

James 3:13-18
Series, "Living the Kingdom"

August 29, 2021
Pastor Kyle Belden

Intro

Bring us up to speed on the series/last week

James—dead faith

Gets done saying all this about our mouths, now he moves on to another thing

It matters what you say, it also matters what you do. What you reveals your values and understanding. He uses a specific word to talk about this and that is the word "wisdom."

By all accounts, James proved through his actions that his words could be trusted.

That's a big theme in his letter.

Exhibit A: Tongue=dead faith

Exhibit B: Wrong kind of wisdom=dead faith

As we are going to find, James says that there are really just two ways when it comes to living in this world, two kinds of wisdom, and that we need to be careful which we choose. He lays out that not all wisdom is created equal. I think that is a really important thing for us to recognize, because at least for me, in my mind, anything that gets called wisdom is automatically a good thing.

But for you and me—in how we process—when we hear the word "wisdom" we think of good things, helpful things. When we think of someone who is wise, we automatically assume they are a good person.

But just because we think something is a good idea, or the world around us tells us it's a good idea, or the right thing to do, doesn't mean that it is, even if it seems to be, or gets called wise.

James says that there are two kinds, one of them is devastating, the other brings life

Both are proved by what comes out of them.

Who is wise and understanding among you? By his good conduct let him show his works in the meekness of wisdom. (James 3:13)

Alright, right out the gate James is subverting our expectations of power, success, and wisdom.

Self-promotion

Limiting our influence—like Travis talked about last week

Humility—a self-subduing, gentle spirit that denies itself

But if you have bitter jealousy and selfish ambition in your hearts, do not boast and be false to the truth. (James 3:14)

If we are motivated by the wrong things, we are not wise. We don't understand what this is all about.

James is saying here that if our motivations are off, everything else will follow.

STORY – Mother's Day

My motivation, I thought, was to give Megan a nice Mother's Day.

My actions proved that I actually wasn't motivated by a desire to give Megan a nice experience. All my motivations were centered around me.

I wanted to feel like I did a nice thing.

I felt dumb that it wasn't working.

I felt attacked when someone would say something about it.

My motivations were selfish, my actions proved it.

The same thing is true in how we choose to live our lives. If we are motivated by things like jealousy, selfishness, power, the characteristics of this world, it's a type of wisdom James says, but not one you want. In fact, he has some very harsh language for it.

This is not the wisdom that comes down from above, but is earthly, unspiritual, demonic. (James 3:15)

Should make us pause

Avoid at all costs

But we might be asking, "Ok, I get it, but sometimes I don't even know what my motivations are." Like me, on that hike, I thought my motivation was Megan having a good Mother's Day. James addresses it next by telling us exactly what is produced from living in this type of wisdom.

For where jealousy and selfish ambition exist, there will be disorder and every vile practice. (James 3:16)

Obvious- Only Fans

Taliban/Politician/Jeff Bezos

Conventional Wisdom

But here is the really good news

But the wisdom from above is first pure, then peaceable, gentle, open to reason, full of mercy and good fruits, impartial and sincere. (James 3:17)

Blessed are the meek, for they shall inherit the Earth.

Blessed are those who hunger and thirst for righteousness, for they shall be satisfied.

Blessed are the merciful, for they shall receive mercy.

Blessed are the pure in heart, for they shall see God.

Blessed are the peacemakers, for they shall be called sons of God.

Blessed are those who are persecuted for righteousness' sake, for theirs is the Kingdom of Heaven. (Matthew 5:5-10)

And a harvest of righteousness is sown in peace by those who make peace. (James 3:18)

These two guiding worldviews, (conventional and biblical) these two types of wisdom couldn't look more different and couldn't stand in greater contrast with each other.

Let me give you one more picture of just how different they are.

Pastor drew this connection and I thought it was so compelling.

Revelation 12-14

dragon vs. lamb

I think there is just one question we need to ask ourselves walking out of here: What kind of wisdom are we letting run our life? What kingdom are we serving? What way are we taking? Is it the dragon way or the lamb way? If we want the answer to that question we just need to look at what is being produced.

If we are discontent with the answer to that question, there is just one thing we need to do: Turn our eyes to the Lamb, and follow Him wherever He goes.



TWO KINDS OF WISDOM

JAMES 3:13-18

AUGUST 29, 2021 | PASTOR KYLE BELDEN



CHECK IN TOGETHER AFTER THE SUMMER BREAK (USE JUST ONE OR ALL OF THESE QUESTIONS TO CONNECT)

If this is your first time getting together since the spring, ask a few questions to catch up on what God has been doing in you over the summer!

- 1 What is something significant that happened to you/your family over this summer?
- 2 What is one aspect of being Jesus' disciple that God wants you to trust Him more with? Briefly share the journey you have been on in this area you want to grow in.

QUICK REVIEW (OPPORTUNITY FOR PEOPLE TO SHARE WHAT MOST STOOD OUT FROM SUNDAY'S MESSAGE)

Looking back at your notes from this week's message, was there anything you heard that caught your attention, encouraged, challenged, or confused you?

DIG DEEPER (OBSERVATIONS FROM THE SCRIPTURE OR COMPLEMENTARY SCRIPTURES FROM SUNDAY'S MESSAGE)

- 1 Someone read **James 1:13-18** for the group.

¹³Who is wise and understanding among you? By his good conduct let him show his works in the meekness of wisdom. ¹⁴But if you have bitter jealousy and selfish ambition in your hearts, do not boast and be false to the truth. ¹⁵This is not the wisdom that comes down from above, but is earthly, unspiritual, demonic. ¹⁶For where jealousy and selfish ambition exist, there will be disorder and every vile practice. ¹⁷But the wisdom from above is first pure, then peaceable, gentle, open to reason, full of mercy and good fruits, impartial and sincere. ¹⁸And a harvest of righteousness is sown in peace by those who make peace.

What two pictures of wisdom does James give here?

Reflecting on vs. 14-15, how does this truth sit with you? As hard as it is to admit, how has this possibly infiltrated your life? As disciples of Jesus, what should our response be?

Looking at vs. 17-18, what are the characteristics of Godly wisdom? What good fruit have you seen the Spirit of God producing in your life because of using Godly wisdom?

The wisdom of the world is rooted in selfishness. While our culture disciplines us to believe that our determination, our truth, and our happiness are the most important priorities in life, these ideas run contrary to God's Word. True wisdom means we embrace God's vision of how the world works.

Focus on James' list of the characteristics of wisdom in verse 17. Which sticks out to you as most imperative in the church?

LIVE IT OUT (DISCUSS HOW YOU CAN LIVE OUT THE TRUTHS YOU JUST OBSERVED IN SCRIPTURE)

- 1 Kyle spoke about conventional wisdom, and how that can be a way we excuse making decisions using worldly wisdom instead of making decisions with godly wisdom. How might you be using conventional wisdom in ways that reflect how James describes worldly wisdom?
- 2 What kind of wisdom are we allowing to influence our life? What is the fruit that is being produced as a result?
- 3 If what we looked at in James 3:13-18 is true, what do you need to do so that you are trusting God and living as a Kingdom citizen and not as a worldly citizen?

CLOSING PRAYER

Close your time in prayer with your group.

NEXT WEEK: JAMES 4:1-10

Take some time before Sunday to pray that God would use this message and the truth in His Word to transform the minds and lives of those who hear it. Pray that God would move you and others in our church to live out what is revealed in His word. Remember to take good notes so you are ready to add to the discussion your home group will have!

PRAISE/PRAYER REQUESTS (TRY TO HAVE ONE OR A FEW PEOPLE PRAY FOR ONE TOPIC AT A TIME)

Use this space or the back of this paper to write the requests and find a way to share those with the group so you can be praying for each other during the week.

TIPS ON GROUP PRAYER

Prayer is an important part of being in a Home Group. Here are some tips to help make group prayer be a life-giving aspect of your group.

PRAY FOR ONE TOPIC AT A TIME: Anyone in the group is free to introduce a prayer request or praise during the prayer time. Once a topic is introduced, the group focuses on that request alone. Once it's covered, the group moves on to the next request or praise.

PRAY MORE THAN ONCE: If your group is focusing on one topic at a time, each person is encouraged to pray several times during the prayer time for those topics they feel most led to pray about. No one should be required to pray.

KEEP PRAYERS SHORT AND SIMPLE: Group prayer goes better when members keep their prayers short and to the point. When someone prays for a long time, it's hard for the other members to stay focused and long prayers tend to intimidate those who are just learning to pray out loud in a group. No one should be required to pray out loud.

How to Use this Discussion Guide

This guide is meant to serve you and your group as you intentionally create a healthy environment for Gospel community, growing in friendship, and becoming like Jesus together. Use the guide as a tool to help your unique group.

With that in mind, please review the guide before your group meets to see if some content or questions might resonate more or less with your group. Don't feel the need to ask every question during your group discussion. This guide is not meant to be something you power through for the sake of completing. Pick the content from the guide you feel will help your group grow in Gospel community. In addition, spend some time praying for your group each week, preparing your heart, and asking God for wisdom and guidance as you lead. We are praying for you too!

Visit cpmodesto.org/groupleaders to download the sermon discussion guide every week. Not in a Home Group, but want to be in one? Visit cpmodesto.org/homegroups and use the Home Group Finder!

COMMENTARY

JAMES 3:13-18

James 3:2-12 presents shortcomings of the tongue to which teachers and all individuals are vulnerable. 3:13-18 reminds us of our need to demonstrate genuine wisdom. The words particularly apply to aspiring teachers, but they have relevance to all believers.

The opening rhetorical question asks how we can show that we have wisdom. "Wise" refers to someone with moral insight and skill in deciding practical issues of conduct. "Understanding" pictures someone with the knowledge of an expert. We are to show the presence of wisdom by good deeds practiced with humility. Only obedient deeds, not mere talk, prove the presence of wisdom.

"Humility" refers to a submissive spirit opposed to arrogance and self-seeking. The person with humility is not a doormat for the desires of others but controls and overpowers the natural human tendency to be arrogant and self-assertive. Non-Christian Greeks felt that this type of humility was a vice. Christianity made meekness into a virtue. "Meek" in Matthew 5:5 is the adjectival form of the noun translated here as humility. Jesus promised the "meek" they would inherit the Earth. Jesus meant a believer who relates to God with dependence and contentment will reap God's abundant blessings.

Even when you are involved in a disagreement, you must demonstrate a gentleness and kindness of attitude. You must banish all contentiousness and mutual accusation. The Bible calls on all Christians to show the presence of spiritual wisdom in their lives by deeds of humility and goodness.

False wisdom destroys unity and develops rivalry. This section discusses the demonstration of false wisdom (v. 14), the source of false wisdom (v. 15), and the results of false wisdom (v. 16).

"Envy" could have a positive or a negative meaning: "zeal" or "jealousy." Here, teamed with "bitter," it conveys the sense of a strong, protective stance to maintain a position in which the teacher takes pride. Wisdom demonstrated in "bitter envy and selfish ambition" does not come from God. This counterfeit wisdom is earthly - human with human limitations. Second, false wisdom is sensual; it is concerned with appetites and desires. Instead of following the Holy Spirit, a person with this wisdom is mastered by unregenerate human nature. Third, such wisdom is demonic; evil is its source, and it serves evil. But genuine wisdom finds its source in God. His wisdom is free from fault. People with this wisdom avoid jealousy, self-promotion, and other sins that contaminate life. It is peace-loving; gentle, easy to be entreated; it is compliant; it is easily persuaded. It is full of mercy—in forgiveness and in acts of kindness to needy people. Its bountiful good fruits are helpful actions for others. Godly wisdom does not show favoritism. Living by wisdom from God produces the fruit of righteousness - evidence of a right relationship with Him. Believers experience peace and work for peace among others. Sowing the seeds of mercy and good deeds, believers function as peacemakers.