

Introduction: Pg. \_\_\_\_\_

As we continue you our Help! Series for the next two weeks, today, I want to help everyone who has had the this thought...

**“Help! Life is on Pause.”  
James 4:13-17**

I assume that is ALL of us! Now, I think there is a significant irony for Bostonians. After all, we are the City of Ambition. Our great city is made up of some of the hardest working people on the planet. People don't come to the best schools in America to be mediocre. They come to dominate! So... it's not surprising that Bostonians are not that great at slowing down.

Now, all of the sudden, for so many, it like life or at least key areas of our lives have been thrown into slow motion, if not paused completely!

At minimum, this feeling can create frustration and disappointment. At the other end of the spectrum, it may feel like life is spinning out of control!

That's why I want to encourage you to fight through this challenging season by...

**The Point: Live your life from a God-centered perspective.**

We see this in the book of James 4

**Read James 4:13-17**

**1. Our plans are in God's hands (4:13-16).**

The first century was marked by growing commercial activity. The Pax Romana opened up travel like the world had never seen. For many, business was booming!, to the point where they started making presumptuous and arrogant plans.

That is why James begins in verse 13 by saying: “Listen up!” That's essentially what he means with the words: “Come now, you who say...

- “Today or tomorrow “we will go into such and such a town and we will spend a year there, and we will trade, and we will make a profit.”
- Do you hear the self-dependence in their statement?
- James does not give them a pass on their presumptuous attitude, because he understands the economics of God's kingdom: “God opposes the proud, but he gives grace to the humble.” (4:6)
- To leave God out of our plans is foolish, but to do so in a pompous manner is evil. Verse 16: “As it is you boast in your arrogance. All such boasting is evil.”

So how does James seek to help them? First, he emphasizes the uncertainty of tomorrow. He says: “Hey, you who are so confident about tomorrow, ‘you do not know what tomorrow will bring.’”

Though this is true all the time, we feel this truth at an extraordinary level.

- We don't know when physical distancing will end.
- We don't know when the Red Sox will return to Fenway Park.
- We don't know when kids will return to school.
- We don't know when our travel plans will be solid.

- We don't know when major life events can finally feel secure.

Listen, I want to say, I feel for you. This is hard! It feels like a huge Question Mark has been stamped over every box on the calendar.

We have many singles in our church family who feel a much heavier weight of physical distancing. We have people placed on furlough or laid off, who don't know when they will be back to work. We have multiple couples in our church whose weddings have been significantly impacted. We have people connected to RHC who can't experience a normal funeral for their family members or loved ones.

More than ever, we understand that we do not control tomorrow.

Perhaps one of the greatest lessons God can teach us in these days is to surrender control of our lives over to him. Because guess what? The future is always, ultimately, in his hands. He is sovereign, which means, he is in control.

Listen carefully:

1) James is not saying planning is bad. It is good to make plans. The Bible affirms this from cover to cover. Our God is a God with a plan. Most importantly, he planned out and provided a way for our redemption! So, by all means, make plans...

2) But in your planning, do so with a posture of surrender before God. God, I'm going to make these plans with your guidance and ultimately surrendering every result into your hands. This is what James is saying in *verse 15*: "Instead you ought..."

- With those four words, "If the Lord wills," we find the solution. All of our plans should be made in light of the will of God.
- This is what it means to live a God-centered life.
- This simple phrase undercuts the self-reliance, independent, presumptuous spirit of *verse 13*.

The fundamental problem of those rebuked in the text is that they took God out of the equation. In essence, they engaged in a form of practical atheism, separating their business life from their Christian life, but these four words remind us:

There are no "God-free zones" in life. P

Don't miss the subtlety of the order in *verse 15*. He says: "If the Lord wills, we will live and do this and that."

- Did you see that? James moves from the greater to the lesser.
- The reason you have breath in your lungs is because God gives you every single breath!
- The reason you will be able to do anything in our life ("this and that") is because God allows it.
- We are totally dependent upon God!

T: Our plans are in God's hands. #2

## 2. Our days are in God's hands (4:14).

We see this explicitly in verse 14.

James, like Jesus, knew how to ask a good question. He knew how to provoke thought and provide the platform for change in their lives. This time he does it with an incredibly sobering question before providing an equally sobering answer.



James sums up this discussion by concluding with a final word concerning God's will. We don't always know what God's will is for the future, but we do know, from the pages of Scripture, what his will is for us today.

Look at v. 17 again: "So whoever knows the right thing to do and fails to do it, for him it is sin."

When we know what God desires for us, we must respond in obedience. Anything less is sin. This cuts in two directions:

- Sins of commission... (Doing things we should not do.)
- Sins of omission... (Not doing the things we should)
- For example, it's not enough to refrain from sinful anger, when God is calling us to put on kindness
- It's not enough set aside greed, when God is calling us to generosity. Here's a challenge: before you designate your entire stimulus check, pray about it. Ask God how he wants you to allocate (spend, save, give to give, save, spend).

Sin taints the glory of God, but righteousness shows how great he is!

- I love this about Christianity. Perhaps, you are watching today, and you have rejected Christianity because it feels like a dry religion with a set of restrictions. I've said it so many times, but let me say it again. If that's all it means to follow Jesus, I'M OUT!
- Jesus offers the path of life, the path of JOY! He shows us the best way to live, a life of adventure and good works.

That's why John Wesley said; **"Do all the good you can, by all the means you can, in all the ways you can, in all the places you can, at all the times you can, to all the people you can, as long as you ever can."**

We should wake up every day praying: God, show me how I can live for you. God, show me who I can love in your name!

Do that in this season. I can promise you, the more you pour out, the more fulfilled you will be within!

*Conclusion:*

I want to encourage you today: I know it may feel like Life is on Pause, but when we live life from a God-centered perspective, we realize: God is in control. He is at work, and he wants to work through us.

Maybe you're watching today and you are struck by the words: "Your life is a mist." Perhaps today is the day you want to settle your eternal destination by placing your faith in Jesus Christ. If you are ready to surrender the control of your life to God and commit to follow Jesus, through receiving the forgiveness of your sins and experiencing his eternal life, text the word "Jesus" to 781-417-5959. Our team will follow-up with you to help you take your next steps. If you are watching on our Church Online platform, raise your hand in the chat box and then click the "live prayer request" button to let us know!

Others may be saying, "I want to maximize my life. I want to do all the good I can." Let me tell you that also happens through faith in Jesus!

The cross of Christ not only saves us from our bad deeds, but it empowers us for all of our good deeds. **Jesus said, "I am the way, the truth, and the life." (John 14:6)** In every moment, Jesus is the way, the truth, and the life. Join me as I pray that God would give us the strength to live our lives for his great name!