

# James 4

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[ 0 : 00 ] All right, well, I'm very excited to be back here with you all this evening. I was just making sure I believe there was some other things that maybe was going on. I want to make sure we were good.

Let's go to the book of James. James chapter, we're going to end up in four, but we'll start in chapter number one. Don't worry, we won't see everything in between one and four. But I do want to share a testimony that I think will be encouraging as we think about what God is doing around the world and what God's doing through the ministry here of Vision Baptist Church to make a difference in places like Chile.

And also, I think that the testimony of this young man will encourage us, and we'll see some texts from the book of James that go along a bit with some of the things that are happening. I want to show a picture now of Carlos Fernandez.

Carlos Fernandez, we probably could have framed that picture a little bit better. Sometimes others can be a bit short by my side, but there's Carlos Fernandez. He walked into the first church that we started there in Chile back in, I think it was in July of 2007.

Actually, Pastor Gardner was there preaching a conference that week, and a girl that he was dating had been saved at our church, and she brought him to church. We've got quite a few young men that are now in the ministry that came along because of some young lady, but praise the Lord, many methods are used to reach people with the gospel, and sometimes that's one of them.

[ 1 : 20 ] And he came to church that night, and we began to talk after the service. It was in a youth conference, and he began to share all kinds of questions that he had about the Bible and about doctrine, and we were going through the plan of salvation to make sure that he understood that well.

He had made a profession of faith before, but a lot of confusion about things. And I remember as we were talking, like happens a lot of times, I'm thinking, I'll probably never see this guy again. And, but you know, I'll see if I can do something to maybe encourage him or help him along.

We ended up getting together a few days later, and we sat down for a couple of hours studying the Bible and talking about different questions that he had, trying to understand Bible teachings about important things.

And I ended up finishing that time giving him a book, and I told him, I'll get together with you again, either when you come to church for several times in a row or when you read this book. And let me know when you, and so he called back about a day and a half later and said, all right, I've read the book, and I've got a list of questions.

And I thought, all right, this guy is showing some serious interest. And we started a weekly and sometimes bi-weekly Bible study together that went on for months, went on for months.

[ 2 : 30 ] And he ended up giving his life to be in the ministry before it was over with and went through our Bible college. And now, for the last four years, has been serving with us there at Liberty Baptist Church as a lay helper with the youth and being involved in a lot of things, but still praying about going out and starting a church.

Well, as you all know, since middle of October, Chile's been going through a very difficult time. And we've got a few pictures that they'll scroll through here in the next few minutes. But riots started, protests started, and the protests ended up going into riots.

And the riots ended up turning quite violent, and all kinds of things were being burnt throughout the city. And you found thousands and even hundreds of thousands. And at the largest time, 1.5 million people in the street of downtown Santiago protesting.

And many of these protests ended up going into riots that looted and vandalized everything from the subway stations to large stores.

And there's just been chaos in so many areas, almost like a war zone in areas of downtown Santiago. And even to today, I'm talking with some of the guys there, and they talk about in the mornings, you start driving through and you're dodging.

[ 3 : 41 ] Every intersection, the lights are out, and the traffic lights have been knocked down and destroyed. And you're going around these piles of burnout barricades that are built every single night in almost all the main intersections throughout the city.

The protests are continuing on in front of Carlos's job. He works in an office building downtown Santiago. And in front of that building, if you go out on any given day, there's protesters, and the police are there, and the water cannons from the big trucks as they're trying to contain the protesters.

And tear gas is flying. And it's just a chaotic scene that goes on, and it goes up, and it goes down, and the subways are sometimes open, and then they're closed, then they're open, then they're closed. And throughout the day, just a very unusual, unsettling time there in Chile.

Carlos's job, because of that, has been closed now for going on two months. The office is not opening up. It's right in one of the hotbed areas downtown. And his boss told Carlos recently, he said, you know what?

The company was on the brink of bankruptcy before all this happened. And now there's no turning back. It's just a matter of time. Everything is going to close down here in the office.

[ 4 : 55 ] About 300,000 to 500,000 people are expected to be without a job in Chile because of all this by the first months of next year. It's a very uncertain time.

It's a very difficult time. And I remember as we, I've been talking with Carlos over these last couple of weeks about how he's serving the Lord and moving forward.

And he said, I'm using a lot of this free time that I have. I get more involved in church and tell more people about Jesus and disciple more and, you know, be involved in some of those kinds of things as he's looking toward church planning.

But, you know, it reminds me as I read here in the book of James, even at the beginning of this book, under different circumstances, persecution had come in Acts 1a there in Jerusalem.

And many of the Christians were scattered. And they left, they left not Santiago, but Jerusalem and ended up going to many places. And this letter was written to those scattered believers that were Jewish.

[ 5 : 53 ] The Bible says in verse number one, James, a servant of God and of the Lord Jesus Christ to the 12 tribes, which are scattered abroad, greetings. And he goes on to say, my brethren, count it all joy when you fall into diverse temptations, talking about trials and difficulties, that they should know how to handle these kinds of situations.

Well, as we go through the book, we come to a text in chapter number four, understanding the context in which the book was written. Look what the Bible says with me. It's a familiar text. We'll start reading in verse number 13, James 4, 13.

The Bible says here, Go to now, ye that say, today or tomorrow we will go into such a city, and continue there a year, and buy and sell and get gain, whereas ye know not what shall be on the morrow.

For what is your life? It is even a vapor that appeareth for a little time, and then vanisheth away. For you ought to say, if the Lord will, we shall live and do this or that.

But now ye rejoice in your boastings. All such rejoicing is evil. Therefore, to him that knoweth to do good and doeth it not, to him it is sin.

[ 7 : 09 ] Let's pray. Lord, I thank you for the text that we're reading, and I pray that you work in our hearts and help us to have a tender heart towards you and to realize that the only certainty we have is you in our relationship with you.

Use this time for your honor and glory, and we ask this in Jesus' name. Amen. Well, that text starts off in verse number 13. Go to now, a phrase that we might not use often. Even in the Bible, it's only used twice here, and then just a few verses down in chapter 5, verse number 1.

It's a common phrase there in the time that the Bible was written, and it basically was used to call the attention of those that were reading. It was kind of a harsh, rough way of saying, hey, listen up.

You really need to pay attention. This is important. It's something that you need to remember. And remember, the book's being written to the scattered believers, and in the immediate context, it's talking about how we should speak, and this particular part about speaking in a non-presumptuous way about how we have everything under control, but we're really trusting in God is what we need to do.

But he says, go to now. Listen up, ye that say. Today or tomorrow we will go into such a city, and continue there a year and buy and sell and get gain, whereas ye know not what shall be on the morrow.

[ 8 : 27 ] As we were sitting talking with Carlos over the months in this year, his plan was sometime toward the end of 2020 to head down to an area called Parral. We talked about it a bit last week and asked you to pray for Parral.

And he wants to go there to start a church. It's an area where he has family that lives, an area that he knows well. He's not from Santiago. He's from the south, and he's praying about going there, planning on going there. And he had all these plans, all right, the financial plans.

I'm working this job. We're going to pay these debts, and we're going to make these purchases, and we'll move forward at this rate, and we'll do all of these things. And now looking at him and talking with him, he's like, all right, all the plans that we had, everything is completely out the window, and no one has any idea exactly what's going to happen tomorrow or the next day.

They're talking about rewriting the Constitution. They're going to have voting in April to decide how they're going to do that, and then three to four years to actually make that happen.

And the protesters are saying, we're not stopping with the revolution until it's all done. And I'm thinking, all right, three to four years. This could get old. This could be quite difficult. But we really have no security except in Jesus, right?

[ 9 : 37 ] And as we look at this text and as we think through it and as we ponder these ideas a bit, the first principle we can learn from this passage is that everything in this life is fragile, temporary, and uncertain.

Everything here in this broken earth is not solid and concrete. Many of us today are rejoicing and thanking God for our help that he has given us or for family that he has given us or for different opportunities and jobs and things of that nature possibly.

But all of us know that health is not guaranteed and that at any given moment, we might even be the one, as I was sharing in the testimony of the gentleman that went home to be with the Lord this week there in Chile, and his loved ones were being consoled by the preaching of God's word about the hope that we have in Christ.

And two people were saved in the funeral. Praise the Lord that realized they needed to put their hope in Christ. But we don't know how much future we have. Jesus could come back.

We could die. We could have some traumatic sickness or something that comes into our life that changes everything. Employment, finances, nothing is sure.

[ 10 : 52 ] Nothing is sure. Watching videos that have been posted and shared of things that are happening just blocks from churches that we have there in Chile. People being shot of things being burned.

Oh, man, Chile used to be the stable country that we all talked about. And it seems that as we're looking from afar, it brings us to passages, you know, like the one that we're looking at here today, knowing that we should look at our current state of mind and realize that today or tomorrow, we can't say that we will go into such a city and continue there for a year and buy and sell and get gain.

Whereas, you know not what shall be on tomorrow. Everything in this life is fragile, temporary, and uncertain. Today and tomorrow. We can't be presumptuous about what comes in the future.

It's a man-centered way of thinking that I will do this and that I am the owner of my future and I have everything under control and I am the master of all of this and I have the answers and I know the way.

The Bible is calling us as Christians to not live that way but to live understanding that we are in a temporary home. We're pilgrims that have been called to a new nation and we have a new home and we're citizens of another place and we live with our eyes not on what's around us but our eyes on Jesus and on eternity and our life is eternity focused on the things that we do and the way that we use our time and our energies and things of that nature.

[ 12 : 21 ] Presumptuous, man-centered, talking about today and tomorrow. It reflects the attitude that this is my life and my future, my belongings. It reminds me of the book that Pastor Gardner is preaching through, the book of Job.

No doubt Job was someone that in a dramatic way ended up having his complete life and existence turned upside down from one day to the next as he literally lost basically everything here in this world and all the hopes that he had.

It revealed really that inner character that was in his life. As we look here in this passage, it says there in verse number 14, there in the middle of the verse, for what is your life?

What is your life according to the word of God? The Bible says, it is even a vapor that appears for a little time and then vanisheth away. You know, I've always thought whenever I read this passage about a tea kettle sitting on an oven and you see the vapor coming out and you can see it for just a quick second or two.

In the last month or two, the illustration that comes to my mind is more of buildings being burnt or the vapor that comes from a tear gas can. I don't know if anybody's ever seen one of those in action.

[ 13 : 36 ] And I've been downwind a couple of times in Santiago from tear gas. We had a youth group. This is a side note. A youth group that came to visit us from Virginia. No, from Tennessee.

And they went to a soccer game with us. And as we're walking to the stadium, the wind kind of came and there was some protests going on and some tear gas came and the teenagers, it was a great story. But your life is a vapor.

Your life is a vapor. You only have it for a short time. You know, oftentimes I think whenever my focus can begin to sway from what I know God has for me and ideas and thoughts and those kinds of things might come into my mind, I try to remember and discipline myself to think about, well, if five minutes in heaven, if I could go and be there with my Lord for five minutes and come back, wouldn't that just bring everything into focus about what our life really should be all about in our time here on this earth?

Our life is a vapor. We're here today and we're gone tomorrow. I was talking with one of the other missionaries just yesterday that his father, through a heart attack, went home to be with the Lord in his 50s.

And he was on his way to get a medical checkup and he was talking with me. I'm not sure why. I guess thinking there was something in common with parents dying at an earlier age.

[ 14 : 58 ] And he was encouraging me and I told him, hey, I'm already going for my annual checkup. It's this time that you, I'm glad you're doing what you're supposed to do. But life is a, we don't know. We don't know how long we might have here on this earth.

The second principle that we can learn from this as we think about it, our lives should be lived trusting only in Jesus, not in our plans or abilities. Verse number 15, the Bible says, For ye ought to say, if the Lord will, we shall live and do this or that.

If the Lord will. If the Lord will. In Christian vernacular, we often say God willing, right? And sometimes it's almost like we're leaving ourself a back door.

Somebody wants us to commit to something, so we're going to do that next week. And we say, God willing. You know, it's almost like I want to pencil it in my calendar, but I have my way out because God might not be willing. And that's not really what the verse is talking about.

The verse is really saying that I don't know what's going to happen tomorrow. I don't even know if I'll be here tomorrow. I don't know if everything is in God's hands. And I'm living day to day.

[ 16 : 03 ] Sure, we plan. Sure. Like the aunt that the sluggard's supposed to go to in Proverbs 6 that works now, thinking about the future. You know, it's good to plan. It's good to think about those kinds of things.

But all of our planning, all of our I'm going to that city, and we'll do this and we'll do that, and this business project and these family plans, and all of that needs to be placed in this big category of it's really in God's hands.

But this is where I think God is leading, and I think this is what he wants us to do. But he is the one that is in charge of all this. He is our Lord. He's our Savior. He's our God.

He is the big boss, and we're following him step by step. And as he leads and as he opens the door, I'm trusting in him. Trusting in him. God willing, we will.

We live that way. So I was talking with Carlos just this past week, maybe two weeks ago now. He looked at me and he said, well, I had these financial plans, and I had this employment plan, and we had this family plan, and right now we don't have any plans because all those plans have gone out the window.

[ 17 : 09 ] And I've realized that some of my ambitions and my focus have been placed on things that are temporal, that can be lost in a minute. And he looked at me as we were talking there through a video phone call there.

He said, what if I were just to put all those plans to the side and realize there's no security in a job that has just disappeared? There's no security in that company that has been giving me raises and better positions and better sales areas to move forward.

Well, I've realized there's no security in any of this. There's only security in Jesus. And as we were talking, he said, what if we were to bump that plan up from November, December of 2020 to like next week?

And I can just go to the South and start a church, and we can just rent whatever and close in a garage and start meeting with people and preaching the gospel and telling people about Jesus. I know this is what he wants me to do, and I've been kind of dragging my feet about it, and now everything is clear because the distractions have been taken away from me, and I'm focused on what the Lord wants, and I want to move forward.

There's not security in anything. I'm going to trust Jesus, and I don't know how it's all going to work out, but it really doesn't matter. We might not even be here next year, so let's make sure we're doing what God has for us to do.

[ 18 : 29 ] And it helps us focus our energy and our attention when sometimes we're in those kinds of situations. Now, how can we apply those kinds of things in our own lives? Well, maybe some of us here today have been knowing and feeling that God's stirring in us to get more involved in our local church, to be telling more people about Jesus, to get more involved in discipling others or being disciplined so that we're prepared to invest in others.

Maybe God's been stirring your heart about doing more to reach this community and from this community to reach the world with the gospel, and oftentimes the distractions and the busy schedule and all the different things that might be there are pushing to the back burner what you know God is trying to push to the forefront of our lives.

Now, does God have to bring some kind of instability in a dramatic way in our life to get us to focus on what He wants us to do? No. Thank the Lord. No. Look what the Bible says here in verse number 17.

The Bible says, Therefore, to him that knoweth to do good and doeth it not, to him it is sin. How do we know what we're supposed to do? Where do we learn what we're supposed to do?

The Word of God. All right, good. I was hoping somebody would give me a good answer there. All right. The Word of God. Now, the text that we're reading tonight was inspired by the Holy Spirit and put into the Word of God that has been given to us.

[ 19 : 56 ] And most of us have a copy of it. And most of us have several copies of it. And we don't have to wait for those extraordinarily uncertain, unexpected circumstances that shake our world up and leave us completely uncertain about all of our future.

So we don't have to wait for those kinds of times because the third principle that we can remember here is that the Bible, the Bible alone, not riots and protests, all those can be helpful at times, but the Bible alone should lead us to these conclusions about how our life is fragile and that everything we have is temporal and that, as Job said, naked came I into this world and I know that I'll go out of here without nothing and God's given and God's taken away and blessed be His name.

And we think about these truths and we study God's Word. Jesus said in Mark 8, 36, There's a lot of distractions and a lot of things that we can fill our attention with, but God has us here for a purpose.

And I encourage you to evaluate your own life, evaluate your own time, your own intention, and make sure that you are doing what God has placed you here in this world to do.

Get more involved in this local church. There's so many opportunities to serve the Lord, to be involved in different ages and classes and outreaches here in the community. The truth is the list is so long that we'll never run out of opportunities.

[ 21 : 40 ] And so step up, give your life to the Lord, get involved, do all you can do to get the gospel to the world, to spend time discipling people like Carlos. Carlos has gone through, and Pastor Gardner and some others know some of his story.

There's a reason why in 2007 we met and started discipleship, and in 2020 he's going out. There's been a lot of ups and downs and some difficulties. And thank the Lord, now the last three years or so, he's been rock solid strong and moving forward serving the Lord.

But God can use you to win, to disciple, to encourage, to help people that are trying to serve the Lord. And some are strong, and others are fighting to be strong. And the Lord wants to use us all.

So let's be focused on knowing that our security is only in Jesus. And our focus needs to be only in Jesus. And our life is temporal, and we should refocus our efforts to serve him, serve others, and reach this world with the gospel.

So let's be focused on what we need to do so. And the good one, so let's be focused on our way for what we need to see some of our old things throughout Theology and online, and we're looking for the word, should be unshaken faith. So if we didn't follow this video to continue and understand what that was written in Jesus, or would you keep watching for me, this mission is 100 years old and is still going strong to international and a lot