

Faith That Works: How to be Happy when the World is Falling Apart  
Part 4: Reliable Happiness  
James 4:13-5:11

## INTRO

One of my favorite games... i hate it but often can't stop playing it... I see a lot of you are good at it too...

Game is called- **"WHAT IF"**

- What if i lose my job?
- What if I have to deal with disease in my family?
- What if this country falls apart?
- What if \_\_\_\_\_?

## WE

Some of us are really creative at this game.

Strange trait that humans have... being able to imagine future scenarios and then worry about things that haven't even happened yet and in many cases won't in the future either... never produces happiness... name a happy worrier.

## Worry is a consistent thief of our happiness.

But God wants us to be happy...

So where does this worry come from and what can we do about it?

This might challenge you- **Our level of self-reliance determines our level of happiness.**

**GOD**- JAMES

**4:13-16** Look here, you who say, "Today or tomorrow we are going to a certain town and will stay there a year. We will do business there and make a profit." How do you know what your life will be like tomorrow? Your life is like the morning fog—it's here a little while, then it's gone. What you ought to say is, "If the Lord wants us to, we will live and do this or that." Otherwise you are boasting about your own pretentious plans, and all such boasting is evil.

"Ummm this seems to cause me more worry... my life is just a fog?" James... "hey guess what you're gonna die!"

It's the reality of life... 10 out of 10 will die  
He's reminding his readers that life is short  
His point- Since life is so short, why waste it on worry?

And then he highlights one of the root causes of worry... Arrogant Pride... I'll explain.

- "I will do this I will do that."
- "I will take care of anything that comes my way"
- "I've got this"
- Common theme? **"I"**
- Problem is, deep down we all know that... **When we rely on ourselves we are relying on someone who will most likely let us down.**
- When we look at ourselves realistically we know we're not all that powerful

The problem isn't having plans. The problem is thinking that our life depends on us and we can control the future.

It can be exhausting!

And James points out how ridiculous this thinking actually is...

- We have no control over our actual life or even what happens in our lives
- Life is short and we have no idea when it will be gone
- We don't actually control the future like we think we can

When we forget there is more going on in this world than we can see... we forget that we are all under the will of God.

Do we have free will- yes. We do make decisions for ourselves and are responsible for those. Does God also direct events of our lives? Yes. If he is outside of time and can hear the prayers we think silently and then do something about them, he can handle this task, too. More than that, He WANTS to help us!

However it works, God says "I love you and you can trust me. You can't see the future, you can't even control if you will have another heartbeat... If you think your life depends on you, you are just fooling yourself."

And the result is misery- We fear our plans won't work out. That we don't know enough, haven't done enough, haven't thought through it enough, aren't rich enough to pull this thing off- and unmet expectations result in disappointment and even anger.

**Self-reliance only adds disappointment and exhaustion to our fear.**

AND James is saying... ultimately this self-reliance is an arrogant disregard for God. Thinking everything in life depends completely on you.

There's a better way...

But James isn't done yet, first there's another aspect of this reliance/arrogance thing that he needs to throw some light on...

**5:1-3** (James gets fired up...) **Look here, you rich people: Weep and groan with anguish because of all the terrible troubles ahead of you. Your wealth is rotting away, and your fine clothes are moth-eaten rags. Your gold and silver are corroded. The very wealth you were counting on will eat away your flesh like fire. This corroded treasure you have hoarded will testify against you on the day of judgment.**

"Yeah, take that rich people!"

First... if you're watching this with electricity either on a smartphone, computer, or tv... compared to many in the world you ARE rich.

Second... James is not saying being rich is automatically bad...

Saying many people (whether they think about it or not) rely on wealth to make them happy.

"I don't do that..."

**We know more money won't make us happy, but we still want a chance to try.**

And James says... weep and groan with anguish... b/c what you're relying on, what you think will give you what you want... happiness, is nothing... it's going to rot, it's going to go away faster than you can imagine... it is completely unreliable.

Relying on wealth for happiness only creates greed.

What are **you** relying on?

**It is impossible to be both greedy and happy.** ("I'm not greedy, I just need a little more.")

**5:4-5** **For listen! Hear the cries of the field workers whom you have cheated of their pay. The cries of those who harvest your fields have reached the ears of the Lord of Heaven's Armies. You have spent your years on earth in luxury, satisfying your every desire. You have fattened yourselves for the day of slaughter.**

Again, doesn't say wealth is bad... wealth can be good if it's seen through God's perspective... a tool and an opportunity to love and care for others.

The problem is a reliance on wealth for our happiness that makes us willing to selfishly do whatever it takes (fight, lie, cheat, kill) to get it

And once we achieve what we've fought so hard for, we neglect those whom we could help and focus only on our wants and desires.

### **When we rely on possessions we usually devalue persons.**

**Side-note:** "Oh I'll be generous when I have more money..." no you won't. Generosity isn't an amount, it's a reliance on God. (Jesus and the widow)

So what do we do instead? Change our perspective.

**5:7-8** Dear brothers and sisters, be patient as you wait for the Lord's return. Consider the farmers who patiently wait for the rains in the fall and in the spring. They eagerly look for the valuable harvest to ripen. You, too, must be patient. Take courage, for the coming of the Lord is near

### **An eternal perspective let's us enjoy every moment.**

When we admit that it's impossible to be happy relying on anything other than God, we are able to be patient and wait for God to do what he says he will do.

James says, "Take courage" = opposite of worry... in other words

### **Why worry when we can wait?**

He promises that he will take care of us and that ultimately will undo every pain and every tear.

We might not even see it in this life... but JFs know there's more than just this life.

- Jesus is coming back to end the division, pain, and suffering that we feel like deep down doesn't really belong here.

And when we have that perspective we don't have to worry about the "what if's"... bc God's already promised what WILL BE... we can patiently endure, and at the same time enjoy the life God has given us.

We are finite, we will die, but God is eternal and we can know that whatever the future brings us, he will be there and he will not be surprised.

Farmers wait patiently for their crops to grow. They WORK (don't just sit and do nothing) and they WAIT to see the results

- Bury the seed and see nothing happening for a while,
- But they know that if they are patient and depend on God for the rain and to grow the seeds there will be a crop to harvest.

The same is true for a JF.

It's not that we don't plan or work- Farmers do plenty of both. They work and wait, both.

When we trust that God is who he says he is and will do what he says he will do... we are able to plan, do our best, and then rest and leave the results to God.

How do you know if you are relying on God? Here's a test to help.

**V. 5:9 Don't grumble about each other, brothers and sisters, or you will be judged. For look—the Judge is standing at the door!**

FYI: Grumbling and complaining is not being patient.

**Complaining is proof that we aren't relying on God for our happiness.**

Happy complainer?

**Sum it up...**

If what Jesus said and showed about God is true.... **(expand)** then we can start seeing our lives as they truly are... in the hands of a loving God, they are short but they have infinite meaning and purpose.

**Our reliance shapes our perspective and our perspective shapes our reality.**

When we rely on God we gain his perspective

We rest in his ultimate love and care

When we rely on Him, we see our world and our challenges from his perspective.

**YOU-** How do we do this?

**Play a new version of What If...**

When the usual "what if's" start forcing their way in... change the question...

**What if God hears me, sees me, knows me, and loves me?**

**What if God has my best interest in mind?**

**What if I can rely on Jesus?**

- Even if Jf for years. Sometimes we need a reliance reminder.
- My new routine- "God here's what I'm worried about... now it's your problem. Good night."
- Why am I worrying when I can wait on you?

**Read: Matthew 6:19-34.**

And remember... God directs and he ultimately provides, but we still need to do our part. We do our part, but we also wait on God to do his.

Just fatalism/wishful thinking. Is there any proof that we can rely on God?

- Jesus. (Gospel)- For God so loved the world

## **WE**

Life is short.

Why waste it worrying about things that might or might not happen?

Why waste it exhausting yourself by trying to rely on yourself for your happiness?

Why waste it fighting for wealth that won't do what it promises and won't even last?

What if this is true?

What if Jesus was right?

What if God is real?

What if he hears you, sees you, knows you?

And loves you enough to die for you before you could ever do anything to earn it?

Has what you've been doing working?

Self-reliance only leads to fear, anxiety, stress, worry

Can we be willing to try trusting God with one week, or even one single situation if that's too much right now?

**Jesus-** Can all your worries add a single moment to your life?

**When you choose to rely on God you choose a reliable happiness.**

## Questions

1. Think of a music/movie/book reference that exemplifies your current state of self-reliance.
2. Read Matthew 6:19-34. What stands out to you? Pick a theme from this passage (self-reliance, focus, worry) and relate it to your current situation.
3. In what areas does it seem to be a challenge to rely on God right now? What barriers do you see with that and how can your group pray for you?