



Ed Miller
February 12, 2017

JAMES 4:13-17

[Scott] We come to church because we want something. We don't have a building. I expect that one day we will have a building. There are advantages to having a building and there are advantages to not having a building. We're going to enjoy the advantages right now of not having a building. You know what the advantage is? The advantage is when you say, "I'm going to church," it's kind of hard to imagine you're going to a school. If you say, "I'm going to church," you know and we all know that the church isn't a building. We're reminded every week when we go to church that the church is people.

We want something when we come to church. We want fellowship. We want connectedness. The world is driving people apart and dividing people by race, by color, by gender, by all kinds of things. Society is pushing people apart, but the church is the place where we come together. God has called us to be that unified place. It's a beautiful place. When we want something when we come to church we want that fellowship.

We don't have fancy programs. We're a small church. There are benefits to being a large church. You've got all kinds of programs to meet people at all their different needs. That's great. There are also benefits to being a small church and we're going to enjoy the benefits of being a small church. You know what those benefits are? When you come here, you can't hide in the back row and slide out at the end of the service. People know that you're here and you're going to greet people, you're going to participate because we want something when we come to church. We want participation. When we come together we recognize that we are connected and we enjoy that participation together. We want something when we come here to church.

We don't have a worship band. Oh I'm sure that someday we will. There are advantages to having a worship band. But there are advantages to not having a worship band. We're going to enjoy those benefits right now. You know what the advantage is? If you've got a worship band there can be the temptation for you to look up there and think those people are the performers and the rest of us are the audience. But we know something different. We don't have a worship band, so when we come here we are the worship band and God is our audience. We're lifting Him up in praise every week when we come here. Amen?

Let's give the Lord a clap offering. Stand with me and let's praise the Lord together. God wants to do amazing things in our lives today and we want to bless Him, we want to praise Him, we want to honor Him. Let's sing to the Lord together because I have a special announcement I want to share with you that you've been waiting for all week.

Let me introduce it this way. When a person is growing sometimes in homes they have that place behind the door where they mark their height and those become the landmarks that know that this person is growing, their body is growing. It's interesting the church is described as a body in the scriptures. We are a church that's growing. We're hitting a major landmark today, February 12, 2017, and that landmark is that we now have elders at Calvary Chapel Living Hope. It's big news for several reasons. Don Brien and Ed Miller are elders, leading this church with me.

Now it's important because it does several things. One is that it makes a statement that we're moving toward being a viable church. When I say viable, we're already alive, I just mean being able to continue on for years to come. But it also makes a statement about our leadership. All the people at Calvary Chapel Living Hope lead because we all have spiritual gifts. There's that initiative that takes place. There's a special role that elders play in guarding the church and nurturing the church. It means for you that you have additional people to go to with your ideas, your suggestions, your concerns, whatever, and you can find help from them. Also they're on the lookout for the church's health and growth.

I'm going to let each of them come and share for just a minute or two, and then we're going to pray for you this morning.

Ed, why don't you start.

[Ed] Thank you, Scott. I'm just honored and blessed to be able to serve in this role. All the things that Scott's already said about the church are things I love. Things I'm particularly excited about are working with teenagers. I love to work with teenagers and coach teenagers. So I'm taking the middle school teenagers on this retreat in March and I'm just pumped, excited. Also one of the things I love about this church is on Monday night we have a small group that meets and we talk about the sermon. It's the first thing we do for the first half and then we're talking about various issues about how we can be faithful to serving Jesus in the world. I get the chance to preach this morning so I have a lot more I'll share with you. So I'll save that. Except I ask that you pray for me, if you would. My verse for this year is *I can do all things through Christ who strengthens me*. I believe that, but I need your help to pray for me that I'll believe that. Amen.

[Scott] Thank you, Ed.

[Don] Thank you. I'm just very honored for this when Scott asked that I can do this. We've been to the church here, my family, for a little over two years and we really enjoy this church. I'm very humbled to be asked to be in this position because I know there are so many people in this church, the Franks, the Tims, the Petes (that covers like half of you right there), just a lot of folks in this church are really wanting to do things, they want to watch the body of Christ grow. So hopefully this gives opportunity for us to grow even more as individuals and as a body. So I ask that you also pray for me and my family. The folks over here are always scared when I get the microphone, but I won't talk too much about them right now. But thank you for this opportunity, Scott. Ed and I look forward to assisting you. Trying to keep up with you would be the hardest part. Bless our weight loss program for the next couple of years. I just ask that you pray for Ed and I as we go on this endeavor, but also pray for our church as a body. Not only we pray as individuals, but pray as a body and I thank you for that.

[Scott] If you want to know more about the role of elders at Calvary Chapel Living Hope, then there is a chapter of a book that Chuck Smith wrote who is our founder many years ago. It's in the back of the information table. Pick that up. You can see what the role of elders are and how they function in the life of the church.

We want to pray for you guys. In fact Don why don't you go stand there in front of Mr. Snee, and Ed why don't you come over here and stand in front of Barbara. Why don't the rest of you stand up and get around them. Lay your hands on them. We're going to pray for them right now. Okay? Come on, get up there. If you can't get close enough, put your hand in front. Let's bless them together. Lay hands on them. If you can't get that far, put your hand out like this. Alright. Let's pray.

[PRAYER] Heavenly Father, we are so grateful for this church. It means a lot to each one of our own hearts and lives. It's the place where we've chosen to serve you, a place where we can find nurture, a place where we can find family. Lord, we thank you for these leaders. We ask that you would continue to bless this church. We ask that you would protect our church from division. Protect our church from sin. Protect our church from heresy. We ask that as these elders are part of the leadership that they would be instruments of your hand in the life of each one of us individually. Bless this church, we ask. Bless these men, we ask, in their new ministry. In Jesus' name, amen.

God bless you. You may sit down. Young people who are in the discipleship can come on out and go with me.

[Ed] Well another thing I love to do is to teach God's word. I love it. Dr. John Alexander was one of my heroes, my friend. He's gone now. I miss him. I miss him a lot. But he had a profound impact on my life.

When I joined the staff of InterVarsity Christian Fellowship as a young man in 1997, fresh out of college I had been involved in InterVarsity as a student, God had done just great things in my life to teach me about leadership and evangelism. Serving God, missions, so many wonderful things. Dr. Alexander was the president of InterVarsity. He had been one of the early presidents and he had helped InterVarsity move from being just kind of a scattered movement to being a real mission with a real strong focus. He was a college professor. They asked him to come and be president. He humbly accepted. He led InterVarsity to be more focused on goals and objectives and knowing where we were headed.

He had this thing he called POGAS. Purposes, objectives, goals, and standards. He's a businessman. He liked business. He liked helping us set goals. He came to our camps where all leaders gathered and he'd talk about POGAS and then we'd all work together on planning and talk about purposes and then on down the line. He had a profound impact on the lives of many.

As I grew as a campus staff member for InterVarsity in colleges in this wonderful state, I was blessed to become the area director of InterVarsity in central south New Jersey. That was pretty much Rutgers and south at that point. One Saturday we had an alumni event at Rutgers. It was

the 50th anniversary of InterVarsity. Dr. Alexander (we called him Dr. A) was retired at that point, but he agreed to come and be our speaker at Rutgers. We had a fabulous day. We had a wonderful day together with him. I'll never forget about him teaching what it means to walk through the valley of shadow of death. Pretty serious stuff. I still remember that.

But you know what I remember more, even than that, is I remember spending the rest of that weekend with Dr. A. He agreed to stay in our home. At that time we lived in urban New Brunswick. The former president of InterVarsity probably could have been put up in a nice place. But what a blessing it was to have him in our home. Joanne remembers that as well, I'm sure. He went to church with me. I actually was not going to my church that week. I was going to a church where I was going to be talking about our ministry at one of my partner churches.

After the service he gave me some feedback. He said, "Ed, that was a great job. I'm going to talk," and we spent almost the rest of the day walking around the city of New Brunswick and through the campus of Rutgers University just talking.

In our group of Monday nights we're learning through the Billy Graham Association training that we've been going through we've been learning about the ministry of presence. Being with other people. Sometimes that's just listening. That's all it is. Sometimes it's sharing advice and insight and stories. This man listened to me and interacted. He was present with me as we walked around.

He had a hard time walking. He was getting pretty old at that point (older than me). He was struggling a bit, but he walked. He walked maybe four hours that we walked around New Brunswick.

I remember we were planting a new InterVarsity chapter at one of the campuses at Rutgers in New Brunswick and I asked him, "Do you have any advice for me?" He said, "Well you start out and you get a group of people together and you have a daily prayer meeting. You pray every day. Maybe only for fifteen, twenty minutes, but you pray for that campus, for God to work on that campus." That has stuck with me through my life.

Of course we talked about one of his favorite subjects, which was planning. He just loved to talk about planning. So I asked him a whole bunch of questions and he said, "Ed, you know, the Bible is not against planning, but the Bible is against arrogance. The Bible is like this," and he told me a parable. I thought I was sitting at the feet of Jesus. I really did.

He told me this parable. He said life as a Christian is like getting in a sailboat and deciding to sail across the lake. The winds look favorable and we pray and we think that's the way I should go, across the lake. But then we set out and the wind changes and it picks up and it blows us. If you know anything about sailing you know you don't go in a straight line. You tack when you sail and you have to go with the wind. You've got to figure out how to adjust to the wind. He said that's the way the Christian life is. The wind is like the Spirit. The Spirit blows and sometimes the Spirit blows in ways that we do not expect.

We talked about these Proverbs. Proverbs 16:9 – *In his heart a man plans his course, but the Lord determines his steps.* Proverbs 19:21 – *Many are the plans of a person's heart, but it is the Lord's purpose that prevails.* He just went on and talked a lot about how it's good that we make plans and it's good that we look into the direction that we pray.

We're going through 1 Samuel with Pastor Scott and we're seeing how Saul often did not bring things to the Lord and he just went with his plans. We don't want to do that. We want to consult the Lord and know that our plans are of God. But then as we go we have to be willing to adjust to the Spirit's moving and alter our plans, change our plans. Because we don't know what's going to happen.

Well that leads me to our passage. If you've heard me preach before you know that I'm preaching through the book of James. We are only in chapter 4 now. So if you have a Bible or you can just listen as well, that will be just fine. James 4:13-17. At first glance this passage is going to seem to contradict what I just said. I don't believe it does. Let me read.

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.

So at first glance people would look at this passage and say this passage is teaching us that we should not plan. I don't believe that's what this passage is teaching us at all. This passage is teaching us that we should not be arrogant.

The folks that James is writing to were the Jews and they were scattered, as you remember from past sermons. They were persecuted, challenged. But there were some that were still pretty successful. They were merchants or businessmen and they would look around the Mediterranean world, see a place, and say, "This place looks good for business. We're going to go there and spend a year there and we're going to make a killing. We're going to just make it." They would not consult the Lord and they would go and have their plans well set. The Lord would not be involved with it at all.

Those are the kind of people that he was writing to. Folks that didn't consult the Lord before they planned, didn't adjust or adapt to what the Lord was doing, and had no real concern for the Lord at all. Not only did they not have concern, they were arrogant. We're going to make money, it says.

Well you know what? He comes back and he basically says you arrogant fools. Who do you think you are? Do you really think you know what's going to happen from day to day? You don't even know what's going to happen tomorrow. You don't know what's going to happen, just like none of us know. We can make all kinds of plans.

I've got some great plans for today and I've got some great plans for this week. I don't know what's going to happen when I walk out the door. I don't know that I'm not going to get hit by a car, or in an accident, or what's going to happen. So to be arrogant and say I'm going to do this and I'm going to do that is just a bad thing for us to do as Christians. We need to be open to the movement of God's Spirit. For Him to change us and direct our path.

You could say in this passage that he's saying that we're worthless. We're like the mist. I think he's saying we're worthless. In the course of all of history, we're just living in a small sliver of time in the vast scheme of things. For us to think that a few of the millions of people in the world that we really can control things, well we're not thinking rightly.

You know the reason why we're supposed to pray for our leaders, our country, and the pastors that lead us in this country is because there's a lot of arrogance in the political realm and people think they know what to do. But when it comes down to it, it's really hard to know what to do and to know how to accomplish the things that need to be accomplished in our world. So we need to pray for them because they need to have the same attitude. I encourage you to pray for all of our leaders, that they would have this kind of attitude. That they would not just plan, but they would consult the Lord and adjust to the Lord's will and to the Spirit blowing and moving.

One commentator says this about this passage. He says James is not trying to banish planning from our lives, but only that sort of self-sufficient, self-important planning. That self-sufficient – “I can do it all.” Self-important – “I'm the master of my own destiny.” Not true. Self-sufficient, self-important planning that keeps God for Sunday, but looks on Monday to Saturday as mine.

Another thing I love about this church is that we talk often about taking Jesus home. That's what we call our group on Monday nights. We call it the Take Jesus Home Group. We spend the first half of our meeting talking about the sermon and how we're living that out or how we're struggling to live that out. We take the application further so we can talk about what it means to live it on Monday and Tuesday and Wednesday and Thursday and the rest of the week. Sunday is a wonderful time. It's great to gather together. I just love to be with you. I love to worship and talk with you and hear God's word together. But we need to live for Jesus all through the week, every day. Right? Every day.

I'll tell you another story. This is a sermon of stories for me. I hope you like stories. This is a current day story and this is about our group on Monday nights. We've been looking over the last number of months to try to find what God would have us do together as a group to make an impact in the world. We're all doing different things. Some of us are out there in the world in various ways in business, in the cities in social work, retired, others of us are working in law enforcement. Doing all kinds of different things ministering to people. But we want to work together as a group.

What I like about this group is we are looking to God. We're looking together to find God's plan. If we ever forget, Sandy will always remind me, are we praying about this? Are we praying about this? Yeah, we're praying about this.

I'm sharing this story with you because I'm going to invite you into this with us. Our group wants you to be a part of this. We're beginning to land I think on a mission as a group. We had our first foray.

Yesterday I had such a wonderful day. You know how you have those days where they're just blessed days. I had one of those days. I started at eight o'clock in the morning at my house where the small group gathered and we prayed for the morning first. Then we went down into the city of Trenton and spent the next couple hours in the city. We're working and we're still seeking God in this because we're looking at how the Spirit is blowing and is this what God wants us to do. We're adapting and adjusting, but we're praying. We'll meet tomorrow night and we'll pray more about this.

But we went down into the city. We're working with the Restoring Hearts Ministries of Trenton. A few of you know Erik Lydick. Erik was a part of this church when we first planted it. But he is now investing fully 100% into this ministry in Trenton, primarily a ministry to the homeless.

Did you know that there are almost 1,500 to 2,000 people that are homeless in Mercer County, and almost all of them are in Trenton? Almost all of them are in Trenton because all of the other towns push them to Trenton. They don't want them in Robbinsville, so they push them into Trenton. The services are there, so that's another reason for them to be there. There's a rescue mission, there's a whole bunch of social services that are available. But these folks have no homes. Some of them sleep in the rescue mission and many of them sleep on the streets or on Duck Island. They sleep in a number of different places. They don't have a place to live, they often don't have enough to eat, they often don't have gloves, hats, toothbrush, soap, whatever.

So we met Erik and some others from Calvary Chapel Mercer County (which is our sister church over in Ewing) and we went together and followed Erik. We were in all different stages of excited and scared. We were going into the train station, we were going into the rescue mission, and we were going on the streets. We never made it to the streets. We got stuck at the rescue mission.

But we started out in the train station and we just walked the train station. We had food, we had tracks they give out. We prayed for a lot of people and just listened to them tell their story. We were able to encourage them and send them out to the truck and get coffee, hot chocolate, food. In the truck we had socks and hats and gloves and coats and soap and toothbrushes and everything they wanted, and we gave it away.

Then we went down and parked the truck outside the rescue mission. We soon were causing a traffic nightmare because we were blocking the street because they all just came around us. They surrounded us. I was giving out soap, toothbrushes, and body lotion. I was just giving it out. Don was giving out food. We were talking to these folks. You got another coat, you got more socks, you got more hats. I was digging in the truck trying to find all the stuff we had. What a blessed, blessed morning we had talking to these folks.

The thing that Erik says about homeless folk is that first and foremost they're people just like us. They're a little down and out. They've been abandoned in a lot of their relationships. They don't

have relationships. Their family is gone. Drugs, alcohol, all kinds of other things have caused them problems and they've been kind of left aside. They don't have much recourse, nobody to go to. They might have psychological, mental problems. Again, they may be trying to recover from drug addictions. A lot of people are dealing with alcohol. They're just trying to get free from it.

But they're seeing miracles happen down there. Over time God is doing miracles. The greatest need is for people. The greatest need is not money. The greatest need is not coats or soap. The greatest need is people. People who will be able to look at them as people.

So the first thing we did, most of us, when we talked to somebody, we reached out our hand and we said, "My name is Ed. What is your name?" Nobody does that to them. They look at them as if it's a person who's down and out. They don't get to know them as a person. We said our name, we shook their hands, and then we tried to bless them in any way we could. They need people.

We haven't decided this, but tomorrow night we'll know for sure when we talk about it. But we're probably going to be going down to Trenton once a month on a Saturday morning. I'll tell you about it and I invite you all to come and join us. I invite you to pray about it. You will be blessed. We were blessed.

The wind blew this week in a way that we didn't plan. I was heading out of town on Wednesday. I'm going to Pennsylvania for work and I'm headed out of town early. I get this text from Erik saying, "We need help. There's a snowstorm coming. We're going to put some of these folks up in a hotel and we've got to feed them. Can you coordinate that with your group?" And I said no I can't. I'm going to be nonstop busy at meetings all day. So I put out a flash text to our group and asked if anybody was willing to help with this. The most natural coordinator is Fred Thompson, but Fred was sick. He couldn't do it at all. Sandy stepped up and said she'd do it. She coordinated meals and got meals to these folks. She met some of them before we got out there on Saturday. What a blessing she was responsive.

That wasn't part of our plan. We weren't planning that. It just happened and we responded. I'm just very grateful for Sandy responding and helping in that way. She was blessed. She could not stop sending me texts and telling me how blessed and thankful she was about it. What a wonderful thing.

So planning is not bad. But arrogance is. Not only arrogance, the passage talks about boasting. They boasted in their arrogance. There's an awful lot of boasting out there today. A lot of people puffing out their chest and saying, "Aren't I great? Aren't I wonderful?" You can hardly be a politician without doing that. You've got to do that sort of. But some of them take the boasting to the extreme. "I'm wonderful, I'm going to do this."

I like confident people. Confidence is good. But overconfidence is a problem for you and I. You don't want to be overconfident. We want to be humble in the midst of this. We want to be dependent on the Lord and do what the Lord asks us to do.

The final verse in this passage talks about if you know what's right you should do it. If you know what's right and you don't do it, you're in sin. Pretty serious stuff. I often have said that the

problem with most Christians is not what they don't know, but what they do know and they're not doing anything about.

I think there's a revival happening in Trenton. I've never personally seen one. I've read about them, but I've never seen one. I think there's a revival happening in Trenton, maybe in our whole country right now. I don't know. I think so. I think it's time for the church to step up. Brothers and sisters, it's time to step forward.

My two life goals for this year, my two primary goals are coaching, mentoring young people, parents, anybody else God brings my way. I'm coaching sports as well. I'm a coach. That's what I do. I'm coaching. But I'm committed to evangelism, sharing the good news of Jesus be it with the homeless, with young people, or whoever God brings along in my path. I ask you to join me.

Pastor Scott talks a lot about this. We are going to be doing evangelism to this community this summer. We talked about that last week. We are going to reach out to the families of Robbinsville. We're going to run a program for the families. It's going to be called Hero Training Camp of Family Adventure. It's going to be good. I'm going to be talking to all your folks about helping us out. I don't have a date yet. I'm going to be looking for a lot of help. Teenagers are all back there, but the teenagers are going to do a lot. The older teenagers are here and I ask for your help this summer. Friends, we're going to have a blast doing it. We're going to have a really great time.

So we're going to plan, but we're going to depend on the Lord to guide us. When the Spirit blows, we're going to adjust and adapt. May the Lord make it so.

Let me pray for us.

[PRAYER] Lord, thank you again for the privilege we have of gathering together. What a joy it is to be in your presence and to worship you, to be together with others who are like-minded, who are filled with your Spirit and to hear your word and to wrestle with it and then to figure out what it has to say for us. Not only today, but for the rest of the week. Lord, help us each to apply this to our lives. I pray that many of my brothers and sisters will join us in ministry this summer in Robbinsville and in the city of Trenton throughout the spring. May it be so. In the name of Jesus we pray, amen.