

FAITH IN ACTION

PART 7: GOD, PLEASE BLESS MY PLANS!

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James writes, "Today or tomorrow we will go to this or that city, spend a year there, carry on business and make money." How many times have you made plans like this without asking for God's will, or perhaps you made plans and then asked God to bless them?

It was the custom of ancient times to trade from city to city, carrying their goods on the backs of camels. The Jews made a practice of trading in Tyre, Sidon, Caesarea, Crete, Ephesus, Philippi, Thessalonica, Corinth, Rome, and more. It is to this kind of business life that James is describing.

A. THE BIG QUESTION



James reprimands his fellow Jews for making plans to go to different cities to carry on business and make money. So, was he saying that it is wrong to make plans? Should Christians not be good business people?

B. JAMES 4:13-16

"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 and brag. All such boasting is evil. James 4:13-16 (NIV)

C. BACKGROUND

New cities were being developed in Europe and North Africa at the time when James wrote his letter.¹ Numerous opportunities to gain wealth were abundant,

¹ These cities included Rome (450,000), Seleucia on the Tigris (420,000), Alexandria, Egypt (250,000) and Antioch in Turkey (150,000). "Top 10 Cities of the Year 100" <<http://geography.about.com/library/weekly/aa011201b.htm>>. Accessed August 19, 2013.

and many Jew's, living outside Palestine, had enviable special talents as merchant businessmen.

Lucrative inducements were given to entice them to become citizens of their newly established metropolitan centers, and in the process many Jews became very wealthy and influential people. James now writes to those scattered Christian Jews who were enjoying this new-found wealth and describes the proper attitude toward one's treasures, warning them about arrogantly planning their lives apart from seeking God's will.



D. GROUP DISCUSSIONS

1. What specific things is James teaching us about making plans (4:13-16)?
2. Is James saying it is ok to do whatever we want as long as we utter the words "...if it is God's will" (4:15)? Explain your answer.
3. What did James mean by "All such boasting is evil" (4:16)? Doesn't the Bible say "But, 'Let the one who boasts boast in the Lord.'" (2 Cor. 10:17 NIV)

E. SEVEN WAYS TO SEEK GOD'S WILL WHEN MAKING PLANS

1. **Ask yourself if your plans are in line with _____.**
"And whatever you do, whether in word or deed, do it all in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks to God the Father through him." (Col. 3:17, 21 NIV)

2. **Look for** _____.

"On arriving there, they gathered the church together and reported all that God had done through them and how he had opened a door of faith to the Gentiles." (Acts 14:27 NIV)

3. **Be sensitive to the presence or absence of** _____.

"Peace I leave with you; my peace I give you. I do not give to you as the world gives. Do not let your hearts be troubled and do not be afraid." (Jn. 14:27 NIV)

4. **When necessary, seek advice from** _____.

Proverbs 20:18 ""Plans are established by seeking advice; so if you wage war, obtain guidance."

5. **Examine your own** _____.

"Take delight in the LORD, and he will give you the desires of your heart." (Ps. 37:4 NIV)

6. **Use** _____.

"If any of you lacks wisdom, you should ask God, who gives generously to all without finding fault, and it will be given to you." (Jas. 1:5 NIV)

7. **Seek the** _____, **not the** _____.

"But seek first his kingdom and his righteousness, and all these things will be given to you as well." (Matt. 6:33 NIV)