

Victoria Fellowship Church
International & Interdenominational
Bible Study Worksheet – June 05, 2022

Theme: James: Faith in Action Topic: Life and Wealth in Perspective

Main Text: James 4:13-17

Key verse: James 4:15 – *“Instead you ought to say, “If the Lord wills, we shall live and do this or that.”* (NKJV)

INTRODUCTION: God has been showing us through the book of James, how to put our faith in action as followers of Jesus Christ. Today, we come to a crucial point about planning our lives. As we think about our lives and our plans, there is something God wants us to pay attention to, and James prefaces it with some hard questions: *“What do you know about tomorrow? How can you be so sure about your life? It is nothing more than mist that appears for only a little while before it disappears.”* (James 4:14 CEV). Truth is, while planning is spiritual and biblical, we do not know what will happen tomorrow. Yet, we need to plan.

1. (a) James 4:14b says that our lives are ‘*more than mist that appears for only a little while before it disappears.*’ What is the life span of a mist and what is God trying to say to us in comparing our lives with that of a mist? (b) Read Psalm 39:5; 102:3; 144:4. What else do we need to know to help us live with the right perspective? (c) What principle about a proper view of life and wealth do you see to live by from Job 7:7; Isaiah 2:22 and James 4:14?

That life is hard and mostly out of our control is something we all acknowledge. But often, like Job, it takes some hard knocks to remind us that our lives are but a sigh (Job 7:7 AMP). Though we may live in denial for a time, tragedy and misfortune soon force us to reckon with our inability to make things work out the way we want. Regrettably, we are far more prone to deny our own lack of control and behave as if there is nothing we cannot do. The wisdom of the world tells us that we can be self-sufficient, and so we arrogantly speak and act as if we are sure of the future. Today, God’s question through the Epistle of James is quite apt – *“What do you know about tomorrow? How can you be sure about your life? ...”* (James 4:14 CEV) Therefore we must remember not to presume against the will of God (4:13–17). This is especially so with those who appear to be succeeding in their careers. It is also a danger for those who may have enjoyed some successes in making the right business decisions. And so, they may become confident in their abilities and business acumen. In the confidence of such past successes, such persons would begin to say, *“Today or tomorrow we will go to such and such a city, and spend a year there and carry on our business and make a profit.”* But James says, *“Instead you ought to say, “If the Lord wills, we will live and we will do this or that.”* (James 4:13 AMP).

2. (a) Read Acts 18:21; Romans 1:10; 1 Corinthians 16:7; what do you learn from Paul’s attitude that relates to the topic? (b) Where is the right balance between ‘*do not boast about tomorrow,*’ ‘*if the Lord will,*’ and planning? (c) What is a possible danger of missing this balance (see Luke 12:16)?

It is important to note that James is not condemning the possession of wealth, success, or even wise planning for the future. The problem is not with any of these. Rather, the problem is with planning as if the future lies in our hands, or handling our successes and attainments as if they were all by our own power. After all, wealth can be used for furthering the kingdom of God, and planning is an essential part of faithful stewardship God requires. Rather, James is condemning the attitude which suggests that money can bring any security to us. Just like our lives, today’s wealth could be lost in an instant. On the other hand, James is also not asserting that merely saying “*if the Lord wills*” is a magic phrase that demonstrates our trust in God and submission to His sovereignty. Rich or poor, this trust must be evident in our lives whether verbalized or not. And though the statement “*If the Lord wills*” is not a magic phrase conveying absolute trust in God, it is often true that when such wording is absent, so too is confidence in God’s sovereignty.

3. (a) How do we ensure that we live with the right perspective? Let participants share what has helped them maintain a proper perspective in life and towards wealth? (b) What is a possible guiding principle from this study for maintaining the right perspective to life and wealth?

Prayer: Heavenly Father, We thank you for your sovereignty. Please help us to acknowledge You in all our ways and help us to do Your will from the heart as You direct our paths in Jesus’ name we pray. Amen.