

October 30th Sermon

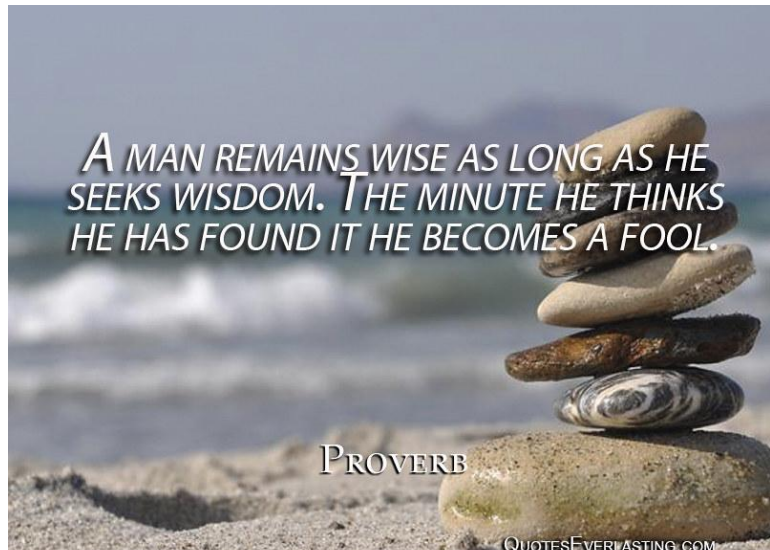
Faith that Works - Session 5

Wisdom- James 3:13-4:3

Introduction

Did you name your daughter Sophia? Do you know someone with that name? Did you know that Sophia is the Greek word for wisdom?

Wisdom has always been a much sought after and desirable gift. King Solomon was said to be the wisest king in ancient times. Solomon asked God for wisdom the night before he was crowned king—and his prayer was answered.



Do you agree with the sentiment expressed in the proverb above, even though it's not from the Bible? What often passes for wisdom is just the opposite. This lesson will show us James' point of view on how the heart is connected to wisdom.

Say a short prayer asking God to give you the gift of wisdom and to guide you to wise teachers.

Earthly or Heavenly

James wants us to be both wise and understanding/knowing (KJV). The word James uses here for understanding, *epistemon*, means to be clothed in expert or professional knowledge. If you are both wise and understanding then you know three things: technical facts, spiritual implications, and practical applications. Wisdom alone is not enough. Understanding alone is not enough. We need to have both! In these verses he is pointing out how we can be deceived by false wisdom, sometimes called earthly or unspiritual wisdom.

Read James 3:13-18.

In verse 17, depending upon your translation, the word considerate or gentle is defined as thoughtful, forbearing, unconcerned with one's own rights. A gentle, considerate person is very likely to put themselves in the other person's place to carefully examine their point of

view. To put it bluntly—they are unselfish. The *Life Change* study explains that they will “yield like air in matters of personal feelings or interests while standing like a rock on moral principles.”

Group Discussion

- Use James 3:13-18 to fill out this wisdom chart.

	Source	Symptoms	Results
Heavenly wisdom			
False wisdom			

- How do you show that you are wise? How do you recognize wisdom in others?
- It is tempting to believe that someone has heavenly wisdom when they agree with your point of view. What does James tell us about how to recognize heavenly wisdom?
- Define bitter envy and selfish ambition. Why are they a red flag in identifying false wisdom?
- What has happened to a heart that is filled with bitter envy and selfish ambition?
- How do envy and ambition affect unity in the church?
- How does a wise and understanding Christian approach a disagreement with another Christian?
- How do you separate your personal feelings from your moral principles?
- What is Paul’s suggestion for walking in pure wisdom? See Philipians 4:8.

Individual Study

- Look at Matthew 11:29 and 2 Corinthians 10:1. Why is humility an essential sign of wisdom?
- How do we gain wisdom? Proverbs 2:1-6, 4(all), 8:10-11, 9:10.
- Check out 1 Corinthians 1:19-21, 2:14; Isaiah 29:14,19. What is the problem with earthly wisdom?
- Purity: Use these verses to help you value purity. Matthew 5:8, 2 Corinthians 7:1, 1 Timothy 1:5, 1 Peter 1:22.
- Peace: What do these verses have to say about peace? Psalms 34:14, Proverbs 12:20, John 14:27,16:33, Romans 14:17, 1 Corinthians 14:33, Ephesians 2:13-14, and Colossians 1:20, 3:15.

Fights and Quarrels

What causes people to fight? Why can't people get along? Why is there always a war somewhere? Why do politics and religion divide people? James wants us to examine our hearts.

Group Discussion

Read James 4:1-3.

- What causes most fights and quarrels in your family, your church, your world?
- What does James say is the root cause of disputes?
- The Serendipity study says "Coveting is killing in a metaphorical sense." (see also Matthew 5:21-22) Do you agree? Why or why not?

Motives And Methods

Prayer is not magic. But often we feel that God is not listening or answering our prayers. James points out that motive matters. Not all desires are bad, but the methods used and motives for fulfilling those desires can be very selfish. Typically motives are self-serving. Jesus showed us how to live our lives in service to others. With God's help we can change our motives and methods to ones that put God and other people first.

Group Discussion

Read James 4:1-3 again.

- Give examples of wrong methods people use to get what they want.
- Give examples of selfish motives for prayer. What are some better motives for asking for God's help?
- How does selfishness separate you from God?
- There is a popular saying: "God always answers prayer, but sometimes his answer is no or not yet." How does this compare with James 4:3?
- When God does not answer your prayer the way you desire, but you feel your motives are pure and Godly, how do you reconcile God's response?
- Solomon prayed for wisdom, and God granted his request. How often do you pray for God to give you the wisdom to understand a problem as well as to fix that problem? Why are both important?
- How can prayer bring you peace when a situation is overwhelming you?

Individual Study

- God answering prayer: Proverbs 3:5-6, Jeremiah 29:11, Luke 9:23, 1 Thessalonians 5:18, Hebrews 10:36, and 2 Peter 3:9.

- Compare these verses with James 4:3. Proverbs 28:9, 21:13; Isaiah 59:2, Zechariah 7:11-13, John 9:31.

Warren W. Wiersbe was a well-known 20th Century clergyman, speaker, and author of Bible commentaries. Think about this quote from him as you complete this lesson.

“We’re prone to want God to change our circumstances, but He wants to change our character. We think that peace comes from the outside in, when in reality it comes from the inside out. Our hearts carry in them their own war or peace, depending on who is in control, Christ or self. Jesus brings peace because He is peace. The more we become like Him, the more we experience His peace and can share it with others.”

- How is the heart connected to wisdom?

Commitment

This week I will grow in heavenly wisdom by taking the following action:
