

## 引言 INTRODUCTION

Have you run into a situation where you believe you are absolutely right, but it turns out that you are completely wrong? A woman was waiting at the airport for her flight. She went to a bookstore and bought a book and a bag of cookies. Then she sat down and started reading. Moments later she noticed something odd. The man sitting next to her grabbed a cookie from the bag between the two of them. She remained calm because she did not want to make a scene. She thought to herself: “I will give him a mouthful if I’m not a nice person!” As time went on, they took turn picking one cookie each time until the last one. She wondered what the man would do. She turned to him, and he squeezed out a nervous smile. He broke the final cookie into two and handed one-half to the lady. She tried to find the right words to say. Just then, the boarding call was announced. She gathered her belonging and headed to the gate, feeling all the heat inside. After settling in her seat, she looked for her book in the purse. Then she gasped with surprise. Her cookies were still there, unopened. She was the real cookie thief! The lesson of the story is not to put all the trust on yourself. In the passage today, James describes people like that. He is speaking to some hypothetical businessmen. They plan to go to another place and settle for a year to buy and sell. Traveling traders like that were common in those days. They went to different places to do business. They might sell their products in the marketplace. They might also exchange their stuff for something else. Perhaps olive oil for exotic spices, or sheep’s wool for fine fabric. Successful businessmen plan things ahead of time. They know where their things will be sold for higher prices. They have a good sense of the values of the items they are looking for. What James condemns is not their actions but their attitudes. Those merchants had a problem of presumption. They thought they had everything in control. But as James is about to teach us, the wisest plan is to include God in it.

## 解釋 EXPLANATION

## 1. 前途不確定 Uncertainty of Future

There are two factors those businessmen failed to consider. First, it is the uncertainty of future. They set their schedule for the next day and onward. They felt that everything would go smoothly. However, James challenges them in verse 14: **Yet you do not know what tomorrow will bring...** Future uncertainties will throw their plans off the track. Variables like health condition, weather, others’ reliability and political stability are beyond their control. Do not get it wrong! God encourages us to plan for the future. For example, Proverbs 21:5 reminds us: **The plans of the diligent lead surely to abundance, but everyone who is hasty comes only to poverty.** Those who do not plan ahead of time may become poor down the road. We make plans for the very reason that we have no idea what tomorrow may hold. Conventional wisdom tells us to hope for the best and plan for the worst. The recent natural disasters are good reminders that the future is uncertain. Series of wild-fires consumed small

houses and multi-million mansions in California. Some people in the mid-south were hard hit by floods and even tornadoes. Then there were earthquakes in Myanmar and Thailand. Highrise buildings toppled like Lego toys. Many places in the U.S. face seasonal winter storms or hurricanes. Accidents may pop up when people are least prepared. That is how property insurance protects us from loss. No one plans to fail. They just fail to plan. We are good stewards of the resources God entrusts us if we plan wisely to minimize risks. For example, some people like to do budgeting. They keep track of their income and expenses so that they will not use the money they do not have for non-essential items. We should save up extra money for future use and rainy days too. Perhaps you plan to buy a house or your kid will go to college soon. Moreover, eventually, your car, your house and your health may break down. It is never too early to teach your kids about saving money. I always tell my two boys that many things in life, good or bad, are cumulative. A few years back, I took them to the bank and opened their own accounts. I felt bad that the lady had to count all the coins in their piggy banks by hand because the bank got rid of the counting machine. Since then, I set up a monthly automatic transfer to their accounts. My younger son earns money by working part-time. Later, I helped him open two CDs. He is now a multi-thousand-naire! I told him that the money will be for his future car. My older son even buys stocks for long-term investment. He may be wealthier than me by the time he finishes school! Besides money and properties, another important asset to protect is our health. After all, we cannot work or enjoy the fruits of our labor without good health. Some people buy life insurance, especially when their kids are still young. Doing so does not mean they have little faith in God. They take steps to give their family a peace of mind. That is an optional choice compared to health, home and auto insurance policies. Unfortunately, insurance is something you need but you do not want to use. But as the saying goes, prevention is better than cure. Even when you have the best insurance plans, you need to take certain precautions. For instance, you should maintain a balanced diet and exercise often. You should keep up your house and car in good conditions too. God gives us wisdom and resources to lower risks and to live a stable life.

## 2. 生命真短暫 Brevity of Life

Besides the uncertainty of life, those unwise businessmen also overlooked the brevity of life. Among all the unknowns in life is our longevity. We expect to have a happy, healthy and lengthy life. But we simply cannot predict how many years we will spend in the world. In verse 14, James describes our life is like “**a mist that appears for a little time and then vanishes.**” Picture a morning fog in your mind. It is all hazy and unclear. Those water vapors will soon disappear when the sun comes up. Our life is very brief too. I wish everyone of you will live past 100. But no one can guarantee that. Remember the parable Jesus once told about a foolish landlord? He was very happy to have a huge harvest, so much so that he ran out of space to store his grains. He knew what he should do. He would knock down his barns and build bigger ones. When he looked at his storage, he was like staring at the zeros in a bank statement. He could not help but giggle in his heart that he had more than enough to chill for years. Just when he was thinking about that, there was a voice from heaven. Luke 12:20 records: “**But God said to him, ‘Fool! This night your soul is required of you, and the things you have prepared, whose will they be?’**” What is the lesson of the story? Jesus told

His audience that those who want to get rich in this life but ignore their relationship with God are simply dumb. One must receive Jesus before it is too late! God can give us an abundant life. It is not measured by the scale of the world. Only God can bring us true fulfillment. There are too many unwise people like that foolish farmer in any culture. Satan knows how to lure us with things we can see, things we can hold in our hands and things that we can brag about. We enjoy the feeling of ownership. Many years ago, a sporting goods company had a slogan: Life is short, play hard! Jesus cautions us not to fall into the devil's trap in Matthew 16:26 – **“For what will it profit a man if he gains the whole world and forfeits his soul? Or what shall a man give in return for his soul?”** A lot of people spend their life to earn money, thinking that they can buy back life with money later. Sadly, once the opportunities are gone, they will be gone forever. Things that God sees as truly valuable are money cannot buy and thieves cannot steal. They will never deteriorate or depreciate either. God sees our relationship with Him and our relationship with each other more important than money and stuff. Nothing Walmart or Amazon sells can give us true and long-lasting enjoyment. Those products will eventually break down or become outdated. God created us to be relational beings. Our deepest needs are to love and to be loved. Very often, what you give will make you happier than what you grab. Many people are in need. You can be a channel of grace. Offer others assistance, pray for them or say some encouraging words. Doing so may not even cost you a penny! But it will shift the focus from yourself to God and to others. Since life is brief, we must set our priorities right. We must also seize the opportunities and take timely actions. That applies to getting further education, dating and marriage, etc. I always counsel young couples that there is no perfect timing to have kids. It may be too late when you finally think that you are ready. For those who have kids, it is never too early to bring them to the Lord. That is the most important task God has entrusted to parents. No Sunday school teacher can replace your role. Kids are simple-minded when they are small. Do not wait till they grow up and their minds are flooded with anti-Biblical ideas from computer games, social media, music and movies. Spend time with them, share the gospel with them and let Jesus save their souls from this wicked world.

### 3. 靠主最穩妥 Security in the Lord

We understand the uncertainty and brevity of life. So far everything seems negative. Here is the good news: we can find security in the Lord. We can and should make plans. However, we depend on God to open the right door at the right time. The author advises us in verse 15: **Instead you ought to say, “If the Lord wills, we will live and do this or that.”** If God allows, then we will continue to exist. Moreover, He will give us the abilities to follow through our plans. Jesus has the final say on everything if we claim that He is our Lord. Security in Him will take away our anxieties. We know that He has everything in control. With that in mind, we willingly submit to Him even when His plans contradict our preferences. In Acts 10, God gave Peter a special message to take away his prejudice. Peter saw a vision in which a cloth dropped down from the sky. There were various unclean animals when it opened up. Then a voice told the apostle to eat them. Peter replied that he could not, since those were unclean food. The voice responded that Peter should not call things that God had purified as unclean. When Peter was wondering the meaning of the vision, a servant from a Roman general

named Cornelius knocked on the door. He asked Peter to go with him and meet with his boss. Subsequently, Peter led Cornelius, his family members and some friends to the Lord. Peter finally understood that God was telling him not to have bias over the Gentiles. The gospel is for every person. On his return, Peter shared his experience with some Jewish church leaders. We see their reaction in Acts 11:18 – **When they heard these things they fell silent. And they glorified God, saying, “Then to the Gentiles also God has granted repentance that leads to life.”** They were encouraged that God intended to save the Gentiles too. Thank God that Peter obeyed God. Otherwise, Gentiles had to wait longer before they could hear the gospel. Sometimes, God can use dramatic ways to open our eyes. Following His guidance is a life-long lesson of obedience. When we ask God, He will increase our faith. We need to keep in mind that we are limited in every way. We can only see the options right in front of us. But God is not restricted by time and space. We only care about our own agenda and the affairs of our family. But God has the whole world in His plans. God’s assurance is the best insurance. James asks us to think of “if the Lord wills” as we make plans. When translated to Latin, the phrase becomes “*deo volente*.” The two words simply mean God willing. Even some modern Christians use the abbreviation DV to remind themselves of this principle. Letting go of our control is a difficult lesson. We hope that everything will go smoothly as planned. To submit to God does not mean that we passively react to things that happen to us. It means that we are always sensitive to God’s guidance and are ready to make adjustments. He actually gives us a lot of freedom to make choices. Think about it this way. Little children may complain that they are contained by four walls in the house. But those restraints are for their safety. They are allowed to move from room to room. They can grumble that parents do not let them touch a hot stove, play with knives or start a campfire in the living room. Those activities are not appropriate for their ages. They can even cause harm to them. Kids should obey their parents, trusting that they have their best interests in mind. Similarly, we need to rely on God, because He loves us and He knows our needs more than we do. We do not harbor resentment when things do not go our way. We can feel sad without getting mad at God when we hit a road-block. Perhaps He is pointing us to a different direction. Just hang on, listen to Him and follow suit.

## 結論 CONCLUSION

The wisest plan is to include God in it. His heart is pleased when we seek after His glory more than our personal gain. A college student named Robert came across a poem written by a teenage girl by accident. She was looking for her future husband. The poem was actually a prayer. I modified the wordings to make it easier to understand. She says: “Dear God, I pray with boldness like other girls do. I do not want a handsome man. Make him to be like You. I do not need a big, tall and strong guy. He does not have to be smart or wealthy either. Just let his head always look up to You. Let his vision be clear of You. Make his shoulders straight, whatever He may face in life. Put character on his face, and strength in his soul. Let his whole life show a single goal. When this man comes, and I will know that he is the one I prayed for.” That girl’s name was Ruth Bell, and she later met and married Billy Graham. She had a profound impact on Pastor Graham by faithfully supporting his ministries. She knew that God’s plan was the best plan. It proved to be true.

## 引言 INTRODUCTION

你是否曾經遇到過以下的情況：你以為自己絕對正確，但結果卻完全錯誤？一位女士正在機場等候航班。她去了一家書店，買了一本書和一包餅乾。然後她坐下來開始閱讀。過了一會兒，她注意到一些奇怪的事情。坐在她旁邊的男士從他們兩人之間的袋子裡拿了一塊餅乾。她保持冷靜，因為她不想引起騷動。她心想：「如果我不是個善良的人，早就罵他一頓！」於是，他們輪流地從袋子裡拿餅乾吃，直到剩下最後一塊。她在猜想那個男士會如何做。她轉向他，他擠出一絲緊張的微笑。他把最後一塊餅乾掰成兩半，遞一半給那位女士。她不知道該說什麼來回應。就在這個時候，她聽到登機的廣播。於是她拿起行李，走向登機口，裡面卻是一肚子的火。當她坐到座位上之後，便從皮包裡找她的書。然後她有驚人的發現。她的餅乾還在那裡，沒有打開。她才是真正的餅乾小偷！這個故事的教訓是不要過份自信。在今天的經文中，雅各描述這樣的人。他與一些假設的商人交談。他們打算去另一個地方住一年，做買賣。當時，這樣的旅行商人很常見。他們去不同的城鎮做生意。他們可能會在市場上賣他們的產品，或者是用自己的東西來交換其他貨物。也許用橄欖油交換外國的香料，用羊毛交換上等布料。成功的商人會預先做好計劃。他們知道他們的貨品在哪裡可以賣到更好的價錢，他們也熟悉其他東西的價值。雅各所責備的不是他們的行為而是他們的心態。那些商人的問題是誇口。他們以為自己能夠掌握一切。但正如雅各即將教導我們的那樣，最明智的計劃就是讓神參與其中。

## 解釋 EXPLANATION

## 1. 前途不確定 Uncertainty of Future

那些商人沒有考慮到兩個因素。第一，是前途不確定。他們安排好第二天以及之後的行程，他們假設一切都會進展順利。然而，雅各在第 14 節向他們提出挑戰：**其實明天如何，你們還不知道...**。前途的不確定會打亂他們的計劃。健康狀況、天氣、別人的可靠性和政治局面等變數是他們無法控制的。請不要搞錯！神鼓勵我們為將來計劃。例如，箴言 21:5 提醒我們：**殷勤籌劃的，足致豐裕；行事急躁的，都必缺乏。**那些沒有預先計劃的人將來可能會變得貧窮。我們定計劃就正是因為我們不知道明天會發生什麼。傳統智慧告訴我們，要有最好的期望，並作最壞的打算。最近發生的天災提醒我們，未來是不確定的。一



連串的山火燒毀了加州的小房屋和豪宅。中南部一些地區淹水甚至受龍捲風的襲擊。緬甸和泰國還發生地震，高樓大廈像樂高玩具一樣倒塌。美國許多地方每年都有冬季的風暴或是颶風。任何意外都可能隨時發生。因此保險保障我們避免損失。沒有人會計劃失敗的，人們失敗是因為沒有計劃。如果我們有智慧地計劃以減少風險，我們就是神賜給我們資源的好管家。例如，有些人喜歡做財政預算。他們記錄收入和支出，避免花沒有的錢購買不必要的東西。我們應該存錢為將來打算和預防額外的花費。例如你可能打算買房子，或者你的孩子很快就要上大學。此外，你的汽車、房屋和健康都可能出狀況。家長也應該趁早教導孩子同樣的原則。我經常告訴我的兩個兒子，許多事情，無論好壞，都是累積的。幾年前，我帶他們去銀行開自己的帳戶。我為那位服務員感到難過，由於銀行沒有數硬幣的機器，她必須用人手點算孩子們有多少儲蓄。從那時起，我就設定了每月自動向他們的帳戶轉帳。我的小兒子後來去打工賺錢。於是我幫他開了兩個定期存款的戶頭。他現在是一位千元富翁！我告訴他這筆錢將用來買他未來的車。我的大兒子甚至學買股票進行長期投資。等他畢業的時候也許會比我有錢！除了金錢和財產，另一個需要保護的就是個人的健康。畢竟，沒有健康的身體，我們就無法工作或享受辛勞的成果。有些人會購買人壽保險，尤其是在孩子還小的時候。這樣做並不等於他們對神缺乏信心。他們找方法讓家人安心。與醫療、家庭和汽車保險相比，人壽保險是一個額外的投資。保險是你需要但又不想使用的東西。但俗語說，預防勝於治療。即使你有最好的保險計劃，你也需要採取預防措施。例如，你應該保持均衡飲食並經常運動。你也應該保養你的房子和車子。神賜給我們智慧和資源，讓我們降低風險，使我們過著穩定的生活。

## 2. 生命真短暫 Brevity of Life

除了忽略前途不確定之外，那些沒有智慧的商人也忘記了生命真短暫。生命中無法預測的事情之一就是我們的壽命。我們期望幸福、健康和長壽。但我們根本無法預料自己在世上的年日。在第 14 節中，雅各說我們的生命「**原來是一片雲霧，出現少時就不見了。**」想像一下早晨的霧，一片朦朧不清。但當太陽升起時，那些水氣很快就會消失。我們的生命也很短暫。我希望每個人都能活過 100 歲，但沒有人能保證這一點。還記得耶穌曾經講過關於一個愚昧的財主的比喻嗎？他因為大豐收而非常高興，甚至他沒有地方儲存收成。他知道該怎麼做。他要拆掉現有的穀倉並建造更大的穀倉。當他看到自己的糧食時，就像看到銀行月結單上好幾個零一樣。當他想到自己的財富，可以慢慢地享受人生，他心裡不禁笑出來。正當他在做白日夢的時候，天上突然傳來一個聲音。路加福音 12:20 記載：「**神卻對他說：『無知的人哪，今夜必要你的靈魂；你所預備的要歸誰呢？』**」這個故事的教訓是什麼？耶穌告訴祂的聽眾，那些只想在今生

發財卻忽略與神的關係的人是愚昧的。我們必須趕快接受耶穌，否則為時已晚！神能賜給我們豐盛的人生。它不是用世界的標準來衡量的。只有神才能帶給我們真正的滿足。在任何文化中，都有很多像那個愚昧的財主的人。撒旦知道如何利用看得見的事物、能夠握在手中和我們可以誇耀的事物來引誘我們。我們喜歡擁有東西的感覺。很多年前，一家運動用品公司有一句廣告口號：人生苦短，盡情玩樂！耶穌在馬太福音 16:26 中提醒我們不要落入魔鬼的陷阱裡：「人若賺得全世界，賠上自己的生命，有什麼益處呢？人還能拿什麼換生命呢？」很多人拼命去賺錢，以為以後可以用金錢買回生命。可惜的是，機會一旦失去，就永遠失去了。神認為真正有價值的東西是金錢買不到、賊也偷不走的。它們不會變質或貶值。神認為我們與祂的關係以及我們與人的關係比金錢和物質更重要。沃爾瑪或亞馬遜所賣的東西都不能給我們帶來真正的、持久的滿足。這些產品最終會損壞或過時。神創造我們成為一個與別人建立關係的個體。我們最深層的需要是愛與被愛。很多時候，你與別人分享東西會比你得到東西更快樂。許多人都有需要。你可以成為傳遞恩典的人。例如你可以幫助別人、為他們禱告或說一些鼓勵的話。你這樣做甚至不需要花一分錢！你卻會把焦點從自己轉移到神和別人身上。由於生命真短暫，我們必須有正確的優先次序。我們也應該把握機會，及時採取行動。這適用於繼續進修、交友和結婚等。我總是建議年輕夫婦，沒有完美的時間生孩子。當你認為自己終於準備好之時，可能已經太遲了。對於有孩子的人來說，要趁早把他們帶到神面前。這是神給予父母最重要的任務。沒有一個主日學老師可以取代你的角色。孩子小的時候思想單純。等到他們長大後，他們容易被電腦遊戲、社交媒體、音樂和電影一些違反聖經思想所影響。花時間和他們相處，與他們分享福音，讓耶穌將他們的靈魂從這個邪惡的世界中拯救出來。

### 3. 靠主最穩妥 Security in the Lord

我們明白到生命不確定而且短暫。到目前為止，一切似乎都是消極的。好消息是：倚靠主是最穩妥的決定。我們可以並且應該計劃人生。然而，我們仰望神在適當的時間打開適合的門。作者在第 15 節中建議我們：你們只當說：「主若願意，我們就可以活著，也可以做這事，或做那事。」如果神允許，那麼我們將繼續存在。另外，祂也會賜給我們力量完成計劃。如果我們宣稱耶穌是我們生命的主，那麼祂擁有最終的決定權。在主裡面的保障除去我們的憂慮。我們知道祂掌管一切。因此即使神的計劃與我們的喜好相矛盾，我們也會願意順服祂。在使徒行傳第 10 章中，神給了彼得一個特別的信息，消除他的偏見。彼得看見一個景象：一塊布從天上掉下來。當布打開的時候，裡面有各種不潔淨的動物。然後一個聲音告訴使徒吃掉牠們。彼得回答說他不能，因為那些是不潔淨的食物。但那個聲音回答說，彼得不應該把神潔淨了的東西視為不潔淨。正

當彼得思考這異象的含義時，羅馬將軍哥尼流的僕人敲門。他請彼得去見他的老闆。隨後，彼得帶領哥尼流、他的家人以及一些朋友信主。彼得終於明白了，神在告訴他不要對外邦人有偏見。福音是給每一個人的。後來彼得與一些教會的猶太人領袖分享他的經歷。我們在使徒行傳 11:18 看到了他們的反應：眾人聽見這話，就不言語了，只歸榮耀與神，說：「這樣看來，神也賜恩給外邦人，叫他們悔改得生命了。」他們受到鼓舞，因為神也打算拯救外邦人。感謝神，彼得順服了神。否則，外邦人必須等待更久才能聽到福音。有時，神會用巧妙的方式來打破我們的視野。順服神的帶領是一生的功課。當我們向神祈求時，祂會增加我們的信心。我們需要記住，我們在各方面都是有限的。我們只能看到眼前的選擇，但是神不受時空的限制。我們只關心自己的事和家人的事情，但是神的計劃包括整個世界。神的保證是最好的保險。雅各要求我們在製定計劃時記住「主若願意」這個道理。這句話的拉丁文是 “*Deo volente*”。甚至一些現代的基督徒也用簡寫 DV 來提醒自己這個原則。放手是一個難學的功課。我們希望一切都能按自己的計劃進行。順服神並不等於我們無奈地對發生的事情採取被動的反應。它是指我們必須敏銳神的指引，並準備好隨時調整。神其實給了我們很大的選擇自由。打個比方：小孩子可能會埋怨說，他們被房子的四面牆困住了。但這些限制其實是為了他們的安全。他們可以從一個房間走到另一個房間。他們可以埋怨父母不讓他們觸摸熱的爐子、玩刀子或在客廳裡生火。這些活動不適合他們的年齡，甚至會對他們造成傷害。孩子應該聽從父母，相信他們凡事為他們著想。同樣，我們需要依靠神，因為祂愛我們。祂比我們更了解自己的需要。當事情不如意時，我們不會心懷怨恨。當我們碰到障礙時，我們會感到難過，但不應該對神發怒。也許祂正在引導我們走向不同的方向。只要堅持下去，聽從祂並繼續跟隨祂。

## 結論 CONCLUSION

最明智的計劃就是讓神參與其中。當我們追求祂的榮耀而不是個人利益時，祂的心會感到喜悅。有一個名叫羅伯特的大學生，偶然發現了一個少女所寫的詩。她正在尋找未來的丈夫。這首詩其實是一個禱告。我稍為修改了內容，使其更容易理解。她說：「親愛的神，我和其他女孩一樣，大膽地禱告。我不是要找個帥哥。求祢使他像祢一樣。我不需要一個高大強壯的男士。他也不必聰明或富有。只要讓他常常仰望祢。讓他的視野清晰地注視著祢。讓他挺直肩膀，無論人生如何艱難。在他的臉上展現出品格，在他的心靈裡加添力量。讓他的一生顯示一個單一的目標。當這個人出現的時候，我便知道他就是我祈求的人。」那個女孩的名字叫露絲·貝爾，後來她遇到了葛培理並嫁給了他。她忠心地支持葛培理牧師的傳道工作，產生了深遠的影響。她知道神的計劃是最好的計劃。事實證明的確如此。