology has come, those people struggle a lot trying to predict the weather!

They have computers and big weather apparatus thingys that are outside with stuff that spins around in the wind and stuff ... and they still can't predict the future!

But, we try to predict the future all of the time and we have no scientific method to do it! We make plans. We make plans for this year, next year and for our retirement like we have any idea what life will be like then!

Now, I know that we have to make plans, but here is going to be my (and James) suggestion for today: Don't make plans without consulting One who can actually see the future!

LET'S PRAY!

At this time, I invite you to take the insert out of your program. On one side you will find our Scripture for today and on the other you will see a brief outline to guide us to where we are going. You will see that there are some blanks to fill in. I hope you will fill in those blanks and jot down whatever you hear or see today that affects you in your life and faith journey. Remember, writing it down helps us remember better what we have heard. Then, I hope you will take this home and hang it on your refrigerator to be reminded of what we've learned today. Take time to read the Scripture again, etc. For those of you who are listening on line or IPODING, our program is available online to download. Then, you too can fill in the blanks.

We continue in the Book of James today, again picking up right where we left off last week ... still in the 4th Chapter:

READ JAMES 4:13-17 NOW!

I. Make Plans; Leave God-Room

Please understand that this Scripture is not about NOT making plans. We just have to remember to make our plans according to how God wants us to make those plans.

For most people success is measured by how many times we got our own way ... or *we* accomplished what *we* planned. If I make a plan and it comes out the way I planned—that's success!

Now, as we make our plans in life, whether that has to do with our family, our relationships, our finances, our careers or our recreation, we have to remember that

we are not in control. James tells us that there are four (4) things that we must remember if we think we can make plans without leaving “God-Room”.

A. *Life is **Complex*** (v.13)

1. Do you ever think about how complex life is? Life is made up of people and places and activities and buying and selling and working and playing and days and months and years...
2. Think of how many decisions you make in a day. Ever think about how things might be different if you had made one of those decisions differently?
3. Life is this crazy mystery and we often ask the question, “Why?” Why did this happen? Why didn’t that work? Why would he act like that? Etc.
4. Apart from the will of God, how can we even think we know what to do next? I know ... “Stan, it’s not that hard. You get up, you go to work, you do your best; you come home and get ready to do it all over again.”
5. Okay, but what about “Sozo”? Do you ever think that there must be something more?!?
6. James is reminding the people he writes to that life is complex ... you say that you have a great plan for the next year ... really?!?
7. Life is a little too complex to say that you are going to a certain town for a year, selling your goods and making a certain profit before you come home!

B. *Life is **Uncertain*** (v.14a)

1. Think about what these merchants are saying ... I will go and make a profit over the next year... Do they really have any idea what life will be like tomorrow?
2. I remember standing on the overpass in front of LaGuardia Airport in NY on that morning of 9/11. I didn’t know what HAD happened, I didn’t know what WAS GOING to happen; I didn’t know if we were safe where we were... everyone was on cell phones trying to figure out what was going on!
3. There are so many times in life, that we have no idea what is going to happen next, but you know what? God is never surprised!
4. God NEVER says, “Wow! I did not see that one coming!” or “OOPS!” or “What just happened? Man, you turn your back for one minute and look...”
5. You do not know what your life will be like tomorrow, but God does!

C. *Life is **Short*** (v.14b)

1. I don’t know about the rest of you, but I’m at that age where I’m no longer counting up, but counting down!

2. If the average life-span of a male in America is around the mid 70s, I've already lived more than half of my life!
3. James says that this life is like the morning fog ... it's here for a little while and then it lifts.
4. I'm 43 ... I might live another 40 years. I might live another 40 minutes or another 40 seconds... I have no idea.
5. We have no idea how much longer we are going to be on this earth—but, God does. Why would we not make our plans according to God's timeline!

D. We are Weak

1. Because life is so fragile and uncertain, we have to make plans for tomorrow ... James is not saying don't plan for the future; he's saying don't plan for the future without being in God's Will!
2. We cannot plan for tomorrow without realizing that we are NOT in Control!
3. Being in God's Will is about Obedience to God ... doing the things that we already know God wants us to do!
4. BUT, what I hear is that people are afraid to totally sell out to God, because they are scared God will have them do something they don't want to do.
5. The only place we are really in danger is OUTSIDE of God's Will!

II. Field Education

A. We Harvest what we Plant

1. Galatians 6:7-8 says, "⁷ Don't be misled. Remember that you can't ignore God and get away with it. You will always reap what you sow!⁸ Those who live only to satisfy their own sinful desires will harvest the consequences of decay and death. But those who live to please the Spirit will harvest everlasting life from the Spirit."¹
2. Just like you cannot cheat in planting, you cannot cheat God. If you don't plant seed in the spring, you do not harvest in the fall.
3. If you plant apple seeds, you are not going to get corn! We reap what we sow!
4. What are you planting? As followers of God who desire a joy in each area of our lives, we need to be planting what God wants us to plant!
5. Let's think about some of the good things that you can be putting in the ground today:
 - a. Integrity = Honesty is so important in every area of our lives ... especially relationships (home and work).

¹Holy Bible : New Living Translation. 1997 (Ga 6:6). Wheaton, Ill.: Tyndale House.

- b. Attention to Detail = in our relationships, this goes a long way, and when we miss details, we pay for it ... miscommunications, etc.
 - c. Initiative = take the lead, work hard at work, be the first at home to admit you were wrong ... be the one to make it better!
 - d. Risk-Taking = in every area of our lives, we have to be willing to take risks if we want great things to happen! Again, relationships ... somebody has to risk being vulnerable!
6. Again, we reap what we sow ... what are you planting today?

B. How much do you want?

- 1. I have people ask me, “Stan, should I tithe my net or my gross?” Answer: “How much do you want to be blessed?” We understand that God desires great things for us, and does that when we trust Him!!!
- 2. Luke 6:38 = ³⁸ *If you give, you will receive. Your gift will return to you in full measure, pressed down, shaken together to make room for more, and running over. Whatever measure you use in giving—large or small—it will be used to measure what is given back to you.*²
- 3. Think about this in terms of our *tithing* ... give and God will make sure you are cared for (and the world will change for good!).
- 4. Think about this in terms of your *career* ... What kind of time are you putting into your job? Are you continually challenging yourself even if your job or boss isn't?
- 5. Think about this in terms of your *relationships* ... Are you giving more than you are receiving right now; and that's okay? When it comes to relationships, you always have to give more than you expect in return... it's people!
- 6. Think about this in terms of *God's Kingdom* ... Are you investing your time, your resources and your talent so that more people can get to know Jesus?!?

C. We Harvest More than we Plant

- 1. In Matthew 13 Jesus tells a parable (story with a point) about a farmer who is scattering seeds. The seeds that fell on the good soil = they produced a crop that was 30, 60 or 100 times what was planted.
- 2. There is a principle of creation at work here ... hard to explain, but when we put time and energy into something good, the results are usually more than we can imagine ... (Mt. Zion Campus = growing faster than expected).
- 3. This works again with all areas of our lives, including Kingdom work. “Pray and expect GREAT things!”

² *Holy Bible : New Living Translation*. 1997 (Lk 6:37). Wheaton, Ill.: Tyndale House.

D. Good Things Come...

1. ...To those who wait...
2. When a farmer plants, he/she does not go out the next day to start gathering in the crops. Farmers know that there is a season of growing and it takes time!
3. Some people think that if they work on their finances or their relationships for a month, everything should be fixed. WRONG!
4. We think that if we attend worship 2 or 3 times, our lives should be all better ... WRONG!
5. Listen: "Discipline, not desire, determines Destiny". If you want to experience SOZO in some area of your life, you have to put some time into it. And, NO, I don't know how much time is enough!

E. We Plant; God Harvests

1. If we are disciplined and work hard at doing life God's way, God will bless us!
2. We are responsible for our part – stay focused on our part – God will take care of God's part!

III. Leave a Legacy

You know what I want to do? I am in the countdown stages of my life, remember? I want to leave a legacy. I don't want to be forgotten. But, I also don't want to be remembered for the wrong things. I don't want to be remembered for what I accomplished...

- A. The only way we leave a true legacy is to leave it in eternity ... this life is like a mist.
- B. To leave a great legacy in this life has to do with selfish things ... money accumulation, popularity, notoriety, self-aggrandizement, etc.
- C. If this life is like a grain of sand on the beach of eternity, then leaving a great legacy in this life is like leaving a great legacy in Kindergarten. Seriously, who's going to remember?!?
- D. I want to be part of "Changing the World for Good!" I not only want to experience SOZO in all the areas of my life, but I want to be able to serve God in offering SOZO in other people's lives.

IV. The End

- A. I cannot wait to tell you how we are going to offer SOZO around the world this Christmas...

See you next week for BLAZE ORANGE SUNDAY!

Let's Pray!