

Springboard Scripture

Proverbs 16:9

This verse establishes the fundamental distinction between man's planning and God's sovereign direction, preparing the hearer to confront the error of presuming upon tomorrow without reference to the Lord's will.

Hook

Men and women fill calendars, book flights, sign contracts, and plan for profit with confidence that tomorrow will go as planned. Daily habits strengthen this feeling: alarms are set, appointments are fixed, goals are tracked. But every obituary, every canceled plan, and every sudden illness proves how uncertain life really is. The merchant in James 4:13 speaks like many people today: "today or tomorrow we will go...and make a profit." The words sound sensible, even responsible. The problem is not having goals. The problem is speaking as if God is not in control of the next breath.

Ecclesiastes 3 says the same truth in pairs: a time to be born and a time to die, a time to plant and a time to pull up. We do not control either side. When life does not follow our plans, we get frustrated. When it does, we often become proud. This is the struggle everyone shares: people make plans, but time is not in their hands. James does not say planning is wrong. He says planning is wrong when it forgets who truly runs the clock.

Introduction

The Preacher in Ecclesiastes looks at life and says that everything has a time set by God. No one chooses when they are born or when they will die. No one can force the harvest or stop a storm. These times are limits that no person can erase. Many years later, James speaks to Christian merchants who talk as if those limits do not exist. They speak of future trips, long stays, and sure profits without mentioning the Lord who controls their days. The problem is not doing business. The problem is the proud confidence that tomorrow belongs to them. James calls this kind of talk evil because it pushes God out of His rightful place as ruler over life and time. This shows a heart problem that is still common today: speaking about the future as if it is already secured by human plans instead of by God's permission. Ecclesiastes humbles us by reminding us that God sets the times. James guides us by telling us to speak with submission. Together they call believers to turn away from proud self-rule and to accept, with humility, that every plan, every day, and every breath depends on the will of the Lord.

Thesis

Faith rejects proud, self-reliant planning that ignores God's rule and instead places every plan under His will, admitting that life and all our actions exist only by His permission.

Lesson Alignment (Bloom's Taxonomy)

A Time for Every Purpose

I. God's Sovereign Control Over All Seasons of Life

The Preacher begins with a clear truth: God sets the times for everything in human life. Nothing happens by accident. Every moment and every action unfold under God's control and according to His timing.

Psalm 31:15 (NASB 1995)

My times are in Your hand;

This short sentence says a great deal. "My times" means the whole course of life—days, seasons, successes, and troubles. Saying they are "in Your hand" means God holds them, guides them, and governs them. Life is not drifting. It is not ruled by luck. It is held by God. The believer can rest, because the same hand that holds our times is a faithful and good hand.

Daniel 2:21 (NASB 1995)

It is He who changes the times and the epochs; He removes kings and establishes kings; He gives wisdom to wise men And knowledge to men of understanding.

This verse shows God's control is not only personal but also historical. He changes seasons and eras. He raises up rulers and brings them down. History does not move by human power alone. God directs it. If God rules over nations and kings, He also rules over the days of individual lives. This means history, nations, and personal lives are not random. God rules them all.

Application: Trust God with your time, your future, and your circumstances. When plans change or life feels out of control, remember your times are still in His hand. Teach your family

to see God’s rule not only in big events in the world, but also in daily life. Worry fades when we remember who truly holds the schedule.

- **A. The appointed time for every activity under heaven**

Ecclesiastes 3:1 (NASB 1995)

There is an appointed time for everything. And there is a time for every event under heaven—

The words “appointed time” mean a fixed time chosen by God, not by luck and not by human control. The phrase “every event under heaven” shows this includes all of life, not just worship or church matters. The New Testament agrees when it says God “works all things after the counsel of His will” (Ephesians 1:11). Our lives are not self-directed. They are under God’s care and rule, just as Psalm 31:15 teaches.

Ecclesiastes 3:2 (NASB 1995)

A time to give birth and a time to die; A time to plant and a time to uproot what is planted.

The first pair shows the limits of human control. No one chooses when they are born, and no one can choose the day they will die (Hebrews 9:27). God alone sets those boundaries. The picture of planting and pulling up shows that even daily work depends on seasons God controls. Farmers must wait for God’s timing (James 5:7). Jesus taught the same truth when He said we cannot add even one hour to our life by worrying (Matthew 6:27). This means life is not in our hands, even when we plan carefully.

Application: Do not speak of your next birthday, your children’s future, or your retirement as if these things are guaranteed. These belong to God’s timing, not yours. Teach your family to respect God’s control over life instead of assuming tomorrow is promised (Proverbs 27:1; James 4:13–15). When you plan trips, work, or daily routines, hold those plans with humility. If you refuse to accept God’s rule over time, you will grow frustrated and bitter. If you accept it, you will learn to trust Him and give thanks in every season (1 Thessalonians 5:18).

- **B. The purposeful pairing of human events**

The Preacher lists twenty-eight activities in fourteen opposite pairs. Together, they cover the whole range of human life—from joy to sorrow, from building to tearing down. Each pair shows that God, not man, decides when each season begins and ends. People may want one side of the pair, but they cannot force it or stop the other.

Ecclesiastes 3:3–8 (NASB 1995, selected)

A time to kill and a time to heal; A time to tear down and a time to build up... A time to weep and a time to laugh; A time to mourn and a time to dance... A time to search and a time to give up as lost; A time to keep and a time to throw away... A time to be silent and a time to speak.

These opposites are not random. They belong to the same plan of God. God allows both the hard times and the good times for His purposes (Romans 8:28). The list ends with speaking and silence, reminding us that even our words and our restraint are under God's timing. The Old Testament says a wise person controls his words (Proverbs 17:27) and speaks at the right time (Proverbs 25:11). The New Testament teaches the same wisdom: there is a right time to speak the truth in love (Ephesians 4:15) and a time to stay quiet and trust God, as Jesus did when He suffered (1 Peter 2:23).

Application: In marriage and family life, understand that there is a time to speak and a time to be silent. Do not rush to force outcomes. God tells us to be quick to hear and slow to speak (James 1:19–20). If you ignore God's timing, you will create strife, resentment, and hurt. If you obey Him, you will find peace that comes from trusting His order. In parenting, remember there is a time to train and a time to release. Trying to control every stage of your children's lives denies that God, not you, rules their days. Show by your example what it means to submit to God's timing and to wait on Him (Isaiah 40:31).

Truth: God's control over every time and event removes the idea that man is in charge of life. It exposes how empty it is to live as if time belongs to us. Instead, it calls us to live in humble trust, knowing that every day, every plan, and every moment rest in the hands of the Lord (James 4:15).

II. The Danger of Arrogant, Self-Centered Planning

James speaks to business people whose words show full confidence in their own control over the future—time, place, length of stay, and profit. The sin is not planning. The sin is planning as if God does not exist or does not rule. Jesus warned about this in the story of the rich man who planned for many years but died that very night (Luke 12:16–20).

- **A. Presumptuous declarations of future plans**

James 4:13 (NASB 1995)

Come now, you who say, “Today or tomorrow we will go to such and such a city, and spend a year there and engage in business and make a profit.”

The speaker claims control over four things: the time (“today or tomorrow”), the place (“such and such a city”), the length (“spend a year there”), and the result (“make a profit”). Each claim assumes a certainty that only God has. The words “we will” show self-rule instead of trust in God. Scripture teaches that people can plan, but God decides what really happens (Proverbs 16:9). Jesus showed how foolish it is to plan without God when He said, “This very night your soul is required of you” (Luke 12:20).

Application: Listen to how you talk about your plans for next month, next year, or your children’s future. If your words leave God out, your heart probably is too. Teach your family to speak with humility, not with proud certainty (James 4:15). When you talk about jobs, moving, buying a home, or big decisions, learn to say and mean, “if the Lord wills.” Ignoring God in planning hardens the heart and invites correction. Living in submission builds real faith and teaches the next generation to trust the Lord, not themselves.

- **B. Ignorance of life's brevity and uncertainty**

James 4:14 (NASB 1995)

Yet you do not know what your life will be like tomorrow. You are just a vapor that appears for a little while and then vanishes away.

James points out the problem: they do not even know what tomorrow will bring, yet they speak with confidence. Life is called a “vapor”—something you see for a moment and

then it is gone. Job said the same thing: life passes quickly and does not return (Job 7:7). The Psalmist prayed that God would teach him how short his life is so he would gain wisdom (Psalm 39:4–5). The New Testament also reminds us that life is brief and uncertain (1 Peter 1:24).

Proverbs 27:1 (NASB 1995)

Do not boast about tomorrow, For you do not know what a day may bring forth.

This proverb repeats the same warning. Tomorrow is not in our control, and it is not even in our knowledge. Boasting about it shows pride and forgetfulness of God.

Application: Let the shortness of life shape your priorities. Do not delay obedience, love, or faithfulness for a “someday” that may never come (2 Corinthians 6:2). Use today to teach your children, love your spouse, serve the church, and share the gospel. Teach your family that every day is a gift, not a guarantee. Forgetting this leads to wasted years and regret. Remembering it leads to a life that counts for eternity.

Truth: Planning without God comes from forgetting how short and uncertain life really is and from refusing to honor the One who holds tomorrow.

III. The Humble Alternative of Submission to God's Will

James gives the right way to speak and think about the future. The words “if the Lord wills” change planning from pride into trust.

- **A. The proper confession: "If the Lord wills"**

James 4:15 (NASB 1995)

Instead, you ought to say, “If the Lord wills, we will live and also do this or that.”

This puts both life (“we will live”) and actions (“do this or that”) under God’s control. The word “ought” shows this is not optional. It is a duty before God. This is not just a phrase to say. It is a way of thinking that admits God rules over our days and our plans. Paul

spoke this way when he said, “I will return to you again, if God wills” (Acts 18:21), and “I will come to you soon, if the Lord wills” (1 Corinthians 4:19).

Proverbs 16:9 (NASB 1995)

The mind of man plans his way, But the LORD directs his steps.

People can and should plan, but God decides what really happens. Planning is not wrong. Trusting plans more than God is wrong.

Proverbs 19:21 (NASB 1995)

Many plans are in a man's heart, But the counsel of the LORD will stand.

This shows that God's purpose always wins in the end. That is why every plan must be held under His will.

Application: Make “if the Lord wills” part of how you speak and think—at home, at work, and in prayer. When God changes your plans through closed doors, delays, or hardships, accept it without anger and trust that He is working for good (Romans 8:28). Teach your children this way of thinking so they grow up planning wisely but trusting God fully. Refusing to submit leads to pride and spiritual danger. Learning to submit protects the heart and helps a person stay faithful to Christ.

- **B. The condemnation of all arrogant boasting**

James 4:16 (NASB 1995)

But as it is, you boast in your arrogance; all such boasting is evil.

James is clear and strong. He calls this kind of boasting “evil.” The problem is not confidence in God. The problem is pride that pushes God out. Scripture says God resists the proud but gives grace to the humble (James 4:6; 1 Peter 5:5).

Application: Remove proud, self-centered talk from your life. Replace it with thanks and praise to God. Show your children by example that success comes from the Lord, not

from yourself (1 Corinthians 4:7). When good things happen—work success, family blessings, personal achievements—give God the credit. Pride pulls the heart away from God. Humility keeps the heart close to Him and protects real faith.

Truth: True faith speaks about the future with humble trust in God’s will and rejects every kind of proud boasting that leaves Him out.

Conclusion

Ecclesiastes declares every moment appointed by God; James condemns every plan that speaks as though those moments belong to man. The sovereign Lord sets the times and holds every life in His hand. Faith obeys by submitting every intention to His will with humble, dependent speech. Examine your heart and your words today. Repent of every arrogant “I will” and begin now to live and speak only as one who knows tomorrow rests with the Lord. Let this truth shape your daily decisions, your family conversations, and your eternal hope.

Invitation

If you have lived with self-reliant arrogance, planning without reference to God’s will, you stand under the same condemnation James pronounces. The gospel calls you to hear this truth, believe that Jesus is the Christ who died for your sins and rose again, repent of self-rule, confess Him as Lord, and be baptized into Christ for the remission of sins so you may walk in newness of life. Continue faithfully, submitting daily to His sovereign will. If you need to obey the gospel or return to faithful submission, come now as we stand and sing.

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