

## The Way of Wisdom

Who is the wisest person you know? Character (you can trust them) Competence (know what they're talking about) Compassion (they care about me).

A lot of very smart people that aren't wise. They may be educated, but they don't have wisdom. They may have all kinds of degrees, but they're a wreck with relationships.

James writing to the church. Scattered abroad. Faith that works. Faith makes a difference in your life. And in the church.

James 1:5 (NLT) If you need wisdom, ask our generous God, and he will give it to you. He will not rebuke you for asking.

### Wisdom is a Lifestyle.

Wisdom has nothing to do with your intelligence or head knowledge. Wisdom is an applied knowledge. It has *everything* to do with relationships, *character* and *conduct*. It's not a matter of what you say with your lips but what you live with your life—not a matter of your words but of your works. Not so much our diplomas or degrees but our disposition (predominant tendency to treat others)

James contrasts two types of wisdom: Earthly (“Worldly”) or Godly.

James 3:13 – 18 (NIV) Who is wise and understanding among you? Let them show it by their good life, by deeds done in the humility that comes from wisdom. <sup>14</sup> But if you harbor bitter envy and selfish ambition in your hearts, do not boast about it or deny the truth. <sup>15</sup> Such “wisdom” does not come down from heaven but is earthly, unspiritual, demonic. <sup>16</sup> For where you have envy and selfish ambition, there you find disorder and every evil practice.

<sup>17</sup> But the wisdom that comes from heaven is first of all pure; then peace-loving, considerate, submissive, full of mercy and good fruit, impartial and sincere. <sup>18</sup> Peacemakers who sow in peace reap a harvest of righteousness.

James writing to the church, scattered everywhere. Apparently, there was some bad stuff going on in the church. He addresses it.

James 3:13 (NIV) Who is wise and understanding among you? Let them show it by their good life, by deeds done in the humility that comes from wisdom.

*Who is wise and understanding among you, James asks?* Answer it: If someone claims to be that way it should show in their lifestyle (how they live) and in how they treat others. (Good life, Deeds done in Humility ie: motive)

*The wisdom we embrace establishes the lifestyle we live.*

### The Wise Daily Demonstrate Godly Wisdom

James knew that a lifestyle of faith was all about actions that revealed a difference in the way a person lived. It isn't that works save the Christ – follower but works *mark* the Christ – follower.

How can you know if you're being wise in the way you relate to people? It means you have integrity. If you're wise, you're not going to lie to others, cheat them, manipulate them, or be deceitful. Not afraid of being found out. Say one thing to one group of people and another thing to the next group. Wise people do not compromise their integrity, because they know that having integrity is the only way to maintain healthy relationships.

Wise people are not phony. They don't wear masks and try to be something you're not. Genuine and authentic. What others see is what they get! They don't pretend like they've got it all together or already achieved it. They're aware of their weaknesses, and they don't try to hide them.

These are the type people we look up to as examples, the people that we go to for wisdom when we desperately need it. The N.T. instructs us about 30 times to imitate someone. Christians leader & Jesus. We imitate their life. They become a role model to follow. These people become our heroes in the faith as they reflect a lifestyle of the character of Christ.

Contrast Godly wisdom with this:

James 3:14 - 16 (NIV): **14 But if you harbor bitter envy and selfish ambition in your hearts, do not boast about it or deny the truth. 15 Such "wisdom" does not come down from heaven but is earthly, unspiritual, demonic. 16 For where you have envy and selfish ambition, there you find disorder and every evil practice.**

This is the way of worldly wisdom. *The wisdom of the world is rooted in selfishness*; my happiness is what matters most. My life is all about me, myself and I. Whatever makes me happy is what I deserve and whatever makes you happy is fine for you.

Proverbs 14:12 (NIV) There is a way that appears to be right, but in the end, it leads to death.

As a Christ – follower what I don't want us to miss is that we have been created by a God of purpose, *on purpose* and for a purpose. Which means apart from the Creator, we the creation will never truly be happy. You may or may not know that, or ever thought about it before.

When we chase after happiness apart from God we never find it. Instead of fulfilling our desires our desires apart from God destroy us.

James says "envy" will destroy you, and probably people around you too.

**Envy is the enemy of a Christ – Centered Lifestyle.**

Envy grabs at things and holds on. “What’s mine is mine and what’s yours *should be* mine.” Envy sees only its own needs and desires, not the needs of those around them. *Grace gives and helps others.* What I have I will share.

Envious people wrongly think their identity and worth derive from their status, possessions, position or title. As long as they think someone else has what they think they deserve, they are miserable.

### The More it’s About ME, the More Miserable I Will Be.

When somebody else gets the promotion, they can’t be happy for them b/c the promotion should have been theirs. When an award is given to a co-worker they lay out the case of why they should have received it instead. Envy prevents us from loving others, celebrating them and rejoicing with them.

As Christ – followers we should ask God to deliver us from envy b/c it devours our souls.

*Selfish* ambition. James isn’t talking here about ambition. Ambition is the willingness to strive or work to attain something. That is healthy. Even scriptural.

Selfish ambition is when we work to attain something, so we can boast about it, brag about it & make sure everyone around us knows about it. Boils down to our motives. Why do I want this promotion, award, degree, position, possession?

Will it help me love & serve others better or cause others to see me as someone they should serve?

What we believe, how we view life, the attitudes we adopt all affect our lives. Our inner thought life spills over into our daily lifestyle.

James says this “wisdom” isn’t from God but is earthly (worldly), unspiritual, demonic (or from the devil). We should expect people who don’t know Jesus to envy each other, to strive against others and be led by selfish ambition. BUT, if believers, people who claim to be Christ – followers struggle with it, we have forgotten who we are. We are beloved children of God. Envy & selfish ambition have NO PLACE in the lifestyle of a Christ – follower or in the life of God’s Church!

### Sow Seeds of Peace That Produce Right Living

What does that look like? “Behavior that is morally justifiable or right.”

James 3:17 - 18 (NIV): <sup>17</sup> But the wisdom that comes from heaven is first of all pure; then peace-loving, considerate, submissive, full of mercy and good fruit, impartial and sincere. <sup>18</sup> Peacemakers who sow in peace reap a harvest of righteousness.

The Greek New Testament word for “righteousness” primarily describes conduct in relation to others, especially with regards to the rights of others in business, in legal matters, and beginning with relationship to God. It is contrasted with wickedness, the

conduct of the one who, out of gross self-centeredness, neither reveres God nor respects man. The Bible describes the righteous person as just or right, holding to God and trusting in Him.

**“Pure”** means uncorrupted and authentic. In 1 John 3:3 this word is used to refer to Christ’s character.

**Peace – loving:** peaceable. Contrasted by envy & selfish ambition.

**Considerate:** it means reasonable, fair-minded or *gentle*. The considerate are willing to yield, not quick to demand.

They are quick to listen, slow to speak and slow to become angry. (James 1:19)

**Submissive:** open to reason; willing to listen & learn. They are open to ideas & suggestions from others. It’s not a “my way or the highway” thing.

**Full of Mercy:** Undeserved kindness. Jesus showed mercy and commanded we show mercy.

**Good fruit:** the consequences of those deeds of mercy shown to others.

**Impartial:** unwavering or undoubting.

**Sincere:** literally “not hypocritical”. Real, not fake. Authentic, transparent.

When we sow seeds that are pure, peace – loving, considerate, submissive (open to reason), full of mercy, impartial and sincere it will lead to fruit in the body of Christ. Flip side: If we sow seeds of bitter envy, selfish ambition, boasting or deny the truth, we tear down the body of Christ (Church).

Godly wisdom means we embrace God’s vision of how things should work.

What kind of results are you getting from the seeds you’re sowing? What type of wisdom would the people closest to you say you have embraced? Godly wisdom from above or worldly wisdom from man?

When we are dealing with conflict, if envy, anger and selfish ambition is present, wisdom is often absent. What if before every time we begin to speak or engage in a difficult situation, we run our plan past these traits of Godly Wisdom: Pure, peace – loving, considerate, submissive, full of mercy and good fruit, impartial and sincere.

*Wisdom is a Lifestyle.* The Wise Daily Demonstrate Godly Wisdom and Sow Seeds of Peace That Produce Right Living. And that makes a difference in their lives, the lives of others and in God’s Church, which Jesus loves and died for.



## Small Group Questions

1. What was challenging, convicting, encouraging, or timely for your current circumstances?
2. Who is the wisest person you know? What is it about them that makes you consider them wise?
3. How would you describe the difference between knowledge and wisdom?
4. Read James 3:13 – 18. How does James say people who are wise will demonstrate their wisdom? Is wisdom more about what comes from our lips or about our lifestyle? Explain.
5. How does James describe *worldly* wisdom? Why does envy, jealousy, and selfish ambition cause confusion and disorder?
6. How can worldly wisdom destroy relationships? What about the church?
7. How does James describe *godly* wisdom? How does this encourage and help grow relationships? How can godly wisdom guide the church?
8. What happens when people work for peace? What do you think it means to sow seeds of peace? How have you seen words sown in peace produce a harvest of “right living” (or a harvest of righteousness)?
9. How do James’s words in this passage challenge you to deal with conflict? What are some practical ways you can bring peace to a conflict you are facing?
10. How can you bring a greater sense of peace to your home, work, school, family, marriage and church?