

Harvest

Evangelical Free Church

SERIES: Life: Redefined • Lesson 9
For Adult Bible Fellowships and Small Groups Meeting Nov. 29– Dec. 5,

Join us in being on mission with God!

OUR VISION

To continually mature and grow as a united body of Jesus-imitators who live out God’s greatest commandment to “Love” by exalting God and serving one another, and His greatest commission to “Go” by reaching into and shaping our local, regional, and global communities.

“Living with the Unexpected”

James 4:13-17

Getting Started

After an introductory time, discuss the following questions in your group or class.

Q: Share about a time when you really relied on God. What precipitated that? How did you feel? How did it end up?

Thinking about Expectations

- When it comes to planning, some people love it, some detest it, and many fall in the middle. Which of the following statements best describes you? Circle all that apply.
 - I try not to plan anything. It ties me down too much.
 - Most days I’ll at least do some preliminary planning for the day in my head.
 - I’ll work through some kind of “to-do” list on a typical day.
 - I’ll work through some kind of “to-do” list for a typical week.
 - I prefer to plan my week in detail.
 - I’ll mark down some key dates for a month.
 - I try to plan out a rather detailed calendar for a month.
 - I typically mark down some key dates for the year ahead.
 - I try to plan as far in advance as I can—even up to a year or more.

2. What is there about planning that you enjoy? What is there about making plans that you find unpleasant?



James 4:13-17

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.

3. In verse 13, James does not criticize people *because* they plan. What is it about their thinking about the future that he challenges?

4. To live without expectation is to live without hope. James is not calling us to abandon all expectations for the future. What do you think there is about the expectation behind the statement in verse 13 that might be dangerous?

5. Without looking at verses 14-17, rewrite the statement in verse 13 in a way that James would probably not criticize.

6. What kind of tension do we create with God when we become resolute in believing that what we expect will come to pass? How does that attitude put your relationship in jeopardy?

7. Identify an expectation that God did not fulfill. Describe the feelings you had when you realized that the thing you hoped for would not come to pass. How did you process that reality?

8. What is the purpose of the first sentence in verse 14? What idea is James trying to challenge?

Living With the Unexpected

9. In the second half of verse 14, James shifts the focus from one day (“tomorrow”) to the length of your entire life. What does he compare your life to? What kind of earthly mist do you think he had in mind?

10. How does grasping the fact that your life is transient (fleeting) change the choices you tend to make from day to day?

11. If you knew that you had 30 days to live, what are some of the things you would do more of? What are some of the things you would do less of?

12. What are some of the things we tend to focus on in the short term that are not as significant when we look at the long term?

13. What is the biggest difference between the statement in quotes in verse 15 and the one in verse 13?

14. Some people insert the words, “Lord willing ...” in front of almost every statement about the future. Do you think this is what James is urging us to do?



Reaching Up and Reaching Out

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16. James does not characterize boasting as a "bad habit". He calls it "evil". What is evil about boasting?

Three horizontal lines for writing the answer to question 16.

17. At first, verse 17 doesn't seem to follow from the previous paragraph. In the context, what is it that the speaker in verse 13 is omitting or forgetting to do?

Three horizontal lines for writing the answer to question 17.

18. If you are in a group, discuss what it means to plan with the consciousness of God. How can we anticipate the future and hope for great things and put God in the center of our expectations at the same time?

Three horizontal lines for writing the answer to question 18.