



| MAIN POINT | MAIN BIBLE VERSE |
|---|------------------|
| Real faith isn't about control; it's about surrender. | James 4:13-17 |

Students will see that while planning is wise, living like we are in control is foolish. James invites us to hold our plans with humility and trust God with the future.

Small Group Leader Guide

LET'S BREAK THE ICE

Leader Note: *Start here! These are easy, fun questions to get everyone talking. You don't have to use both — pick whichever one feels right.*

- Tell us about a time when your plans completely fell apart. What happened?
- On a scale of 1–10, how much do you like being in control? Why did you pick that number?

BIBLE STUDY: **Read Together: James 4:13–17**

- In verse 13, what kind of plan were these people making? Does it sound like a bad plan?
- In verse 14, James says life is like a vapor — like breath on a cold morning. What do you think he means by that?
- What does James say in verse 15 about how we should think about our plans?
- James says planning is okay — so what was the problem with how these people were planning?
- The teaching talked about “closed hands” and “open hands.” In your own words, what's the difference?

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

Leader Note: *These questions connect the teaching to everyday middle school life. Keep it simple and conversational — there are no wrong answers here.*

- What's something you really want to be in control of right now? (Friend group? Grades? What people think of you? Something else?)
- The teaching said when we're NOT in control, we can feel worried, frustrated, or afraid. Which of those do you feel most when things don't go your way?
- What's the difference between trusting yourself and trusting God with your plans?
- Do you think it's hard to trust God when you don't know what's going to happen? Why or why not?

MAKE IT REAL

Leader Note: *Slow it down here. These questions are a little more personal. It's okay if there's some quiet — give students time to actually think. Share your own answer first.*

The teaching gave us three challenges: Pray before you plan. Obey what God has already shown you. Put one thing in God's hands.

- Is there something you've been trying really hard to control lately? What would it look like to give that to God?
- What's one thing you already know God wants you to do — maybe apologize to someone, tell the truth, be kind, or stop doing something you know is wrong? What's one step you could take on that this week?
- The teaching said: "The safest place for your life is not in your own hands. It's in the hands of Jesus." Does that feel true to you right now? Why or why not?

THE GOSPEL CONNECTION

Leader Note: *Bring it back to Jesus here. This is also a great moment to explain the gospel simply if you have students who are new or not yet believers.*

Jesus is the best example of surrendered living. Before going to the cross, He prayed: "Not as I will, but as you will." (Matthew 26:39) He knew it would be really hard — but He trusted God's plan. Jesus died for the times we try to be in control instead of trusting God. And He rose again so we can be forgiven and made new.

- Jesus gave up control because He loved us. How does that make you feel about trusting Him with your life?

THIS WEEK / PRAYER

Leader Note: *Close in prayer together. You can pray for the group or ask if anyone wants to pray out loud. Keep it warm and simple.*

- Before you make a decision this week, try praying first: "God, help me trust You with this."
 - Take one step of obedience on something you already know God wants you to do.
 - Take prayer requests from the group.
 - Pray especially for anything students are worried about or trying to control.
-