

If the Lord Wills

“Come now, you who say, ‘In 2016 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 2016 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’” (**James 4:13-15**, modified).

What are your plans for the coming year? What are your goals? What do you hope to accomplish?

Do not misunderstand. James is not saying Christians don’t make plans or don’t have goals. He is saying we need to keep our plans and goals in proper perspective of the Lord’s will. What does this brief passage teach about our plans for 2016?

Submission to God: While **James 4:15** is more about God’s permissive will than His prescriptive will, we should be reminded of God’s desires for us. The fact that we succeed in accomplishing a goal is not a stamp of God’s approval. It is quite apparent God permits many things to happen He doesn’t actually want to happen. He may even allow us to accomplish ungodly goals. But James reminds us that as we establish our goals and plans, we need to anchor them in God’s will for us. He tells us that if we know the right thing to do and don’t, we are sinning (**James 4:17**). We need to think in terms of only wanting to accomplish what is within God’s will. In fact, we would do well to pray that if God doesn’t want us to pursue a particular plan that He would scuttle that plan. In that way, we aren’t deceived into believing God is with us merely because we accomplished our own plans.

Dependence upon God: While God often permits plans He doesn’t actually want. If He decides not to permit something, no amount of our effort will accomplish it. Every goal or plan we have is dependent upon God’s permission. James goes on to explain that boasting in all we are going to accomplish is actually boasting in our own arrogance. He also says such boasting is evil (**James 4:16**).

Give thanks to God: If our plans and goals are dependent upon God, when we have accomplished them we need to give thanks to Him. We need to glorify Him instead of ourselves. Our efforts would have been nothing more than spinning wheels if God had not given His nod of permission to us. Whatever you do or accomplish in 2016, give God the glory.

Plan with eternity in mind: People often say to treat each day like it was your last. However, in a strict sense, that doesn’t work too well. After all, if I treat today like my last, I won’t save to pay next month’s bills. Where will that leave me if today is not my last and I get to next month? However, my life is a vapor and today may be my last or 2016 may be my last year. That means we need to plan with eternity in mind. God may not permit us to live beyond this year. What are we doing this year in our plans and goals to prepare for that eventuality? The rich fool in **Luke 12:13-21** made many plans for this life, but did not prepare for the next. Don’t make his mistake.

2016 can be a great year, full of completed plans and accomplished goals. Just make sure to keep it all in God’s perspective.