

**“Don’t Leave God Out”**  
**James 4:13-17**

I have always been and still remain a firm believer in planning – making careful plans and working hard to carry them out. My wife of 46 years and I made plans for retirement and looked forward to special time together for many years to come. I was certainly shocked and troubled about our careful plans when vision problems made it necessary for me to stop driving a vehicle a few years ago and then when my wife died suddenly on May 5, 2006.

Recently, as I read Holy Scripture, I learned some important truths about planning.

1. In James 4:13-14, James stresses the uncertainty of the future. We make our future plans as did the businessman pictured in our text, but the truth is that we do not even know what even a day may bring forth. I believe that James would agree with me that planning is wise and good but he would have me learn that the right kind of planning must always include God and His will for our lives.

Jesus clearly taught this truth about the uncertainty of the future in Luke 12:16-21. Here we have the story of the rich, but foolish, man who made his fortune and built his plans for the future and never realized that that very night his soul might be required of him – his life might end.

The more I think about this lesson, the more grateful I am that we cannot really know the future. If we did, worry would likely possess our lives. Few things can ruin the joys of abundant life today like worry over our uncertain tomorrows. We need to plan and plan wisely by facing the reality that in the final analysis the future is uncertain. The future is in the hands of God!

2. The uncertainty of the future is NOT a reason to be fearful and inactive. Instead, it is a reason to accept the spiritual truth that we are completely dependent on Almighty God.

Some of the early Christian converts developed a kind of thinking that Paul and other leaders helped them to resolve. Some converts took the position that Christ was coming back and doing so soon. Therefore, they decided to sit back, focus on the second-coming, and wait for Christ’s return for them. They became lazy, indifferent and unconcerned. This is not the Christian way and Paul and others worked hard to change this dangerous thinking.

James and Paul would have us to make all our plans in dependence on God. In I Corinthians 4:19 Paul writes: “I will come to you shortly, IF THE LORD WILL.” And in I Corinthians 16:7 he declares: “I hope to tarry a while with you, IF THE LORD WILL PERMIT.”

3. James closes our text with a warning. The warning in essence is this: When we declare our self-dependence even though we know in our hearts that we are to be dependent on God and committed to His will, we are sinning against God. James writes: “But now ye rejoice in your boastings (about all you are going to do in the future): all such rejoicing is evil. Therefore to him that knoweth to do good and doeth it not, to him it is sin.” The future is not in man’s hands but in the hands of God.

It is my strong conviction that the Word of God teaches truths about planning for the future which can be summarized in the title of this message: “Don’t leave God out.” As we make our plans, let us follow Paul’s example by saying “IF THE LORD WILLS I will do this or that.” I will accept my dependence on God and will never leave Him out.

Reverend Phillip R. Morrow Sr.