

Prayer: Heavenly Father, each day is a struggle against sin and temptation. Give us the strength to overcome cruelty with grace, and hatred with love. God, remind us that our actions matter. We do not fight a physical battle but a spiritual one, and with each act of compassion we build your kingdom. Help us to be kingdom-builders today. Amen.

“WHO IS WISE AND UNDERSTANDING AMONG YOU?”

Data are facts. Put facts together, and you get information. Information stored and retrievable in your brain is knowledge, but wisdom is so much more. Today’s sermon teaches us that, beyond knowledge, wisdom is about the impact of our lives on other people.

Like a boat leaving a wake in the water, our decisions and actions affect people. James says godly wisdom is shown by our works, but how do we know if our deeds are godly? It helps to first rule things out. James says we can be sure we are not wise if our lives are filled with bitter jealousy and selfish ambition. Let’s start with that.

James 3:13-18 says, “Who is wise and understanding among you? Let him show by good conduct that his works are done in the meekness of wisdom. But...”—here’s the contrast—“...if you have bitter envy and self-seeking in your hearts, do not boast and lie against the truth. This wisdom does not descend from above, but is earthly, sensual, demonic. For where envy and self-seeking exist, confusion and every evil thing are there. But...”—again, the contrast—“...the wisdom that is from above is first pure, then peaceable, gentle, willing to yield, full of mercy and good fruits, without partiality and without hypocrisy. Now the fruit of righteousness is sown in peace by those who make peace.”

My question to you today is: Does your Christianity work? By that I mean, in the book of James, does it make you rejoice in trials, does it help you to resist temptation, does it make you a doer of the Word and does it help you tame your tongue?

James is the epistle of applied Christianity. It is Christianity in shoe leather. It is Christianity 101. James has as its theme faith that works. If we have a genuine faith, if we have an authentic faith, if we have a real faith, then our faith is going to manifest itself in our works. Now James says that if we have wisdom that comes from above, it’s going to show itself by the way that we live.

Notice in verse 13, James says, “Who is wise and understanding among you?” The passage starts with a question: “Who thinks they’re wise?” He’s talking to those who want to be teachers, want to be instructors by using their speech to tell other people how to live. You normally would think of a teacher as being wise. So, James is saying “you wise men,” “you wise women,” “you who want to instruct others or teach others.” He’s saying these people need to show by the way that they live that they are really, truly wise. The Bible tells us that “Wisdom is better than rubies, and all the things one may desire cannot be compared with her.” The Scripture says, “With all your getting, get understanding.”

There is a difference between knowledge and wisdom. Knowledge is the accumulation of facts; it’s having information. We live in an age of knowledge. Everyone has knowledge. Your smart phone is full of knowledge. You can ask your phone anything and you can get the information immediately.

So, we have all this knowledge, but we don’t know how to relate to people. Have you ever met someone who is really smart, has a high IQ, but they make thoughtless life decisions? They don’t know how to relate to people. They don’t know how to get along with others. Knowledge doesn’t necessarily help you live out in your daily life the things that you need in relationships. So, knowledge is information.

Wisdom is knowing how to apply knowledge. Someone said, “Wisdom is living in a proper sense of values. It is living in light of what is true, what is right and what is lasting.” I believe that true knowledge is living in the light of

eternal values. The Hebrew idea of wisdom is practical; it is the ability to make right choices in life. Again, Proverbs 4:7 says, “Wisdom is the principal thing; therefore, get wisdom.”

The first place to start with wisdom is Psalm 111:10. It says, “The fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom.”

In verse 13, James gives us a question, and then he issues a command. “Let them show by good conduct...”—or “the good way that he lives”—“...that their works are done in the meekness of wisdom.” Notice the command: “Let him show.” James is actually saying, “Show me by the way that you live.”

And how should you show the way you live? By two things: meekness and wisdom. That’s the mark of a wise person. A wise person fears the Lord, walks in humility and is meek like Jesus Christ. So, James issues this command: Show your life by meekness and wisdom. It’s showing others your faith by the way that you live.

The Bible says, “Whatsoever you sow, that shall you also reap.” Whatever you plant is what grows. If you put tomato seeds in the ground, you get a tomato plant. If you put strawberry seeds in the ground, you get a strawberry plant. If you plant zucchini seed, you get zucchini. So, if you sow to the flesh, you’ll reap of the flesh corruption. But if you sow to the Spirit, you’ll reap of the Spirit life everlasting. Basically, we get what we sow. We reap what we sow. If we sow to the flesh, we reap corruption. If we sow to the Spirit, we reap life everlasting.

By way of conclusion, I want to tell you four simple steps to living wisely. Number one, you need to know Christ personally. No one can be considered wise if they reject Jesus Christ as their Lord and Savior. If you are saying to God, “I don’t want Christ. I don’t want You. I can live my own life,” then you’re a fool. You may have a high IQ. You may have good knowledge of things, but you don’t understand the things of God. You are rejecting the God Who made you, and the God Who made you to be able to relate to Him and others you are rejecting in your life.

1 Corinthians 1:30 says that “...Christ Jesus, who became for us wisdom from God...” Do you know that Christians have “the mind of Christ”? Walking with and knowing Christ, we begin to think like Christ, we begin to feel like Christ, we begin to see like Christ, and we begin to live the way Jesus would live. So, you need to know Christ personally.

The second step to take to be wise is that you need to read the Bible obediently. You might add “daily” in there, as well. I don’t mean just reading the Bible and then forgetting what you read, but rather putting into practice, putting into shoe leather what God says in His Word. Too many times, as Christians, we know what the Bible says, but we don’t do it. That’s what James is all about: being “doers of the Word and not hearers only.”

Thirdly, we need to pray to God humbly. Another place to get wisdom is on your knees. James 1:5 said that: “If any of you lacks wisdom, let him ask of God”—pray. Do you need to know how to deal with a problem in your marriage? Get on your knees. Get on your knees and seek God. Bring God into the equation. Bring God into your life. Start with a fear of God and humbly, dependently pray. Ask God to fill you with His Holy Spirit. Ask God to give you wisdom from above.

Then fourthly and lastly, fear the Lord reverently. “The fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom,” the Bible says. Know Christ personally, read the Bible obediently, pray to God humbly and fear the Lord reverently. That’s the wise walk. Without those elements in your life, you can’t be considered a wise person. Amen.