

Give some examples of bold plans that people make for their lives, businesses, futures, or family goals. Do you have any examples from your own life? What's the danger in such thinking?

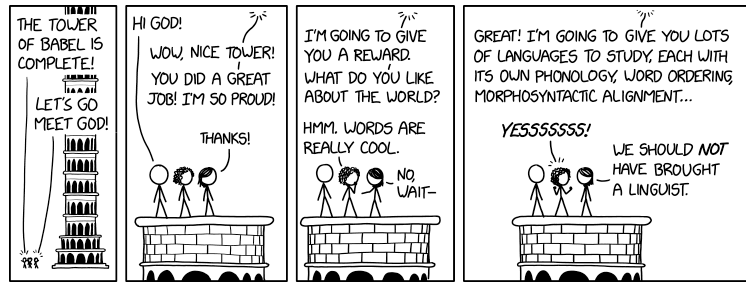
But he gives more grace. Therefore it says, “God opposes the proud, but gives grace to the humble.”¹ Submit yourselves therefore to God. Resist the devil, and he will flee from you. Draw near to God, and he will draw near to you. Cleanse your hands, you sinners, and purify your hearts, you double-minded.² Be wretched and mourn and weep.³ Let your laughter be turned to mourning and your joy to gloom. Humble yourselves before the Lord, and he will exalt you.

James 4:6–10

What does submission to God entail?
How is it related to resisting the devil?

Read David's prayer of repentance in Psalm 51. What similarities do you see with what James writes here? Consider

also the Heidelberg catechism: “Q. What is the dying-away of the old self? A. To be genuinely sorry for sin and more and more to hate and run away from it.”⁴ (Q&A 89)



Do not speak evil against one another, brothers. The one who speaks against a brother or judges his brother, speaks evil against the law and judges the law. But if you judge the law, you are not a doer of the law but a judge. There is only one lawgiver and judge, he who is able to save and to destroy. But who are you to judge your neighbor?

James 4:11–12

Why is it so bad to judge others? (Cf. Matthew 7:1; Romans 14:4) Does the Christian reason for avoiding judgment coincide with the secular one?

Paul writes that “if anyone is caught in any transgression, you who are spiritual should restore him in a spirit of gentleness.”⁵ How can we do this without becoming judges of the law?

¹ Proverbs 3:34 (LXX)

² This is the same adjective used in James 1:25 (q.v.) to describe the one who asks while doubting.

³ See also Luke 6:25, “Woe to you who laugh now, for you shall mourn and weep”

⁴ Psalm 51:3–4, 17; Joel 2:12–13; Romans 8:12–13; 2 Corinthians 7:10

⁵ Galatians 6:1

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”—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. Instead you ought to say, “If the Lord wills, we will live and do this or that.” As it is, you boast in your arrogance. All such boasting is evil. So whoever knows the right thing to do and fails to do it, for him it is sin.

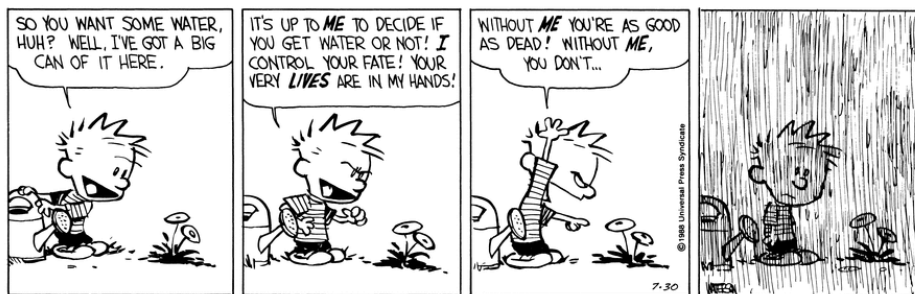
James 4:13–17

Is all planning for the future evil? If not, what are the specific attitudes that James condemns here, and how can we avoid them in our own planning?

Consider the attitude that Moses has in Psalm 90. Why is it so important to say, “if the Lord wills it?” What are some areas of your life in which you need to say this?

Looking back at the entirety of chapter four, James sets up many strong contrasts. How do the proud and humble approach God differently?⁶ How do they approach those around them differently?

Spend some time in prayers of repentance for your sins and acknowledgment of God’s ultimate sovereignty over your life. If you feel comfortable, share something that God has shown you.



If you have extra time left over and want to spend it debating theology...

- Look back at the rest of James. What can you tell about the people to whom James is writing? To what sinful tendencies are they especially prone? Do you see the same errors in your own life?
- What does it mean that “whoever knows the right thing to do and fails to do it, for him it is sin”? Does what is sinful depend on our own understanding? (Cf. Romans 14:23)
- In his commentary on this chapter, Calvin anticipates a possible objection: “Or do you not know that the saints will judge the world?”⁷ Does this contradict what James says about judgment?

⁶ On Christian humility, see also Philippians 2:4–8. Note especially that its source is in Christ.

⁷ 1 Corinthians 6:2