

Two Kinds of Wisdom: Part 1
James 3:13-16
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Discussion Questions:

1. What is the problem with wisdom that has no action? What good is it really for?
2. Who can you think of whose life is good in terms of beautiful, praiseworthy or excellent? What can you learn from them?
3. Why is it difficult to be both wise and gentle? Think about I Corinthians 8:1
4. We are all born with self seeking, but Christ is the one that changes our hearts. What are ways we can check ourselves so we don't resort to self seeking?
5. Which description of godless wisdom resonates with you and why? Earthly, sensual or demonic?
6. Godly wisdom comes from having a relationship with God. How can we ensure our relationship with God impacts how we live and treat one another?

Teaching Notes

We talked about the tongue, a small but powerful instrument.
It needs to be controlled and can be no matter the circumstance We said we control it with God's word and wisdom.

...Now James will transition from words to wisdom.

Words are small but powerful...so use them wisely!

Two Kinds of Wisdom pt 1

Words, wisdom, and works are core themes in James.

And they all come together here in this section.

James 3:13 Who *is* wise and understanding among you? Let him show by good conduct *that his works are done* in the meekness of wisdom.

Do you think you are wise?

Do you think you have understanding?

Wisdom is meant to be seen not just spoken.

James is from Missouri...the show me state.

A godly life is not just about having wisdom or understanding...
...It is about living wisely with understanding.

1. Godly wisdom has works.

It is not just knowing things or having understanding...
...It is about **doing** things with wisdom and understanding.

Godly wisdom isn't just taught in the classroom by professors...
...it is lived out in the living room by people.

Godly wisdom is not just spoken at church, it is lived at work.

Godly wisdom is not just discussed in life groups, it is lived out in all the groups in our life.

But the kind of works are important too...

2. Godly wisdom has good works.

What do you mean by "good"?

It is like good fruit...excellence, beauty, honor, praiseworthy.

This life is full of excellence and honor and beauty.

There are many intelligent people that do ugly, dumb things.

People **talk about** wisdom & understanding, but **live like fools**

If someone gives you advice and tells you what to do...

...but their own life has no beauty or honor...Be careful!

No matter how much money they have or...

... how successful or smart they seem...

...If you are a follower of Jesus, they may lead you astray.

Why? How?

Their wisdom is not good or godly...their priorities are not God's.

If you are going to school or listening to podcasts or you are paying thousands of dollars for your kids to go to school...

...consider the wisdom being given.

Check it with the wisdom of God and His word.

You may gain the whole world, but lose your soul.

BUT...It is not just about works that are good...

...James has more...

These good works are done in a certain way...

Amplified

Who among you is wise and intelligent? Let him by his good conduct show his [good] deeds with the gentleness *and* humility of *true* wisdom.

NIV

Who is wise and understanding among you? Let them show it by their good life, by deeds done in the humility that comes from wisdom.

New Living

If you are wise and understand God's ways, prove it by living an honorable life, doing good works with the humility that comes from wisdom....They are good works done with meekness, humility, gentleness

3. Godly wisdom is gentle.

Meekness/humility/gentleness...are connected to true wisdom.

This word is only used 3x in NT and twice by James.

A person with wisdom and understanding...

...but without meekness and humility is out of line.

A wise person should live a beautiful life of excellence, honor and praiseworthy actions WITH gentleness and humility.

We shouldn't force their wisdom on people.

We shouldn't be harsh and condescending.

We shouldn't flaunt knowledge.

We shouldn't humiliate others.

Being meek doesn't mean being weak.

Being gentle doesn't mean that you can't be strong.

Meekness is strength under control.

David Banner is a pretty good example of meekness.

He is the Hulk and he learned to keep him under control and just uses his strength in the appropriate circumstances.

You have control and use your wisdom gently.

A foolish child will crush a delicate object...

... or damage a fragile animal.

Children need to be taught and trained...

...And a wise one will apply that knowledge.

The wise has understanding...

... they know their power, and they understand HOW to act.
They deal gently with a flower and carefully with a puppy.

In the same way...

...A fool can crush a delicate situation or damage a fragile person.

You could humiliate a person...

...with your argument and intellect...

...but in wisdom you are gentle and honoring.

You could slam someone with your biblical understanding...

...but in wisdom you control yourself and are gentle.

Godly wisdom is trained and received.

We live and learn...and hopefully grow.

Jesus grew in wisdom, stature, and favor with God and man.

God often speaks of the how not just the what.

There is quite a lot of freedom with the “what’s”.

But quite a lot of direction about the “how’s”.

How we speak is written about more than **what** to speak.

How to treat people seems more imp. than what we do for them.

The Bible doesn't have a script of what to say...

...but it gives plenty of direction in how to say it.

There is no printed directions for sharing the gospel.

There is no step by step for how to be married or be a parent.

...But there is plenty of directions about “how” to do these things.

How you do what you do makes all the difference.

Same words with a different tone has a different meaning.

Same actions with a different attitude has a different result.

- Know who you are saying it to.
- Think about how they will receive it.
- Remember what is going on in their life.

If you are wise, show it with gentleness and humility.

Why is a wise person meek?

- Maybe because they understand people are fragile.
- Maybe because they realize it is more effective long term.
- Maybe they know how it feels
- Maybe they realize it is not all about them.
- Maybe because they know it is how Jesus is.

Jesus was meek.

He could have called down fire from heaven
He could have annihilated Pilate with legions of angels
He could have humiliated unbelievers and skeptics
...but Jesus was wise: His good works were done in meekness.

Don't measure spirituality by what they know...
Measure spiritual maturity by good actions done in meekness...
...and their ability to live with self control.

James introduces another kind of wisdom...godless wisdom.

14 But if you have bitter envy and self-seeking in your hearts, do not boast and lie against the truth. **15** This wisdom does not descend from above, but *is* earthly, sensual, demonic.

16 For where envy and self-seeking *exist*, confusion and every evil thing *are* there.

Let's talk about the last part first...

Confusion and all kinds of evil result from godless wisdom.

If you look around and wonder what the heck is going on?!...

Our world operates with godless wisdom...
...Godless wisdom leaves a mess!

What is godless wisdom? James describes it...

Bitter envy is a toxic energy or poisonous zeal.
It is harmful, unsafe, damaging, hurtful desire

Self seeking is pursuing your own way for your own benefit.

4. Godless wisdom is hurtful and selfish.

- The friend who says hurtful things bcuz it makes her feel better.
- The person that doesn't listen, they just talk about themselves
- The family member who makes everyone feel uncomfortable because you don't know what harmful thing they will feel like saying or doing.
- The person at work that cuts you down and takes the best role for themselves.

If that stuff is in your heart, James says...
...don't boast and lie against the truth...it is wrong!
They boast...I am just a truth teller...I tell it like it is....
...I do what I want...I don't live with any regrets.

Your poisonous zeal or self seeking...is not the good life.
It is not heavenly wisdom.

It is not God's way.

The kind of wisdom or way of living that is all about this toxic energy and selfish benefit is godless.

James describes this godless wisdom 3 ways...

Earthly:the wisdom/way of living concerned with temporary stuff

4. Godless wisdom is short sighted.

This means you live for what is attached to the earth, not heaven.
You pursue goals that are temporary, not eternal.

Your priorities may be a big house, vacations, lots of toys and a good amount of money.

Your spiritual life...

- Giving to the church or tithing is silly. It is a poor investment.
- Going to church is a good way to make a business contact or find a spouse.
- You're willing to sacrifice your family to make more money so you can have more stuff or more security.
- You care a lot about how you look on the outside and what people think.

These are temporary choices that are a means to an end...

...but you don't realize that end is dead.

When you get to the end you will be empty...

...You will wonder, why did I live for these temporary things?

Sensual wisdom is all about feelings.

5. Godless wisdom feels good.

You want good feelings.

You want to be around people that make you feel good.

You like good food, good times, and good people.

Your motto is, "If it feels good, you do it."

Regarding spiritual things...

You do not like going outside of your comfort zone.

You have been doing the same spiritual practices forever with little growth or development.

You don't like fasting or self denial.

You don't like a message or worship song that doesn't make you feel good.

If it doesn't feel good, you will find somewhere that does.

The last kind of wisdom is demonic...yikes!

Demonic wisdom is all about rebellion against God.

"the vast majority of Satanists do not even believe in the existence of a personal being named Satan. Rather, Satan is a symbol of struggle against a tyrannical God."

The Satanic bible builds upon the traditional secular humanistic philosophy that each individual can be his or her own "god."

6. Godless wisdom is all about you.

So what does that look like?

They do what they want, when they want.

they do their own thing, make up their own rules.

They may take different religious things they like and combine them all together into something they want to worship.

They are the master of their own destiny...

...they are the captain of their own ship.

Spiritually...

Church is good when **they** want to go or when it works for **them**.

Serving is something that must benefit them.

Sacrifice is fine as long as someone else is not telling them what to do.

Jesus is great, but they are the lord of your life.

Now...

You may be saying...wait a minute...isn't all of this stuff normal?

Yes, that is just the point.

...This is how everyone lives!

If we are born again, we don't live like everyone else!

We have a new nature, a new heart, new priorities, a new king!

I don't live for temporary things, I live for heavenly, eternal things.

I don't live for what feels good, I live for what God says is good.

I don't live for myself or my way, I live by faith and submit to Jesus, the true king.

Walking in wisdom is life changing.

It can impact your life and the lives of those people you know.

God desires wisdom for us because wisdom brings blessings and strength to you and the lives around you.

