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CFBC... “James: A Real Faith For A Real World”

“PLAYING GOD”

James 4:13-17

Is it possible for a Christian to live like an atheist? I

don't mean that you deny the existence of God or reject the Word of God. I'm talking about living your life without the slightest regard for God's personal involvement in your decision making and without the recognition that each day of your life is hinges on the sovereign will of God.

When James sat down to write a letter to Jewish Christians who had been scattered because of rampant persecution, he addressed this issue with them. In essence they were *PLAYING GOD* over their own lives. For a true Christian who had received Jesus by faith, that was totally unacceptable and he addressed it directly. **READ THE TEXT.**

Are you making the same mistake? Do you pray about . . .

- **your career decisions?**

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- **your financial decisions?**
- **your parenting decisions?**
- **your marriage relationship?**

Don't forget. In James 3:13-18, he laid out two approaches to life. There is the wisdom of the world with its self-centered approach, and there is the wisdom from above with its God-centered approach. Which wisdom have you opted for? Have you submitted to the Lordship of the Jesus in every area of your life? Here's the truth that leaps out of this text this morning . . .

FACTOR GOD INTO EVERY ASPECT OF YOUR LIFE!

The 5 verses in this text reveals how we can move from living as a practical atheist to living as a Spirit-filled, fruitful Christian. Here's the first key:

1. RESIST THE ILLUSION OF CONTROL.

Have you ever pressed a crosswalk button and wondered if it actually triggered the traffic signal?

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- **In New York City, an official told CNN that only around 100 of the 1,000 crosswalk buttons in the city perform a task.**
- ***The Boston Globe* reported that the buttons in downtown areas of that city are not even functional.**
- **The BBC reported that the buttons in London are useless during the day when pedestrian traffic is high.**

Planners time traffic systems to keep cars moving at a proper speed, with pedestrian crossings programmed into the continuous cycle. Civil engineers use the placebo buttons to give pedestrians the illusion of control.

Have you bought into the idea that you are ultimately in control of your life? That’s what James addressed in verses 13-14 . . .

James 4:13–14... Come now, you who say, “Today or tomorrow we will go to such and such a city, and spend a year there and engage in business and make a profit.” 14 Yet you do not know what your

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life will be like tomorrow. You are *just* a vapor that appears for a little while and then vanishes away.

James addressed Christian businessmen who confidently declared what they would do, where they would go, how long they would stay, and how much money they would make. Their problem was not simply that they were making plans, but that they were making plans without acknowledging God and His authority over every aspect of their lives.

That is worldly wisdom replete with its self-centered approach on steroids. This illusion of control gives the impression that a believer can *PLAY GOD* over their own lives. This approach never works out well. There are basically two reasons for this . . .

The Complexity of Life

"Come" is another one of the strong commands that is splashed throughout this letter. **"Now"** adds a sense of urgency. The warning here is addressed to those merchants who presume upon God. When you consider the who and the when and the where and the what and the why of our existence, life gets

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very complex. Only God and His sovereign will can make it work in harmony. Can you handle the complexities of life on your own? I don't think so. In verse 14, we find another reason that we must resist the illusion that we are in control of our lives . . .

The Brevity of Life

Notice the emphasis in verse 13 on *"Today or Tomorrow."* You can make elaborate plans for your life and die before they ever become a reality. Jesus could come back this afternoon.

Psalm 90:10... As for the days of our life, they contain seventy years, Or if due to strength, eighty years, Yet their pride is *but* labor and sorrow; For soon it is gone and we fly away.

Psalm 103:15–16 As for man, his days are like grass; As a flower of the field, so he flourishes.
16 When the wind has passed over it, it is no more, And its place acknowledges it no longer.

Psalm 144:4... Man is like a mere breath; His days are like a passing shadow.

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Proverbs 27:1... Do not boast about tomorrow,
For you do not know what a day may bring forth.

Take your Bible and turn to **Luke 12:16-21**. In this parable the Lord Jesus makes a clear point about greed and the illusion of control. Here’s a pertinent illustration of the reason why you must . . .

FACTOR GOD INTO EVERY ASPECT OF YOUR LIFE!

The first key to accomplishing this goal is this—*resist the illusion of control*. Here’s the second one . . .

2. PURSUE THE WILL OF GOD.

The middle verse of this text highlights the challenge we must incorporate into our lives if we hope to avoid the arrogance associated with the presumptuous sin of playing God . . .

James 4:15-16... *Instead, you ought to say, “If the Lord wills, we will live and also do this or that.” 16 But as it is, you boast in your arrogance; all such boasting is evil.*

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Pursuing the will of God was so important for the leaders of the New Testament church . . .

Romans 1:9–10... For God, whom I serve in my spirit in the *preaching of the* gospel of His Son, is my witness *as to* how unceasingly I make mention of you, **10** always in my prayers making request, if perhaps now at last by the will of God I may succeed in coming to you.

Acts 18:20–21... When they (church at Ephesus) asked him to stay for a longer time, he did not consent, **21** but taking leave of them and saying, “I will return to you again if God wills,” he set sail from Ephesus.

J.A. Motyer wrote . . .

When even in little, secret, almost unrecognized ways we forget how frail we are, and stop short of conscious dependence on our God, it is an element of the proud, boastful, vaunting human spirit.

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The world celebrates those who boast and brag. In fact, social media has become an available and addictive platform to boast about our beauty, our wealth, and our accomplishments. The word of God summarizes it all in one word: “EVIL.”

- Are you considering a marriage proposal?
- Are you in the process of choosing a career?
- Are you thinking about buying a house?
- Are you pondering a job change, a move?
- Are you about to purchase a vehicle?

Don't be arrogant—PURSUE THE WILL OF GOD!

I pray that you will . . .

FACTOR GOD INTO EVERY ASPECT OF YOUR LIFE!

The first key to accomplishing this goal is this—resist the illusion of control. Here's the second one—pursue the will of God. Here's the final key . . .

3. DO THE RIGHT THING IMMEDIATELY.

James 4:17... Therefore, to one who knows *the right thing to do* and does not do it, to him it is sin.

At first, this verse may seem detached from what came just prior to it. However, James has connected it with the previous verse through the word, “therefore.” The good that believers know they must do involves confessing dependence upon God’s will in everything they do. David Platt said . . .

Humble submission to God’s will means humble obedience to God’s will.¹

James concludes our text today by emphasizing that *sin is not just doing wrong; it is failing to do what is right*. The sin of omission involves knowing what is right and this makes you accountable to the Lord. To know what is right obligates you to do the right thing

¹ David Platt, [*Exalting Jesus in James*](#) (Nashville, TN: Holman Reference, 2014), 95.

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instantly, sincerely, and faithfully. *If you know you should. . .*

- **repent and receive Jesus by faith, do it!**
- **be baptized, do it!**
- **join CFBC, do it!**
- **confess and forsake a sin, do it!**
- **spend more time reading the Bible, do it!**
- **give to meet someone’s need, do it!**
- **share the gospel with someone, do it!**
- **surrender to God’s call to ministry, do it!**

Whatever you do, don’t ignore the will of the Lord.
Do the right thing immediately.

CONCLUSION

Are you playing God over your life as if you were a practical atheist? I’ve got news for you. You aren’t God and you never will be. This job is too big for you! I want you to give serious consideration to the challenging truth of our text this morning . . .

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FACTOR GOD INTO EVERY ASPECT OF YOUR LIFE!

To make this an integral part of your life you must incorporate three keys . . .

1. RESIST THE ILLUSION OF CONTROL.

2. PURSUE THE WILL OF GOD.

3. DO THE RIGHT THING IMMEDIATELY.

Now's the time to do what you know the Lord is calling you to do. Let Him have His way in your heart today!

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