

# ***Making the Most of 525,600 Minutes***

## ***Our Plans/God's Plans***

### **January 15, 2023**

**Overarching Theme:** 2023 – Living the Dream

**Instructions:**

When using this material as teacher, feel free to pick and choose the point you want to emphasize in the lesson. The format of the curriculum is designed to have an abundance of information in which to refer as desired.

**Core Point:** 2023 can be a year of living the dream of faithful discipleship as we take a step forward in following Jesus Christ.

**Reflect on this Scripture:** **James 4:13-16** *Come now, you who say, "Today or tomorrow we will go to such and such a town and spend a year there, doing business and making money." <sup>14</sup> Yet you do not even know what tomorrow will bring. What is your life? For you are a mist that appears for a little while and then vanishes. <sup>15</sup> Instead you ought to say, "If the Lord wishes, we will live and do this or that." <sup>16</sup> As it is, you boast in your arrogance; all such boasting is evil.*

**Commentary:**

James summons the people ("come now") to a consideration of their lack of wisdom from above. Once more, they are given speech to express their plans of future travel, trade, and profit. At the most obvious level, the traders are criticized for their arrogant assumption that they can depend on the future as though it were secure. But at a deeper level, they show that they operate by the wisdom of the world, which is the logic of envy and selfish ambition; by selling and getting a profit, they will secure their own future. James responds to them by reminding them of the evanescent quality of human life (4:14). How can they plan for the next year when they cannot guarantee that they will even see tomorrow? The awareness that human existence itself is a "*mist that is here and gone*" encourages greater modesty concerning human plans and projects.

James also challenges the very view of reality assumed by such friends of the world. Their speech shows that they see the world as a closed system of limited resources, available to their control and manipulation, yielding to

their market analysis and sales campaigns. When James tells them that they should say, *"If it is the Lord's will, we will live and do this or that"* (4:15), he is not simply recommending a more pious form of speech. Rather, he calls for a profoundly different perception of reality. He is recommending the view provided by faith and friendship with God that the world is an open system, created by God at every moment and infinitely rich in resources provided by God for humans to exist and to prosper, in cooperation rather than in competition and mutual elimination. Within *this* perspective, their pretentiousness and boasting are more than foolishness; they are symptoms of something evil (4:16).

- Adapted from the New Interpreters Bible Commentary, Vol XII, p. 216

### **Questions to Ponder for Accountability in the Group:**

1. Why do you think James challenges the human tendency to plan without considering our human limitations?
2. Have you ever been tempted to chart a course based on envying someone else's life or circumstances? What would be the result of a life based upon envy rather than one's own unique calling?
3. What is the difference between healthy ambition and the selfish ambition that James decries (3:14)? In your view, what is the end result of each?
4. James calls out the tendency to make plans without consulting Godly wisdom. How could the practice of seeking God's will help one make the most of the 525,600 minutes of each year?

### **Activity for the Life of a Disciple:**

1. Remember to find encouragement for the day by reading the daily devotional from FUMCC.
2. Ponder and pray on this scripture this week: James 4:15 <sup>15</sup> *Instead you ought to say, "If the Lord wishes, we will live and do this or that."*