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# Seeking God's Guidance For Our Tomorrows

**JAMES 4:13-17**

## Introduction

1. There is a hymn to which I would like to draw your attention tonight.
2. It was written in 1950 by Ira Stampill; it's title, "I Know Who Holds Tomorrow."

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3. Let's take a moment and consider the words which we find in the first and third stanzas:

I don't know about tomorrow,  
I just live from day to day;  
I don't borrow from its sunshine,  
For its skies may turn to gray;  
I don't worry o'er the future,  
For I know what Jesus said,  
And today I'll walk beside Him,  
For He knows what is ahead.

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I don't know about tomorrow,  
It may bring me poverty;  
But the one who feeds the sparrow  
Is the one who stands by me;  
And the path that be my portion,  
May be thru the flame or flood,  
But His presence goes before me,  
And I'm covered with His blood.

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Chorus  
Many things about tomorrow

**I don't seem to understand;  
But I know who holds tomorrow,  
And I know who holds my hand.**

4. Let me ask each of you a very important question tonight: "Is God an important part of your daily life?"
5. Do you pray to Him concerning His will when it comes to the everyday decisions you make in life: Decisions involving your education, vocation, whom to marry, which house or car to buy, your provision for and guidance of your children?
6. In the letter which James wrote to the Jewish Christians who had been scattered abroad, we find him addressing these issues.
7. For them, it had not been easy when they first became Christians.
8. Initially, they held on to Christ with everything they had, but as life began to settle down, the cares of living took center stage in their lives once more.
9. It wasn't long before they once again saw themselves as self-made, self-assured men, who though they were now Christians, lived as if the world were all there was.
10. They still prayed in their lives, but it was not to ask God where or what they should do, but to ask His blessings on their plans.
11. It is important that we stop every so often and ask ourselves, "Am I becoming like them?"

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12. Listen to what James says in James 4:13-17.

## **I. Our Certainty About That Which Is Uncertain**

"Come now, you who say, "Today or tomorrow we will go to such and such a city, and spend a year there and engage in business and make a profit.""

(James 4:13, NASB95)

### **A. LIFE'S UNCERTAINTY**

“Yet you do not know what your life will be like tomorrow . . .” (James 4:14a, NASB95)

1. None of us know what tomorrow holds.
  - a. Whether it is a financial reversal, as in the case of Job, or wealth beyond imagination as in the case of Joseph.
  - b. An accident or the return of our Lord in glory.
2. It is presumptuous on our part to say that we are going to . . .
  - a. Go here or there
  - b. Do this or that. . . without reference to God.

**4a**

## **B. LIFE'S BREVIDITY**

“ You are just a vapor that appears for a little while and then vanishes away.”  
(James 4:14, NASB95)

1. How many of us have taken an early-morning walk or jog at a time when the weather is cold and seen our warm breath appear and suddenly disappear into the air.
2. Or experienced the same with steam from a pan on the stove or a warm cup of coffee in our hand.

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3. Time and again, through His Holy Spirit, God's speaks to the brevity of our lives in Old Testament Scripture:

“My days are swifter than a weaver's shuttle, and come to an end without hope.” (**Job 7:6, NASB95**)

“Now my days are swifter than a runner; they flee away, they see no good.” (**Job 9:25, NASB95**)

“My days are like a lengthened shadow, and I wither away like grass.”  
(**Psalms 102:11, NASB95**)

“As for man, his days are like grass; as a flower of the field, so he flourishes.” (**Psalm 103:15, NASB95**)

4. It is said that long ago when an eastern emperor was crowned at Constantinople, the royal mason would set before the new emperor a certain number of marble slabs.
  - a. He was to choose one then and there for his tombstone.
  - b. Those who had set this practice in place thought it wise for him to remember his funeral at his inauguration since his life would not last forever.
5. Imagine if each of us at some point in our lives, perhaps our high school or college graduation were required to go through a similar ceremony.
6. Over the years, I have stood at a number of graves where a headstone had been set in place for a husband and wife, with the birth dates for both:
  - a. We were in the process of burying one.
  - b. The other was still living.
    - ❑ I have often thought about how that stone and the information on it must pause the living to stop and think.

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7. It was Moses who wrote so long ago, “teach us to number our days, that we may present to you a heart of wisdom” (Psalm 90:12).

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## II. What We Ought To Say (vv. 15,16)

“Instead, you ought to say, “If the Lord wills, we will live and also do this or that” (James 4:15, NASB95)

### A. “IF THE LORD WILLS”

1. While many plan their lives without any true dependence upon God, James tells us that you and I should always condition our plans upon the Lord’s will.

2. This expression, "if the Lord wills" is not found in the O.T., however, it is used several times in the N.T.

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- a. At the end of his second missionary journey, Paul promised the Ephesians, "I will return to you again if God wills" (Acts 18:21).
  - b. In his first letter to the believers in Corinth, Paul wrote, "I will come to you soon, if the Lord wills" (1 Corinthians 4:19).
  - c. He told the Philippians that "I hope in the Lord Jesus to send Timothy to you shortly" (Philippians 2:19).
3. There were other times when Paul spoke confidently of his future plans without using the phrase (cf. Acts 19:21; Romans 15:28; 1 Corinthians 16:5).
    - a. "Paul purposed in the Spirit to go to Jerusalem after he had passed through Macedonia and Achaia, saying, "After I have been there, I must also see Rome."" (Acts 19:21)
    - b. In Romans 15:28, he told the Christians in Rome that once he had delivered the contribution for the poor among the saints in Jerusalem, "I will go on my way of you to Spain."
    - c. In 1 Corinthians 16:5, "I will come to you after I go through Macedonia."
      - ❑ Even in these times, Paul knew that his plans were always dependent upon God's will.
  4. For you and I here tonight it is the right mind-set — recognizing our dependence upon God — which is more important than saying the right words.
  5. "If God wills" must be written over . . .
    - a. Our plans as students
    - b. Our choice of a future spouse
    - c. Our future education and vocation

- d. All of our everyday activities
- 8. Have you been planning your way through life with little thought of God's will?
- 9. If so, then it is time to have a change of heart.

**Slide 10****B. THE DANGER OF ARROGANT BOASTING**

“But as it is, you boast in your arrogance; all such boasting is evil.” (James 4:16, NASB95)

1. James' words here seem to suggest that some of His readers were bragging about their accomplishments apart from God.
2. It is if someone were to say today, “look what I have done” without giving God credit.
3. Most of us would never speak such words openly, but, would we dare to think them in our heart.
4. According to Scripture, Nebuchadnezzar, the greatest of the Babylonian kings dared to think this way.
6. One day as he was walking on the roof of the royal palace in Babylon, observing the grandeur of the city he said, “Is this not Babylon the great, which I myself have built as a royal residence by the might of my power and for the glory of my majesty?” (Daniel 4:30).
7. God sent swift judgment upon Nebuchadnezzar and he fell to all fours.
8. For seven years, he ate grass as an ox until he finally came to his senses.
8. If God did this to a pagan king, do you think He will allow one of us who are His own children to continue in such arrogance?

## **Conclusion**

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“Therefore, to one who knows the right [good] thing to do and does not

do it, to him it is sin." (James 4:17, NASB95)

1. What is the "right" or "good thing" of which James speaks?
2. The "right thing" is to reject the delusion that God is irrelevant to life.
3. I call it a delusion because Satan seeks to deceive or trick us into believing it.
4. Instead, you and I must embrace the truth that our life is short and we have no control over its brief span.
3. The "good thing" is to say with all our heart, "If the Lord wills, I will live and do this or that."

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- a. Is it God's will that you give up something specific? If so, then be willing to say, "Your will be done."
- b. Is there someone to whom God wants you to go and you are resisting? If so, then be willing to say, "Lord, I am willing."
- c. Is there a difficult responsibility God wants you to accept? If so, then may you be able to say, "Lord, I am willing."
4. Remember what James said, "Yet you do not know what your life will be like tomorrow. You are just a vapor that appears for a little while and then vanishes away." (v. 14).
5. Ultimately, we long for eternity with God.
6. The burning question which each of us must ask ourselves is this: "Do I belong to Him and am I living with eternity in my heart?"
7. If not, tonight is a good time to come to Him.