



# What is Your Life?

---

(James 4:13-17)

## Review & Context

### James is writing to Christians (Exiles)

- He addresses them as “the twelve tribes in the Dispersion” a phrase that alludes to the people of God during the exile. In this sense, he is saying that Christians are exiles in this world.

### Your going to face trials (These trials are a testing of your faith)

- (James 1:2-3) — Count it all joy, my brothers, when you meet *trials* of various kinds, <sup>3</sup>for you know that the *testing of your faith* produces steadfastness...

### The tests are determining (and revealing) what you really believe.

- Do you believe Jesus and His Word, or do you believe the world and the world’s way of thinking?

### The entire book of James begs the question:

- **Do you have a Godward heart or a worldly heart?**
- It is definitely a heart issue: (James 5:8) — *Establish your hearts*, for the coming of the Lord is at hand.

## ◆ The Godward heart:

### What is the goal of the Godward heart?

1. To be perfect and complete in Christ: (James 1:2–4) — Count it all joy, my brothers, when you meet trials of various kinds, <sup>3</sup>for you know that the testing of your faith produces *steadfastness*. <sup>4</sup>And let steadfastness have its full effect, that you may be *perfect and complete*, lacking in nothing. **(To be proven faithful.)**
2. To receive the crown of life: (James 1:12) — Blessed is the man who remains steadfast under trial, for when he has stood the test he will receive the *crown of life*, which God has promised to those who love him. **(To receive the reward.)**

### What are the means to this goal?

1. The wisdom of God (or wisdom from above):
  - (James 1:5) — If any of you lacks *wisdom*, let him ask God, who gives generously to all without reproach, and it will be given him....
  - (James 3:17) — But the *wisdom from above* is first pure, then peaceable, gentle, open to reason, full of mercy and good fruits, impartial and sincere.
2. The Word of God:
  - (James 1:18) — Of his own will he brought us forth by the *word of truth*, that we should be a kind of firstfruits of his creatures.
  - (James 1:21) — Therefore put away all filthiness and rampant wickedness and **receive** with meekness the *implanted word*, which is able to save your souls.

### What is the evidence of a Godward heart?

- (Ch 1) - You're not just a hearer of the Word, but a doer of the Word
- (Ch 2) - You treat people impartially, not based on worldly thinking
- (Ch 2) - Your faith produces good works
- (Ch 3) - Your words bear good fruit for the Kingdom

# ◆ The Worldly Heart

## What is the goal of the worldly heart?

### 1. Your own desires & passions:

- (James 1:14–15) — But each person is tempted when he is lured and enticed by *his own desire*. <sup>15</sup>Then desire when it has conceived gives birth to sin, and sin when it is fully grown brings forth death.
- (James 4:1–3) — What causes quarrels and what causes fights among you? Is it not this, that *your passions* are at war within you? <sup>2</sup>*You desire* and do not have, so you murder. *You covet* and cannot obtain, so you fight and quarrel. You do not have, because you do not ask. <sup>3</sup>You ask and do not receive, because you ask wrongly, to spend it on *your passions*.

### 2. Earthly Riches:

- (James 1:9–11, **AMP**) — Let the brother in humble circumstances glory in his elevation [as a Christian, called to the true riches and to be an heir of God], <sup>10</sup>And the *rich* [person ought to glory] in being humbled [by being shown his human frailty], because like the flower of the grass he will pass away. <sup>11</sup>For the sun comes up with a scorching heat and parches the grass; its flower falls off and its beauty fades away. Even so will *the rich man* wither and die in the midst of *his pursuits*.
- (James 5:1–3) — Come now, you rich, weep and howl for the miseries that are coming upon you. <sup>2</sup>Your riches have rotted and your garments are moth-eaten. <sup>3</sup>Your gold and silver have corroded, and their corrosion will be evidence against you and will eat your flesh like fire. You have laid up treasure in the last days. [*fading treasure*]

## What are the means to this goal?

- Worldly Wisdom: (James 3:15) — This is not the wisdom that comes down from above, but is *earthly, unspiritual, demonic*.

## What is the evidence of a worldly heart?

- (Ch 1) - You are having a serious struggle with sin in your life (vs 15)
- (Ch 1) - You hear the Word, but you don't put it into practice
- (Ch 2) - You treat people differently based on their position in the world (wealth, power, etc.)
- (Ch 2) - You may say you are a Believer, but there's no evidence by what you do (your works)
- (Ch 3) - Your tongue causes great trouble
- (Ch 3,4) - Dissension, quarrel, and disagreement follows you

## **CORE QUESTION:**

**Do you have a Godward heart or a worldly heart?**

(Are you operating by Godly wisdom or worldly wisdom?)

### **(James 4:13-16)**

Come now, you who say, "Today or tomorrow we will go into such and such a town and spend a year there and trade and make a profit" — <sup>14</sup>yet you do not know what tomorrow will bring. What is your life? For you are a mist that appears for a little time and then vanishes.

<sup>15</sup>Instead you ought to say, "If the Lord wills, we will live and do this or that." <sup>16</sup>As it is, you boast in your arrogance. All such boasting is evil.

<sup>17</sup> So whoever knows the right thing to do and fails to do it, for him it is sin.

### (Verse 13)

Come now, *you who say*, “Today or tomorrow we will go into such and such a town and spend a year there and trade and *make a profit*”

## ◆ #1) The worldly heart - is about worldly things

### Their words revealed their heart

- Their words revealed *a total neglect for God and His Kingdom*.
- Their words revealed worldly thinking - *“I am in control of my own life.”*
  - When. Where. How long. What I’ll do (trade). The result.
- Their words revealed worldly pursuit - *their purpose was “to make a profit”*

**NOTE:** It’s not a sin to plan or to make a profit. It’s a sin to plan without regard for God. It’s a sin to pursue wealth & riches.

### Do your words reflect Godly Wisdom or worldly wisdom?

- Jesus, rebuking the corrupt religious leaders:  
(**Matthew 12:34-37**) — You brood of vipers! How can you speak good, when you are evil? For *out of the abundance of the heart the mouth speaks*. <sup>35</sup>The good person out of his good treasure brings forth good, and the evil person out of his evil treasure brings forth evil. <sup>36</sup>I tell you, on the day of judgment people will give account for every careless word they speak, <sup>37</sup>for *by your words* you will be justified, and *by your words* you will be condemned.”

## ◆ What does the Bible say about our plans and our words:

### Our PLANS depend upon God:

- (Proverbs 16:9) — The heart of man plans his way, but *the Lord establishes his steps*.
- (Proverbs 3:6) — In all your ways *acknowledge him*, and he will make straight your paths.
- (Proverbs 16:3) — *Commit your work to the Lord*, and your plans will be established.

### God’s WORDS never fail:

- (Isaiah 55:10-11) — “For as the rain and the snow come down from heaven and do not return there but water the earth, making it bring forth and sprout, giving seed to the sower and bread to the eater, <sup>11</sup>so shall *my word* be that goes out from my mouth; it shall not return to me empty, but it shall accomplish that which I purpose, and shall succeed in the thing for which I sent it.

### (Verse 14)

— Yet *you do not know* what tomorrow will bring. What is your life? For you are a mist that appears *for a little time* and then vanishes.

## ◆ #2) The worldly heart - ignores the brevity of life

### They were banking on something that wasn't theirs

- *"You do not know what tomorrow will bring"*
- (Proverbs 27:1) — Do not boast about tomorrow, for you do not know what a day may bring.
  - **ILLUSTRATION: ALL THOSE WHO'VE LOST THEIR LIVES RECENTLY**  
Jimmy Buffett. Damar Hamlin (NFL - Buffalo Bills)  
(MAYBE): *BORROWING MY CHECK CARD*

## ◆ What does the Bible say about the brevity of life?

- Everyday is a gift: (Psalm 118:24) — This is the day that *the Lord has made*; let us rejoice and be glad in it.
- (Psalm 90:12) — So teach us to number our days that we may get *a heart of wisdom*.
- (Psalm 39:4-5) — "O Lord, make me know my end and what is the measure of my days; let me know *how fleeting I am!*" <sup>5</sup>Behold, you have made my days a few handbreadths, and my lifetime is as nothing before you. Surely all mankind stands as *a mere breath!*  
Selah

## ◆ Parable of the Rich Fool

(Luke 12:16-20) — And he told them a parable, saying, "The land of a rich man produced plentifully, <sup>17</sup>and he thought to himself, 'What shall I do, for I have nowhere to store my crops?' <sup>18</sup>And he said, 'I will do this: I will tear down my barns and build larger ones, and there I will store all my grain and my goods. <sup>19</sup>And I will say to my soul, "Soul, you have ample goods laid up for many years; relax, eat, drink, be merry." ' <sup>20</sup>But God said to him, 'Fool! *This night your soul is required of you, and the things you have prepared, whose will they be?*'

(Verse 15)

Instead you ought to say, "*If the Lord wills*, we will live and do this or that."

## ◆ #3) The Godward heart - is fixed on God

**What does God want?** — (This should be our constant question)

- *What does God want in me, through me, for me, and beyond me?*
- We should seek first the Kingdom: (Matthew 6:33) — But *seek first the kingdom of God and his righteousness*, and all these things will be added to you.

**NOTE:** Righteousness meant - to be in conformity with what God desires (and commands) of us

**This is the distinguishing characteristic of true Believers**

- (Matthew 7:21) — "Not everyone who says to me, 'Lord, Lord,' will enter the kingdom of heaven, but the one *who does the will of my Father* who is in heaven.
- Jesus said this was the key point for those who'd be saved: (John 7:17) — "if anyone's *will is to do God's will*, he will know whether [my] teaching is from God or whether I am speaking on my own authority" — "**If you truly want to do God's will, you'll believe and follow my teaching.**"

**This is why James told us to seek God for wisdom**

- (James 1:5) — If any of you lacks wisdom, let him ask God, who gives generously to all without reproach, and it will be given him. —

**NOTE:** If I seek God's wisdom, He will teach me His will.



---

## ◆ What does the Bible say about God's wisdom?

### God's wisdom is true riches:

(Proverbs 8:10–11, 17–19, 21) — Take my instruction instead of silver, and knowledge rather than choice gold, <sup>11</sup>for wisdom is better than jewels, and all that you may desire cannot compare with her...

<sup>17</sup>I love those who love me, and *those who seek me diligently find me*. <sup>18</sup>Riches and honor are with me, enduring wealth and righteousness. <sup>19</sup>My fruit is better than gold, even fine gold, and my yield than choice silver. <sup>20</sup>I walk in the way of righteousness, in the paths of justice, <sup>21</sup>*granting an inheritance* to those who love me, and *filling their treasuries*.

- **ILLUSTRATION: IMAGINE YOU WON THE LOTTERY (GOD'S WISDOM)**
  - God's Bank of Wisdom
  - The World's Bank of Wisdom

### God's wisdom is true life:

(Proverbs 8:34–36) — Blessed is the one who listens to me, watching daily at my gates, waiting beside my doors. <sup>35</sup>For whoever finds me finds life and obtains favor from the Lord, <sup>36</sup>but he who fails to find me *injures himself*; all who hate me *love death*."



(Verse 16)

As it is, *you boast* in *your arrogance*. All such boasting is *evil*.

## ◆ #4) The Godward heart - is a humble heart

### James is rebuking them for their pride

- **Arrogance means** — the one who “makes more of himself” than the reality justifies, “ascribing to himself either more and better things than he has, or even what he does not possess at all”; who “*promises what he cannot perform*”
- This same word for *arrogance* is used one other time in scripture — (1 John 2:16) — For all that is in the world—the desires of the flesh and the desires of the eyes and *pride of life*—is not from the Father but is from the world.

- **IMPORTANT: HE CALLS THIS EVIL**

---

## ◆ What does the Bible say about pride & humility?

### ABOUT PRIDE:

- (Isaiah 2:12) — The Lord Almighty has a day in store for all the *proud and lofty*, for all that is exalted (and they will be humbled).
- (James 4:6) — ...God opposes the *proud* ...
- (Proverbs 8:13) — ...I hate *pride* and *arrogance*...

### ABOUT HUMILITY:

- (James 4:6) — ...God... gives grace to the *humble*.
- (James 4:10) — *Humble* yourselves before the Lord, and he will exalt you.
- (Psalm 138:6) — For though the Lord is high, he regards the *lowly*, but the haughty he knows from afar.

**(Verse 17)**

So whoever knows *the right thing to do* and fails to do it, for him it is sin.

## ◆ #5) The Godward heart - thrives in obedience

### How often have we heard and not obeyed?

- (James 1:22) — But be doers of the word, and not hearers only, deceiving yourselves.

### Delayed obedience is disobedience

- One of our greatest sins is knowing what God has told us to do and saying: “I’ll do it tomorrow” or “One day I will do it.” — *This is giving God a soft “no”*
- (Psalm 119:60) — I hasten and do not delay to keep your commandments.

### The blessing and favor of God is on those who obey:

**(Deuteronomy 28:2-14)** — And all these blessings shall come upon you and overtake you, *if you obey the voice of the Lord* your God.

- <sup>3</sup>Blessed shall you be in the city,
- and blessed shall you be in the field.
- <sup>4</sup>Blessed shall be the fruit of your womb and the fruit of your ground and the fruit of your cattle, the increase of your herds and the young of your flock.
- ...<sup>6</sup>Blessed shall you be when you come in, and blessed shall you be when you go out.
- ...<sup>11</sup>And the Lord will make you abound in prosperity, in the fruit of your womb and in the fruit of your livestock and in the fruit of your ground...
- <sup>12</sup>The Lord will open to you his good treasury, the heavens, to give the rain to your land in its season and to bless all the work of your hands.
- And you shall lend to many..., but you shall not borrow.
- <sup>13</sup>And the Lord will make you the head and not the tail

## **Closing:**

**QUOTE:** “If you knew how quickly people would forget you after your death, you would not seek in your life to please anyone but God.” — John Chrysostom

**QUOTE:** “Do not have Jesus Christ on your lips and the world in your heart.” — Ignatius of Antioch

# **Are you living with a Godward heart or a worldly heart?**

## **If you are at peace that you’ve been honoring the Lord**

Thank God and take joy that He has taken you through a journey that has helped to make you steadfast. Humbly know that it is only by God’s grace that you can walk in obedience and a Godward heart.

## **Are you feeling convicted that you have not been honoring God**

- If you are a Christian — you need to repent and set your mind to obey all that you know the Lord has spoken to you. I challenge you to confess it to another Believer who can help hold you accountable to follow through.
- If you are not a Christian — Bible says that “today is the day of salvation.” Today you need to repent of your sin and surrender your life Jesus. This means your are turning away from your way of doing things and are choosing to follow Him and obey Him.
- If the Lord has spoken to you today — You are not promised another day. You are not promised that He will speak to you again. And you are not promised that He will give you another opportunity to repent and be made right with Him.

**(Isaiah 55:6-7)** — “Seek the Lord while he may be found; call upon him while he is near; <sup>7</sup>let the wicked forsake his way, and the unrighteous man his thoughts; let him return to the Lord, that he may have compassion on him, and to our God, for he will abundantly pardon.