



[James 4:13-16](#)

(13) Go to now, ye that say, To day or to morrow we will go into such a city, and continue there a year, and buy and sell, and get gain: (14) Whereas ye know not what shall be on the morrow. For what is your life? It is even a vapour, that appeareth for a little time, and then vanisheth away. (15) For that ye ought to say, If the Lord will, we shall live, and do this, or that. (16) But now ye rejoyce in your boastings: all such rejoycing is evil.

King James Version

Is [God](#) leading things, or are we? Perhaps better put, do we recognize—and desire and seek—God's leadership, or do we prefer to take matters into our own hands, make our own plans, and look to God for a blessing only after *we* have decided what needs to be done? If we actively seek God's leadership, and submit to it as He provides it, our belief will be evident in the fruits produced and the faithful witness made. If, on the other hand, we—individually or corporately—are self-directed, the results will be confusion, division, contention, and all the other fruits of following the wrong sovereign.

James rebukes those who make too much of their own plans and leave God out of the picture. He calls such self-directed plans "boasting" and its source "arrogance," reinforcing the fact that in his natural state, man is in continual contention with God. In this case, carnality's symptom is confidence in one's own ability to bring something to pass without taking God into account.

[Psalm 10:4](#) (KJV) describes a wicked man as one who "will not seek after God: God is not in all his thoughts." The same man may *inquire* of God—He

could be in *some* of his thoughts—but he will not wholeheartedly *seek* Him. The man is self-directed, purpose-driven, and intent on bringing his own plans—"strategic visions," we call them today—to pass.

By inference, the righteous man *does* seek after God, rather than merely *inquiring* occasionally, and God *is* in all his thoughts. God will look on such a man: one of a poor and contrite spirit, and who trembles at His word ([Isaiah 66:2](#)).

At various times the leaders of ancient Israel, good and bad, inquired of God. Sometimes, because of idolatry—including setting up idols in their hearts—Sabbath-breaking, rebellion, and general disobedience, Israel was so far from God that He would not even allow them to inquire of Him ([Ezekiel 14:1-11](#); [20:1-4](#))! Of those who inquired of God, not very many are shown actually *seeking* Him. The Bible records bad rulers inquiring of God like an adolescent might play with a Magic 8-Ball: desiring an answer, but not truly recognizing God's sovereignty.

King Saul, for example, inquired of God at one point, but God did not answer him. It seems that he never bothered to consider *why* God would not answer him. Rather than trying to restore the breach with God by repenting, he just decided to try a different way to make his decision: by consulting a spiritist. He was determined to have his own way. Even when he sought guidance, he demanded it on his own terms—even if it meant seeking "wisdom" from an unclean source. The Bible does not say of many men that God specifically killed them, but Saul made it onto this list for his unfaithfulness ([I Chronicles 10:13-14](#)).

In contrast, [King David](#) frequently inquired of the Lord, but he is also known for being a man after God's heart—he had a tremendous track record of *seeking* God. Those who truly [seek God](#) will be answered—positively—when they inquire of Him, for they will be a breathing incarnation of the phrase "if the Lord wills." This is a major part of the witness that God desires us to make of Him: that *He* is God, and there is no other sovereign—least of all a puny man.

— David C. Grabbe

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