



# CAPITOL COMMISSION™

## Seeking Your Will

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### Scripture Lesson

*James 4:13 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 and brag. All such boasting is evil. 17 Anyone, then, who knows the good he ought to do and doesn't do it, sins.*

### Introduction: God's Will or Your Will?

James offers a simple illustration taken from the common business life of first century Palestine. The merchant class was well developed, and a common way for Jewish entrepreneurs to make a living was to trade goods within the Roman Empire. But let us remember that James is making a much larger point, and this is not a lesson about business, but it is instruction about responding to the will of God in everyday life.

### Now Listen...

A more precise translation of the original is "come now" and it is in the form of a command. In the New Testament, only James uses this strong wording. He, as he often has, is calling the reader to pay attention and to be prepared to take some new action or direction.

### You who say...

The original Greek says, "You who are saying..." His emphasis is on the habitual practice of seeking after our own will with no regard to God's better purposes.

*Today or tomorrow we will go to this or that city, spend a year there, carry on business and make money.*

First, James is not objecting to correctly pursuing one's occupation, or more specifically, being in business. Rather, he is pointing out the foolishness of presuming what you will or will not do without any regard to God's will or His sovereignty.

This can take two basic forms: 1. The atheist who does not believe in God always acts in this manner. What will be done is decided, and off we go! 2. Many more believe in God but are practical atheists, that is, the Lord is not considered in the planning of life. We could more accurately say they are practical deists. God is there, way out there, but He does not matter.

How sad that followers of Christ might live in such a way that God is irrelevant for their lives.

It is sad because the Lord is ignored, and He does not receive the glory as the One who has all authority—who is the ruler of the Kingdom. Also, it is sad in the practical sense that only a fool really believes he is in charge in some ultimate sense. Who among us can look back and say, "All of life has turned out just as I thought it would!" Many of us have different occupations, live in

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### BIBLE STUDIES

LEGISLATORS: MONDAYS, 5:00 PM, ROOM 1425 LB  
STAFF: MONDAYS, 12:00 NOON, CHAPEL, 2<sup>ND</sup> FLOOR LB

# North Carolina

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different cities, or experience life in ways we never imagined. Even if the major pieces are such as you planned, what does tomorrow hold for you?

*Why, you do not even know what will happen tomorrow.*

James points out the obvious—nobody knows tomorrow. We have to grasp the future lightly—prepared to let certain things go, and take into our hands what the Lord places there.

Do not boast about tomorrow, for you do not know what a day may bring forth (Proverbs 27:1).

*What is your life? You are a mist that appears for a little while and then vanishes.*

His next point is a little more unsettling—our earthly lives are not much. We are a mist. He is not saying that we are not much. We are eternal beings who will live forever!

### Quiz

1. What was the name of person for whom the Taj Mahal was constructed? **Answer.** Mumtaz Mahal, the third wife of the Mughal emperor Shah Jahan.
2. Why was it constructed? **Answer.** So everyone would remember Mumtaz Mahal.

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

First things first... We ought to seek after the Lord and then make our plans. First, we notice that our lives are in the Lord's hand. Second, if He gives us

life and strength then we can follow Him from moment to moment and day to day. Remember how Jesus said, "My sheep listen to my voice; I know them, and they follow me" (John 10:27).

*As it is, you boast and brag. All such boasting is evil.*

The essence of sinful boasting and bragging is a preoccupation with and promotion of the self. This is a serious sin because it is the child of pride which is our fundamental rebellion against God.

*Anyone, then, who knows the good he ought to do and doesn't do it, sins.* Here we find a common blind spot for our behavior—sins of omission. Perhaps James inserts this idea because all of chapter 4 has been a discussion of different ways we pay attention to ourselves and neglect the will of God and the good of our neighbor.

*"Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind and with all your strength. The second is this: 'Love your neighbor as yourself.' There is no commandment greater than these." (Mark 12:30-31))*

Think about it...

Releasing tomorrow to God does not mean we should fail to plan in a responsible way.

"In all your ways acknowledge him and he will make your paths straight." (Proverbs 3:6)

"In his heart a man plans his course, but the Lord determines his steps." (Proverbs 16:9)