

BLUEPRINT

Sermon-Based Study Guide
Good Shepherd Presbyterian Church
James 4.11-17 | August 11, 2019

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FOR A FAITH THAT WORKS

I. Introduction to this Study

This week we continue studying James, one of the earliest books in the Christian Scriptures, uncovering God's blueprint for a faith that works. In this study we again engage our language – how we speak of others and how we boast of future plans, instead of relying wholly on God's will for our lives.

II. Connecting with One Another

When was the last time you made plans that fell through? How did you respond?

III. Study the Text

a. Read James 4.11-12.

Why is it so easy to talk about what's wrong with other people and cast them in a bad light?

What do you think James means when he says that speaking against someone is "speaking against the law and judging it"?

b. When are people tempted to think they are "above the law" (whether the laws of the land or of Scripture) and why?

c. How are you tempted to judge your neighbor (whether literal or figurative)?

d. Read James 4.13-17.

Throughout these verses, James warns against the temptation to put ourselves in the place of God. How do verses 13-16 highlight this danger?

How can planning for the future be a wise thing to do? How can it become sinful? What is the difference?

e. Matt Chandler writes that "Our view of the future greatly influences where we place our assurance." Why is this so?

How often do you think about the future? (1 – not at all, 10 – all the time)

1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10

How often do you pray about the future?

1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10

What's your attitude toward the future?

1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10

How do your thoughts of the future affect your daily life?

1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10



What word would you use to describe your attitude toward the future?

When thinking about the future, what do you focus on?

How does reflecting on these questions help you see where you place your trust?

- f. Why does James compare our lives to a mist or vapor? Why is this truth important to keep in mind?

How do you respond to James' observation about the fragility of your life?

- g. Why is admitting weakness a liberating truth? Why is acknowledging humility vital to the unity of the church?

Are you more prone to not recognize your weakness or to feel that God can't use you because of your weaknesses? How is each perspective detrimental to the mission of God?

- h. In practical terms, what does it look like to live out an attitude that expresses, "If the Lord wills, we shall live, and we shall do this, or that"?

- i. As you look over this passage, in what ways is God calling or nudging you to do what you know is right?

IV. Pray

- a. Ask God to help you keep a tight reign on your tongue,
- b. Lift up your needs and your future to the One who cares for you,
- c. Rest in the good news that while we don't know what the future holds, we know who holds the future.

V. Digging Deeper

- a. Spend time in quiet reflection on Jesus' words in Matthew 6.25-33.

This study guide relies on material from Matt Chandler's *James: Faith/Works*, N.T. Wright's *James: 9 Studies for Individuals and Groups*, and David Platt's *Christ-Centered Exposition: Exalting Jesus in James*

