

Small Group Study Questions

Sermon: Humble Ambition in Making Plans

Passages: James 4:13-17

Context:

In this passage, James is addressing the issue of human arrogance and presumption, particularly in regards to planning for the future without acknowledging the sovereignty of God over our lives. James is, of course, writing to Christians who were exiled from their previous homes and now live in a foreign land that often disregards and opposes them. In such situations, it is easy to settle into new rhythms—including the pace of life and decision-making—that fit their new culture, rather than living out their faith in God. James cautions these Christians—and cautions us—about the impact of such rhythms in our plans.

Questions:

1. How does the passage challenge our modern culture's emphasis on self-reliance and long-term planning?
2. What specific warning does James give in this passage to Christians? What should you not do in your planning? What should you do in your planning? According to James, what should be our attitude towards planning in light of God's sovereignty?
3. What does James mean when he says, "You do not even know what will happen tomorrow?" Can you think of examples in your own life or from history when people's plans were thwarted unexpectedly? Share an experience when you suddenly realized the truth of this verse in your own life.
4. How does James characterize those who make plans without referring to God and remembering God's sovereignty? Why is it important to consider God in our planning?
5. James uses an unexpected description of the person who fails to consider God in his or her planning. In what ways is it "evil" when we do not consider or refer to God's involvement and sovereignty for our decisions and plans?
6. What practical steps can we take to cultivate a humble and God-centered approach to planning our lives?