



SERIES: FEBRUARY – MARCH FAITH IN REAL LIFE

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Scripture: James 4:13-14

TITLE: Release and Respond

I'm a planner. I like knowing the route to the hotel. I like knowing which restaurants I will eat at. I like having my day regimented from the moment I wake up to the moment I go to bed. But I've also learned that "many are the plans in a man's heart, but it's the Lord's purpose that prevails" (Proverbs 19:21) In other words, don't hold too tightly to my plans.

Well, James has a very similar message for us today in James 4:13-14 (CSB).

Come now, you who say, "Today or tomorrow we will travel to such and such a city and spend a year there and do business and make a profit." Yet you do not know what tomorrow will bring—what your life will be! For you are like vapor that appears for a little while, then vanishes.

Verse 13 is an easily misinterpreted passage. Let's first just think about this contextually. James has been addressing the behavior of a believer. And he's been hitting on topics such as arrogance and playing judge. James continues to punch the point of playing God with our plans.

Some of the people James may be addressing were of the merchant class who were, at one time, successful businessmen. But that desire to succeed was marked by arrogance and control. But even the most controlling of institutions find out that such pride comes before the fall.

James is not condemning wise planning, capitalism, or strategic plans. What James is condemning is the posture of playing God.

Why? James could easily say, "Friends, you thought that you'd be in Jerusalem forever but surprise! You are now living abroad and starting over." In other words, you only have so much control.

We like to know the end from the beginning. We like to have inside information. We like retirement projections. We like polling for elections. But as we've seen consistently, even the most apparently sure things can go the other way.

And James points out an easy example: life. We think we'll live forever, but tomorrow is promised to no one. The child dies in a car crash, and the terminal cancer patient lives an extra ten years. We have little control over the outcomes of our lives, just our response to daily events.

So here's my challenge for you today: release and respond. Today, what areas of your life do you hold onto with an iron fist? Begin to loosen the grasp. Is it your job? Is it your retirement? Is it your health? Your kids? Your spouse. Begin to look at God, trust Him, and begin to let go.

And then, ask the Spirit to help you respond well as life happens. God has yet to disappoint me in His planning. It may be a surprise, but it is much better in the end.

When we release our life to God and respond in His Spirit, we will win the day.