

We are a plan-making culture. We plan education, careers, vacations, retirement and tonight's dinner! Planning, in and of itself, is not wrong. Paul often made plans in regard to his travels (**Acts 15:36; 18:20-21; 1 Corinthians 16:5-9**). In fact, making plans (or setting goals) is a key to success in any venture we may undertake in life. But there is a "right" way to plan, and a "wrong" way; James discusses both!

James 4:15: "Instead you ought to say, 'If the Lord wills, we will live and do this or that.'"

- **Grammatical Usage:** "**wills**" or in the Greek, "thelēsē" meaning, "active, preferred option".
- **Literal Interpretation:** Your planning and conversation should be prefaced with, "If it is the Lord's will, we shall be alive and will do so-and-so."
- **Contextual/Comparison:** God keeps His Word: God continually uses His Word. Let's consider the right way to make plans:

I. WE CAN SUBMIT TO GOD'S WILL

A. I.E., SUBMIT OUR PLANS TO THE WILL OF GOD...

1. We can make our plans, but we should make them contingent to God's approval - "**if the Lord wills**" (**v. 15**)
2. This is what Paul did
 - a. "**God willing**" - **Acts 18:21**
 - b. "**if the Lord permits**" – **1 Corinthians 16:7**
3. Saying "if the Lord wills" assumes our faith in two things:
 - a. That God does have a will for us (even in mundane matters)
 - b. That God can intervene (via providence) to carry out His will
4. The wisdom of making our plans contingent upon the will of God will become evident later, when we consider the "wrong" way to plan

B. IF WE REALLY WANT OUR PLANS TO SUCCEED, THEN WE WILL SEEK FIRST TO DISCERN GOD'S WILL, AND PLAN ACCORDINGLY...

1. To a great degree, this is possible, for God wants us to:
 - a. Understand His Will - **Ephesians 5:17**
 - b. Be filled with His Will - **Colossians 1:9**
 - c. Prove His Will - **Romans 12:2**
2. Of course, this relates especially to His "revealed" will
 - a. Which pertains to matters right and wrong
 - b. Which is found in the pages of the Bible
 - c. When we know God's "revealed" will (from our study of the Bible), then we can act or plan accordingly
 - d. Until then, the right way to plan is to show our submission to God by leaving our plans subject to His will
3. There is also God's "permissive" will

- a. Which pertains to matters not right or wrong, but good and better
- b. Even so, we should still show our trust and dependence upon God in such matters by committing our plans to His Will

Now let's look at the "wrong" way in **"Making Our Plans"**:

II. **WE CAN IGNORE GOD'S WILL**

A. **TO PLAN THIS WAY IS FOLLY (vv. 13-15)**

- 1. Because life is COMPLEX (v. 13)
 - a. There are the complexities of TIME (today, tomorrow, when?)
 - b. There are the complexities of ACTIVITIES (buy, sell?)
 - c. So many decisions to make, so many mistakes might be made
 - d. If it's possible to know God's will on any matter, that would increase the likelihood that our decisions and plans will be correct
- 2. Because life is UNCERTAIN (v. 14a)
 - a. No one has a guarantee of tomorrow
 - 1. Whether there will even be one
 - 2. Or what will happen
 - b. Only God can bring about what He wills for the future without fail
 - c. Since this is true, we should certainly desire to make plans that are in keeping with "His" plans!
- 3. Because life is FRAIL (v. 14b)
 - a. It is like a "vapor" - cf. **Psalm 39:5-6, 11**
 - b. How substantial is a "vapor" or "shadow"?
 - c. How quickly we can succumb to sickness or an accident illustrates how frail we really are
 - d. It is foolish, then, to think "we" have the strength within ourselves to "make" our plans happen - remember **Jm 1:10-11**
- 4. Because life is BRIEF (v. 14c)
 - a. "appears for a little time"
 - b. This is something Job observed - **Job 9:25-26; 14:1**
 - c. Since life is so short, it is important that we do God's will and not our own (**1 John 2:17**)

B. **TO PLAN THIS WAY IS BOASTFUL ARROGANCE (v. 16a)**

- 1. To plan without taking into consideration God's will is to set ourselves up above God Himself!
- 2. How could one be more arrogant than that?

C. **TO PLAN THIS WAY IS SIN (vv. 16-17)**

- 1. It is sin because it involves evil arrogance and boasting – v. 16
- 2. It is sin because we who are Christians know better – v. 17
 - a. We know what is good: to plan with God's Will in mind
 - b. To do otherwise is to sin!

➤ **Conclusion:** Have I planned with the Lord foremost in my heart and mind?