

VISIBLE TRUTH WHEN MAKING PLANS

James 4:13-17 (NIV) 13 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." 14 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. 15 Instead, you ought to say, "If it is the Lord's will, we will live and do this or that." 16 As it is, you boast in your arrogant schemes. All such boasting is evil. 17 If anyone, then, knows the good they ought to do and doesn't do it, it is sin for them.

This morning I want to talk to you on the subject matter **VISIBLE TRUTH WHEN MAKING PLANS.**

One of the questions that stresses people is this thing called "the future" – not knowing what will happen tomorrow or next week can throw you into a spin. We worry about our children's future; we worry about the sustainability of our income and such like things.

- The ordinary person would like to have clarity about tomorrow. By default, we tend to trust ourselves more than anything else. In this regard, we try to be in charge of everything within our reach.
- This has resulted in people adopting an unhealthy approach of self-reliance and self-dependency to life.
- However, there are some people who choose to approach life with a fatalistic attitude in which they allow life to take its course without their involvement. Now, these are two extremes of looking at the future and it is not the design of God for life to be lived in extremes.
- James is cautioning us to avoid the approach of being self-reliant regarding the future.
- He cautions those who speak with confidence about their future by reminding them about the nature of life – life is like mist, which is there in the morning and vanishes by the heat of day.
- **How should one approach the future?**
- **You have a measure of control over your life.**

Genesis 1:26 And God said, Let Us make man in Our image, after Our likeness. And let them have dominion over the fish of the sea, and over the fowl of the heavens, and over the cattle, and over all the earth, and over all the creepers creeping on the earth.

Psalms 115: 16 The highest heavens belong to the LORD, but the earth He has given to mankind.

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- When God created man, He told Him to till the land, to subdue the earth and multiply. God gave you a mandate and there is an expectation for you and me to dutifully pursue our God given responsibilities.
- Yes, a lot is out of your control, but it is also true that you were entrusted with many aspects of life you can control in order live out your destiny.
- God wants you to do something with your life – it brings honor to God when you properly think over and decide what you shall do with your life.
- It brings pleasure to God when you have a financial plan, when a businessman anticipates the markets, and plans his productions accordingly.
- Where does the planning of one's life go wrong? There is nothing wrong with saying "To-day or to-morrow we will go into this city, and spend a year there, and trade, and get gain."
- The problem is not with what you have planned to do but the issue is with the spirit behind the plan. James calls it a plan that is full of boasting and arrogance.
- God is greatly honoured when your plans are selfless and involve Him.
- **Your life is in God's control.**
- There is an ultimate plan for every life which God made. It is God who determines the length of your life, your habitation, and your life circumstances.
- Your life contains a puzzle piece that can only be found in God – a life without divine control will always be incomplete.

Psalm 139:16 Your eyes saw my unformed body; all my days were written in Your book and ordained for me before one of them came to be.

Isaiah 46:11, NIV From the east I summon a bird of prey; from a far-off land, a man to fulfill my purpose. What I have said, that I will bring about; what I have planned, that I will do.

- In the eyes of God, a life well lived is one that is lived according to His intends and purpose.
- God will assist you to become all that He has planned for you. It is a plan that can only be missed by those who are self-reliant.
- When God is in the lead, your life will be pleasant and whole, even when going through adversity. God works out everything for your good – when there is no food, God is working out something good, when there is pain, God is working out something good because He is good.

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- Your life is in one sense within your control and in another sense totally out of your control. The key is to master where human effort starts and end and where divine providence takes over.

Proverbs 16: 9 A man's heart plans his course, but the LORD determines his steps.

- It is quite like parents and children – parents will fashion and order a child's life and at the same time, under the parental control the child makes his own little plans.
- Those little plans are somehow controlled by the parents towards the parents' great plan for the child.
- Things will go wrong the moment a strong-willed child forces his plans against the parental plans.
- The bible tells us "...unless you change and become like little children, you will never enter the kingdom of heaven. Therefore, whoever humbles himself like this child is the greatest in the kingdom of heaven" – *Matthew 18: 3-4.*
- The reality of life is that, when you make your plans, you cannot be sure that you will live long enough to carry out the plans.
- The parable of the rich fool reminds us about this – he decided to pull down his barns in order to build bigger and better in anticipation of a great harvest and the Bible says in *Luke 12:20 "Thou fool, this night thy soul is required of thee."*
- You can plan all you want but it is God who will direct the plans.

Jeremiah 10:23 O Lord, I know the way of man is not in himself; It is not in man who walks to direct his own steps.

- **The Christian attitude towards the future**

- James teaches us of the attitude a Christian should adopt regarding the future:

James 4: 15 Instead, you ought to say, "If it is the Lord's will, we will live and do this or that."

- This Christian finds pleasure in divine control and knows that divine control does not interfere with his sense of personal responsibility.
- This Christian goes about his business; planning like any other person, dreaming like any other person, writing resolutions like any other person but does all this with a sense of humility and total submission to divine control.
- All this is found in the expression "if God is willing..."

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- This requires a level of surrender and brokenness. Some people are so strong willed that they are uncomfortable with anything that seems to fall out of their control.
- Being strong willed is not necessarily a bad thing, in fact we need to have a strong will in order to withstand the pressures of life.
- However, any positive trait that is overused becomes a weakness.
- When a strong-willed person over uses this character, they can become stubborn, unwilling to receive help, very controlling and obstinate (can't be told what to do).
- As you can clearly see, these traits are ungodly and unchristian because you will not be able to operate in a functional community.
- Divine control is allowed to operate when you surrender willingly to God's sovereignty.
- An example of a man who allowed God to lead his life was king David. Despite being a mighty warrior and seasoned in battle, David knew that without God's guidance the future was bleak.
- It is recorded that 9 times David sought the Lord's guidance - each time he inquired, the Lord graciously gave him a clear and definite answer.
- In 1 Samuel 23:1-3, David asked the Lord if he should attack the philistines who had besieged Keilah, a fortified city within Judah's borders.
- After helping Keilah, David sought refuge within the people, and he heard that Saul, who was after him was coming down to Keilah. In 1 Samuel 23:10-11, David asked God if the people of Keilah were going to hand him over to Saul and God told him that they were going to.
- David lived among the Philistines at a certain point as he was running away from Saul. It so happened that the Amalekites attacked Ziklag, the place that David was camping at. In 1 Samuel 30:8-9, David asked the Lord if he should pursue the Amalekites and God told him to and he had a great victory.

Proverbs 3:5 Trust in Jehovah with all your heart, and lean not to your own understanding. 6 In all your ways acknowledge Him, and He shall direct your paths.

- You need to be reminded that God has good plans for you, even when your circumstances are saying something else.
- The devil wants to plant seeds of doubt regarding the character of God; His love, His power, and His goodness.
- The moment you doubt the character of God, you start operating from self. You are convinced that you are all by yourself and therefore you need to look out for yourself.