

Gentleness: A Sweetness that Satisfies James – God's Work in Us and through Us

Hillsboro Presbyterian Church

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How do we relate wisely to other people? In **James 3:13-18** - James teaches about genuine wisdom ...what it is, why we need it, what it does and doesn't do. The NASB (New American Standard Bible) translates James **3:13** as: **"Who among you is wise and understanding? Let him show by his good behavior his deeds in the gentleness of wisdom."** That phrase struck me... "the gentleness of wisdom". We talk about the harsh realities of life...but God's wisdom is gentle as it is lived out in everyday life. Let's get to what James has for us...

WISDOM IS A LIFESTYLE 3:13 "Who is wise and understanding among you? Let him show it by his good life, by deeds done in the humility that comes from wisdom."

Wisdom has little to do with intelligence. It has everything to do with relationships and character. It is not a matter of what you say with your lips but a matter of what you live with your life. Not a matter of your words but of your works. How do you get along with other people? That shows how wise you really are. It is a lifestyle. Wisdom has more to do with character and relationships than with education and intelligence. Knowledge causes pride, but wisdom causes humility.

LACK OF WISDOM CAUSES PROBLEMS 3:14-16 "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, of the devil. For where you have envy and selfish ambition, there you find disorder and every evil practice."

Lack of wisdom causes all kinds of disorder and problems, chaos and confusion. Whether it comes from worldliness, humanness, or God's adversary...it is no more wisdom than fool's gold is real gold. "Such 'wisdom'" is really a lack of wisdom that makes a mess out of life and relationships.

CHARACTERISTICS OF WISE PEOPLE 3:17 "But wisdom that comes from heaven is first of all pure, then peace loving, considerate, submissive, full of mercy and good fruit, impartial and sincere." Test yourself against these traits of genuine wisdom that James tells us:

1. THE WISE WON'T COMPROMISE... INTEGRITY 3:17 "Wisdom is...first of all pure..."

Pure means uncorrupted, authentic. In **1 John 3:3** this word is used to refer to Christ's character. With genuine wisdom, I am not going to lie or cheat or manipulate. I will be a person of integrity, because all relationships are built on trust and respect. **Proverbs 10:9** says "The man of integrity walks securely." He is not afraid of being found out because he doesn't say one thing to one person and something else to another. Someone said, "No man has a good enough memory to be a habitual liar." If you've got integrity you've got confidence, and you walk securely in your relationships.

2. THE WISE WON'T ANTAGONIZE...ANGER 3:17 "Wisdom is...peace-loving..."

Wise people work at maintaining harmony. They are not always looking for a fight. If you're smart you don't antagonize people's anger. **Proverbs 20:3** "Any fool can start arguments. The wise thing is to stay out of them." What causes arguments? 1. Comparing. 2. Condemning. 3. Contradicting. James says, "If you are wise you don't sweat the small stuff." Anger causes mistakes.

3. THE WISE WON'T MINIMIZE...FEELINGS 3:17 "Wisdom is...considerate..."

"Considerate" means "mindful of the feelings of others". To not minimize your feelings, I don't have to accept them but I can understand them. **Proverbs 15:4** "Kind words bring life, but cruel words crush your spirit." Typically when we react to people's emotions we say things that hurt. Often we belittle the feeling. We put people down, or we play psychologist. If you care you'll be aware.

4. THE WISE WON'T CRITICIZE...DECISIONS/SUGGESTIONS 3:17 "...submissive..."

A wise person can learn from anybody...not defensive...open to reason...not stubborn...willing to listen and learn. The word "submissive" here really means "reasonable". Are you a reasonable person? Open to suggestions. "Don't confuse me with the facts; I've made up my mind. When I want your opinion, I'll give it to you." Don't be defensive. Most of us are too oversensitive. If somebody makes a suggestion we take it as a personal criticism and become defensive. James says that is dumb. A wise person can learn from anybody.

5. THE WISE WON'T EMPHASIZE...MISTAKES 3:17 "...full of mercy and good fruit."

Do you jump on people every time they mess up? Do you ever let people go, or do you keep hounding them about their past mistakes? Do you hold them in leverage so they never can be set free even if they have asked forgiveness? That is unmerciful and unwise. One guy complained that his wife would get all historical on him. "Don't you mean hysterical?" "No, historical. She tells me everything I ever did wrong." If I'm wise I won't emphasize your mistakes. **Proverbs 17:9** "Love forgets mistakes. Nagging about them parts even the best of friends. We don't need judgment rather encouragement when we mess up. Remember: "Mercy triumphs over judgment." (**James 2:12**)

6. THE WISE WON'T DISGUISE...WEAKNESSES 3:17 "Wisdom is...impartial and sincere."

These two words mean "without hypocrisy". In the Greek theater they often would have just a couple or three actors playing an entire play. These people would change parts. They would hold masks in front of their face. One person would have five or six different masks and parts and that person, that actor, was called a hypocrite...because of all of their different kinds of masks. You don't wear masks and try to be something you're not. I've said this before: if you're perfect or if you are going to wear masks, HPC isn't for you. HPC is for real people with real faith in a real God dealing with real problems in a real world who are willing to be real with God, themselves, and others.

How did you do? All of us have room for growth. James tells us that it is crucial that we operate out of genuine wisdom because we reap what we sow. **James 3:18** "Peacemakers who sow in peace raise a harvest of righteousness." We reap what we sow. So if we want to be "Christ-ian" and to reap "Christ-likeness" in our life, than we need to sow God's wisdom into our life and relationships. "Righteousness" not only means our standing with God because of Christ...it means our "right relationships" with other people because of Christ. So how does one get genuine wisdom?

GENUINE WISDOM IS FROM GOD James 1:5 "If any of you lacks wisdom he should ask God." Knowledge comes from education. Wisdom comes from God. To get knowledge you look around. To get wisdom you look up. Knowledge comes from reason. Wisdom comes from revelation. Knowledge is something you learn. Wisdom is a gift. God is pleased when we ask for wisdom...and even more pleased when we bless others by living it out in our daily lives.