



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.

Teaching Script / Guide

HOOK

- **Use this time to build a connection:**
 - Either you can start with a story of a time when plans changed and left you disappointed.
 - Or you can use an introduction like this...
- **Have you ever had a plan that completely fell apart?**
 - Maybe you planned to hang out with a friend, but they canceled. Maybe you were excited for a game, but it got rained out. Maybe your family was supposed to go somewhere fun, but then something changed. Maybe you had your whole day planned, and then your parent said, "Actually, we're doing this instead."
 - And in that moment, you were like, "No. That is not the plan."
- **We all know what it feels like when plans change.**
 - And honestly, we usually don't love it. Why?
 - Because we like knowing what's going to happen.
 - We like feeling prepared.
 - We like feeling like we have some control.
- **But today, James is going to teach us something really important:**
 - Life isn't about control; it's about surrender.
 - That does not mean planning is bad. Planning can be wise. But James wants us to understand that our plans are not more important than God's plans.

TENSION:

- **Most of us like control more than we realize.**
 - We like controlling what we do
 - where we go, who we sit with
 - what we wear
 - what people think of us
 - and what happens next.
- **And when we don't feel in control, we can get worried, frustrated, angry, or afraid.**
- **Maybe you've thought things like:**
 - "What if I don't make the team?"
 - "What if my friends leave me out?"
 - "What if I fail this test?"
 - "What if people don't like me?"
 - "What if things don't go the way I want?"
- **James is writing to people who were making plans for their lives, but they were leaving God out of the picture.**
 - They were acting like they controlled everything.
 - And James says, "That is not how followers of Jesus are supposed to live."
 - Followers of Jesus are built different.
 - We don't have to pretend we are in control. We can trust the God who actually is.

BIBLE:

- ***Either read or invite a student to come up and read James 4:13-17.***
 - *Before reading, say: As we read, listen for what James says about our plans, our life, and God's will.*
- **James teaches us 3 truths about planning, control, and trust:**
 - **Making plans isn't wrong**
 - Look at the types of people mentioned in vs. 13
 - At first this doesn't sound that bad. It actually sounds wise!
 - These people had a plan. They knew where they were going, when they were going, what they were doing, and what they hoped would happen.
 - And James is not saying planning is bad. You should plan.
 - You should do your homework.
 - You should study for tests.
 - You should practice if you want to improve.
 - You should think ahead and be responsible.
 - The problem was not that they had a plan.
 - The problem was that they were making plans without God. They were acting like their future belonged completely to them.
 - **We are not in control of tomorrow**
 - In verse 14, James compares life to a vapor (Teacher note: This is a great place for a visual illustration)
 - Think about your breath on a cold morning. You breathe out, you see it for a second, and then it disappears.

- James is not saying your life does not matter. Your life matters deeply to God.
 - But James is reminding us that life is short, and we are not in control of everything.
 - You don't know everything that will happen tomorrow. But God does.
 - That means we don't have to panic when we are not in control. We can trust God.
- **Followers of Jesus hold their plans with open hands**
 - In verse 15, James tells us how then we should live:
 - James is teaching us to live with open hands.
 - Closed hands say: *"God, this is mine. I want control."*
 - Open hands say, *"God, I trust You. My life belongs to You."*
 - That's the difference...
 - A closed-hand life says:
 - *I have to get my way*
 - *My plan has to work*
 - *I know what's best*
 - *I'm in charge*
 - An open-hand life says:
 - *God, I can make plans, but I trust You.*
 - *God, I can have hopes, but I surrender them to You*
 - *God, I don't know everything, but You do.*
 - *God, I want Your way more than my way.*
- This is a "built different" life
 - The world says: "Be in control"
 - Jesus says, "Trust me"

APPLICATION/SMALL GROUP DISCUSSION SET UP:

- So what does this look like in our everyday lives, and how can we start learning to trust God more, starting today?
 - **Pray Before you plan**
 - Before you make a decision, talk to God.
 - You can pray something simple like:
 - "God, help me make a wise choice."
 - "God, help me trust You."
 - "God, I want Your way, not just my way."
 - **Obey what God has already shown you**
 - What is one good thing you know God wants you to do?
 - Maybe apologize.
 - Maybe forgive.
 - Maybe tell the truth.
 - Maybe stop being mean to someone.
 - Maybe invite someone in.
 - Maybe confess something.
 - Maybe start spending time with God again.
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- Don't wait until later to obey God. Obey Him today.
- Put one thing in God's hands
 - Some of you are trying really hard to control everything.
 - You are trying to control what people think of you.
 - You are trying to control your friend group.
 - You are trying to control your future.
 - You are trying to control your image.
 - You are trying to control your life.
 - But Jesus is inviting you to trust Him. You do not have to be in control because God already is.
- So today, the question is: What do you need to place in God's hands?
 - Maybe it is a worry.
 - Maybe it is a friendship.
 - Maybe it is a plan.
 - Maybe it is a sin.
 - Maybe it is your whole life.
- Jesus is good. Jesus is trustworthy. Jesus is worthy of your surrender.

GOSPEL MOMENT/CLOSE:

The good news is that Jesus lived the surrendered life we fail to live. We often want our way. Jesus fully surrendered to the Father's way. Before Jesus went to the cross, He prayed: "Not as I will, but as you will." (Matthew 26:39)

Jesus knew the cross would be painful. He knew it would cost Him everything. But He still surrendered to God's plan because He loved us. At the cross, Jesus died for our sin.

- He died for the times we try to control our lives without God.
- He died for the times we know the right thing and do not do it.
- He died for our pride, fear, selfishness, and disobedience.

And then Jesus rose again so we could be forgiven and made new. That means we do not have to live like everything depends on us. We can trust Jesus. The safest place for your life is not in your own hands. The safest place for your life is in the hands of Jesus.