

Passage: James 3:13-18

Title: The Test of Wisdom Applied

Summary: In Chapter 2 James told us that real faith is a faith that works. But good works need to be accompanied by wisdom! You can do the right thing the wrong way, or at the wrong time – and you can undermine the good you're trying to do. In our study today we will look at "rightly applying wisdom"; another vital study for us as we seek to grow in our reflection of Him.

James 3:13–18 (NKJV) ¹³ Who is wise and understanding among you? Let him show by good conduct that his works are done in the meekness of 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. ¹⁷ But the wisdom that is from above is first pure, then peaceable, gentle, willing to yield, full of mercy and good fruits, without partiality and without hypocrisy. ¹⁸ Now the fruit of righteousness is sown in peace by those who make peace.

Exposed to the Son

Some years ago, on returning from a business trip, a man brought his wife some souvenirs. Among them was a Treasure Box that would glow in the dark. After giving it to her, he turned out the light, but the object was not visible. "This must be a joke!" she said. Disappointed, the husband commented, "I've been cheated!" Then his wife noticed some French words on the box. Taking it to a friend who knew the language, she was told that the directions read: "If you want me to shine at night, keep me in the sunlight all day." So she put her gift in a south window. That evening when she turned out the light, the Treasure Box had a brilliant glow. The surprised husband asked, "What did you do?" "Oh, I found the secret," she said. "Before it can shine in the dark, it must be exposed to the light."

Just as the Treasure Box, having been exposed to the sun, took on the nature of the sun and began to shine, so Christians should constantly expose themselves to the Son, that they may take on his nature and shine as lights in a dark world.

Michael P. Green. (2000). 1500 illustrations for biblical preaching (p. 397). Baker Books.

For we are firstfruit, and His Seed (Word) is designed to change us into His image, glory, ways, and will:
James 1:18 (NKJV) ¹⁸ Of His own will He brought us forth by the word of truth, that we might be a kind of firstfruits of His creatures.

Genesis 1:11–12 (NKJV) ¹¹ Then God said, "Let the earth bring forth grass, the herb that yields seed, and the fruit tree that yields fruit according to its kind, whose seed is in itself, on the earth"; and it was so. ¹² And the earth brought forth grass, the herb that yields seed according to its kind, and the tree that yields fruit, whose seed is in itself according to its kind. And God saw that it was good.

Prayer

The Word of God is Living and Powerful, and is ready, and will do a mighty work in our lives.

Hebrews 4:12 (NKJV) ¹² For the word of God is living and powerful, and sharper than any two-edged sword, piercing even to the division of soul and spirit, and of joints and marrow, and is a discerner of the thoughts and intents of the heart.

In Every Study

- Who Is God? (How Great is He?)
- What Does He Think of Me? (How Wonderful Are His Thoughts Towards Me?)
- What Does He Want Me to Do?
- What Can I Boldly Request of Him?
- What Do I Need to Be on Guard of When I Leave Here Today?

Boldly come to the throne of grace, ask God to reveal Himself in a mighty way to you, and to do I might work in you, and through you.

Hebrews 4:16 (NKJV) ¹⁶ Let us therefore come boldly to the throne of grace, that we may obtain mercy and find grace to help in time of need

Written by James / Didn't believe – to Leader / Hindsight / Everyday Living

The Book of James was written by none other than Jesus' brother James. James was a leader in the church, a pillar in the church (Acts 21). James didn't believe that Jesus was God when He walked this earth (John 7:5); but after the resurrection Jesus appears to him (1 Cor 15:4-7), and

everything changed. James is going to write us this letter, he will talk about everyday practical stuff. He will talk about trials in life, our works, our tongue, prayer, and other things; as he writes these things, no doubt he will be remembering how Jesus handled them, reflecting back on watching situations, and watching his oldest brother. He will reflect on Jesus' life of love, and a life of sinlessness, in a world that can be so hateful at times, and so full of sin. James will write these things based on hindsight, based on first hand witnessing of how his older brother lived life, everyday. James watched Jesus handle everyday life, and that is what this book is about; it is about living everyday life as a Follower of God, in a fallen world.

Jesus Rubbed Off / Nature Illustrations / Favorite Teacher - Sermon on Mount

We can see how much Jesus rubbed off on James, for James style resembles his brother so much. Like Jesus used nature as illustrations for His teaching points, so does James some 30 times. He uses nature analogies such as the sea, flowers, sun, fire, horses and ships to name a few). It is obvious who James favorite teacher was, because this epistle covers every topic that Jesus covered in the Sermon on the Mount. There is amazing parallelisms between the two; James does not actually quote the Lord's words, but he obviously had internalized Jesus' teachings and reproduced them with spiritual depth. Jesus covered about 30 topics in the Sermon on the Mount, and we will see that James touches on every one of them in this epistle. The Book of James is Sermon on the Mount 2. The Book is also very quick and concise, moving from thought-to-thought quickly. So the Book of James is the New Testament Version of the Old Testament Proverbs. It resembles Proverbs because it is very poetic the way it flows its thoughts using illustrations and analogies.

So We can Examine Self / How am I Doing

Jesus gave the Sermon on the Mount so that we might examine ourselves and ask the question, "so how am I doing in each of these areas?" James writes to the church, to us, and as we read, we have to ask ourselves, "so how am I doing in these areas?" This book is practical and applicable for us living in the year 2022, and the ultimate goal of this epistle is giving to us in verse 4 of chapter 1, to bring us into maturity, perfect and lacking nothing.

As in school, we take tests to see how much of a handle and mastery we have on a subject, we will do the same in this book.

3 Key Verses

Here are three key verses to get us going:

James 2:20 (NKJV)²⁰ But do you want to know, O foolish man, that faith without works is dead?

James 1:22 (NKJV)²² But be doers of the word, and not hearers only, deceiving yourselves.

James 1:4-5 (NKJV)⁴ But let patience have its perfect work, that you may be perfect and complete, lacking nothing. ⁵ If any of you lacks wisdom, let him ask of God, who gives to all liberally and without reproach, and it will be given to him.

The Outline of the Book of James:

Chapter 1

- Introduction (1:1)
- The Test of Perseverance and Suffering (1:2-12)
- The Test of Blame in Temptation (1:12-18)
- The Test of Response to the Word (1:19-27)

Chapter 2

- The Test of Partiality (2:1-9)
- The Test of the Law (2:10-13)
- The Test of Faith and Works (2:14-26)

Chapter 3

- The Test of the Tongue (3:1-12)

- The Test of Wisdom Applied (3:13-18)
- Chapter 4
 - The Test of the World's Influence (4:1-12)
 - The Test of Dependence (4:13-17)
- Chapter 5
 - The Test of Endurance (5:1-11)
 - The Test of Prayerfulness (5:12-20)

Works & Words / But Words are Important

In chapter 2, James stressed that mere words are not the issue. The proof of one's salvation is seen in works. Yet here in chapter 3, we'll see him plunge into a discussion about the tongue. Why? I suggest the reason is that, although it is true that it is our works and not our words that validate and verify our salvation, this does not mean words are not important in our spiritual life. The power of speech is one of the greatest powers God has given us. With the tongue man can praise God, pray to God, preach the Word of God, and lead a lost sinner to God. Yet with the same tongue a man can tell lies that ruin a man's reputation or break a person's heart with harsh words. That takes us back to the theme of this book, the purpose of this book, that we might mature. In chapter 1 we were told to be Doers of the Word, and chapter 2 we saw that it is to be Faith the Works! And here in chapter 3, watch our words. Our words will affect our marriages, our families, and every relationship we have with another person. This study, this test, is vital to our Christian walk, our spiritual growth.

Tests Tied Directly Together / Chapter 3 flows Together

The Test of the Tongue is tied directly to the Test of Wisdom Applied. Chapter 3 just flows together, as it should, for it is only the Wisdom from above that can control our tongue. The outlines for these two tests are nearly identical, because they are nearly identical:

Outline: The Test of the Tongue (3:1-12)

- Power to Direct: the Bit and Rudder - 3:1-5
- Power to Destroy: the Fire and Animal - 3:5-8
- Power to Delight: the Fountain and Tree - 3:9-12

Outline: The Test of Wisdom Applied (3:13-18)

- Wisdom that Directs: 3:13
- Wisdom that Destroys: 3:14-16
- Wisdom that Delights: 3: 17-18

Wisdom Falls into 2 Categories Only

The wisdom that directs us will fall into two categories, and two categories only, there is no gray area; it will be wisdom that destroys or wisdom that delights, and that will result in a tongue that destroys or a tongue that delights. Although the tongue is specific, it reflects my life in general. We will look at these verses specifically in terms of the tongue, and generally in terms of our lives.

Mind you – James watched his Brother Jesus, and he speaks from watching close to 30 years how his Brother, spoke, and spoke in wisdom – and now he shares what he learned by watching, so we too can walk and talk in wisdom. And, I might add, James watched the world, and saw their destruction and delight.

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

(James 3:14 NKJV) But if you have bitter envy and self-seeking in your hearts, do not boast and lie against the truth.

(James 3:15 NKJV) This wisdom does not descend from above, but is earthly, sensual, demonic.

(James 3:16 NKJV) For where envy and self-seeking exist, confusion and every evil thing are there.

(James 3:17 NKJV) But the wisdom that is from above is first pure, then peaceable, gentle, willing to yield, full of mercy and good fruits, without partiality and without hypocrisy.

(James 3:18 NKJV) Now the fruit of righteousness is sown in peace by those who make peace.

Wisdom that Directs: 3:13

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

What is Meekness

Meekness, means “power under control”, it carries itself in the sense of “gentleness”. So we see the calling that wisdom, carries itself as gentle. I like the adjective form, as it conveys “gentle, of a soothing disposition”. Jesus had the power of the universe at His disposal, yet we see Him carrying Himself in gentleness and humility.

Here is the word as used as an adjective: praus or praos (πραῦς, 4239) denotes “gentle, mild, meek”; for its significance see the corresponding noun, below. B. Christ uses it of His own disposition, Matt. 11:29; He gives it in the third of His Beatitudes, 5:5; it is said of Him as the King Messiah, 21:5, from Zech. 9:9; it is an adornment of the Christian profession, 1 Pet. 3:4. ¶ Cf. epios, “gentle, of a soothing disposition,” 1 Thess. 2:7; 2 Tim. 2:24. ¶

Vine, W. E., Unger, M. F., & White, W., Jr. (1996). In Vine's Complete Expository Dictionary of Old and New Testament Words (Vol. 2, p. 401). T. Nelson.

In the four Gospel accounts given to us in Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John—eighty-nine chapters of biblical text—there's only one place where Jesus tells us about his own heart, and it is Matthew 11:29 (for I am gentle and lowly in heart):

Matthew 11:28–30 (NKJV) ²⁸ *Come to Me, all you who labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest. ²⁹ Take My yoke upon you and learn from Me, for I am gentle and lowly in heart, and you will find rest for your souls. ³⁰ For My yoke is easy and My burden is light.”*

Matthew 5:5 (NKJV) ⁵ *Blessed are the meek, For they shall inherit the earth.*

Matthew 21:5 (NKJV) ⁵ *“Tell the daughter of Zion, ‘Behold, your King is coming to you, Lowly, and sitting on a donkey, A colt, the foal of a donkey.’”*

1 Thessalonians 2:7 (NKJV) ⁷ *But we were gentle among you, just as a nursing mother cherishes her own children.*

So, by looking at Jesus we have baseline to hold how we should be carrying ourselves in our conversations and dealings with one another and our personal decisions we make in life.

Balanced

Although Jesus was gentle, lowly, humble – there was and is times He needed to make the whip to protect His Sheep. But it was always in the balance of what we will read next. I think Christians and the Church can go too far and exchange truth for compromise. Jesus lived the perfect balance, and our passage today gives the “filter/checklist” on how to sort through why we do what we do, and how we do it.

Jesus gentle and lowly, but as nursing mother protecting the sheep (same Spirit given to Apostle Paul – see 1 Thess 2:7). We are to live peaceably if at all possible, and if the day comes that we can't it can only come after running through our passage before us today:

Romans 12:18–21 (NKJV) ¹⁸ *If it is possible, as much as depends on you, live peaceably with all men. ¹⁹ Beloved, do not avenge yourselves, but rather give place to wrath; for it is written, “Vengeance is Mine, I will repay,” says the Lord. ²⁰ Therefore “If your enemy is hungry, feed him; If he is thirsty, give him a drink; For in so doing you will heap coals of fire on his head.” ²¹ Do not be overcome by evil, but overcome evil with good.*

John 2:15–17 (NKJV) ¹⁵ *When He had made a whip of cords, He drove them all out of the temple, with the sheep and the oxen, and poured out the changers' money and overturned the tables. ¹⁶ And He said to those who sold doves, “Take these things away! Do not make My Father's house a house of merchandise!” ¹⁷ Then His disciples remembered that it was written, “Zeal for Your house has eaten Me up.”*

I had a squirrel take residence in my deck. I tried to rid the squirrel with 50 bucks of nonlethal ways, all to no avail. At times it would charge me as I would stand over its home. I thought it rabid, until I “heard them”, the purr of newborn babies, then I realized I was dealing with a mother.... And I went from war with the little critter, to protecting the little critter, because I was in such respect of the heart of that mother willing to fight me to protect her babies. Small picture of our Lord, yet a good one for me.

Wisdom Directs Everything / Abundant Life – Wash Cycle / Life Today

My source for wisdom will direct my thoughts, my tongue, and my actions.

- *Wisdom is knowledge applied.*

First, a word about wisdom. What is it? We must not confuse it with knowledge. Knowledge is information; wisdom is application. Knowledge is comprehending facts; wisdom is handling life. Knowledge is theoretical; wisdom is practical.

Ellsworth, R. (2009). Opening up James (p. 27). Day One Publications.

Even the most “mature, aged, seasoned” Christians can make the mistake that “their biblical knowledge”, equates to “spiritual wisdom”. It simply is not so. We must learn the word of God (knowledge), and equally so ask the Lord “how to apply that knowledge” (wisdom), in every situation.

Spurgeon puts it a little sharper, it seems we can ready his passion into the point:

- Wisdom is the right use of knowledge. To know is not to be wise ... There is no fool so great as a knowing fool. But to know how to use knowledge is to have wisdom. (Charles Haddon Spurgeon)

Manser, M., ed. (2016). Christian Quotations. Martin Manser.

RC Sproul gives a good summary:

- One can have knowledge without having wisdom, but one cannot have wisdom without having knowledge. (R.C. Sproul)

Water, M. (2000). The new encyclopedia of Christian quotations (p. 1120). John Hunt Publishers Ltd.

Wisdom is taking all the things I have learned and applying them to my life. It will determine if I live the “abundant” life Jesus spoke of in John 10:10. Or the “Romans 7 Wash Cycle” as I call it. I’m up and I’m down, I succeed and then I fail (Romans 7:15). Wisdom takes the knowledge I have learned and puts it into action in my life so I might live the abundant Christian life that Jesus so desires for me. Jesus didn’t just die for my salvation upon death, but he died so that I might live here and now. There are too many people alive today who are not living:

(John 10:10 NKJV) "The thief does not come except to steal, and to kill, and to destroy. I have come that they may have life, and that they may have it more abundantly.

Romans 7:15–25 (NKJV) ¹⁵ For what I am doing, I do not understand. For what I will to do, that I do not practice; but what I hate, that I do. ¹⁶ If, then, I do what I will not to do, I agree with the law that it is good. ¹⁷ But now, it is no longer I who do it, but sin that dwells in me. ¹⁸ For I know that in me (that is, in my flesh) nothing good dwells; for to will is present with me, but how to perform what is good I do not find. ¹⁹ For the good that I will to do, I do not do; but the evil I will not to do, that I practice. ²⁰ Now if I do what I will not to do, it is no longer I who do it, but sin that dwells in me. ²¹ I find then a law, that evil is present with me, the one who wills to do good. ²² For I delight in the law of God according to the inward man. ²³ But I see another law in my members, warring against the law of my mind, and bringing me into captivity to the law of sin which is in my members. ²⁴ O wretched man that I am! Who will deliver me from this body of death? ²⁵ I thank God—through Jesus Christ our Lord! So then, with the mind I myself serve the law of God, but with the flesh the law of sin.

Who is Wise / Demonstrate It

Who is the one who has true wisdom and knowledge? He said, let him show (demonstrate or show it) out of a good conduct/conversation of his works. Let him demonstrate it or show it out of his manner of living. Let it be demonstrated! True wisdom has one of its characteristics of meekness. It doesn’t boast! It doesn’t parade itself! It is always concerned with the others well-being. True Wisdom just does it, it isn’t looking for recognition.

True Wisdom – False Wisdom / Destined to Fail

True wisdom comes from above, but false wisdom comes from below. In other words,

- there is a “heavenly wisdom” that comes from God,
- and there is a “man made wisdom” that does not come from God.

Whatever does not come from God is destined to fail, no matter how successful it may seem at the time.

Examples of Man's Wisdom / Babel – Hagar - Loaves

The Bible contains many examples of the folly of man's wisdom.

- The building of the Tower of Babel seemed like a wise enterprise, but it ended in failure and confusion (Genesis 11:1-9).
- It seemed wise for Abraham to take his handmaiden Hagar to bear a child, but that ended in heartache and suffering (Genesis 16) and the pains of that wisdom are still seen today in the Mid-East turmoil.
- The disciples thought it wise to dismiss the great crowd and let them find their own food; but Jesus took a few loaves and fishes and demonstrated the power and glory of God (Mark 6).

Determines My Life

*****Where my wisdom comes from, which wisdom I apply to my life will determine my life.*****

God – Wisdom World

I'm always interested in what God thinks of something. God says the wisdom of this world is foolishness, and comes to nothingness:

(1 Corinthians 1:19–21 (NKJV)) ¹⁹ For it is written: "I will destroy the wisdom of the wise, And bring to nothing the understanding of the prudent." ²⁰ Where is the wise? Where is the scribe? Where is the disputer of this age? Has not God made foolish the wisdom of this world? ²¹ For since, in the wisdom of God, the world through wisdom did not know God, it pleased God through the foolishness of the message preached to save those who believe.

God – His Wisdom

But God says His wisdom is mighty and nothing is stronger:

1 Corinthians 1:22–25 (NKJV) ²² For Jews request a sign, and Greeks seek after wisdom; ²³ but we preach Christ crucified, to the Jews a stumbling block and to the Greeks foolishness, ²⁴ but to those who are called, both Jews and Greeks, Christ the power of God and the wisdom of God. ²⁵ Because the foolishness of God is wiser than men, and the weakness of God is stronger than men.

How do I get Wisdom

Before we even get going into this study it is important to know "How do I get this wisdom"? James makes it so clear and easy, just ask the Father:

James 1:4–5 (NKJV) ⁴ But let patience have its perfect work, that you may be perfect and complete, lacking nothing. ⁵ If any of you lacks wisdom, let him ask of God, who gives to all liberally and without reproach, and it will be given to him.

Now the Contrast / Context of Tongue

Now James is going to show the contrast of these two wisdom's, and we see also it is in the context of the use of the tongue. That is why the outline is the same as the outline we had for the tongue. Wisdom, like the tongue, directs, and it will direct unto destruction or delight.

Outline: The Test of the Tongue (3:1-12)

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The Grid for Every Conversation - Action

I have these verses underlined because it is a grid (rule of thumb) through which I can run any conversation, teaching, or any word of instruction, and action for my life. If there is envy and strife, tension and confusion in what I hear, then I know it's from hell. But if there is purity and peace, righteousness and mercy in what I hear, I embrace it as being from the Lord.

Why So much Time / Stamp these Verses / As a man Thinks

Why have we spent so much time on this subject, of the tongue, our conversation, our actions? First because it is right here in the verse-by-verse so we know it is God's perfect timing for all of us. But also, because these next 5 verses are life to any marriage, to any family, and to any church. If every believer could just stamp these verses on their mind, pull out these verses before every conversation, action, or thought, then the church and family would be ever so different. I say thought because as a man thinks, therefore he is. We must take every thought into captivity, so it doesn't take us into captivity:

(Proverbs 23:7 NKJV) For as he thinks in his heart, so is he.....

Marriages- Ministries / Memorization / Not a Favorite Study – But Written to Examine Ourselves

I have watched it over and over in relationships, ministries, churches, mission trips, of ministries and relationships dying from within, and nobody can see the problem. We always have to be examining ourselves and asking why am I doing what I am doing, or saying what I am saying. Remember this book was written so that we might examine ourselves. These verses are vital for memorization. I know these types of studies are never a favorite. I notice that when we study passages like these, no one ever says to me, wow that was awesome, you could really feel the Spirit moving. I'd much rather be teaching a passage of God's grace and love, but these passages, these studies are ever so vital for our Christian maturity. We must ask the Lord to search us and show us what is in our heart.

So.....

Wisdom that Destroys: 3:14-16

Wisdom that Destroys: My tongue specific, my life in general.

(James 3:14 NKJV) But if you have bitter envy and self-seeking in your hearts, do not boast and lie against the truth.

(James 3:15 NKJV) This wisdom does not descend from above, but is earthly, sensual, demonic.

(James 3:16 NKJV) For where envy and self-seeking exist, confusion and every evil thing are there.

True wisdom doesn't lead to envying and strife, but confusion and troubles – evils.

In Your Heart

Verse 14 - But if you have bitter envy and self-seeking in your hearts - Again come to terms with the fact that if your words are bitter, then it is because your heart is bitter:

Matthew 12:33-34 (NKJV) ³³ "Either make the tree good and its fruit good, or else make the tree bad and its fruit bad; for a tree is known by its fruit. ³⁴ Brood of vipers! How can you, being evil, speak good things? For out of the abundance of the heart the mouth speaks.

Matthew 15:17-19 (NKJV) ¹⁷ Do you not yet understand that whatever enters the mouth goes into the stomach and is eliminated? ¹⁸ But those things which proceed out of the mouth come from the heart, and they defile a man. ¹⁹ For out of the heart proceed evil thoughts, murders, adulteries, fornications, thefts, false witness, blasphemies.

Out of My Mouth / Someone Else / Not of the Lord / Grid of the Heart

If I open my mouth and any of these things come out of mouth, or if any of these things are stirring in my heart and thoughts, (bitter envy, self-seeking) then I know they are being energized by Satan. If someone opens their mouth and these things come out, then I know they are being energized by Satan. Then I know, this is not of the Lord, this is not where I am supposed to be. I can quickly gauge every conversation or action in my life based on these verses, they are a perfect grid to examine the heart.

Verse 14 – do not boast and lie against the truth - Anyone who shows bitter envy and self-seeking should not deceive anyone—especially themselves—about how wise they are. (Guzik)

3 Sources / Ephesians

Notice the three sources here:

Verse 15 - This wisdom does not descend from above, but is earthly, sensual, demonic.

These are the three agents at work against, these are the three agents that we must battle every day.

We studied this in Ephesians 2:

Ephesians 2:1–3 (NKJV) ¹ And you He made alive, who were dead in trespasses and sins, ² in which you once walked according to the course of this world, according to the prince of the power of the air, the spirit who now works in the sons of disobedience, ³ among whom also we all once conducted ourselves in the lusts of our flesh, fulfilling the desires of the flesh and of the mind, and were by nature children of wrath, just as the others.

Definitions

- Earthly - The World: man's philosophies that are void of God's moral standard and Laws. Having this life only in view.
- Sensual – The Flesh: our flesh wanting to be satisfied
- Demonic – Satan, the prince and power of the air trying to energize to submit to these agents that want to destroy us.

Easy to be Drawn In / See it all Around Us / FM 66.6

It is so easy to be drawn into these things. We see it in the world every turn we make. Reality shows that are filled with man's wisdom and the works of the flesh – me, my way, I. Our old nature is always ready to feed off these things. And then there is Satan, he has his radio station FM 66.6, and for 24/7 he is sending the signal out, saying receive ye these things. Anyone, who is tuned into his station, receives his signal, and the battle is on.

The Outcome

The outcome, bitter envy, self-seeking, confusion, and every evil thing:

Bitter / Undrinkable Water

Bitter – Greek term for undrinkable water. I have been served this drink many a times, and have served it many a times. God help me to change the menu.

Envy

Envy – a harsh resentful attitude, a greedy or prideful longing for something that belongs to another.

Self-seeking / Selfish Ambitions / Politics / 7 Things / Rom 14

Self-seeking – also translated “strife”. It is selfish ambition, for personal gain, regardless of the expense to others. The Greek word was used to describe someone who had entered politics for selfish reasons and sought to achieve his agenda at any cost (even if it meant trampling on others). This is very applicable in the area of gossip, gossip is the tearing down of others to build up oneself. Self-seeking causes divisions in the church and relationships. Proverbs and Romans have some clear words on God's position on these things. The combination of the three and how they come together for the harm or destruction of another. God says it is wrong, even if it is true. God says don't judge my servant, for I will deal with him, I will take care of him:

Proverbs 6:16–19 (NKJV) ¹⁶ These six things the LORD hates, Yes, seven are an abomination to Him: ¹⁷ A proud look, A lying tongue, Hands that shed innocent blood, ¹⁸ A heart that devises wicked plans, Feet that are swift in running to evil, ¹⁹ A false witness who speaks lies, **And one who sows discord among brethren.**

Romans 13:10–14 (NKJV) ¹⁰ Love does no harm to a neighbor; therefore love is the fulfillment of the law. ¹¹ And do this, knowing the time, that now it is high time to awake out of sleep; for now our salvation is nearer than when we first believed. ¹² The night is far spent, the day is at hand. Therefore let us cast off the works of darkness, and let us put on the armor of light. ¹³ Let us walk properly, as in the day, not in revelry and drunkenness, not in lewdness and lust, not in strife and envy. ¹⁴ But put on the Lord Jesus Christ, and make no provision for the flesh, to fulfill its lusts.

Romans 14:1-4 (NKJV) ¹ Receive one who is weak in the faith, but not to disputes over doubtful things. ² For one believes he may eat all things, but he who is weak eats only vegetables. ³ Let not him who eats despise him who does not eat, and let not him who does not eat judge him who eats; for God has received him. ⁴ **Who are you to judge another's servant? To his own master he stands or falls. Indeed, he will be made to stand, for God is able to make him stand.**

Confusion, and Every evil thing / It will Fail

Confusion, and every evil thing - The outcome of these things will be confusion and result in evilness. Evil here means "worthless". Man's wisdom energized by Satan causes confusion and chaos in our lives and the lives of others, and it ends in things that are worthless. Christian, even if it makes sense it is not going to work, it will fail.

Win-Win

God's wisdom and earthly wisdom differs. Earthly wisdom divides, and pits people against one another. Its envious, self-seeking, and egotistical. Earthly wisdom creates factions and friction. Man's wisdom is always a win - lose deal. Someone ends up on the top, and someone ends up on the bottom. Whereas, God's wisdom is a win - win proposition. Both parties benefit from the proposal, or the solution. (Sandy Adams)

3 R's

It is back to the three R's: Recognize, Resist, and Rejoice.

1. We must recognize this wisdom that destroys, that it comes from the world, the flesh, and Satan.
2. Then we must resist it, we can not let it into our mind so that it may start working within us, energized by Satan.
3. Then we can rejoice for we did not allow it to destroy us or others.

Check the Grid / the Blessings

Ohh that we might check this grid, this rule of thumb, every time we are faced with an attack, or making a decision for an action to take, or getting to unleash the tongue, and our thought life. Your marriage will be blessed, your family will be blessed, your ministry will be blessed, and most importantly – God will be blessed. He would say, well done my child, you have grown so much, you are becoming just like Jesus. You are a man/woman of integrity, and that blesses me. That Delights me. Christian grab on to these things, take this study straight into your heart.

Wisdom that Delights: 3: 17-18

My tongue specific, my life in general.

(James 3:17 NKJV) But the wisdom that is from above is first pure, then peaceable, gentle, willing to yield, full of mercy and good fruits, without partiality and without hypocrisy.

(James 3:18 NKJV) Now the fruit of righteousness is sown in peace by those who make peace.

God's Wisdom - Unity

Man's wisdom looks out for self-interest. God's wisdom looks beyond selfishness to what brings harmony and unity. (Adams)

Back to Chp 1 / Good & Perfect

The wisdom form above, from the Lord. This takes me back to chapter 1:

(James 1:17 NKJV) Every good gift and every perfect gift is from above, and comes down from the Father of lights, with whom there is no variation or shadow of turning.

Good things will Result / Apply Them

Everything that comes from the Lord is good, it is perfect, it is Wisdom that Delights. Look at God's wisdom, look at what comes from Him to us. Apply these things to every conversation in your marriage, in your family, in your workplace, in the church, and not only imagine, but know the good things that will result. The Wisdom from Above is a mirror of the Sermon on the Mount.

The wisdom from above is:

Pure / undefiled / Clean to Enjoy / Wisdom Below Drains Life

Pure – means free from defilement. I am clean, I am free to enjoy my relationship with the Lord and not have guilt or shame about the things I have said or did. The Wisdom that Destroys, leaves me dirty. I walk away after I let my tongue loose on someone, or entered into gossip, and I feel defiled, dirty, for the Holy Spirit is convicting me. The wisdom from below sucks the life right out of me.

Sermon on Mount Cross-Reference:

[\(Matthew 5:8 NKJV\)](#) Blessed are the pure in heart, For they shall see God.

Peaceable / Peace with Fellow Man / Wisdom Below cause Wars

then peaceable – Purity and Holiness lead me to peace with God and peace with my fellow man. Whether that be my wife, child, brother in the Lord, or unsaved neighbor or co-worker. The wisdom from below causes competition, rivalry, and wars (as we will see in chapter 4).

Sermon on Mount Cross-Reference:

[\(Matthew 5:9 NKJV\)](#) Blessed are the peacemakers, For they shall be called sons of God.

Gentle / Sweet Reasonableness / No Compromise / Not Revile Back

Gentle – gentleness has been called “sweet reasonableness”. It carries the meaning of moderation without compromise. The gentle person does not cause fights, but nor does he compromise the truth in order to keep peace. A gentle person will take all kinds of mistreatment (like Jesus did) without reviling back, seeking revenge, getting the last word in, without hatred in his heart.

Sermon on Mount Cross-Reference:

[Matthew 5:10–11 \(NKJV\)](#) ¹⁰ Blessed are those who are persecuted for righteousness' sake, For theirs is the kingdom of heaven. ¹¹ “Blessed are you when they revile and persecute you, and say all kinds of evil against you falsely for My sake.

Willing to Yield / Easy to Live With / Wisdom below Difficult / Lay Down Right to be Right

willing to yield – God's wisdom makes the believer agreeable and easy to live with and work with. Man's wisdom makes a person hard and stubborn. The person who is willing to yield is willing to listen, think, pray, and then obey whatever God reveals to them. As we have seen in the Sermon on the Mount cross-references, God asks us to lay our rights, and wants down, for the sake of the kingdom.

Sermon on Mount Cross-Reference:

[Matthew 5:3–5 \(NKJV\)](#) ³ “Blessed are the poor in spirit, For theirs is the kingdom of heaven. ⁴ Blessed are those who mourn, For they shall be comforted. ⁵ Blessed are the meek, For they shall inherit the earth.

God's Economy on Yielding

Christian, let me share a truth that I have learned from being willing to yield. The more I yield to others, the more I lay down my right to be right even when I am clearly right, the more I bite my tongue when I am reviled and attacked by others, and the more I let go my ministries, I find the result is the more God adds to me. It results in more insight He gives me into His Word, into the things of the Lord, and ultimately it all adds up to more peace in my life and a more intimate relationship I have with Him. I know this sounds crazy, but I actually get excited when a person slams me, and I remain silent, cause I truly expect God is going to bless me cause I was willing to yield. So I wait, anticipating, a blessing. I sit wondering ohh what is He going to do to bless me this time, I can't wait, it is like Christmas time for me. However, I watch people who do the opposite, I watch Christians who apply the Wisdom from Below, wisdom that destroys, I watch them gossip, attack, be self-seeking, and I watch their lives dry up – spiritually. I watch their relationship suffer with the Lord, and it carries over into their marriage, their family, and the ministries they are involved in. It is sad to watch. Be willing to yield, be an Abraham and say you take the left and I'll take the right, or you take the right and I'll take the left, and watch God bless you, just like he blessed Abraham (Genesis 13).

Full of Mercy / Controlled By / Ability to Forgive Quickly

full of mercy – to be “full” of something means to be “controlled” by. The person who follows God's Wisdom is controlled by mercy. Mercy is showing concern for those who suffer pain and hardship. Mercy is the ability to forgive quickly.

Sermon on Mount Cross-Reference:

[\(Matthew 5:7 NKJV\)](#) Blessed are the merciful, For they shall obtain mercy.

Good Fruits / Full Life / John 15 / Wisdom Below Empty

and good fruits – to be full applies to good fruits. We are to be controlled by good works. The Wisdom from Above does not make a life that is empty, it makes it full. We quickly reflect back to Jesus teaching in John 15:1-16, and the fruit of the Spirit in Galatians 5. These are the things we are to be controlled by:

[\(John 15:5 NKJV\)](#) "I am the vine, you are the branches. He who abides in Me, and I in him, bears much fruit; for without Me you can do nothing.

[John 15:12–13 \(NKJV\)](#) ¹² This is My commandment, that you love one another as I have loved you. ¹³ Greater love has no one than this, than to lay down one's life for his friends.

[Galatians 5:22–23 \(NKJV\)](#) ²² But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, longsuffering, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, ²³ gentleness, self-control. Against such there is no law.

Partiality & Hypocrisy / Only Found Once / Unwavering / No Negotiations on Wisdom Below

without partiality and without hypocrisy – This Greek word for partiality is only found once in the whole New Testament, right here in this verse. It denotes a consistent, unwavering person who is undivided in his commitment and conviction and does not make unfair distinctions (remember our test of Partiality). This is how we must be about applying Wisdom from Above, the Wisdom that Delights against the Wisdom from Below, the Wisdom that Destroys. We must be unwavering, there must be no negotiations with the Wisdom of the World, the Flesh, and the Devil. To profess Christ, and submit to the Wisdom of the World is hypocritical, and Christian and Non-Christian will be able to tell the difference.

(James 3:18 NKJV) Now the fruit of righteousness is sown in peace by those who make peace.

Fruit of Righteousness – Seed After It's Own Kind

The Wisdom from Above, produces the fruit of righteousness within us, and peace among us.

This fruit is like a seed that will bear fruit as it is sown by those who make peace.

- “The fruit of righteousness; either the fruit we bring forth, which is righteousness itself, Luke 3:8, 9; Romans 6:22; Philippians 1:11; or the fruit we reap, which is the reward of righteousness, viz. eternal life.” (Poole)

Christian, scatter your seed well, and in due season you shall reap a harvest. Like a farmer, it may take much time, as seed sown in spring may not see fruit until the fall, but the seed will do what it was designed to do.... It will reproduce in the likeness it was divinely and genetically design to bear:

James 1:18 (NKJV) ¹⁸ Of His own will He brought us forth by the word of truth, that we might be a kind of firstfruits of His creatures.

Genesis 1:11–12 (NKJV) ¹¹ Then God said, “Let the earth bring forth grass, the herb that yields seed, and the fruit tree that yields fruit according to its kind, whose seed is in itself, on the earth”; and it was so. ¹² And the earth brought forth grass, the herb that yields seed according to its kind, and the tree that yields fruit, whose seed is in itself according to its kind. And God saw that it was good.

Interesting Word for Righteousness in Chinese

The Chinese character for “righteousness” is most interesting. It is composed of two separate characters—one standing for a lamb, the other for me. When “lamb” is placed directly above “me,” a new character—“righteousness” is formed.

This is a helpful picture of the grace of God. Between me, the sinner, and God, the Holy One, there is interposed by faith the Lamb of God. By virtue of his sacrifice, he has received me on the ground of faith, and I have become righteous in his sight. 1147

Michael P. Green. (2000). *1500 illustrations for biblical preaching* (p. 307). Baker Books.

Conclusion:

The Grid / Who is Wise Among You

So again, I have these verses underlined because it is a grid (rule of thumb) through which I can run any conversation, teaching, or any word of instruction. If there is envy and strife, tension and confusion in what I hear, then I know it's from hell. But if there is purity and peace, righteousness and mercy in what I hear, I embrace it as being from the Lord. It is so easy to get involved in the conversation, but when we lay it against this test of wisdom, we know whether to walk away or not. If you can do these things, then God considers you a wise person:

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

Theme of The Book / Satan wants to Divide

Remember the theme of this book that we might mature, and grow in wisdom. Satan wishes to divide the church, divide the body, divide the marriage, divide the family, so that he can get us alone, and when he does he can rip us to shreds and destroy us:

(1 Peter 5:8 NKJV) Be sober, be vigilant; because your adversary the devil walks about like a roaring lion, seeking whom he may devour.

Outline: The Test of Wisdom Applied (3:13-18)

- Wisdom that Directs: 3:13

- Wisdom that Destroys: 3:14-16
- Wisdom that Delights: 3: 17-18

How do I get Wisdom

How do I get this wisdom? James makes it so clear and easy, just ask the Father. I take a study like this, lay these things out before the Lord, let Him examine us, and then ask for the wisdom to apply them to our lives:

James 1:4-5 (NKJV) ⁴ But let patience have its perfect work, that you may be perfect and complete, lacking nothing. ⁵ If any of you lacks wisdom, let him ask of God, who gives to all liberally and without reproach, and it will be given to him.

Power of Life / Power of Death

The power of life and death is in the tongue, and may there be life in all that we say. Wisdom from Above, the power of life in all we say and do, may there be life in our families, friendships, and all we do.

Prayer

The Word of God is Living and Powerful, and is ready, and will do a mighty work in our lives.

Hebrews 4:12 (NKJV) ¹² For the word of God is living and powerful, and sharper than any two-edged sword, piercing even to the division of soul and spirit, and of joints and marrow, and is a discerner of the thoughts and intents of the heart.

In Every Study

- Who Is God? (How Great is He?)
- What Does He Think of Me? (How Wonderful Are His Thoughts Towards Me?)
- What Does He Want Me to Do?
- What Can I Boldly Request of Him?
- What Do I Need to Be on Guard of When I Leave Here Today?

Boldly come to the throne of grace, ask God to reveal Himself in a mighty way to you, and to do I might work in you, and through you.

Hebrews 4:16 (NKJV) ¹⁶ Let us therefore come boldly to the throne of grace, that we may obtain mercy and find grace to help in time of need