

“Living Faith Has Godly Wisdom”

Week 6 - James 3:13-18

February 20, 2022

Introduction

Tim. Pastor. *NEW FOLKS*. **James 3:13-18**. **Pray**.

We are right at the halfway point in our series on the book of James - and I don't know if you've picked up on this so far in the first 5 weeks, but there is a back and forth theme of juxtaposition that James has throughout the book, offering us two ways of living:

- Make it through trials vs. Mature through trials
- Hear the Word vs. Do the Word
- Show Partiality vs. Welcome in the Poor
- Faith without works vs. Faith with works
- Uncontrollable tongue of destruction vs. controlling our speech

Tonight → He's setting up another juxtaposition - living with **Worldly Wisdom vs. Godly Wisdom**.

They look different, have different goals, shape your lives in different ways.

Big picture then application.

All with this goal - Living faith has Godly wisdom.

Wisdom vs. Knowledge

Let's look at it together, James 3, starting in v13.

13 Who is wise and understanding among you? By his good conduct let him show his works in the meekness of wisdom.

Before we get to the two types of wisdom - worldly and godly - let's make sure we're on the same page about what wisdom is.

Wisdom is one of the megathemes of Scripture. Wisdom is mentioned in some capacity in the Scriptures over 350 times. And one of the central messages in regards to wisdom is how necessary and good true wisdom is.

Solomon, who the Bible says is the wisest man who ever lived, wrote about the search for wisdom numerous times in the book of Proverbs:

- **Proverbs 16:16 - “How much better to get wisdom than gold.”**
- **Proverbs 4:7 - “The beginning of wisdom is this: Get wisdom, and whatever you get, get insight.”**

And one of the things the Scriptures make clear about this pursuit of wisdom is that **wisdom involves action**. In fact, the Hebrew word for *wisdom* (khok-maw) is often translated as “skill”. It refers to skillful living.

James himself says it here, right? Who is wise among you? Let him show his wisdom by his works and good conduct...wisdom involves action.

There is a distinction between knowledge and wisdom.

Knowledge is knowing the truth; wisdom is knowing what to do with the truth.

Winter Olympics. The winter olympics have been taking place over the past few weeks - end tonight. I love watching the winter olympics because it's a bunch of sports I would never even think of attempting. One sport in particular that was fascinating to me this time around was **luge** (the one man bobsled). They basically throw themselves down this giant track on one piece of fiberglass and steel at 90 miles per hour. I've been reading up on it, really more than I should, about how they lean and steer and the rules.

So you could say I've gotten some luge knowledge. But I have no luge wisdom. Do not put me at the top of that track and think I'm making it to the bottom. I might know some things, but those things haven't affected my life, my abilities, my hands.

Wisdom is not simply theoretical or knowing the right thing - although that is part of it. Wisdom also involves taking that accumulated knowledge and getting it into our lives. Learning how to live with skill.

So when James offers us two systems of wisdom, **he's not simply concerned with the framework of our minds - he's concerned with our rhythms of life.** Our hands, not just our heads.

Are we living with Godly wisdom?

Worldly Wisdom

So let's spend time talking about each of these systems.

Let's look first at worldly 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.

Worldly Wisdom		
Comes from:	World, Flesh, Devil	
Centered on:		
Creates in us:		
Culminating in:		

For hundreds of years throughout church history, the Church has identified and talked about what they call **"the three enemies of the soul"**. Three enemies working against the Christian to keep us from God, from living for God, from being holy, loving God and loving neighbor, being at peace, etc. etc.

These enemies are - **The World, The Flesh, and the Devil.**

James picks up on all three of those in 3:15 to tell us that that is where this system of "worldly wisdom" comes from:

1. “Earthly” - The World - The world is used in different ways in the Bible. Sometimes it refers to the planet. Sometimes it refers to all mankind like in John 3:16 “For God so loved the world.”

But sometimes “the world”, like here in James 3, or in Ephesians 2 or Romans 12 refers to a system or a pattern or a way of being - that is opposed to God. “The World” means sinful ways of thinking, living and believing that defy God that become normalized to those living in a particular society.

Not all wisdom that comes from our society as a whole apart from God is inherently corrupt and bad - There is some good wisdom with finances, wisdom in parenting, wisdom in relationships. Some of it is very good and is based upon the common grace of God given to humanity. But “worldly” wisdom addressed by this passage in particular is a system of life that is opposed to God.

It is the way that society around us decides to operate that functions in opposition to the ways of Jesus.

2. “Unspiritual” - The Flesh (natural/fleshly) - We talked about the flesh quite a bit last fall, but the flesh is this internal operating system all of us have within us apart from God that wants to live life in rebellion against and independently from God. Some folks call it our “sin nature”. It’s all the disordered desires within us that pull us away from God. It’s that little thing deep inside that calls us towards sin, calls us towards rebellion.

3. “Demonic” - The Devil - Our third enemy is the devil. The great enemy of God. According to Ephesians 2 is the “prince of the power of the air” - the enemy of God working to steal, kill, and destroy. And satan’s #1 trick is not primarily to make your car break down, or send some demons to scare you at night, or to get you sick. According to Jesus in John 8 - his primary tactic is lies. He is according to Jesus, the “Father of Lies”. He dwells in deception.

- External system opposed to God - “The world”
- Internal system opposed to God - “The flesh”
- Spiritual system opposed to God - “The devil”

So in this system of worldly wisdom, according to James, all three of these team up to put forward a way of living. A way of living contrary to the way of Jesus. A way of living contrary to Godly wisdom.

The best summary I’ve heard of this comes from a pastor who summarized the relationship this way → **Deceitful ideas (the devil), that play to disordered desires (the flesh), that are normalized by a sinful society (the world).**

So that’s where worldly wisdom comes from, but then what is it centered on?

Worldly Wisdom	
Comes from:	World, Flesh, Devil
Centered on:	Self
Creates in us:	
Culminating in:	

Life is all about me. Everything is about me. The wisdom of the world doesn’t put the devil at the center, it’s not like God’s on the throne or satan’s on the throne - satan is much too sneaky for that - he knows that we, in our flesh and sin, want to sit on the throne.

And to be honest, this is extremely compelling for me. I love it. I want life to be all about me. Can we be honest for a second? Sure I know y'all are all way more Christian than this, but I do. There's this gnawing part of me that wants to be the sun that everything revolves around in the universe. When I go to work, I want it to all revolve around me - what I want, my preferences, my ease, my comfort. I want to come home from the office and I want my home to be all about me. Come in the door, Lindsay's like - "welcome home my wonderful husband, here's your steak and beer ready for you. Harper just frolics over to the door - "Welcome home papa. You're the best ever, I love you so much!" Lindsay again - "Let's watch whatever you want on TV tonight - is there an NBA game, maybe some golf?" I just do, I want everything to be about me always. I see it the most when I drive. "These idiots, don't they know I have somewhere to be - get out of my way!" My heart is always bent towards me, me, me.

Some of y'all are like - "That's our pastor?" Yep!

And here's what's so deceptive about that...the devil lies and tells me it is, my flesh wants it so badly to be true, and then everything I see in the world around me reinforces that lie. Every commercial I watch, every instagram ad that pops up, every flier in the mail - seize the moment, live your best life, it's all about you.

And my flesh is like **YEAH IT IS BABY! LET'S GO.**

And guess what that creates in me, in us:

Worldly Wisdom		
Comes from:	World, Flesh, Devil	
Centered on:	Self	
Creates in us:	Jealousy + Selfish Ambition	
Culminating in:		

Why? Because the world is supposed to be about Tim. So if someone is doing better than I am, getting ahead in the race, planting a bigger church, preaching better sermons, getting more recognition, has more friends, more obedient kids, goes on more vacations, is generally just better and ahead of me in life - I become so incredibly bitter. That guy? Him?

Bitter jealousy...which then in turn leads to selfish ambition - well I guess I have to be better. Work harder. Improve more. Why? Because it's all about me.

And you know what happens when we all live this way?

16 For where jealousy and selfish ambition exist, there will be disorder and every vile practice.

Worldly Wisdom		
Comes from:	World, Flesh, Devil	
Centered on:	Self	
Creates in us:	Jealousy + Selfish Ambition	

Culminating in:	Disorder and Evil	
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If I'm living for me, and you're living for you, and we're all driven by bitter jealousy and selfish ambition, what choice is there but disorder and evil? I don't care who I hurt. I don't care how it affects you - I want what I want when I want it so I'll do what I want to get there.
Which leads to —> Chaos. Disorder. Evil.

When the devil plays deceptive ideas that life is about us, our flesh (which wants it to be that way) grabs hold, the world reinforces it - yep all about you buckaroo - our lives become centered on us, we're on the throne, meaning everyone who succeeds that is not us is an enemy, I'm going to do whatever it takes to get ahead and I don't care what the collateral damage is.

That is the wisdom of the world.

I want to show you how this works its way into various aspects of your life, but let me first address Godly Wisdom...

Godly Wisdom

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.

	Worldly Wisdom	Godly Wisdom
Comes from:	World, Flesh, Devil	God
Centered on:	Self	
Creates in us:	Jealousy + Selfish Ambition	
Culminating in:	Disorder and Evil	

James says the wisdom that comes from above - that is, comes from God. God has a way of living that He desires for all of us to live into.

Here's how that works —> God is, as the Bible teaches - the author and creator of life. Gen 1:1 - "In the beginning, God." God spoke, life came to be.

Colossians 1:16 - For by him all things were created, in heaven and on earth, visible and invisible, whether thrones or dominions or rulers or authorities...

So if God created life, He knows how it's supposed to be lived, right?

iPhone. I've used this illustration before but think about the iphone. Most of you have one.. Who created the iPhone? Steve Jobs. He created the iPhone to be a mobile device, right? Make calls, send texts, get on the internet, play games.

Now imagine you got to meet Steve Jobs (if he was still alive) - and you said - Hey Steve. I have an iphone. I love it. It's great. It really helps me when I need to stir things on my stove. I just stick it right in, stir it on up. Great invention! It doesn't last very long though, so could you work on that?

That would be foolish right! Steve designed the iphone to work a particular way. Wisdom would mean - "Hey Steve, this is an awesome creation of yours - How am I supposed to use it?"

That's what Godly wisdom does. It goes to the creator of life and says - "Hey God, awesome creation of yours - How am I supposed to use it? How do you want me to live this life you gave, in this world you gave, for the glory of You?"

God has designed life to be lived a particular way, a way that is full of His wisdom. That's why His Word, his revelation of Himself, can be described in Psalm 119 as a lamp to our feet and a light to our path. God show me how to live with your wisdom and your design.

And in God's design for life, He designed the whole thing to be centered on...Himself.

	Worldly Wisdom	Godly Wisdom
Comes from:	World, Flesh, Devil	God
Centered on:	Self	God
Creates in us:	Jealousy + Selfish Ambition	
Culminating in:	Disorder and Evil	

This is a central truth you need to understand in your Christian life - **God is for God.**

The second part of that Colossians verses says it this way - **Colossians 1:16 - For by him all things were created, in heaven and on earth, visible and invisible, whether thrones or dominions or rulers or authorities—all things were created through him and for him.**

By Him, through Him, and... **FOR HIM.**

All of God's creation is not so we have stuff to enjoy, not so we can be happy. We want to be the center of the universe. We want to be the sun in which everything revolves around - but that's not reality. God is. God is the center. God is on the throne. It's all about Him.

And that's not a selfish thing, or a self-centered thing → that is a good thing, the best thing!

Because here's the lie (we talked about this yesterday in the Apologetics seminar) - the lie is that God created the world, but one day he was lonely. He needed some companions to share creation with, he needed some friends - so he created Adam and Eve. Adam and Eve were God's first friends. But they rejected him and sinned, so he sent Jesus to make us his friends again. Poor, sad, lonely God.

That's not the story at all. God existed from eternity past, with no beginning - in the trinity. Meaning God the Father since before forever lived in perfect relationship with God the Son and God the Holy Spirit. Meaning he was not lonely in the slightest. Rather, it was out of the overflow of love that the triune God had that then led to wanting to share that love with lowly created beings like us.

God is not first and foremost for you. He is first and foremost for Himself. **God is for God.**

Can I keep hitting this? **Psalm 23.** We sing this, it's a great Psalm. Let's look at it.

The Lord is my shepherd; I shall not want. He makes me lie down in green pastures. He leads me beside still waters. He restores my soul. He leads me in paths of righteousness....

Man. God is awesome. He makes me take a nap next to some pastures. He leads me beside a calm, cool stream. He restores my soul. This sounds like God's really into me. Thanks God! But notice the end of verse 3. Why does he do this, not cause you're awesome....**...for His name's sake.**

So yes, there's blessing, yes there's benefit, yes he gives us peace. God is kind to us, gracious to us, welcomes us, saves us. Yes he loves us beyond words and cares for us. But all of that is not primarily first and foremost for us → It's primarily about God. God is first and foremost for God.

Which then creates in us - humility.

	Worldly Wisdom	Godly Wisdom
Comes from:	World, Flesh, Devil	God
Centered on:	Self	God
Creates in us:	Jealousy + Selfish Ambition	Humility
Culminating in:	Disorder and Evil	

13 Who is wise and understanding among you? By his good conduct let him show his works in the meekness of wisdom.

God's wisdom comes with meekness. With humility. God is God, and I am not. So we're humbled - and yet he loves me. And yet he cares for me. And life is not about me. It's about Him. It's about me loving Him and Him loving me and out of that me loving those around me.

When then culminates in/leads to...

	Worldly Wisdom	Godly Wisdom
Comes from:	World, Flesh, Devil	God
Centered on:	Self	God
Creates in us:	Jealousy + Selfish Ambition	Humility
Culminating in:	Disorder and Evil	Peace and Righteousness

James gives this whole list of attributes of Godly peace, but he summarizes in verse 18:

18 And a harvest of righteousness is sown in peace by those who make peace.

When we learn to live with wisdom from God, that is centered around the fact that all of life is about God, leading to our

humility, it then culminates in us living lives of:

1. Righteousness towards God - we say no to sin and yes to Him
2. Peace with one another - we forgive, we reconcile, we love, we serve.

Why? Because my life is not all about me, so I'm freed up to make it about God and about others.

*****Transition → These are the two paths laid before us. Worldly Wisdom and Godly Wisdom.**

James says a living faith lives with Godly wisdom. Where they come from, what they're centered on, what they create in us, and what they culminate in are all different. Two distinctly different systems of wisdom, of skillful living that are completely opposed to one another.

Can't have both → You're either going to live with Godly wisdom or Worldly wisdom. No have your cake and eat it too. One or the other.

Now, that's the big picture, 30,000 feet. Let me spend the rest of our time this evening showing you a few ways this would show up in your life. These are not exhaustive, just some particular ways in different areas of how living with worldly wisdom or godly wisdom might look.

Ways this would show up in our lives:

Friendships: (Full of Mercy)

Worldly Wisdom

- The devil lies to me, tells me my friendships are all about me. My flesh eats it up. Yes! They are. My friends exist for me - to make me feel less lonely, make me feel included, build me up and care for me. That's the role of my friends. World agrees - Cut off people that don't build you up, encourage you. If they're draining, say you're too much - be done with them because it's all about you.
- SO - because my friendships are all about me in my worldly wisdom, when someone I consider a friend doesn't love me like I think they should. They don't call. They don't invite me. They don't check in. They don't ask the right questions. They don't say the right thing. They don't support me how I want, then in my selfishness I'm done with them.
- Which culminates in disorder and evil - broken friendships, gossip, slander, belittling, cutting down, canceling, etc.

Godly Wisdom

- My life is about God. How I can glorify Him. Part of glorifying Him is loving and serving others. My friendships are good, they're a blessing, but they're not ultimately about me. So I'm freed up to enter coffee, dinners, hangouts, with my eyes and thoughts and heart off of me and placed onto others - how can I love, serve, bless.
- Which means when someone doesn't love me like I think they should - I have the wisdom from above which (v17) is **full of mercy**. Meaning - I can be quick to forgive. I can overlook offenses. I can believe the best instead of assuming the worst. I give thanks for my friends, regardless of how imperfect they are or I am. I have a heart of humility seeing my friendships as a gift from God despite all the ways I wish they were different or better.
- Which leads to peace and righteousness. I'm merciful - it's not one strike, you're out with my friendships. There's harmony as I seek to lay down my pride and selfishness and with godly wisdom repent, forgive, and reconcile.

Workplaces: (Pure + Sincere)

Worldly Wisdom

- Devil, flesh, and world all get together to lie to me - this job is about me. It's about me getting ahead, it's about me getting validated and identity. It's about me making as much money as I can with as little effort as possible. It's a means to an ends of identity or earning for ME.
- SO - why wouldn't I cut corners? Why wouldn't I do as little work as possible as long as I look good to my boss? Why wouldn't I do what I need and then just leave my computer logged in and watch tv? Why would I put forth more effort? Why would I work hard unless there's a tangible reason to grind an unhealthy obsessive amount to make more and more money? Why would I invest in my coworkers? It's about me.
- Which culminates in evil - I'm willing to be apathetic, lazy, dishonest, and cut corners at work - slowly what happens? It starts to bleed into other areas of our lives as well.

Godly Wisdom

- Godly wisdom says life is about God. So my job is a common grace gift from God which He has placed me in and called me to (regardless of how mundane or unfulfilling it is) so that I can serve Him, love others, and grow as a disciple to Jesus.
- So - I'm going to work with a (v17) pure and sincere heart. I'm going to work hard and work with integrity, even when no one is looking. I'm going to do good work, because my work is my worship and how I work says something about how I view God. And I'm going to have the proper perspective of wisdom which is able to put work down at the end of the day and go be with God's people.
- Which culminates in righteousness - leads to a righteous life. As I learn to honor God with 40-50 hours a week, that will have a shaping effect on other aspects of my life and righteousness as well.

Marriages: (Gentle)

Worldly Wisdom

- World, Flesh, Devil - lying again - your marriage exists for you! You're the center. Your spouse should live out that Ephesians 5 calling - sacrifice for you, love you, serve you - it's all about you. They should meet every need, make sure you're emotionally fulfilled, cared for, loved.
- Which means when they don't - anger, rage, cold shoulder. We can rage inside just as much as some folks rage outside right? Malice towards our spouse. I mean just bitterness through and through.
- Culminating in disorder, right? A marriage that's all over the place. No grace, no peace, no mercy, no forgiveness.

Godly Wisdom

- Marriage is not about me, or my spouse - our marriage is about God. Ephesians 5 is ultimately about how marriages reflect Christ's love for the church. Our marriage is for God's glory. Which means I can love my spouse, serve my spouse, sacrifice for my spouse. It's not 50/50, it's 100/100 and 100/0 even if they're at 0. It's a covenant I press into regardless of how they treat me. I give of my full self in love and sacrifice expecting nothing in return.
- So - when they don't sacrifice like my sin wants them to. When they don't revolve around and love me like my sin wants them to. When they don't engage with me like I want them to - Instead of lashing out I respond in the (v17) gentleness of Godly wisdom. I can forgive, I can love regardless.
- Culminating in - peace. Peace between my spouse and I as we learn to love, sacrifice, and forgive.

Church: (Reasonable and Peaceable)

Worldly Wisdom

- You get the picture at this point → Just like everything else in life, church is about me. My preferences, my wants, my desires. Even in like a super Christianity type of way - it exists to build me up in my faith. That's its primary role - still me centered, just sounds more Christian.
- So how am I supposed to respond when someone oversteps and steps on my toes? Someone in my community group wants to address my sin? Call me out on a blind spot they see, encourage me in a direction different than what I want, try to call me towards Christ instead of my desires in the moment?
- Of course I'm not going to listen, I'm going to push back, argue, justify, and then passive aggressively shun. Because this is supposed to be the place I'm built up, not called out.

Godly Wisdom

- OR, Godly wisdom says Church, like everything else - is for God. That this place exists not for me, not for you, but for God. For God to get the glory as His people come together and live in unity, worship Jesus, and invite others to know and follow Him. The Church exists primarily for the glory of God. So - when someone in my CG loves me enough to press in on sin in my life, weakness in my life, it's not because they are against me, hate me, are annoyed with me, after me, or trying to ruin my fun or my life - it's because they want God's glory in my life and then through my life the Church. They want me to look more and more like Jesus. So they're trying to point me back to Him.
- So when it's about God, then I can be (v17) reasonable (open to reason, open to hearing what others have to say) and peaceable (willing to receive correction and rebuke) - and actually see how God might use the courage of other believers to have a hard conversation to actually shape and grow me into the image of Christ.
- Culminating in peace with them, peace with God, and further righteousness in my life.

Conclusion

Two completely different systems of wisdom.

Godly wisdom vs. Worldly wisdom. Living faith has godly wisdom. That's our invitation today.

So here's where I want to leave you tonight → **Here's your two next steps.** How do you walk down this path of a godly wisdom sort of life? A life about God, for God, with deep humility leading to peace and righteousness.

How do we get wisdom, live with wisdom, keep wisdom?

1. ASK GOD

James 1:5 - If any of you lacks wisdom, let him ask God, who gives generously to all without reproach, and it will be given him.

We ask God to help you know how to live and then actually live it. Ask God for His grace. His mercy. His help in time of need. And then just like last week - ask Him to change your heart!

2. FEAR GOD

Psalms 111:10 - The fear of the LORD is the beginning of wisdom; all those who practice it have a good understanding. His praise endures forever!

Then we fear the Lord → we praise Him, honor Him, revere Him, live life in light of Him and His greatness and goodness.

HERE'S THE GOOD NEWS: We don't have to live in worldly wisdom. We don't have to live with jealousy or selfish ambition, we don't have to swim in the waters of disorder and evil. We can trust in Jesus.

Because here's the good news we celebrate every Sunday:

Though we have very real enemies - the world, our flesh, the devil - calling us to live with worldly wisdom, calling us to revolve our lives around us, make us the center, with jealousy and selfish ambition - those these enemies are real and though they are tempting...

...They are all defeated by King Jesus.

Jesus has come, and through His life, death, and resurrection:

- He has defeated the world and is making all things new.
- He has defeated our flesh and given us new hearts and His Spirit.
- He has defeated our enemy and is reigning forever as the conquering King.

So we can live with Godly wisdom as we see the Lord - pleading with Him - God give me wisdom, fearing Him, living with His glory as our sole aim, such that He would change us from the inside out to live for Him more and more in our everyday life.

Christ has died, Christ is risen, Christ will come again - and he offers all of us wisdom if we will seek His face.

Communion tie-in - So let's remember the gospel of our conquering King together. On the night he was betrayed....

Communion. Pray.