

Lockdown Lessons

Hold Your Plans Loosely - James 4:13-16

Sermon Questions

INSTRUCTIONS: Leaders, check out some fun Connection Activity ideas for your group time, which are posted on our Chapel website Small Groups page under “virtual group resources.” We encourage you to come up with your own “introduction” question to begin your group discussion, and to end your group time in prayer.

Read James 4:13-16. Ask God to fill you with His Spirit as you read through the passage. Use your journal to record what stands out to you, and how you relate this passage to your life today.

James 4:13-16

13 Now listen, you who say, “Today or tomorrow we will go to this or that city, spend a year there, carry on business and make money.” **14** Why, you do not even know what will happen tomorrow. What is your life? You are a mist that appears for a little while and then vanishes. **15** Instead, you ought to say, “If it is the Lord’s will, we will live and do this or that.” **16** As it is, you boast in your arrogant schemes. All such boasting is evil.”

1. Read verses 13-15. James reminds us about the uncertainty of life, and the fact that life is “a mist.” Discuss with your group how this COVID-19 lockdown has revealed these truths even more. Note that in this section of James, he was talking to business people. They had made some very specific plans. How about you? Are you a planner? Share how you tend to plan things in your life – from a simple shopping trip to determining what school to attend or job to take?
2. James doesn’t fault making plans; instead, he turns our attention to the way we plan. Read verse 16. It’s about planning with boasting and arrogance. What are some specific things that you boast about or talk about that you’re “going to do?” Look back to verse 13 - why is this an example of boasting, and why is it ‘evil’?

Pastor Dave says the best way to discern if we are holding our plans tightly, is to look at how we respond when our plans don’t work out. He shared examples such as looking for someone to blame, getting angry, and getting bitter. Share with your group your typical response when your plans don’t work out as you had hoped? What kind of emotions do you experience? In light of this COVID-19 lockdown, have you seen changes in the way you respond?

3. Have someone else read verse 15. What is encouraging us to do? Pastor Dave mentions that this is a life-changing concept that affects the way we talk, and it’s a mindset and attitude that realizes God is God (and we are not). How does approaching life with a recognition that all of your plans are ultimately at the discretion of God’s bigger plan help you hold your plans more loosely?
4. Pastor Dave talks about three responses of people who are holding their plans loosely, when those plans get messed up: (1) they grieve; (2) they trust that God is in control; (3) they are present to what God is doing now. Which of those three do you find hardest to do, and why? What could help you to do that thing better? What are some ways we can encourage one another to hold our plans more loosely, and to remain faithful should our plans not turn out the way we had planned or hoped?
5. Pastor Dave ended his message by sharing a passage from John 10, where Jesus says, “Nothing can snatch you out of my hand.” Jesus has us - He died for us, he rose again, which means he’s alive for us now. And He has said, “I will never leave you or forsake you.” He’s holding us tightly, so we can hold loosely. What have you learned from this week’s message, as well as in the midst of this lockdown, that will help you loosen your grip on your plans? End your group time in prayer, asking the Spirit to help you as you move forward, to hold your plans more loosely.