

Weekly Study of Sunday's Message.

January 28, 2024 The Serenity Prayer for a New Year. "And wisdom to know the one from the other through Jesus Christ, our Lord, Amen."

"O God and Heavenly Father, grant to us the serenity of mind to accept that which cannot be changed, courage to change that which can be changed, and wisdom to know the one from the other through Jesus Christ, our Lord, Amen." -Reinhold Niebuhr

I Intro.

It's still early into 2024, and there's lots to look forward to. We don't want you to miss out on anything. So, make sure you stay connected to stay informed. We hope you are fed and ministered to by NCC, and that you can be an essential part of us moving forward. We have many ways you can plug into life at NCC. You can find all those through our website, app, and social media sites. Our app is the best way to livestream our services, but you can also livestream on FaceBook and YouTube. You can revisit past services, sign up for events and even give. We're encouraged by your presence when you gather with us. New and familiar faces join us every Sunday. If you join us online, we appreciate your presence. We are 100% committed to our virtual attenders. We are your church family, and if there is anything you need, prayer, or anything else, please let us know. This is our weekly devotional that gives you some specific things to work through from Sunday's message. Whether you were able to participate in this service or not, this devotion is free-standing. You can use it to help you dig deeper into your own spiritual walk. We hope you find this tool helpful on your spiritual journey.

II Recap.

For this new year we've been taking a slightly different approach to the year and walking through "The Serenity Prayer". This prayer is used by many 12 Step programs in a modified form. But we're using the prayer Reinhold Niebuhr came up with. You can read it in its entirety at the top. We've broken the prayer up into four parts, and you can find each of the past three messages and a companion devotional available on the app and website.

Today we hit the foundational work and the final aspect of this prayer. *"And wisdom to know the one from the other through Jesus Christ, our Lord, Amen."*

III Sunday.

It's the last Sunday of our Serenity Prayer series, and we land on a special kind of wisdom. Not just; 'do the good things and don't do the bad things' kind of wisdom. Honestly, we know these even if we don't always do them.. It's a deep inner wisdom that changes who we are. Let's talk about wisdom.

How would YOU define wisdom?

What do you look for in a person to let you know they're wise?

How do you grow a deeper kind of wisdom?

The scripture we used for this final Sunday is **James 3:13-18, and 4:1-3**. Go ahead and read those and we'll talk about them.

What jumped out to you about these passages?

What did they say to you about wisdom?

How do you see wisdom lived out?

There are some unique insights about this greater wisdom we can pull from these two passages.

1. How to know if you have this kind of wisdom. This will seem kind of counter-intuitive. The test, or determination, of; ***“are we growing the right kind of wisdom to ‘know one from the other’ isn’t; are you always making the right choices?”*** I hate to break it to you. You’re going to make unwise, bonehead, self-destructive choices for the rest of your life. We believe in gracious plenty, lavish, grace at NCC knowing we all mess up all the time.

The test for wisdom is outlined in this passage. **There will be a you that reflects the personhood, likeness, of Jesus, you will begin to feel, and others will be able to see.** This is wisdom James learned, grew within, from being the half-brother of Jesus. And helped him navigate some very tricky situations with the early church. James leaned on this wisdom to figure out what issues and problems to address and what not to, as the church was forming. There are things you, and others can observe in you, that will point to this type of wisdom being formed in you. It’s visible wisdom.

2. The root and sign of this kind of wisdom. This kind of wisdom, to know the difference between what can and cannot be changed, is deeply rooted in the difference between selfishness vs selflessness. This is the root. To be able to have the wisdom to know what you should accept as unchangeable, and what you need to commit yourself to changing, you have to ask these questions.

What is your intent? What do you want to happen?

Who benefits from the choices you make? Are these choices based on selfishness or selflessness?

This isn’t a specific plan for you to work. Some AI or formula you plug all the data in, and the right answer pops out. *“Here are the things you can’t change, and here are the things you can.”* That’s what we want though isn’t it. We want the right answers, the cheat code, without having to put the work in. We want to be wise, without doing the work that grows wisdom within us.

Choosing more wisely; to know the difference between the things that which cannot be changed and the things that can be”, is the wisdom of *“knowing the difference”* This is the wisdom we are growing. The wisdom to know the difference grows out of being formed into selflessness. **James is saying; this thing has to happen inside of you that grows the ability to have this kind of discernment. This wisdom requires you to change on the inside first.** To fight that eternal battle of selfishness vs selflessness. As George said last week; *“the courage to change the things you can.”* YOURSELF!!

3. Real vs Fake. There is a third benefit of this kind of wisdom. We’re in a weird place in our society where we’re trying to figure out what is real and what is fake. We’re not sure what we hear and see can be trusted. We all feel that. This is a test we can use as a lens, filter, to determine what is real, legit, and what is fake. Hold this up as a comparison, template, filter to when you look at others to see if they possess the wisdom James was talking about. Is what others are saying for their benefit, for you to gain something just for yourself? Or is what they’re saying for the betterment of everyone?

IV Challenge.

This was a challenging series. It pushed us to adopt an attitude and lifestyle as we enter this new year to help us lean more into the work of the Holy Spirit. And to examine what we expect and need from the world. This is continual constant work. A type of spiritual training program.

So, as we march into 2024, how will you cultivate the kind of life that brings this deeper kind of serenity to your life?