

## Wisdom from Above

James 3:13-18

February 18-19, 2017

I mentioned last week that the book of James could be considered the Proverbs of the New Testament. That's particularly clear in the verses we're studying today where he calls them to live according to the wisdom that comes from above.

The other theme James writes in this letter is that authentic, genuine faith will be seen in how you live. In other words, living and active faith brings good works, good deeds, and good fruit in how you live.

That's also true of wisdom; if you have godly wisdom, it will be seen in how you live. That's the evidence of it. Wisdom brings good fruit from it. *"Who among you is wise and understanding? Let him show by his good behavior his deeds in the gentleness of wisdom."*

He starts with a question, "Who among you is wise and understanding?" Do you know anyone who is wise? If someone is wise it will be seen in how they live, in how they make decisions. And in particular, it will be seen in relationships. What you believe about God, if it's living and active faith, will be a blessing to those around you. In other words, relationships reveal what you truly believe. It's a heart issue.

There's a big difference between knowledge and wisdom. Knowledge is really about facts and ideas, but

wisdom is about applying truth to life, it's about having the discernment that comes from living by godly principles.

Wisdom is so important that the Bible says over and over that it is more valuable than great riches.

**Proverbs 16:16, How much better it is to get wisdom than gold! And to get understanding is to be chosen above silver.**

If you were given a choice between great riches and great wisdom, which would you choose? It takes wisdom to understand that wisdom is more valuable than great riches. Why? Because a fool and his money are soon parted.

<b>I. We're Called to be Different</b>
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- James is making a comparison between wisdom that comes from above and wisdom that comes from the world - and there is a great difference.

**1 Corinthians 1:20, Where is the wise man? Where is the scribe? Where is the debater of this age? Has not God made foolish the wisdom of the world?**

- The problem with wisdom that comes from the world is that it doesn't produce good

fruit, it's based on selfishness and self-centeredness.

- It comes from the culture around us and it's messing people up. Just like James writes in verse 16, there is disorder and every evil thing. The problem is that the world's wisdom, the world's philosophy, the world's way, is more and more in our face.
- Christians need to understand how to draw a line in their lives and decide to live God's way rather than the world's way.

**Proverbs 14:12, There is a way which seems right to a man, but its end is the way of death.**

- The way of the world destroys lives, it destroys marriages, it destroys bodies, and ultimately it's destructive to the soul.
- James makes the comparison between worldly wisdom and godly wisdom so we can understand that we're called to live higher and have the blessing that comes from it.

A. Worldly wisdom is earthly

- We are greatly influenced by the world, but we need to draw a line in how much the world, the culture around us, influences us.

**Romans 12:2, Do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind, so that you may prove what the will of God is, that which is good and acceptable and perfect.**

**Illus - When we were raising our five kids, and now raising our granddaughter, it's always a challenge to draw the line of how much the world influences. There's music, movies, the Internet, friends, social media, and on and on. Your job as a parent is to stand guard over how much the world influences your kids and to make sure they receive godly inputs.**

- But it's not just our kids, it's all of us as well; we need to set a guard over our mind and our heart because the culture around us can be a destructive influence.

**B. Worldly wisdom is sensual**

- Worldly wisdom is 'natural' James wrote, but that word in the Greek can be translated as sensual, or the forces that drive the nature of a person. And one of the great driving forces of our culture is sensual.
- The world says, "If it feels good, do it." Yeah, right, like you can trust your feelings. Here's

the thing, your feelings will lie to get what it wants.

- That's why James writes in verse 14, "***Do not be arrogant and so lie against the truth.***"
- Just because something feels right doesn't make it right. The test of whether something is right isn't based on your feelings, it's based on the word of truth, God's word.
- What worldly wisdom neglects to mention is that something that feels good at the moment may well bring destruction in the future.

**Romans 6:21, What benefit did you gain from the things of which you are now ashamed? The outcome of those things is death.**

C. Worldly wisdom is demonic

- In case you haven't noticed, James is not a big fan of holding anything back, he lays it out there straight.
- Earth's wisdom is demonic, James is writing. Our culture is strongly influenced by the same selfish, prideful, it's all about me spirit that caused Lucifer to be cast from heaven in the first place.
- Verse 16 – where jealousy and selfish ambition exist, there is disorder and every evil thing. Look at what's happening in the world

today, is there not a dramatic increase in disorder and every evil thing?

- That selfish and self-focused philosophy that doesn't care about others is driving our culture to a level of hostility and division like I've never seen.

**Illus - Social media can be a great place to connect with friends and those who share your outlook on the world, but it's also a place of brutal hostility. The true nature of people comes out behind the anonymity of their username.**

**When our daughter was killed there were many news articles written and they warned us to be careful when reading them because Internet trolls attack everything.**

- Isn't it self-focus that's causing the recent trend of everyone taking offense at something?

**Illus - In the old days, college students gathered to protest the Vietnam War. Now they're protesting because they're offended. They shouldn't have to study Shakespeare because he was a white male. 1300 students signed a petition calling on a college to make "C" the lowest possible grade so no student would be deemed "below average." As a response to all this nonsense universities are setting up "safe spaces" where students can be insulated from**

**anything that might make them feel anxiety or to feel offended. Safe spaces include cookies, coloring books, bubbles, Play-Doh, calming music, pillows, blankets, and a video of puppies.**

- The world is going the way of selfish ambition and envy. The “everything is about me” philosophy of the world is demonic, but not us, we are called to be different. Those who follow Christ must also follow His wisdom because He is the truth.
- Jesus said to the Jewish leaders...

**John 8:44-45, “You are of your father the devil, and you want to do the desires of your father. He was a murderer from the beginning, and does not stand in the truth because there is no truth in him. Whenever he speaks a lie, he speaks from his own nature, for he is a liar and the father of lies. But because I speak the truth, you do not believe Me.”**

## **II. Live by the Wisdom from Above**

- In verses 17 and 18 James shows us what the wisdom from above looks like and the results that come to those who live by that wisdom.
- The point is that we should seek to get that kind of wisdom and live by it...

**Proverbs 4:7-8, “The beginning of wisdom is:  
Acquire wisdom; and with all your acquiring,  
get understanding. Praise her and she will  
exalt you; she will honor you if you embrace  
her.”**

A. Wisdom from above is pure

- The wisdom from above comes from God and springs forth out of godly principles and is therefore pure as He Himself is pure... and it has a purifying effect on those who receive wisdom from above.

**1 John 3:2-3, ... We will be like Him, because we will see Him just as He is. And everyone who has this hope fixed on Him purifies himself, just as He is pure.**

**Illus - The idea is similar to the process of purifying silver or some other precious metal. Purifying precious metal involves removing the impurities that are in it because it is impure by nature. In other words, it comes out of the ground impure and must be made pure in order to become useful.**

**Proverbs 25:4, Remove the dross from the silver, and a silversmith can produce a vessel;**

- The wisdom from above purifies because it is poured into your soul as that which is pure.

**Illus – I was teaching a class once and said, “If I had a glass of dirty water could I not purify it by adding pure water to it?” Someone interjected, “Why don’t you just throw the whole thing out?” My answer; God doesn’t throw you out. He doesn’t reject you because you’re imperfect, He welcomes sinners to Himself, but He also does something about it. He implants His word and pours the wisdom that’s pure into your soul.**

B. Wisdom from above considers others

- James then gives us a list of qualities that describe the wisdom that comes from above and many of them describe how wisdom impacts our relationships.
- Wisdom from above is peaceable, or, in other words, peace-loving. He expounds on this in the next verse.
- Wisdom from above is gentle. It’s the opposite of being pugnacious or contentious. Some people seem to enjoy being difficult. Perhaps they enjoy the power that comes from being contentious; after all, it does get some people to do what you want.
- Here’s the problem; that’s a worldly principle, not a biblical one.

**Proverbs 26:21, Like charcoal to hot embers and wood to fire, so is a contentious man to kindle strife.**

- God does not bless being contentious or pugnacious, God blesses those who are gracious and gentle.

**Proverbs 16:23, The heart of the wise instructs his mouth...**

- Wisdom from above is ‘reasonable’. That’s not the best translation. It’s better said that wisdom from above is willing to yield. In other words, it listens, it isn’t rigid and stubborn. It considers the opinions of others and takes them into consideration.

**Illus - Many of you know we raised five kids and there were numerous times they didn’t agree with some of our rules or decisions. But rather than saying, “Well I’m the parent and I said it so that’s the end of it,” I wanted to hear their opinion... mostly so I could show them how dumb it was. Just kidding, I was more than willing to listen because I wanted them to learn to listen also.**

- In the same way, we need to be willing to listen to God and yield to His wisdom and His ways. To be willing to yield to God is one of the greatest principles of godly

transformation. *If you cannot yield, you cannot be changed.*

- Wisdom from above is full of mercy and good fruits. Notice... **full** of mercy and good fruits.

**James 2:13, Mercy triumphs over judgment.**

**Matthew 5:7, “Blessed are the merciful, for they shall receive mercy.”**

**1 Corinthians 13:5: Love is not easily provoked, it does not take into account a wrong suffered.**

**Illus – Two guys were talking and one complained, “Man, my wife is historical.” “Do you mean hysterical?” the other guy said. “No, she’s historical, she brings up everything I ever did.”**

**Don’t be historical, be full of mercy.**

- Why be full of mercy? Because we need a lot of mercy ourselves.
- Wisdom from above is without hypocrisy. It’s real, not acting a part, just being honest with God and ourselves.

**C. Wisdom from above is sown in peace**

- Verse 18 – And the seed whose fruit is righteousness is sown in peace by those who make peace.

- Those who have wisdom from above make peace because they sow in peace and it produces the fruit of righteousness in their lives

**Matthew 5:9, “Blessed are the peacemakers, for they shall be called children of God.”**

- In other words, those who make peace and sow in peace will be called children of God because they are like their Father in heaven.
- How do you become like your Father? Draw near to Him and He will draw near to you. Why is that such an important key?... Because...

**Colossians 2:3, In Christ Himself are hidden all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge**