LifeGroup
Discussion Guide

GOSPEL GOALS FOR THE NEW YEAR
BIG IDEA: There is no greater pursuit than to know God and make Him known.
DATE: Sunday, January 3, 2027
SCRIPTURE: James 4:13-17; 5:7-8; Philippians 3:7-14 (CSB)

OPENING QUESTION

Outside of being a holiday, do you typically approach a new year with some measure of weight and importance, or do you treat it like just another day? Why? *Should the new year be different for those who trust in Christ? Have you ever thought about making a "gospel goal"? What would it look like to turn the page on a new year in a way that emphasizes gospel priorities?*

THE SETTING

The book of James was probably written from Jerusalem, where James served as pastor. He wrote this letter to offer practical, pastoral advice to those Jewish believers who had been dispersed by persecution. James wanted these believers to stay on course with their mission. Today's reading focuses on submitting one's actions to God in faith. Philippians was one of four letters Paul penned while imprisoned in Rome. Paul had received a call to preach in Macedonia and Phillippi was one of its leading cities. In this section of his letter we see his zeal for an ever deepening relationship with Christ and how that is one of the highest goals we can have – to know God and make Him known.

SCRIPTURE

JAMES 4:13-17 (CSB) Come now, you who say, "Today or tomorrow we will travel to such and such a city and spend a year there and do business and make a profit." [14]Yet you do not know what tomorrow will bring – what your life will be! For you are like vapor that appears for a little while, then vanishes. [15]Instead, you should say, "If the Lord wills, we will live and do this or that." [16]But as it is, you boast in your arrogance. All such boasting is evil [17]So it is sin to know the good and yet not do it.

JAMES 5:7-8 (CSB) Therefore, brothers and sisters, be patient until the Lord's coming. See how the farmer waits for the precious fruit of the earth and is patient with it until it receives the early and late rains. [8]You also must be patient. Strengthen your hearts, because the Lord's coming is near.

PHILIPPIANS 3:7-14 (CSB) But everything that was a gain to me, I have considered to be a loss because of Christ. [8]More than that, I also consider everything to be a loss in view of the surpassing value of knowing Christ Jesus my Lord. Because of him I have suffered the loss of all things and consider them as dung, so that I may gain Christ [9]and be found in him, not having a righteousness of my own from the law, but one that I through faith in Christ – the righteousness from God based on faith. [10]My goal is to know him and the power of his resurrection and the fellowship of his sufferings, being conformed to his death, [11]assuimg that I will somehow reach the resurrection from among the dead. [12]Not that I have

already reached the goal or am already perfect but I make every effort to take hold of it because I also have been taken hold of by Christ Jesus. [13]Brothers and sisters, I do not consider myself to have taken hold of it. But one thing I do: Forgetting what is behind and reaching forward to what is ahead, [14]I pursue as my goal the prize promised by God's heavenly call in Christ Jesus.

BIBLE STUDY

OUR WILL AND GOD'S WILL
READ: JAMES 4:13-17

Some people read James 4 and take the extreme position that Christians should not make any long term plans. How do you think Christians should approach planning for the future?

How does James' warning here apply to the topic of New Year's Day or making resolutions?

Did James mean it's a sin to make resolutions? How does verse 17 help you put James' words in right perspective?

What's the difference between inviting God into your plans and letting Him lead your life? Why does this matter?

WAITING FOR THE LORD
READ: JAMES 5:7-8

Do you tend to view waiting patiently as something that is active or inactive? Based on his chosen illustration of a farmer, did James view waiting patiently for the Lord as active or inactive?

What does the analogy of the farmer indicate about what the Lord wills for you in the new year?

How does the reality of verse 8 impact your plans and perspective?

REACHING FORWARD TO GOD'S GOAL
READ: PHILIPPIANS 3:7-14

Prior to his conversion experience, how did Paul define success in life? How did he define it after knowing Christ?

What are some pursuits for the new year the world might view as gains that Paul would consider loss compared to knowing Christ?

Based on these verses, what would Paul say is a worthy new year's resolution for believers? Why?

APPLICATION

What is one "gospel goal" you can make this year – as an individual, a couple or a family? Pray about it and display it in your home to be reminded of it all year. Trust God with your plans in this coming year. Desire to know Him and make Him known.