

***Breaking through the Deception Agenda
Breaking Foolish Wisdom
James 3:13-18***

God has created you to ...

- *Hear His Voice...*
- *Know the Truth...*
- *And Live in Freedom...*

But the reality for most people today is...

- *We don't hear His voice...*
- *We don't know what is really true...*
- *We live in perpetual bondage...*

Most people are tired of all the conflicts we are living in today...

- *Tired of the propaganda based news that is nothing more than marketing for political agendas...*
- *Tired of the COVID anxiety ...*
- *Tired of the Social Media "EXPERTS" with their continual opinions and shameless meaninglessness...*

We DON'T KNOW WHO TO BELIEVE ANYMORE...

We DON'T KNOW WHO TO TRUST...

I am starting a NEW SERIES this morning...

I've titled it, "Breaking through the Deception Agenda"

NOTICE – It's NOT "Breaking through a DECEPTIVE Agenda..."

The agenda I'll be referring to is not anything new...

It's not based upon our current crisis of deceptive agendas...

Rather, it has been around since the dawn of time...

Deception has existed almost as long as man has been on earth...

What is deception?

Deception: "The act of causing someone to accept as TRUE or VALID what is FALSE or INVALID."

Over the next few weeks we will be looking at FOUR major areas we run into the DECEPTION AGENDA and the REALITY the Lord has provided for us to make us free...

→ Pic 1 – Blank

**BREAKING THROUGH
THE DECEPTION AGENDA**

THE DECEPTION	THE REALITY

→ **Pic 2 – Foolish Wisdom**

**BREAKING THROUGH
THE DECEPTION AGENDA**

THE DECEPTION	THE REALITY
FOOLISH WISDOM	

→ **Pic 3 – Wisdom of God**

**BREAKING THROUGH
THE DECEPTION AGENDA**

THE DECEPTION	THE REALITY
FOOLISH WISDOM	WISDOM OF GOD

→ **Pic 4 – Completed**

**BREAKING THROUGH
THE DECEPTION AGENDA**

THE DECEPTION	THE REALITY
FOOLISH WISDOM	WISDOM OF GOD
FAULTY SELF-RELIANCE	DEPENDENCE UPON GOD
FALSE RELIGION	INTIMACY WITH GOD
FLESHLY CRAVINGS	ABUNDANCE FROM GOD

ONE THING

Since the Garden of Eden there has been an AGENDA to deceive HUMANITY from our God given REALITY!

→ **Pic 5 – Sources of Deception**

SOURCES OF DECEPTION

SOURCE	SCRIPTURE
SATANIC	REVELATION 12:9
SELF	1 JOHN 1:8; 1 COR. 3:18
SPIRITUAL	ROMANS 16:17-18
SCRIPTURAL	JOHN 5:39
SOCIETAL	COL 2:8; 1 COR. 3:19
SOCIAL	1 CORINTHIANS 15:33

→ **Satanic**

Revelation 12:9 (ESV) — And the great dragon was thrown down, that ancient serpent, who is called the devil and Satan, the deceiver of the whole world...

→ **Self**

1 John 1:8 (ESV) — If we say we have no sin, we deceive ourselves, and the truth is not in us.

1 Corinthians 3:18 (ESV) — Let no one deceive himself. If anyone among you thinks that he is wise in this age, let him become a fool that he may become wise.

→ **Spiritual**

Romans 16:17–18 (ESV) — I appeal to you, brothers, to watch out for those who cause divisions and create obstacles contrary to the doctrine that you have been taught; avoid them. For such persons do not serve our Lord Christ, but their own appetites, and by smooth talk and flattery they deceive the hearts of the naive.

→ **Scriptural**

John 5:39 (ESV) — You search the Scriptures because you think that in them you have eternal life; and it is they that bear witness about me,

Galatians 1:6–9 (ESV) — I am astonished that you are so quickly deserting him who called you in the grace of Christ and are turning to a different gospel— not that there is another one, but there are some who trouble you and want to distort the gospel of Christ. But even if we or an angel from heaven should preach to you a gospel contrary to the one we preached to you, let him be accursed. As we have said before, so now I say again: If anyone is preaching to you a gospel contrary to the one you received, let him be accursed.

→ **Societal**

Colossians 2:8 (ESV) — See to it that no one takes you captive by philosophy and empty deceit, according to human tradition, according to the elemental spirits of the world, and not according to Christ.

1 Corinthians 3:19 (ESV) — For the wisdom of this world is folly with God. For it is written, “He catches the wise in their craftiness,”

→ **Social**

1 Corinthians 15:33 (ESV) — Do not be deceived: “Bad company ruins good morals.”

James 3:13–18 (ESV) — 13 Who is wise and understanding among you? By his good conduct let him show his works in the meekness of wisdom. 14 But if you have bitter jealousy and selfish ambition in your hearts, do not boast and be false to the truth. 15 This is not the wisdom that comes down from above, but is earthly, unspiritual, demonic. 16 For where jealousy and selfish ambition exist, there will be disorder and every vile practice. 17 But the wisdom from above is first pure, then peaceable, gentle, open to reason, full of mercy and good fruits, impartial and sincere. 18 And a harvest of righteousness is sown in peace by those who make peace.

James asks a QUESTION...

James 3:13a (ESV) — “Who is wise and understanding among you?”

Wise means...

Understanding means...

This question is asked rhetorically...

He meant, “How can you know if someone is wise and understanding?”

→ LOOK at the answer to the question!!!

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

Today we are going to compare and contrast THE TWO WISDOMS...

→ Pic - Handout*

THE TWO WISDOMS		
	WISDOM FROM BELOW	WISDOM FROM ABOVE
	BITTER JEALOUSY & SELFISH AMBITION	
	1. _____ 2. _____ 3. _____ 4. _____ 5. _____ 6. _____ 7. _____	1. PURE _____ 2. PEACEABLE _____ 3. CONSIDERATE _____ 4. REASONABLE _____ 5. MERCIFUL _____ 6. UNWAVERING _____ 7. SINCERE _____
	EARTHLY UNSPIRITUAL DEMONIC	

→ Pic - Character 1*

THE TWO WISDOMS

	WISDOM FROM BELOW	WISDOM FROM ABOVE
CHARACTER	BITTER JEALOUSY & SELFISH AMBITION	
	1. _____ 2. _____ 3. _____ 4. _____ 5. _____ 6. _____ 7. _____	1. PURE _____ 2. PEACEABLE _____ 3. CONSIDERATE _____ 4. REASONABLE _____ 5. MERCIFUL _____ 6. UNWAVERING _____ 7. SINCERE _____
	EARTHLY UNSPIRITUAL DEMONIC	

By “character” I mean the HEART in which the person lives/functions...

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

Two things to point out here...

First has to do with the LOCATION...

“... bitter jealousy and selfish ambition IN YOUR HEARTS...”

Second has to do with the last part of this verse...

“... and be FALSE to the truth.”

The word “false” means “to tell a lie for the purpose of deceiving someone.”

→ Pic - Character 3*

THE TWO WISDOMS

	WISDOM FROM BELOW	WISDOM FROM ABOVE
CHARACTER	BITTER JEALOUSY & SELFISH AMBITION	MEEKNESS/ GENTILENESS OF ATTITUDE
	1. _____ 2. _____ 3. _____ 4. _____ 5. _____ 6. _____ 7. _____	1. PURE _____ 2. PEACEABLE _____ 3. CONSIDERATE _____ 4. REASONABLE _____ 5. MERCIFUL _____ 6. UNWAVERING _____ 7. SINCERE _____
	EARTHLY UNSPIRITUAL DEMONIC	

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

→ Pic – Conditions 1*

THE TWO WISDOMS

	WISDOM FROM BELOW	WISDOM FROM ABOVE
CHARACTER	BITTER JEALOUSY & SELFISH AMBITION	MEEKNESS/ GENTILENESS OF ATTITUDE
	1. _____ 2. _____ 3. _____ 4. _____ 5. _____ 6. _____ 7. _____	1. PURE _____ 2. PEACEABLE _____ 3. CONSIDERATE _____ 4. REASONABLE _____ 5. MERCIFUL _____ 6. UNWAVERING _____ 7. SINCERE _____
CONDITIONS	EARTHLY UNSPIRITUAL DEMONIC	

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

→ Pic – Conditions 3*

THE TWO WISDOMS

	WISDOM FROM BELOW	WISDOM FROM ABOVE
CHARACTER	BITTER JEALOUSY & SELFISH AMBITION	MEEKNESS/ GENTILENESS OF ATTITUDE
	1. _____ 2. _____ 3. _____ 4. _____ 5. _____ 6. _____ 7. _____	1. PURE _____ 2. PEACEABLE _____ 3. CONSIDERATE _____ 4. REASONABLE _____ 5. MERCIFUL _____ 6. UNWAVERING _____ 7. SINCERE _____
CONDITIONS	EARTHLY UNSPIRITUAL DEMONIC	HEAVENLY SPIRIT-LED GODLY

→ Pic – Consequences 1*

THE TWO WISDOMS

	WISDOM FROM BELOW	WISDOM FROM ABOVE
CHARACTER	BITTER JEALOUSY & SELFISH AMBITION	MEEKNESS/ GENTILENESS OF ATTITUDE
	1. _____ 2. _____ 3. _____ 4. _____ 5. _____ 6. _____ 7. _____	1. PURE _____ 2. PEACEABLE _____ 3. CONSIDERATE _____ 4. REASONABLE _____ 5. MERCIFUL _____ 6. UNWAVERING _____ 7. SINCERE _____
CONDITIONS	EARTHLY UNSPIRITUAL DEMONIC	HEAVENLY SPIRIT-LED GODLY
CONSEQUENCES		

→ Pic – Consequences 2*

THE TWO WISDOMS

	WISDOM FROM BELOW	WISDOM FROM ABOVE
CHARACTER	BITTER JEALOUSY & SELFISH AMBITION	MEEKNESS/ GENTILENESS OF ATTITUDE
	1. _____ 2. _____ 3. _____ 4. _____ 5. _____ 6. _____ 7. _____	1. PURE _____ 2. PEACEABLE _____ 3. CONSIDERATE _____ 4. REASONABLE _____ 5. MERCIFUL _____ 6. UNWAVERING _____ 7. SINCERE _____
CONDITIONS	EARTHLY UNSPIRITUAL DEMONIC	HEAVENLY SPIRIT-LED GODLY
CONSEQUENCES	DISORDER & EVERY VILE PRACTICE	

→ **Pic - Consequences 3***

THE TWO WISDOMS

	WISDOM FROM BELOW	WISDOM FROM ABOVE
CHARACTER	BITTER JEALOUSY & SELFISH AMBITION	MEEKNESS/ GENTLENESS OF ATTITUDE
	1. _____ 2. _____ 3. _____ 4. _____ 5. _____ 6. _____ 7. _____	1. PURE _____ 2. PEACEABLE _____ 3. CONSIDERATE _____ 4. REASONABLE _____ 5. MERCIFUL _____ 6. UNWAVERING _____ 7. SINCERE _____
CONDITIONS	EARTHLY UNSPIRITUAL DEMONIC	HEAVENLY SPIRIT-LED GODLY
CONSEQUENCES	DISORDER & EVERY VILE PRACTICE	PEACE & RIGHTEOUSNESS

→ **Pic - Conduct***

THE TWO WISDOMS

	WISDOM FROM BELOW	WISDOM FROM ABOVE
CHARACTER	BITTER JEALOUSY & SELFISH AMBITION	MEEKNESS/ GENTLENESS OF ATTITUDE
CONDUCT	1. _____ 2. _____ 3. _____ 4. _____ 5. _____ 6. _____ 7. _____	1. PURE _____ 2. PEACEABLE _____ 3. CONSIDERATE _____ 4. REASONABLE _____ 5. MERCIFUL _____ 6. UNWAVERING _____ 7. SINCERE _____
CONDITIONS	EARTHLY UNSPIRITUAL DEMONIC	HEAVENLY SPIRIT-LED GODLY
CONSEQUENCES	DISORDER & EVERY VILE PRACTICE	PEACE & RIGHTEOUSNESS

→ **Pic - Conduct - Pure***

THE TWO WISDOMS CONDUCT

WISDOM FROM BELOW	WISDOM FROM ABOVE
1. IMPURE _____	1. PURE _____
2. _____	2. _____
3. _____	3. _____
4. _____	4. _____
5. _____	5. _____
6. _____	6. _____
7. _____	7. _____

→ **Pic - Conduct 1***

THE TWO WISDOMS

	WISDOM FROM BELOW	WISDOM FROM ABOVE
CHARACTER	BITTER JEALOUSY & SELFISH AMBITION	MEEKNESS/ GENTLENESS OF ATTITUDE
CONDUCT	1. IMPURE _____ 2. _____ 3. _____ 4. _____ 5. _____ 6. _____ 7. _____	1. PURE _____ 2. PEACEABLE _____ 3. CONSIDERATE _____ 4. REASONABLE _____ 5. MERCIFUL _____ 6. UNWAVERING _____ 7. SINCERE _____
CONDITIONS	EARTHLY UNSPIRITUAL DEMONIC	HEAVENLY SPIRIT-LED GODLY
CONSEQUENCES	DISORDER & EVERY VILE PRACTICE	PEACE & RIGHTEOUSNESS

→ **Pic - Conduct - Peaceable***

THE TWO WISDOMS CONDUCT

WISDOM FROM BELOW	WISDOM FROM ABOVE
1. IMPURE _____	1. PURE _____
2. TURBULENT _____	2. PEACEABLE _____
3. _____	3. _____
4. _____	4. _____
5. _____	5. _____
6. _____	6. _____
7. _____	7. _____

→ **Pic - Conduct 2***

THE TWO WISDOMS

	WISDOM FROM BELOW	WISDOM FROM ABOVE
CHARACTER	BITTER JEALOUSY & SELFISH AMBITION	MEEKNESS/ GENTLENESS OF ATTITUDE
CONDUCT	1. IMPURE _____ 2. TURBULENT _____ 3. _____ 4. _____ 5. _____ 6. _____ 7. _____	1. PURE _____ 2. PEACEABLE _____ 3. CONSIDERATE _____ 4. REASONABLE _____ 5. MERCIFUL _____ 6. UNWAVERING _____ 7. SINCERE _____
CONDITIONS	EARTHLY UNSPIRITUAL DEMONIC	HEAVENLY SPIRIT-LED GODLY
CONSEQUENCES	DISORDER & EVERY VILE PRACTICE	PEACE & RIGHTEOUSNESS

→ **Pic - Conduct - Considerate ***

**THE TWO WISDOMS
CONDUCT**

WISDOM FROM BELOW	WISDOM FROM ABOVE
1. IMPURE	1. PURE
2. TURBULENT	2. PEACEABLE
3. INCONSIDERATE	3. CONSIDERATE
4. _____	4. _____
5. _____	5. _____
6. _____	6. _____
7. _____	7. _____

→ **Pic - Conduct 4***

THE TWO WISDOMS

	WISDOM FROM BELOW	WISDOM FROM ABOVE
CHARACTER	BITTER JEALOUSY & SELFISH AMBITION	MEEKNESS/ GENTLENESS OF ATTITUDE
CONDUCT	1. IMPURE 2. TURBULENT 3. INCONSIDERATE 4. UNREASONABLE 5. _____ 6. _____ 7. _____	1. PURE 2. PEACEABLE 3. CONSIDERATE 4. REASONABLE 5. MERCIFUL 6. UNWAVERING 7. SINCERE
CONDITIONS	EARTHLY UNSPIRITUAL DEMONIC	HEAVENLY SPIRIT-LED GODLY
CONSEQUENCES	DISORDER & EVERY VILE PRACTICE	PEACE & RIGHTEOUSNESS

→ **Pic - Conduct 3***

THE TWO WISDOMS

	WISDOM FROM BELOW	WISDOM FROM ABOVE
CHARACTER	BITTER JEALOUSY & SELFISH AMBITION	MEEKNESS/ GENTLENESS OF ATTITUDE
CONDUCT	1. IMPURE 2. TURBULENT 3. INCONSIDERATE 4. _____ 5. _____ 6. _____ 7. _____	1. PURE 2. PEACEABLE 3. CONSIDERATE 4. REASONABLE 5. MERCIFUL 6. UNWAVERING 7. SINCERE
CONDITIONS	EARTHLY UNSPIRITUAL DEMONIC	HEAVENLY SPIRIT-LED GODLY
CONSEQUENCES	DISORDER & EVERY VILE PRACTICE	PEACE & RIGHTEOUSNESS

→ **Pic - Conduct - Merciful ***

**THE TWO WISDOMS
CONDUCT**

WISDOM FROM BELOW	WISDOM FROM ABOVE
1. IMPURE	1. PURE
2. TURBULENT	2. PEACEABLE
3. INCONSIDERATE	3. CONSIDERATE
4. UNREASONABLE	4. REASONABLE
5. UNMERCIFUL	5. MERCIFUL
6. _____	6. _____
7. _____	7. _____

→ **Pic - Conduct - Reasonable ***

**THE TWO WISDOMS
CONDUCT**

WISDOM FROM BELOW	WISDOM FROM ABOVE
1. IMPURE	1. PURE
2. TURBULENT	2. PEACEABLE
3. INCONSIDERATE	3. CONSIDERATE
4. UNREASONABLE	4. REASONABLE
5. _____	5. _____
6. _____	6. _____
7. _____	7. _____

→ **Pic - Conduct 5***

THE TWO WISDOMS

	WISDOM FROM BELOW	WISDOM FROM ABOVE
CHARACTER	BITTER JEALOUSY & SELFISH AMBITION	MEEKNESS/ GENTLENESS OF ATTITUDE
CONDUCT	1. IMPURE 2. TURBULENT 3. INCONSIDERATE 4. UNREASONABLE 5. UNMERCIFUL 6. _____ 7. _____	1. PURE 2. PEACEABLE 3. CONSIDERATE 4. REASONABLE 5. MERCIFUL 6. UNWAVERING 7. SINCERE
CONDITIONS	EARTHLY UNSPIRITUAL DEMONIC	HEAVENLY SPIRIT-LED GODLY
CONSEQUENCES	DISORDER & EVERY VILE PRACTICE	PEACE & RIGHTEOUSNESS

→ Pic - Conduct - Sincere *

THE TWO WISDOMS CONDUCT

WISDOM FROM BELOW	WISDOM FROM ABOVE
1. IMPURE	1. PURE
2. TURBULENT	2. PEACEABLE
3. INCONSIDERATE	3. CONSIDERATE
4. UNREASONABLE	4. REASONABLE
5. UNMERCIFUL	5. MERCIFUL
6. INCONSISTENT	6. UNWAVERING
7. HYPOCRITICAL	7. SINCERE

→ Pic - Conduct - Unwavering *

THE TWO WISDOMS CONDUCT

WISDOM FROM BELOW	WISDOM FROM ABOVE
1. IMPURE	1. PURE
2. TURBULENT	2. PEACEABLE
3. INCONSIDERATE	3. CONSIDERATE
4. UNREASONABLE	4. REASONABLE
5. UNMERCIFUL	5. MERCIFUL
6. INCONSISTENT	6. UNWAVERING
7. _____	7. _____

→ Pic - Conduct 7*

THE TWO WISDOMS

	WISDOM FROM BELOW	WISDOM FROM ABOVE
CHARACTER	BITTER JEALOUSY & SELFISH AMBITION	MEEKNESS/ GENTLENESS OF ATTITUDE
CONDUCT	1. IMPURE 2. TURBULENT 3. INCONSIDERATE 4. UNREASONABLE 5. UNMERCIFUL 6. INCONSISTENT 7. HYPOCRITICAL	1. PURE 2. PEACEABLE 3. CONSIDERATE 4. REASONABLE 5. MERCIFUL 6. UNWAVERING 7. SINCERE
CONDITIONS	EARTHLY UNSPIRITUAL DEMONIC	HEAVENLY SPIRIT-LED GODLY
CONSEQUENCES	DISORDER & EVERY VILE PRACTICE	PEACE & RIGHTEOUSNESS

→ Pic - Conduct 6*

THE TWO WISDOMS

	WISDOM FROM BELOW	WISDOM FROM ABOVE
CHARACTER	BITTER JEALOUSY & SELFISH AMBITION	MEEKNESS/ GENTLENESS OF ATTITUDE
CONDUCT	1. IMPURE 2. TURBULENT 3. INCONSIDERATE 4. UNREASONABLE 5. UNMERCIFUL 6. INCONSISTENT 7. _____	1. PURE 2. PEACEABLE 3. CONSIDERATE 4. REASONABLE 5. MERCIFUL 6. UNWAVERING 7. SINCERE
CONDITIONS	EARTHLY UNSPIRITUAL DEMONIC	HEAVENLY SPIRIT-LED GODLY
CONSEQUENCES	DISORDER & EVERY VILE PRACTICE	PEACE & RIGHTEOUSNESS

**Breaking through the Deception Agenda
Breaking Foolish Wisdom
James 3:13-18**

Deception: "The act of causing someone to accept as _____ or _____ what is _____ or _____."

Since the Garden of Eden there has been an _____ to deceive _____ from our God given _____!

THE TWO WISDOMS

	WISDOM FROM BELOW	WISDOM FROM ABOVE
	BITTER JEALOUSY & SELFISH AMBITION	
	1. _____ 2. _____ 3. _____ 4. _____ 5. _____ 6. _____ 7. _____	1. <u>PURE</u> 2. <u>PEACEABLE</u> 3. <u>CONSIDERATE</u> 4. <u>REASONABLE</u> 5. <u>MERCIFUL</u> 6. <u>UNWAVERING</u> 7. <u>SINCERE</u>
	EARTHLY UNSPIRITUAL DEMONIC	

SOURCES OF DECEPTION

SOURCE	SCRIPTURE
SATANIC	REVELATION 12:9
SELF	1 JOHN 1:8; 1 COR. 3:18
SPIRITUAL	ROMANS 16:17-18
SCRIPTURAL	JOHN 5:39
SOCIETAL	COL 2:8; 1 COR. 3:19
SOCIAL	1 CORINTHIANS 15:33

1. wisdom is humble (3:13)

3:13. James asked the rhetorical question, *Who is wise and understanding among you? "Wise" (sophos; cf. sophias in 1:5) describes one with moral insight and skill in the practical issues of life. "Understanding" (epistēmōn) refers to intellectual perception and scientific acumen.*

Let him show it. Here is an original "show and tell." Wisdom is not measured by degrees but by deeds. It is not a matter of acquiring truth in lectures but of applying truth to life. The good life and deeds are best portrayed in the humility of wisdom, or "wise meekness" (prautēti sophias). The truly wise man is humble.

2. wisdom is gracious (3:14–16)

3:14. True wisdom makes no room for bitter envy ("zealous jealousy") or for selfish ambition ("factious rivalry," erithian, from eritheuō, "to spin wool," thus working for personal gain). This is nothing to glory about. To boast (lit., "exult," katakauchasthe) in such attitudes is to deny, or "lie against," the truth.

3:15–16. Envy and strife are clear indicators that one's so-called wisdom is not from above (cf. 1:17), but is earthly, unspiritual ("natural, sensual," psychikē), and of the devil ("demonic," daimoniōdēs). Envy and selfish ambition, or rivalry, can only produce disorder, or confusion, and every evil practice. A truly wise person does not seek glory or gain; he is gracious and giving.

3. wisdom is peaceable (3:17–18)

3:17. Wisdom that comes from heaven (lit., "wisdom from above"; cf. "from above" in 1:17) is first ... pure or "holy" (hagnē), then peace-loving, considerate or "forbearing," submissive or "easy to be entreated" (eupeithēs, only used here in the NT), full of mercy and good fruit, impartial (lit., "without uncertainty"; cf. "not doubt" in 1:6), and sincere ("without hypocrisy").

3:18. Peace is the seed sown that yields a harvest (lit., "fruit") of righteousness. The truly wise man is a man of peace.

To achieve "righteousness," spiritual maturity, practical holiness—the theme of this book—a believer must learn to speak with care. Winsome speech comes from a wise spirit. A controlled tongue is possible only with cultured thought. A mouth filled with praise results from a mind filled with purity.

A believer should stand confidently (chap. 1), serve compassionately (chap. 2), and speak carefully (chap. 3). He should be what God wants him to be, do what God wants him to do, and speak as God wants him to speak.

Wisdom from Below

JAMES 3:13–16

J. I. Packer, a gifted and personable theologian, has shown how many go wrong in their thinking about wisdom via the illustration of a British railway station,

the kind with which all visitors to England quickly become very familiar. He says that if you stand at the end of a platform you will readily observe the constant movement of trains in and out, but you will only be able to form a general idea of the overall plan of what is going on, catching only glimmers of the subtle minute-by-minute alterations that are part and parcel of a smooth-running station.

However, if you are privileged to be taken into the signal box room, you will see on a long wall a detailed diagram of all the tracks for five miles around the station, with little "glowworm lights" indicating the positions of every engine on the track—some moving slowly or swiftly, some stationary. In a glance you will be able to survey the entire situation through the eyes of those in control. You will see why one engine is signaled to a halt, and why another has been diverted, and why another sits unmoving on a siding. The reasoning for all the movements will become perfectly plain once you see the great diagram and its glowing dots. Says Dr. Packer:

Now the mistake that is commonly made is to suppose that this is an illustration of what God does when He bestows wisdom: to suppose, in other words, that the gift of wisdom consists in a deepened insight into the meaning and purpose of events going on around us, an ability to see why God has done what He has done in a particular case, and what He is going to do next.

People who think this is what wisdom is imagine that if they walk close enough to God, they will be in God's signal box and will understand everything that happens. Such people are always analyzing the events of life: why this or that happened, whether specific happenings are signs to stop, park on a siding, or go ahead. When they are confused, they suppose themselves to have a spiritual problem. It is true that God sometimes uses unusual signs to confirm the way we should go by, but this is very different from getting a message from every unusual thing that comes our way.

On the contrary, explains Dr. Packer, the experience of God's wisdom is like learning to drive a car. When driving it is important to make appropriate responses to the constantly changing scene, to exercise soundness of judgment regarding speed, distance and braking. If you are going to drive well, you must not fret over the highway engineer's reasoning for an S curve, the philosophy which produced red, green, and yellow traffic lights, or why the lady in front of you is accelerating while her foot is on the brake. Rather, "You simply try to see and do the right thing in the actual situation that presents itself. The effect of divine wisdom is to enable you and me to do just that in the actual situations of life." In order to drive well, you need to keep your eyes wide open to what is before you and use your head. To live wisely, you must be clear-eyed about people and life, seeing life as it is, and then responding with a mind dependent on the wisdom of God.

Being wise does not mean we understand everything that is going on because of our superior knowledge, but that we do the right thing as life comes along. Some drivers may have immense knowledge about everything, but they cannot drive well at all. Others who are less knowledgeable consistently do the right thing as they wisely drive through life.

How does wisdom from God come to us? The Scriptures identify four specific avenues:

Reverence. The first is reverence or a respectful fear of God. Again and again God's Word says, "The fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom" (Psalm 111:10; Proverbs 9:10; cf. Job 28:28; Proverbs 1:7; 15:33). When we see God for who he is—holy, awesome, loving, and sovereign—and embrace a proper fear of him, we are at the doorway of wisdom. And we step through that door when we acknowledge our own finiteness and inability to direct our lives. There can be no wisdom apart from a quaking, fearful vision of God and our own contrasting littleness. This vision is the missing element today in evangelical Christianity. Christians, in their desire to be relevant and relational in their worship, have minimized the awesomeness of God and have falsely maximized their own virtues and importance. But

when we truly see God and truly see ourselves, we become humble and meek, and therefore teachable and receptive to God's wisdom. As Proverbs 11:2 says, "with humility comes wisdom." Whole libraries can exist in a man or woman's head without even a whiff of wisdom, but in humble relationship with God—WISDOM!

Conversion. When we became Christians we became what the Scriptures describe as "in Christ," a term which Paul uses over and over again (some 161 times!) to indicate our dynamic relationship with God through Christ. In respect to wisdom, believers are "in Christ Jesus, who has become for us wisdom from God" (1 Corinthians 1:30). Since all God's wisdom resides in Christ, when we came to be "in him," we become rooted in wisdom. Thus we personally experience the infinite wisdom of God. Our relationship with Christ assures a transfer of this wisdom to us and opens us to further wisdom. "Jesus ... has become for us wisdom from God." Hallelujah!

Scripture. The 119th Psalm repeatedly affirms that wisdom comes from God's Word, but no more eloquently than in verses 97–100:

Oh, how I love your law! I meditate on it all day long. Your commands make me wiser than my enemies, for they are ever with me. I have more insight than all my teachers, for I meditate on your statutes. I have more understanding than the elders, for I obey your precepts.

In accord with this Paul commands us in the New Testament to "Let the word of Christ richly dwell within you, with all wisdom teaching and admonishing one another ..." (Colossians 3:16, NASB). None of us will ascend to the heights of wisdom God wishes for us without spending long hours reading and meditating on God's Word. Do we spend as much time with the Bible as with our daily newspaper? What fools we will be—and so remain all of our lives—if we do not take the time to avail ourselves of God's wisdom!

Prayer. The last avenue to wisdom is prayer. As James so memorably stated in 1:5, "If any of you lacks wisdom, he should ask God, who gives generously to all without finding fault, and it will be given to him." Anyone who asks believing will get wisdom—no

exceptions! God will always keep his word. There is wisdom for the many decisions that have to be made in your life—simply *ask for it*.

The formula for wisdom is simple enough: 1) *reverence/fear*, for “the fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom” (Psalm 111:10); 2) *conversion*, receiving Christ who is “wisdom from God” (1 Corinthians 1:30); 3) *the Scriptures*, which convey the wisdom of God; and 4) *prayer*, which brings wisdom for the asking. As we follow this formula we will know how to conduct our lives with ultimate wisdom.

Also, we will begin to manifest the sublime characteristic of a truly wise person: *humility/meekness*. This is because the true root of wisdom is, as we have seen, a profound understanding of the greatness of God and our own finiteness and sin, which in turn facilitates the God-glorifying character trait of meekness. Wisdom and meekness are interrelated. No one can be considered wise who is not at the same time meek. Meekness is the *moral characteristic* of wisdom.

This insight makes the opening question and command of our brief text come alive: “Who is wise and understanding among you?” (v. 13). After voicing this question James states rhetorically, “Let him show it by his good life, by deeds done in the humility that comes from wisdom” (v. 13). The ambitious would-be teachers who had been devastating the church with their incendiary tongues were claiming to be superior in their wisdom and understanding. They imagined those who disagreed to be mentally inferior. In their thinking wisdom had to do with the mind, intellectual prowess.

But James, the practical theologian, knew better and brought them down to earth by informing them that real wisdom is demonstrated by two qualities: first a “good life” (that is, a noble and beautiful life), and second, “by deeds done in the humility [meekness] that comes from wisdom”—a quality they were definitely lacking. This was a penetrating rebuke because in their frame of mind meekness was an obvious sign of weakness.

Meekness, of course, is not weakness at all. Israel’s powerful ruler Moses was himself called “very meek, more than all men that were on the face of the earth” (Numbers 12:3, RSV). In addition, Jesus said

of himself, “I am gentle [meek] and humble in heart” (Matthew 11:29). Meekness does not denote cowardice or any of its parallel characteristics such as spinelessness, timidity, or a “peace at any cost” attitude. Neither does meekness suggest indecisiveness, wishy-washiness, a lack of confidence, shyness or a withdrawn personality. Nor can it be reduced to wimpy niceness.

Seeing what meekness is not, we must note that the popular rendering of “meek” and “gentle” are fairly adequate. In classical Greek the word was used to describe tame animals, soothing medicines, a mild word, and a gentle breeze. “It is a word with a caress in it.”⁵ The New Testament bears the same sense. John Wycliffe translated it “mild.”

James gives a penetrating moral test for any who think themselves to be wise—the test being not pride, but *gentleness, meekness, mildness* in dealing with others. The wise know that God is in control, and they know who they are as redeemed sinners. Thus they can confidently meet their problems and their detractors with the gentle assurance that God will vindicate them. The meek/wise know how to do the right thing as they pass through the traffic of life.

Having established the moral shape of true wisdom, James goes on to describe the outworking, character, and results of pseudo-wisdom.

THE OUTWORKING OF FALSE WISDOM (v. 14)

James assails the bogus wisdom of the pseudo-wise in verse 14 by saying, “But if you harbor bitter envy and selfish ambition in your hearts, do not boast about it or deny the truth.” The hearts of the would-be wise were wrought with “bitter envy,” or literally a *harsh zeal*. They could not stand to see others in possession of the position and influences they so desired. They experienced an inner frenzy at what they saw and set themselves to subvert it.

The story is told of two men who lived in a certain city. One was envious and the other covetous. The ruler of the city sent for them and said he wanted to grant them one wish each—with this proviso, that the one who chose first would get exactly what he asked for,

while the other man would get exactly twice what the first had asked for himself. The envious man was ordered to choose first, but immediately found himself in a quandary. He wanted to choose something great for himself, but realized that if he did so the other would get twice as much. He thought for a while, and then asked that one of his eyes be put out. In the church this type of person could honestly pray, “Lord, I would sooner your work was not done at all than done by someone better than I can do it.”

The wretched twin of this bitter envy in our text is *erithia*, “selfish ambition”—political ambition in the church. The same word is used by Paul in Philippians 1:17 where he describes rival brethren who “preach Christ out of selfish ambition (*erithia*), not sincerely, supposing that they can stir up trouble for me while I am in chains.” This brought party splits to the church—vile little support groups which mutually envenomed one another in sustained attacks. And to top things off, they were boasting about it.

James says, “do not boast about it or deny the truth” (v. 14b). In other words, stop claiming that your bitter envy and party spirit are a result of God’s wisdom. James’ insightful reproach is still a sharp challenge to us today who presume to be wise in doing God’s work, but inwardly are driven by pride, so that our conversation is full of subtle gibes and witty ripostes aimed at those we envy.

THE CHARACTER OF FALSE WISDOM (v. 15)

In verse 15 James gives the diabolical bloodline of pseudo-wisdom: “Such ‘wisdom’ does not come down from heaven but is earthly, unspiritual, of the devil.” There is an ascending order of negative strength here: “earthly”—“unspiritual”—“the devil.” This pseudo-wisdom is “earthly”—the world is its source and boundary. Further, this wisdom from below is “unspiritual” (*pseuchike*), natural as opposed to spiritual. Paul’s use of the same word in 1 Corinthians 2:14 clarifies this idea: “But a natural (*pseuchikos*) man does not accept the things of the Spirit of God; for they are foolishness to him, and he cannot understand them, because they are spiritually appraised” (NASB). Thus we see that “unspiritual” or “natural”

describes a wisdom that comes from the mind of depraved fallen humanity and is hopelessly flawed. Last, and lowest, this wisdom is “of the devil.” This wisdom which produces “bitter envy,” “selfish ambition,” and proud boasting is radically evil, for it is authored by the Devil.

The truth is clear—proud, ambitious, fighting “wisdom” comes from the world, the flesh, and the Devil. We must never let anyone convince us that such conduct is “common sense,” or that if we don’t learn “to give as good as we get” we will never succeed in life, or that meekness is “unmanly” (or “unwomanly”), or that the wise must always have the last word. Such wisdom is from below and can only take us down, down, down, down!

THE RESULT OF FALSE WISDOM (v. 16)

James concludes his discussion of false wisdom by summing up its unhappy results: “For where you have envy and selfish ambition, there you find disorder and every evil practice” (v. 16). One of the words that came out of World War II was *snafu*, which is an acronym for “situation normal, all fouled up.” According to the *Chicago Tribune*, the Pentagon has now scrapped that word for a new one, *fubb* —“fouled up beyond belief.” Sadly, both words describe any church where the false wisdom of the world prevails. Over the years, in speaking at pastors’ conferences, I have repeatedly been told horror stories which would tax the credulity of those unfamiliar with the ravages of worldly “wisdom” in the church—situations truly fouled up beyond belief.

James’ message is simple: there is no place in the church for pride, envy, or selfish ambition. Anyone who says pseudo-wisdom is okay is an unwitting messenger of the Devil. We must allow no place for harshness, criticism, or clever comments masquerading as “wisdom.”

We have seen that one becomes wise through fear of the Lord, through conversion, through the Word, and through prayer. True wisdom is within reach.

But what about meekness/gentleness, apart from which there is no wisdom? This too is within reach. In fact, it is one of the fruits of the Spirit listed in Galatians 5:22, 23. We also know it is possible because Jesus blessed it: “Blessed are the meek, for they will inherit the earth” (Matthew 5:5). And most of all we know it is possible because as Christians we are “in Jesus,” who urged us to “Take my yoke upon you and learn from me, for I am gentle [*meek, mild*] and humble in heart, and you will find rest for your souls. For my yoke is easy and my burden is light” (Matthew 11:29, 30). He promises that if we consciously yoke ourselves to him, we will learn meekness and humility and will find rest for our souls.

In Biblical times a young ox was yoked to an older, experienced ox, so that the older might train him to perform properly. By bearing the same yoke, the untrained ox learned the proper pace and how to heed the direction of the master. Jesus calls us to yoke ourselves to him. What a privilege and joy!

Wisdom from Above

JAMES 3:17, 18

In 1845 Royal Navy Rear Admiral Sir John Franklin and 138 specially chosen officers and men left England to find the Northwest Passage. They sailed in two three-masted ships with the daunting names the *Erebus* (the dark place, according to Greek mythology, through which souls pass on their way to Hades) and the *Terror*. Each ship was equipped with an auxiliary steam engine and a twelve-day supply of coal, should steam power be needed sometime during the anticipated two- to three-year voyage. But instead of loading additional coal, each ship made room for a 1,200-volume library, an organ, and full, elegant place settings for all—china, cut-glass goblets, and sterling flatware. The officers’ sterling was of especially grand Victorian design, with the individual officers’ family crests and initials engraved on the heavy handles. “The technology of the

Franklin expedition,” says Annie Dillard, “... was adapted only to the conditions in the Royal Navy officers’ clubs in England. The Franklin expedition stood on its dignity.” The only clothing which these proud Englishmen took on the expedition were the uniforms and greatcoats of Her Majesty’s Navy.

The ships sailed off amidst imperial pomp and glory. Two months later a British whaler met the two ships in the Lancaster Sound, and reports were carried back to England of the expedition’s high spirits. He was the last European to see them alive.

Search parties funded by Lady Jane Franklin began to piece together a tragic history from information gathered from Eskimos. Some had seen men pushing a wooden boat across the ice. Others had found a boat, perhaps the same boat, and the remains of thirty-five men at a place now named Starvation Cove. Another thirty bodies were found in a tent at Terror Bay. Simpson Strait had yielded an eerie sight—three wooden masts of a ship protruding through the ice.

For the next twenty years search parties recovered skeletons from the frozen waste. Twelve years later it was learned that Admiral Franklin had died aboard ship. The remaining officers and crew had decided to walk for help. Accompanying one clump of bodies were place settings of sterling silver flatware bearing the officers’ initials and family crests. The officers’ remains were still dressed in their fine, buttoned blue uniforms, some with silk scarves in place.

The Franklin Expedition was a monumental failure by all estimations. It was foolishly conceived, planned, equipped, and carried out. The expedition itself accomplished absolutely nothing. Yet it is universally agreed that it was the turning point in Arctic exploration. The mystery of the expedition’s disappearance and its fate attracted so much attention in Europe and the United States that no less than thirty ships made extended journeys in search of the answer. In doing so, they mapped the Arctic for the first time, discovered the Northwest Passage, and developed a technology suitable to Arctic rigor. It was upon the shipwreck of Rear Admiral

Franklin's "wisdom" that Amundsen would one day stand victorious at the South Pole and Perry and Henson at the North. Similarly, the shipwreck of worldly wisdom ought to motivate us to seek wisdom from above, so we can wisely navigate through life.

This is what James had in mind when he contrasted two kinds of wisdom in 3:13–18. In verses 13–16 he demonstrated the follies of the "wisdom" from below by parading its skeletons before us. "Such 'wisdom,'" he says in verses 15, 16, "does not come down from heaven but is earthly, unspiritual, of the devil. For where you have envy and selfish ambition, there you find disorder and every evil practice." A close look at those rotting bones, hopes James, will cause us to swear off the vanity of earthly pride and wisdom.

By contrast there is the lure of the meek/gentle wisdom (v. 13) from above, and James skillfully describes its seven beautiful characteristics in verses 17 and 18.

WISDOM FROM ABOVE: ITS PROFILE (v. 17)

Pure. James begins, "But the wisdom that comes from heaven is first of all pure ..." It is pure in the sense of being undefiled—morally pure. This purity comes when one has been cleansed by Christ's blood, who is himself pure (the very same word is used of Christ in 1 John 3:3), has received Christ's purity, and as a result is leading a morally pure life. Those who are pure have put aside sensuality, pride and covetousness, which lie at the root of earthly wisdom.

But even more, this person's heart is pure in its unmixed devotion to God. James will repeat this idea later in 4:8: "purify your hearts, you double-minded." That is, get rid of your mixed motives, your double-mindedness; be committed and pure in your devotion. This carries the idea of being pure in one's focus on God, concentrating on serving him. So we see that the purity which characterizes a life full of heavenly wisdom is utterly dynamic. It involves *moral* purity before God and *devotional* purity in one's focus on him.

It is most significant that purity is positioned as the very first characteristic of wisdom from above. The scholar James Adamson says it is the key to all the qualities of wisdom to follow. Others agree,

calling it the "overarching attribute."⁵ The authenticity and intensity of one's purity determines the outworking of the other qualities of wisdom.

James' opening declaration that "the wisdom that comes from heaven is first of all pure" teaches that all who possess it are to make perfect purity in one's moral and devotional life a primary goal. The Christian who wants to live in wisdom can ask no better question regarding his thoughts, words, actions and devotion than, "Am I pure?"

James had apparently given much thought to the arrangement of the remaining six characteristics of wisdom because he has artfully ordered them so that in the Greek the first four began with the *e* sound and the last two with a pleasant *a* sound. Also, the last two have an almost metrical rhyming. He wanted his hearers to remember this wisdom.

Peace loving. The next of wisdom's characteristics, which our translation renders as "peace loving," is literally "peaceful." This does not suggest, as some may hear it, an attitude of peace by abdication—like the couple who had just celebrated their fiftieth wedding anniversary. Someone asked the gentleman the secret of their marital bliss. "Well," the old man drawled, "the wife and I had this agreement when we first got married. It went like this: When she was bothered about somethin' she'd jus' tell me and git it off her chest. And if I was mad at her about somethin', I was able to take a long walk. I s'ppose you could attribute our happy marriage to the fact that I have largely led an outdoor life."

There are indeed proper times to "take a walk," but James is not recommending a peace that depends on walking away from conflict. Rather, he is commending a peaceful spirit. The hearts of those with such peace have met Christ, who is himself their peace (Ephesians 2:14). They have the peace he gives, which is totally unlike the peace the world gives (John 14:27). Their spiritual war is over, they are at peace with God, and they have a deep sense of well-being—*shalom*. The person walking in heavenly wisdom longs for peace. At times he or she may make some "waves" because a Biblical principle is at

stake, but ordinarily they refrain from turbulence and rejoice in making peace. They “Make every effort to keep the unity of the Spirit through the bond of peace” (Ephesians 4:3) and “make every effort to do what leads to peace and to mutual edification” (Romans 14:19). They live out Paul’s injunction, “If it is possible, as far as it depends on you, live at peace with everyone” (Romans 12:18). St. Francis understood this, as his prayer beautifully recalls:

*Lord, make me an instrument of Thy peace;
Where there is hate, may I bring love;
Where offense, may I bring pardon;
May I bring unison in place of discord.*

You and I have met many people more capable than us, with far greater knowledge and gifts, some far more accomplished and esteemed. But if they are pugnacious and trouble-making, they are, despite their great abilities, unwise. The wise are peace loving, says God’s Word.

Considerate. The wisdom from above also makes one “considerate.” The great linguist Archbishop Trench said there is no word in English or Latin to adequately translate this word. Nevertheless, the idea is fairly clear. It describes the kind of person who though wronged and possessing the “right” not to bend nevertheless forgoes his rights.⁸ I saw this quality in the pastor under whom I served for nine years. On one particular occasion, when slandered and with a right to just recourse, he refused any such action. Instead he gently began to defend his slanderer, listing the pressures his attacker was under and the necessity of tolerance. The man or woman with this quality makes allowances for the weaknesses and ignorance of others and takes the kindest perspective whenever possible.

Heavenly wisdom is “considerate,” or as the *Jerusalem Bible* has it, “kindly.” The honest personal application of this is humbling, to say the least. But if we are to be wise we must take this to heart.

Submissive. The NIV’s rendering of the fourth characteristic as “submissive” is fine if one understands it as willing to submit to

persuasion, or open to reason.¹⁰ A moving example of such submissive wisdom is seen in the case of David and Abigail. David’s generous and friendly overtures to Abigail’s foolish husband Nabal had been outrageously rejected. So David and his men armed themselves and set out for redress. Fortunately they were met by Abigail, who eloquently argued against violence. David responded by saying, “Praise be to the Lord, the God of Israel, who has sent you today to meet me. May you be blessed for your good judgment and for keeping me from bloodshed this day and from avenging myself with my own hands” (1 Samuel 25:32, 33). Those who are filled with Heaven’s wisdom will submit to reason.

On one occasion Abraham Lincoln, to please a certain politician, issued a command to transfer certain regiments. When Secretary of War Edwin Stanton received the order, he refused to carry it out, saying the President was a fool. When Lincoln was told of this, he replied, “If Stanton said I’m a fool, then I must be, for he is nearly always right. I’ll see for myself.” As the two men talked, the President quickly realized that his decision was a serious mistake, and without hesitation he withdrew it. A teachable, open spirit is often a major key in defusing conflict.

A man or a woman is in a bad way when he or she is no longer persuadable. “Foolish” is the Biblical designation for such a state. Are some of us playing this part in our marriages—or at work—in our theology? The wise are open to reason—they are “submissive.”

Mercy. Next, the wise are characterized as “full of mercy and good fruit.” Recently a friend of mine, Olena Mae Welsh, received this note:

I was very excited one day when I was listening to the “Geraldo” program on TV in California. They were having a discussion about abused children, and this one man—in his 20’s I would say—told of how a neighbor lady named Olena Welsh had been such a help to him. He would be beaten and sitting forlornly outside his home, as a child, probably wishing he were dead, when Olena Welsh came and put her arms around him and told him how much God loved him

and that God had a purpose for his life. He said that was the redeeming factor in his life. I knew it had to be you.

This happened because Olena Mae overflows with Biblical mercy. Mercy, in Biblical theology, is not just compassion which results in pity and sympathy. It is *compassion in action*.

James, the unrelenting moral theologian, ties wisdom (seemingly so cerebral and esoteric) to action. Thus we may teach the Bible and be viewed by everyone as fountains of wisdom, refreshing those around with pithy sayings and sage advice. But if we are not full of mercy and good works we are not wise! How radical and countercultural this is. It condemns many twentieth-century dispensers of so-called “wisdom”—consider, for example, Ernest Hemingway and Jean-Paul Sartre—as fools!

Impartial. The sixth characteristic of true wisdom is that it is “impartial” or steady. It does not vacillate, taking one position in one circumstance and another in a different situation. It operates on consistent principle. I remember once viewing a conversation between Groucho Marx and William Buckley in which Groucho excused a contradiction by quoting Thoreau: “consistency is the hobgoblin of little minds.” At which Buckley rolled his eyes and faced the camera with a winning grin as he corrected Groucho with the exact quotation: “A *foolish* consistency is the hobgoblin of little minds.” Consistency—being “impartial”—is a hallmark of wisdom from Heaven.

Sincere. Finally, wisdom from above is “sincere,” or literally *without hypocrisy*. Sir Arthur Conan Doyle, the author of the Sherlock Holmes mysteries, used to tell how he sent a telegram to each of twelve friends, all men of great virtue and considerable position in society. The message was worded: “Fly at once, all is discovered.” Within twenty-four hours, the story goes, all twelve had left the country! No doubt there was some playful exaggeration here, but the point is generally true that so many people, including Christians, are not what they seem to be.

But those full of wisdom from above never play-act. What you see is what you get. No masks—no feigned sincerity—no pretense. How refreshing this is in a world full of off-stage actors who believe a little hypocrisy is part of the essential wisdom of life. Christian wisdom demands and demonstrates the sincerity of Christ. “Now this is our boast,” says Paul, “Our conscience testifies that we have conducted ourselves in the world, and especially in our relations with you, in the holiness and sincerity that are from God. We have done so not according to worldly wisdom but according to God’s grace” (2 Corinthians 1:12).

WISDOM FROM ABOVE: ITS FRUIT (v. 18)

Having given the seven characteristics of heavenly wisdom, James now reaches for a fitting summary and appropriates what most believe to be a popular proverb of the day: “Peacemakers who sow in peace raise a harvest of righteousness.” The sense is: “peacemakers produce, in the atmosphere of peace they create, the harvest (fruit) of righteousness.” Righteousness cannot be produced in the climate of bitterness and selfish ambition fostered by wisdom from below. Righteousness can only grow in a climate of peace.

This is a call to reject the decaying skeletons of earthly wisdom: “Such ‘wisdom’ does not come down from heaven but is earthly, unspiritual, of the devil. For where you have envy and selfish ambition, there you find disorder and every evil practice” (vv. 15, 16). The bones and grinning skulls of such false “wisdom” are clumped everywhere along the shores of modern culture, and among them are the remains of many believers and their churches.

We need to be like the ships that followed Franklin’s Expedition, learning from the folly of the past and embracing new wisdom for the journey. We must consciously take hold of the wisdom from Heaven.

This is a good point at which to consider again the promise given earlier in James’ letter: “If any of you lacks wisdom, he should ask God, who gives generously to all without finding fault, and it will be given to him” (1:5). Let us pray frequently for Heaven’s wisdom with full assurance.

Our only wise God, we pray that you will make us “pure” in our moral lives and in the purity of our devotion to you. With all our hearts we desire this first-named characteristic of wisdom—the foundational element of wisdom from above.

We pray that you will further fill us with Heaven’s wisdom, making us “peace loving.” Give us your shalom, and help us promote peace with our brothers and sisters.

God, we entreat you to make us “considerate” so we will gently make allowances for the weaknesses of others and will be reasonable and kind in all our dealings with difficult people.

Make us “submissive” so we will submit to reason, abandon unthinking stubbornness, and be open to the changing of our minds when we are wrong.

Lord, Heaven’s wisdom is “full of mercy and good fruit,” compassion that brings merciful action. Help us to go beyond pity and sentiment so that we do merciful acts, becoming the hands of Christ.

Grant us the wisdom to be “impartial,” unwavering in respect to Biblical principle, so our lives will exude fairness.

Finally, make us “sincere,” clear-eyed, honest, forthright, without masks—so others will perceive the wisdom of Christ in us.

Lord, give us wisdom from Heaven.

We pray this in Jesus’ name.

Amen.