ARROGANCE AND HUMILITY
JAMES // REAL RELIGION
James 4:13-17 // Craig Smith
June 25, 2017

CRAIG: Good morning. Welcome to Mission Hills, so good to have you here this morning. I’m really glad to be back. I did have a
great chance last week to spend some time with my wife’s family. Her parents were celebrating their 50th anniversary. So we got
together with them and Coletta’s brother had a great time but it is good to be back this morning and it’s good to be diving back
into the book of James, at least I thought it was until I looked at the passage and there’s like I need another week of vacation I
think before I really tackle this. Once you go and turn with me to James Chapter 4, we’re going to pick where we left off last week
and when you turn out only to say this that, James up to this point in the book is basically been saying pretty simply that there’s
two ways to live life, there’s two approaches life, there’s two kinds of wisdom there’s God’s wisdom and then there’s this other way
and he uses language like the world’s way and that makes perfect sense but what’s interesting to me is, how often he attaches to
the world’s way of doing life language like it’s demonic, it’s evil. And my reaction to that honestly is that that feels a little extreme
James. It kind of feels like, you know shock jock attacks. Maybe he’s just trying to get our attention, but as I really dug into the
passage they were looking at this morning, I realize there’s a very specific reason why he does that and we need to pay attention
to it. What he’s gonna say this morning is actually pretty simple. There’s nothing really complex in what he has to say, but there’s a
couple of, I think a hard parts in it. The first one is to ask the question like why do you say that and then
there’s the harder question of like, how do we actually put that into practice?

This is what he says, James Chapter 4 showing verse 13, now listen, you who say, “Today or tomorrow we will go to this or that city,
spend a year there, carry on business and make money.” Why, you do not even know what will happen tomorrow. What is your life?
You are a mist that appears for a little while and then vanishes. Instead, you ought to say, “If it is the Lord’s will, we will live and do
this or that.” As it is, you boast in your arrogant schemes. All such boasting is evil. If anyone then knows the good they ought to do
and doesn’t do it, it is sin for them.

Now obviously James is talking here about arrogance, but what, I think, grabbed my attention when I first started to look at this
passage is the example that he uses of arrogance doesn’t sound all that arrogant to me. I mean example he uses is, listen we’re
talking about somebody who says, today or tomorrow I’m gonna go this or that city and I’m gonna make some money. Like that doesn’t strike me as overly arrogant, like I don’t look at that and go wow, this is a prideful individual here. Now I mean if he had said, you know tomorrow I’m going to go to New York and I’m gonna work in Wall Street for a year and the end of that year I would become the CEO of J.P. Morgan, I might go okay that, that’s arrogant. But the plan just doesn’t sound that arrogant and here’s two things that really kind of kind of struck me as I was dealing with the passage this week. The first one is just this, what James is kind of saying is arrogance is not confined to audacious plans. Do you hear me?

Arrogance is not confined to audacious plans. We have a tendency to go well, I don’t have big plans, you know I don’t plan to be
the president of the company. I’m not expecting to be the best dad in the world in spite of the fact that a lot of us got mugs, this
last week that said that. We’re like we know it’s probably not true. I’m not, you know I’m not, I’m not looking to elevate myself
way up to this high level in some form or fashion. So I’m kind of safe right? There’s no arrogance but what James describes is not
really an audacious plan. And he says its arrogance. So arrogance is not confined to audacious plans. Now there’s actually a good
side to that. There’s good news that comes from it and that means, if it’s not confined to audacious plans, it’s also not confirmed
by audacious plans. Arrogance is not confirmed by audacious means, what I mean is just because you have big a plans doesn’t
necessarily mean you’re arrogant because the reality is what James is showing us is there’s no really no correlation, there’s no
matching up between the size of our plans and the arrogance in our hearts. Arrogance is based upon something else and as we’re
gonna see is we work through the passage, that the arrogance of his concerned about is an arrogance that leaves God out of the
equation. God is not part of the plan. He’s not part of thinking. Now if God is part of the thinking, it’s okay to have big plans. You’re free to dream big with God. I honestly believe God wants us to dream big with Him and that’s the key.

But the danger is, because we tend to associate arrogance with the big stuff. The danger is that you and I can harbor arrogance and be completely unaware of it. Because we don’t have what we think of as the warning signs, the red flags when it comes to arrogance. Because we go yeah, my plans aren’t that big, but James going yeah, size your plans is not the core issue. Arrogance is not confined to audacious plans. And the other thing that grabbed my attention is as I read what James had to say here is this is very surprising. I think statement that James makes the basically boils down to saying, that arrogance puts us on the wrong team. Arrogance puts us on the wrong team. I think most of us would recognize, you know arrogance is not a good thing, right? Most of us would say yeah arrogance is not a virtue. Arrogance is something that yeah, we need to be concerned about but the James is a little bit further than saying it’s not a good thing, right? He says that it’s evil. Did you catch that, he says that it’s evil. And that’s pretty strong language that the word that he’s using the Greek word for evil there, is actually the exact same word that Paul uses in Ephesians 6:16, when he warns us about the schemes of the evil one, which of course is Satan. James uses the same word associated with Satan to describe the arrogance that’s hidden underneath plans that leave God out of the equation. Even small plans that leave God, he says it’s not just a bad idea he says its evil. It puts you on the wrong team and this is to take you out of alignment with God, it actually puts you into alignment with the enemy. And then my reaction to that is that just feels a little extreme.

Is it really that big a deal and James says, “Yeah, yeah it is.” Okay but why? Why would he say that? And I think to answer that question, we have to ask another one which is what made the devil the devil? Because, you know he didn’t start out that way right. God didn’t like make the devil because like yeah, the world’s beautiful but it’s not very interesting, we need some conflict. Let’s make a bad guy and that’s not what happened. Satan was an angel, but something happened that changed Satan from an angel, who served God into a demon who opposes God. Something went wrong and the Bible really doesn’t tell us a lot about his fall. There is one passage over and I invite you to turn with me a back to the book of Isaiah chapter 14. There’s a little snippet in the middle of Isaiah, the most Bible-believing scholars think is giving us a glimpse behind the scenes into Satan’s rebellion, Satan’s fall and this is what Isaiah says about him. He says, you said in your heart, “I will ascend to the heavens and I will raise my throne above the stars of God. I will sit enthroned on the mount of assembly, on the utmost heights of Mount Zaphon, I will ascend above the tops of the clouds, and I will make myself like the Most High.”

Now there is this, there is this idea out there, I would call it a misconception that a lot of people believe in that is that when Satan rebelled, he was trying to take over God’s throne. He was trying to get God out, so that he could take charge of everything and I’m gonna say this morning that, that’s not, that’s not accurate. There’s a couple of reasons I say that as Satan wasn’t trying to defeat God. First reason I would say that just because he’s not stupid, he’s evil, but he’s not stupid. Satan has enough insight into God to know there’s no way he’s going to win a fight against God. That’d be he like an ant looking at a herd of hundred million elephants and go on, I’m pretty sure I can take them. It’s not going to happen, I mean, Satan knows enough to know he’s not gonna beat God in a fight, but here’s the interesting thing and the other reason that I say that’s not what was going on, that’s not what the Bible says.

This description never says that Satan thought he could take God’s throne. The first thing it says is, I will raise my throne above the stars of God. Not above God, but above the stars of God. Now, there’s two ways to interpret that. It could just mean that, you know he wanted to raise his throne as high as he could that’s a way of saying, it’s way up high, but in a lot of prophetic material in the Bible, there’s a close association between stars and angels. It’s very often in the Old Testament as well as in the New, when prophets speak about stars, they’re often talking about in figurative language about angels and so it’s quite likely that what Satan is basically saying here is that I’m going to put my throne over the angels. In other words, I’m going to take charge of the angels and certainly we see some of that happening in the Book of Revelation, we’re given again using that same kind of language that he swept a third of the stars from the heavens. I mean, he took a third of the angels with him in his rebellion, but do you understand what he’s saying here is that Satan’s plan was not to sit on God’s throne. It was to establish his own throne and to take command of God’s creatures, but he didn't think you could beat God in a fight.
The other thing is that at the end of this it says that his plan was “I will make myself like the Most High,” not greater than, not the Most High, but I will make myself like Him. I will do something that’s really is prerogative. I will, I will take from myself something that really only belongs to God and when we ask the question what would that be? What would make him like God? The answer is it’s the right to call the shots. It’s the right to determine your destiny. It’s the right to decide what road you walk. It’s the right to choose for yourself what and how you will live. That’s what Satan was saying, “I’ll become like the Most High.” I’m not going to listen to Him, I’m not going to take my commander, my cues from Him. I’m going to decide for myself what I will and will not do and certainly that’s what he tempted Adam and Eve with, right? He came to Adam and Eve and he offered them the right to know good from evil for themselves. When they ate the fruit, that’s what he said, you’ll become like God, knowing good from evil. And if you’re here last fall, when we did the wonder of series, you may remember that we looked at that phrase knowing good from evil and we saw that there are several places in the Old Testament where that’s kind of a, it’s a figurative way of saying decide for yourself. When a child is old enough to know good from evil what that means is they’re old enough to decide for themselves. What Satan offered Adam and Eve was a lie. And the lie was this, you can call the shots. You can sit on your own throne, you can decide your own destiny, you can decide what road you’re going to walk and they bought it, they bought at hook line and sinker.

They bought the lie that they could decide for themselves what their lives would look like, and that they would look like something good. The reality is that we deal with the consequences of that decision every day, but we don’t just deal with the consequence of that decision. If you don’t want to deal with a life that isn’t the good that we thought we could produce for ourselves, we contribute to it. Because we are still buying into Satan’s lie. We are still imitating Satan’s arrogance. And understand that is James is talking about arrogance here, arrogance isn’t thinking that we’re better than God. It’s thinking that we’re independent of God. You hear me? It’s very important to understand when James talks about arrogance here, arrogance isn’t thinking you’re better than God, it’s not Satan thinking he’s better than God, it’s thinking that you’re independent of God, it’s thinking that you can do life with God out of the equation. It’s thinking you can make plans with God out of the equation. And the reason that James says that approach to life that thinking you’re independent of God is actually evil is because it’s aligned with Satan’s approach to life. See Satan proposed initially and he continues to push an approach to life that leaves God out of the equation. That’s Satan’s approach to life, leave Him out of the equation, you can do this on your own. Satan proposed and pushes an approach to life that leaves God out of the equation and so what James says is, there’s really only two ways to do life. You can have God in the equation at the center of everything, you can leave you out on the throne, and you can let Him call your shots or you can follow the devil’s way.

He says, this is something that sneaks up on us. This approach to life, it becomes the way that we live it, it becomes the way that we walk sometimes without us even realizing it. And that’s why he says, you know you can have fairly simple plans. And then suddenly realizes, “Huh, God’s got no place in those. God’s not in my equation, which means that I’m arrogant and didn’t even know it.” So what James offers us really are three keys to replacing that hidden arrogance that satanic, that evil arrogance with a godly humility. The first one comes as he responds to this plan. As the plans is a today or tomorrow, I’ll go to this or that city, I’ll be there for a year and I’ll make some money, I’ll make a profit. He says, really? Verse 14, he says, “Why, you do not even know what will happen tomorrow.” He says, you’re making plans a year out, that’s fascinating. You think your plans are going to pan out, you think you’re going to be able to actually do what you’re planning to do? You really think you know enough to plan a year in advance, that’s fascinating because here’s the thing, you don’t even know what’s going to happen tomorrow. And understand, this is important, James isn’t saying don’t plan. James isn’t saying that planning is evil. James is saying you can’t plan with God out of the equation because when you plan with God out of the equation, you’re making plans as though you know enough to think that your plans will actually pan out the way you expect them to, but the reality is you can’t know that.

You don’t have that kind of knowledge, you don’t even know what’s gonna happen tomorrow and let’s be honest he’s being generous, right? When he says you don’t even know what’s going to happen tomorrow, he’s being incredibly generous because the reality is you and I don’t even know what’s going to happen the next hour. We don’t know what’s going to happen this afternoon, let alone tomorrow. Last night, when I was preaching, I said, you know here’s my plan for the evening. I plan on finishing preaching and then I’m gonna spend little bit of time talking to people about what God’s doing in their lives and then my daughter and I gonna get a car, we’re going to drive home, we’re gonna get some pizza on the way home, we’re gonna have some conversation, when we get
home, I’ll spend some time with my wife and then I’m going to bed early and get a good night’s sleep and be ready go this morning. Guess what? That ain’t what happened. And some of it happened, but as I got out of my car, in my house, I saw my neighbor on his porch and my neighbor lost his wife a couple of weeks ago and I looked at him and I immediately knew that’s what I need to do right now. And I just went over and I sat down on his porch and he came and sat down and we just talked for a long time. I didn’t get to bed early. No, it’s not bad and that was the right thing to do is what God wanted me to do in that moment, but you understand like I can’t even predict how my evening is going to go. There’s no way I can predict what’s going on in a year. And again, James isn’t opposed to making plans, even to making a long range plans, but he is opposed to making plans that leave God out of the equation and when we make plans as though we know enough to have really genuinely expect those plans to pan out the way we’re thinking, what we’re doing is we’re displaying a kind of arrogance. And so he says, the first key to replacing satanic arrogance with a godly humility is to never forget what we do not know.

Make sense? Key number one, never forget what we do not know. When we forget what we do not know we make plans and we feel like they’re set in stone. This is what’s going to happen. And I don’t know if you ever struggle with this but I know I do that, you know I make plans we’re going to do this, and this and these four things are going to happen, it’s going to work in this order and it’s going to be great and then when that doesn’t happen, like my response is not whatever, my response is that I’m frustrated and this is where, honestly if I have six things planned, then I only get five of them done, it’s that one that I didn’t get done, that was the one that really bugs me. It’s the one that I fixate on. Anybody else? Here’s the thing, here’s what I’ve discovered just about my own soul, that anger over plans that are derailed by unforeseen developments, is a pretty sure sign of hidden arrogance. Because when I get angry that my plans don’t work out the way that I thought they were, what I’m really saying is I thought my plans were set in stone, I thought that my plans were going to pan out, I thought I was in control, I had this thing figured out and that’s actually a sign that there’s arrogance going on. Conversely when we know when we don’t forget, when we remember how much we don’t know, we make plans and we hold them loosely. You know, I think we’re going to do this and this, but obviously there’s a bunch of things that I don’t know that could affect this and so we hold the plans loosely and when we hold the plans loosely, we don’t find ourselves frustrated and that’s a sign that I’m not struggling with arrogance in the same way. So how we feel about our plans and they get derailed can be a really good sort of litmus test for how much arrogance is actually present in our hearts? And so I just challenge you with that question, how frustrated you get when your plans don’t work out? And does that tell you about whether or not you’ve forgotten how much you don’t know.

That’s the first key, never forget what we don’t know. The second key comes when he says basically that, you know you need to get a grip on the fact that you’re not as big a deal as you think you are. This is how he says it as he says, why, you do not even know what will happen tomorrow, what is your life? What is your life? You are a mist that appears for a little while and then vanishes. You’re a mist that appears for a little while and then vanishes. Obviously, James is not overly concerned with building up our self-esteem right? I mean self-esteem books are full of you’re a winner, you’re the best, you’re a champion, and James is like yeah, you’re a mist. Meaning there’s really not that much to you and you not to be around that long. And here’s the thing you need to understand, James isn’t saying that you don’t matter, because you do. Please hear me on this. You matter more to God than you can wrap your head around. And if your response to that is, how do I know that? How can you possibly know that? My answer is The Cross. The fact that God loved you enough to send His own son to die for you, there is the proof. There’s the overwhelming evidence that you matter to God okay. Please hear me, you matter to God more than you can even begin to understand. It’s just that you matter to God for different reasons than the world tells us we matter. The world says we matter because we’ve acquired and we’ve accomplished. And James says, yeah in those terms you’re a mist, it’s all passing away, you really haven’t acquired much, you really haven’t accomplished much and even if you did, acquire all the wealth of the world and even if you did accomplish all these things that people are impressed by, at the end of the day and that they will come very quickly you’ve got nothing left to show for it. You don’t matter because of all the things that you’ve done that are impressive. This is what we got to understand, God’s not impressed with us.

You’re never gonna blow God’s mind, do you hear me? You’re never gonna do something and God be like, “Oh that was unbelievable, guys come look at this, I never would have imagined, how did she, how did?” It’s never going to happen, you’re never going to blow God’s mind, okay. God’s never going to be impressed by you, but that doesn’t mean you don’t matter. It just means that you
matter for different reasons, so you matter to God because you’re His son or His daughter. You matter to God because you’re His beloved child. I remember being in the hospital two separate days. About three and a half years apart in the hospital, when our daughters were born and I remember being handed them and holding them in and looking at them and just, you know, just sort of staring entranced at this, you know, pink wrinkled beautiful utterly useless creature. And I know that sounds bad, but it’s true isn’t it? I mean baby horses can gallop 24 hours after they’re born. My kids could hardly stand up after a year. But there’s nothing impressive there, there’s nothing like oh unbelievable, it’s just not impressive at all. And they’ve become much more impressive, I’m very impressed by my daughters, but here’s the thing I don’t love them more now than I did in the hospital when they were not impressive. I love them as much now as I ever will and I love them as much on that day as I ever will, not because of the things they do that impress me, but just because they’re my children. They’re my beloved daughters and you need to understand that God sees you in exactly the same way. He’s not impressed by you, but His love for you is impressive. But James says, the world says you’ve got to be impressive but the reality is you’re just not.

Into the second key to replacing the satanic arrogance with godly humility is to come to grips with the fact that we’re not a big deal. Come the grips of the fact that we are not a big deal. We are loved. God’s love for us is a big deal, but we are not a big deal. And I discovered over the years that one of the best ways to do that is to look up instead of down, or even sideways because we tend to, we know we compare ourselves, we go, you know we’ll compare to that person actually I’m way better at this. And you’re going to stop looking down and start looking up and you can, you can look up, I mean obviously you can always look up to God and sometimes that’s where it needs to go, but honestly even when we look around us, we often find ourselves having to look up and that kind of helps us come to grips the fact that we’re not a big deal, I mean, people can say to me, you know what? You must be a big deal, you’re the pastor of church of like 4,000 people and I go, “Yeah, but I like I have a couple coaches in my life, who passed the churches of 10,000.” I’m not a big deal, I’m just not.

Like we had to speak to, you know thousands of people a week. Yeah, but I spent years speaking to 20 and 30 and learning that what mattered was that I was faithful to God’s word, not how many people heard what I had to say. I’m not a big deal. If you go well, you know you’re a great father. You know I screw up all the time. Just this weekend, I’ve definitely messed up sometimes. When I look up to God, like yeah when it comes to fathering, I’m not a big deal. And it works almost everything right? I mean as you can go, yeah I’ve got, I’ve got a lot of money and you can start to think why the big deal because all this money, but you look around you’ve got, there’s people who have so much more. Or you can look even higher and go, God invented money, right? Like it’s hard to be impressed the amount of money you have when you compare yourself to the guy who invented it, right? I mean I had to think about this, you’re, it needs, you know, let’s go back in time and so you’re one of the first people to get a telephone and you’re a big deal because you got the telephone when other people don’t have a telephone, you kind of brag about that all the time right? You’re in the train station, you meet some random stranger and it comes out as these things are want to do and you go like, “Yeah, I’ve a phone in my house.” It’s is like well I’m Alexander Graham Bell, I invented your phone and suddenly like okay, I’m not as big a deal that he said I’m saying. No matter what it is that tempts us to go I’m kind of a big deal when we look up rather than down, we find that I’m really not that big a deal. And in that way we begin to take that arrogance that wants to take root and you’re not going to have any ground to grow in here.

The third thing, third key that James gives us is it’s really, and it’s a deceptively simple practice. What he says is this, he says in verse 15, “Instead, you ought to say, “If it is the Lord’s will, we will live and do this or that.” Because right now you’re saying I’m going to...today or tomorrow, I may go to the city and I’m going to work there for a year and I want to make some money, he says instead you ought to say if it is the Lord’s will, we will live, that’s an important one, because every other plan is kind of contingent on that one right? And what we’re saying is, you know God’s kind of in charge of that one. So if God lets me live, then all this, you notice he’s not saying you can’t make the plans, he’s not saying you can’t plan to do this or that, but he says God’s got to be in the equation. And He’s got to be at the right place in the equation which is right up front, if it is the Lord’s will, I will live and I’ll go the city and will do that thing.

I say that’s a simple technique because it’s not hard. We just have to add the words into our conversation, we have to make this a regular part of our vocabulary and I would argue that the James isn’t saying that it has to be every single time you speak about
anything, it’s got to be in there. I mean, James, I would argue, is not saying that, you know if you’re watching TV with your wife and you get up and she goes where you going, you don’t have to say, well if it is the Lord’s will, I am going to go to the kitchen and see if we have any Doritos. I am not saying you have to do that okay. And in fact, bibliically, I look through the New Testament and I realized that when Paul talks about his plans, it’s about 50:50, about 50% of the time he says if the Lord wills, I’ll do this and the other 50% of the time, he doesn’t say that, okay. So James isn’t calling us to make it a part of every single statement that we ever utter, but what James is calling us to do is to make it a regular part of our vocabulary Paul indicates, by the fact that about 50% of the time he says it indicates it’s a regular part of his vocabulary and the fact that it’s a regular part of his vocabulary, also indicates the more important thing which is that it’s a foundational part of his thinking. You hear me? And that’s what James is calling us to. And so I say it’s simple. It’s just adding this language in our vocabulary, making this a part of our regular ways of talking. I say it’s deceptively simple because it doesn’t seem like it would have that much power, but James is calling us to do something that actually can have a tremendous impact. Especially when you remember what he’s already told us about the tongue and the ability of the tongue has to affect things not only in the world around us, but also even inside us and in terms of the way that we think.

What he’s saying is that when we make it a habit to say, if it’s the Lord’s will, I’m gonna do this and this, that impacts the way that we actually think about life. And so what he is really giving us is he’s giving us this pretty simple key and the key is just this. The third key to replacing satanic arrogance with godly humility is to publicly acknowledge God’s sovereignty, that’s the key. And we publicly acknowledge God’s sovereignty, not just privately, but we publicly acknowledge God’s sovereignty. That we make it a regular part of our speech to say, if the Lord wills, I’m going to do this or this. If it’s God’s will, this is going to be what we’re going to do. And honestly, I wonder if you had the same experience that when I saw what James is saying here, I realize this is not what I normally do. It’s actually and fortunately, it is pretty rare that I say that and I like to think that in my heart I’m assuming that, but it’s not coming out in my speech as much as it should be and so I’m repenting of that, and I’m changing my thinking on this, and I’m going to start publicly acknowledging God’s sovereignty. By the way, if you’re not familiar with the word sovereignty, let me just say it’s a word that we can hang a really big idea on and the big idea is that to say God sovereign means that God’s on the throne. That He’s the one who calls the shots, that He is the one who decides my destiny. And I’m allowed to plan and I’m allowed to dream big but I always at the do that with God in the equation because that all ultimately comes back to what He wills or doesn’t will.

And so James says make this a regular part of your vocabulary. And here’s the interesting thing, it’s not just a suggestion, he’s not just saying, you know this might be helpful or you might want to think about those on occasion, it’s clearly a command because he says at the end of this passage if anyone then knows the good that they ought to do and doesn’t do it, it is sin for them. If anyone then knows the good that they ought to do it, but does not do it, it is sin for them. Now, we have a tendency to take that verse and to treat it in very generic terms. You know, well if, you know what’s right you don’t do it, then that’s sin and that’s true, that’s accurate, but James is using this good business in a very specific way. When he says if anyone knows the good, the good that he’s talking about is what he just told us. It is good to publicly acknowledge God’s sovereignty. Such as a suggestion, it’s a command. James tells that to us because the Holy Spirit wanted to make sure that we understood that this is something that we need to do. And it really what James is saying, kind of boils down to this one big idea that the whole passage revolves around that’s this, that the one of the best remedies for personal arrogance is public humility. One of the best remedies for personal arrogance is public humility. That when we are publicly humble, when we publicly acknowledge that God is on the throne and that we’re not, that has a huge impact on rooting out this arrogance that tries to get hold of us and I understand you might go okay, but here’s the thing, anybody can say that. Anybody can add those words and it doesn’t necessarily mean that they’re humble. That’s true. It’s entirely possible to say if the Lord wills and not actually mean it and not actually be humble, but what I’m suggesting to you is that it’s harder, that the more we publicly acknowledge God’s sovereignty, the harder it is to be personally arrogant and I think there’s three ways that that happens.

And one of them is that public humility regularly reminds us and others that God is in charge, right? I mean simply speaking the words out loud, we hear them too and other people hear them and so what’s happening is we are regularly reminding ourselves, “That’s right, I am not in charge, it’s not my have throne, it’s God’s throne, He’s the one who’s in charge,” and so public humility regularly acknowledges that God is in charge. And that affects the way we think. It affects the way that we make decisions when
we remember that God is in charge. The second thing that it does is that public humility, it declares submission to God’s authority. It declares submission to it. I mean it says to others who can then hold us accountable and then when they see it’s not living that way, they can say, wait a minute, I thought you said, I thought you believed, I thought you lived as though, but that’s not what I’m seeing, you know, like you’re right and so it provides that sort of correction but it helps us as well just by publicly declaring I am going to submit to God’s authority. It moves us to remember the need to do that and to live accordingly. And the third thing is that the public humility, it makes a sensitive to divine appointments and what I mean by that is when we are publicly declaring that God is in charge and that we’re letting him call the shots, what it does is it makes us aware of the fact that sometimes our plans are not His plans and we’re open to that we’re actually looking for it. I mean do you understand that God has plans for you? When I was in college, I was part of a ministry that taught us to share the gospel by saying God loves you and has a wonderful plan for your life and hear me that’s true. God does have a wonderful plan for your life, but it doesn’t go quite far enough because what I would suggest to you is the God has plans for your life. God has plans for your year, God has plans for your day, God has plans for you before the day’s over. He has words that He wants you to speak in other people’s lives. He has words that He wants other people to speak into your life. He has divine appointments and when we publicly acknowledge that God’s plans, maybe different than ours that we become since to that we’ve been looking for it.

I mean several years ago, it was Christmas time, I was in the Highlands Ranch Walmart actually and I had plans. I needed to get a few things. I need to get out, the line was crazy, and it was we saw we’re able going on, I was busy. So I had plans, I knew what I was going to do, I was going to get in, I was going to that, I was going to get out and as I walked in, the problem is that I had been preaching just a little earlier on the importance of looking for divine appointments. So I was sort of sensitized to it and as I walked in, I walked past a couple guys sitting on a bench and I had this bizarre experience, I walked past them and this is not what normally happens for me, but the Holy Spirit spoke very clearly to me in that moment and said, “Hey, go back and tell those guys that, you know, they’re Christians and I was like aha...I mean this bizarre like lightning out of the blue thought and I’ve ducked into the office supply aisle and God and I had a little argument there, where I said God, was that you, that was weird, was that you and God said nothing. And I remember that this whole, ah you got to be looking for the...and okay, so I went out and I stood in front of them, they were huddled over talking and I think they saw my shoes first because they did one of those, and there’s me, hey, I said ah, so awkward. I feel like I’m supposed to tell you that I know you guys are Christians. Are you? Because, I didn’t... are you and they were aha...and it turns out they were actually both pastors and they were going through some hard stuff and right before I had gotten up, one of them and said to the other, I don’t know I don’t feel it’s making a difference, I don’t feel like people can even tell that we’re doing God’s work. You know people can’t even tell that I’m Jesus follower and it’s like well, apparently someone can. Merry Christmas.

But here’s the thing like if I hadn’t been sensitized to this idea that God has plans for me, if I hadn’t been remembering that I would have missed that opportunity. I would have missed the opportunity I had last night as I sat with my neighbor and I didn’t have any great words of wisdom, I didn’t really have much of a thing to say but he didn’t need me to say anything, he just needed me to be with him. And I would have missed that if I insisted on following my plan. And publicly acknowledging God’s sovereignty, it sensitizes to the fact that my plans may not be his and I don’t want to miss out on his because his are way better than mine. They might be harder but they are always way better. And so James says the best remedy for personal arrogance is public humility. Acknowledge that God’s on the throne in control, make that a regular part of our speech. Just three quick things to wrestle with, the first one is this: How much do I privately acknowledge God’s will when I’m making plans? Do you make plans thinking about God? What’s your plan for me this summer or this week or this next year? What’s your plan for your career? Or you know, and if you don’t have a clear answer do you say, you know, this is my plan this what I think is going to happen, but God I recognize this is your will, I mean is that even a private consideration. And one of the remedies of fixing that private session may actually be to start going public with what we know needs to be true and find that God works it backwards into our hearts. But how much do I privately acknowledge God’s Will in my plan making.

Second thing to wrestle with is just what makes it harder for me to do it? What makes it harder for me to publicly acknowledge God’s sovereignty is? Am I embarrassed, do I think people are thinking I’m gonna...I’m preppie and think I’m weird, they are. Just get over that. Other people thinking you’re weird is not as important as acknowledging that God is on the throne. But what is it is that
a fear or what is it? And just wrestle with that. What is it that’s making it harder for me to publicly acknowledge God’s sovereignty and then the flip-side of that is what would make it easier? What would make it easier for me to publicly acknowledge God’s sovereignty? Do I need a group of friends around me who’re doing the same thing? Or do I need to get other people who are helping me to do this because they’re doing it and I, you know, I can imitate them and they can imitate me and we work on this together? But what would help you. And ask God and He will show you. He’ll show you because this is a big deal. The arrogance that James is warning us here it’s not just the thing that gets us out of alignment with God, it’s the thing that gets us into alignment with His enemy and so it’s critical that we do this work that we identify arrogance. Again arrogance isn’t saying I’m better than God or I’m better than someone else arrogance of saying, I’m independent of God, I can do this on my own, I can call the shots, James says that way of life is not only not God’s way, it’s the enemy’s.

Would you pray with me? Jesus, we confess that we have more arrogance than we’d like to acknowledge that we recognize from your servant, James, that it’s really important that we do acknowledge it, because there’s a lot of stake in it. We recognize and admit that we often live life in our own terms, we leave you out of the equation and that we acknowledge you only in bits and pieces. We ask for your forgiveness. Holy Spirit, we invite you to root out the arrogance that’s hidden in us that we don’t even recognize and show it to us and that’s not going to be easy, it’s not going to be fun, but we know that needs to happen. So Holy Spirit we invite you to root that arrogance out and show it to us, so that we can confess it, be forgiven of it and we can begin to live in a different way, no longer under its influence, no longer under the influence of the world of Satan’s approach to life that leaves You out of the equation. In Jesus name, Amen.