

Practical Christianity; Real Wisdom

- A small factory had to stop operations because an essential piece of machinery had jammed. Everyone tried, but no one could get the machine working again. At this point the owner brought in an outside expert, who looked over the equipment for a minute, took a hammer and gently tapped the machine at a certain spot. Immediately it began working and continued to run as if nothing had ever happened. When the expert submitted his bill for a \$1000, the owner hit the ceiling and demanded an itemized bill. The bill was submitted as follows: For hitting the machine, \$1; for knowing where to hit, \$999.
- After his retirement, World War II five-star General Omar Bradley reflected on his career and said, “*The world has achieved brilliance, without wisdom.*” He explained, there’s a vast difference between wisdom and knowledge.

Unfortunately, in today’s world, most people overlook the difference between wisdom and knowledge. There’s a tendency to connect wisdom with intelligence; wisdom to experts with titles and educational degrees.

- But when we listen to these experts, do we pay attention to the lifestyle of the expert, or even consider the long-range impact of his or her wisdom?

If you listen to the world today, the universities, most news media and politicians telling you - it doesn’t matter if a person **lives** out wisdom in his or her life, they say it only matters if a person **shows** wisdom on the job. *But God has a **different** idea; true wisdom expresses itself through how we live all the time!*

Today as we continue through the letter from James, we’ll hear about a principle that’ll show us how much we’ve allowed God’s grace to penetrate into our lives. *In today’s world, sometimes it’s hard to tell the difference between Christians - the people of grace - and the rest of the world.*

That’s why we’re having this sermon series, “Practical Christianity,” to discover **how** we can live the powerful victorious Christian life! The purpose of James letter is to help people understand that we must come to a point in life where we must start trusting God by taking steps of faith, we trust God by acting on the promises and principles found in God’s word.

So today, we're taking another look at a basic principle about "Practical Christianity," understanding real wisdom. **Let's turn to James 3:13-18**

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. But if you harbor bitter envy and selfish ambition in your hearts, do not boast about it or deny the truth.

Such "wisdom" does not come down from heaven but is earthly, unspiritual, demonic. For where you have envy and selfish ambition, there you find disorder and every evil practice.

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. Peacemakers who sow in peace reap a harvest of righteousness. James 3:13-18

Why is **wisdom** important? With wisdom, we can grow in our relationship with God, we can grow in trusting God and grow in living life in victory. So James points out 2 kinds of wisdom; human & Godly.

- **Human wisdom is similar to what the bible calls carnality.** You can have human wisdom, but still live a life filled with bitterness and envy, turmoil and conflict.
- However, **Godly** (Or heavenly) **wisdom that comes from God is selective.** Godly wisdom doesn't have anything to do with resentment or jealousy, chaos or snarky attitudes; *in fact, Godly wisdom can't be separated from a person's life* because Godly wisdom changes those who receive it. It rejects hypocrisy and embraces purity. According to James, if you have it, you will naturally live right and be humble.

True wisdom proves itself in how we live - than in what we say. *That's the key to understanding today's scripture. A person can say they are wise, but how can we **know** for sure?*

A person can say the right things, but does their life demonstrate Godly wisdom? *Not that they have to be **perfect**, that's impossible.* But like anything valuable, wisdom has a **counterfeit!** **In v. 13-14, James gives us way to test wisdom.**

Testing the real thing: Godly wisdom. James explains Godly wisdom in verse 13 when he says “*Who among you is wise? Let him show it by his good life, by deeds done in the humility that comes from wisdom.*”

1. The 1st test: **Ask, does the person’s life show good deeds or in other words good behavior.**
2. The 2nd test: **Watch, does the person’s life show humility.** The original Greek uses the word gentleness. This doesn’t mean being spineless.

Gentleness means bringing a high-spirited horse under control. The spirit and strength of the horse was not lost, *it was simply harnessed, under control*. In the same way, a gentle person never feels threatened by others who opposes them.

- The confidence of a person with heavenly wisdom comes from the power of God, they know God can soften the hardest heart or the baddest attitude. ***The true test of Godly wisdom is a life living God's truth and a controlled.***

The Counterfeit: Human or carnal wisdom. While divine wisdom, is a transformed and humble life; James reveals the counterfeit... human wisdom. In verse 14 he says, “*But if you harbor bitter envy and selfish ambition in your hearts, do not boast about it or deny the truth.*”

1. The 3rd test, **Compare, while Godly wisdom seeks to free others, carnal wisdom wants to control others.** Godly wisdom looks out for what is best for others, it looks to free people; carnal wisdom has envy and bitterness desires control and tends to say – my way or the highway.
2. The final test, **Look, carnal wisdom is often motivated by jealousy or selfishness.** James explains, a person with carnal wisdom is someone who tends to be jealous, and that jealousy comes out in a suspicious or argumentative attitude; and they’re prone to fight a battle of wills right to the bitter end.
 - Selfish ambition is the **desire** to be seen and recognized. Carnal wisdom is **motivated** by selfish ambition; it’s **driven** by the power or popularity of a position. Just doing good deeds or having self-control isn’t enough.

A person with *Godly wisdom* lets God open doors to opportunities; they let God to change someone's mind. They don't have to **help** God by forcing things to happen.

One more thing, don't brag about your spirituality if it's filled with jealousy, bitterness or selfishness. It's a sin, as verse 15 explains; it is earthly, unspiritual and is of the devil, because it denies truth.

The results of carnal wisdom: In verse 16 James goes on to explain the results of carnal wisdom when he says, "*For where you have envy and selfish ambition, there you will find disorder and every evil practice.*"

- **Look at the word disorder**, James means more than confusion; he's talking about chaos, the absence of unity and stability. This is the person who only sees problems **or** talks in a way that tears down relationships instead of building up in **love**; that is not wisdom from above.

Carnal wisdom lets loose all sorts of worthless, petty, evil things. It destroys relationships because it causes pain and suffering between you and others.

But there's Hope! Again, God never shows us a human condition without giving us hope. God offers us a new life... a new source of life that builds in us, a character that is absolutely rare by human standards.

But... in order for divine wisdom to take root in our lives, something very unnatural has to happen in our hearts – by faith. That would be the living water Jesus talked about in John 7:38, "*Whoever believes in me, as the scripture has said, streams of living water will flow from within him.*" That is the person of the Holy Spirit - and through the power and direction of the Holy Spirit, our lives can experience a Divine Wisdom we can never produce on our own.

God has given us directions to wisdom.

1. We must admit our human condition, this means to admit we have been following a carnal, human wisdom. Proverbs 9:10 "*To be wise, you must first have a reverence for the Lord. If you know the Holy one, you will have understanding.*" (GN) Do you know Jesus, **do** you trust Him?

2. We should seek it, Proverbs 2:4 says we should, “Look for it (wisdom) as hard as you would for silver or some hidden treasure.” (GN) Or as Jesus said in Matthew 6:33, “we should seek first the kingdom of God and what He requires of you and He will provide you with all other things

James also told us in verse 5 of chapter 1, “*If any of you lacks wisdom, he should pray to God, who will give it to him; because God gives generously and graciously to all.*” (GN)

If we realize our condition and accepted Jesus as our Savior and sought out the wisdom of God, we can also pray for it and it will be given to us abundantly.

The Result of True Wisdom

James finishes today’s scripture in verse 18 by saying, “*Peacemakers who sow in peace raise a harvest of righteousness.*” There’s a whole sermon there, **what James is saying is that peace means being rightly related to one another.** It’s not peace between God and each of us.

It’s a peace between you and me, you and your brother and sister, mom and dad, between you and your neighbor or co-workers and friends. Those who disturb this peace will not enjoy a righteous lifestyle before God.

Nothing is more desolate than a desert, unless it is a human heart apart from God. But as rain gives life to a drought plagued land, so can God cultivate a garden with a harvest of divine wisdom in us through the living water of the Holy Spirit.

Are you ready for the change?

Let's take a moment to reflect on the ways we stubbornly choose and live our own ways and not Gods ways, cheating ourselves of God's good and perfect ways. Cheating ourselves of God's plan and purpose.