

Ministry Partner Offering, June 28

Worship Service Vision Huddle, quote

Worship Night, June 24

What is some conventional wisdom? Don't spit into the wind. Don't stick your tongue on frozen metal. Don't plant veggies before May long weekend. Don't count your chicken's before they hatch. This morning we are going to think about the vast difference between God's divine wisdom and human wisdom.

### Proposition

We continue today in our series is “**Navigating Faith**”. The epistle of James guides believers to walk by **faith** in Christ and to live out that relationship through good **works**. Last week we started into chapter 3, in which we learn that “real faith produces genuine **humility**” (Chuck Swindoll's outline). Understandably, our sermon theme, “**Bitterness And Jealousy**” is completely counter to a humble lifestyle! These two heart-attitudes stand for host of human tendencies.

Let's read [James 3:13-18](#). Last week we noted that we cannot claim to be a complete Christian (see 1:4) if we do not control our tongue. We looked at several **illustrations** which highlighted the dangerous potential of speech which is not Spirit-controlled. In our text today we will consider the **implications** of a humble lifestyle. We will see that the overflow of our speech reveals the reality of our inner convictions. And there is a profound distinction between those convictions which are of human (“earthly”) origin and those which are heavenly in nature.

### [A] The harm of earthly wisdom – vv. 13-16

Our text begins with a **caution**. Just as James began in 3:2b, in verse 13a he cautioned/challenged those who thought themselves “*wise and understanding?*” The “**wise**” refers to “*the Teacher...in Jewish usage one who has a knowledge of practical, moral wisdom, resting on a knowledge of God. In contrast the Greek philosophical term meant ‘theoretical wisdom’.*” (**Linguistic Key to the Greek NT**, Fritz Rienecker & Cleon Rogers, Zondervan, 1980, 734)

“**Understanding**” is a term that suggests expert or professional knowledge. Those who taught the Christians to whom James wrote may well have had wisdom and knowledge. But this had to **pass two tests**. First, what was quality of their interpersonal communication ([3:1-2](#))? Second, what was the quality of their lives and character (3:13)? God's wisdom must be demonstrated by godly Christian conduct.

Notice that this behavior has an overarching description. It involves deeds done in the “*gentleness of wisdom*” (v.13). This speaks of a lifestyle that is **meek, patient, humble**, and **free of malice**. This is the life to which Jesus calls us in Matthew 11:29, “*Take my yoke upon you and learn from me, for I am gentle and humble in heart, and you will find rest for your souls.*”

This is the opposite of living selfishly. Selfish living is more fully expressed in verses 14-16. What are the characteristics of self-centered thinking or “earthly wisdom” (v.15)? We can also identify how these negative characteristics reveal themselves in our world today.

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| 1. <b>Bitter jealousy</b>  | <i>tribalism</i>     | <i>loyalty to one's own group combined with prejudice to all others</i>  |
| 2. <b>Selfish ambition</b> | <i>credentialism</i> | <i>worth and value are tied to education, expertise, and experience</i>  |
| 3. <b>Arrogance</b>        | <i>racism</i>        | <i>hatred and prejudice shown to those outside one's racial group</i>  |
| 4. <b>Lies</b>             | <i>relativism</i>    | <i>belief that truth and morality are not absolute; a progressive pastor explained it this way: “our moral imagination expanded” (Ray Waters, The Village Church, Atlanta, GA)</i> |
| 5. <b>Natural</b>          | <i>nihilism</i>      | <i>afterlife is absolute non-existence so there is no soul, heaven, hell</i>   |
| 6. <b>Demonic</b>          | <i>mysticism</i>     | <i>enlightenment and divination (tarrot; tasseography with tea/coffee)</i>   |

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| 7. Disorder      | <i>anarchism</i> | <i>seeks the elimination of all hierarchy, institutions, and authority</i> |
| 8. Evil practice | <i>hedonism</i>  | <i>the ultimate aim of life is personal pleasure</i>                       |

These examples of human wisdom (philosophy) are what Paul described in II Corinthians 10:5 as “arguments and every pretension that sets itself up against the knowledge of God.” The great Baptist preacher of the 19<sup>th</sup> Century, Charles Spurgeon said, “Nothing teaches us about the preciousness of the Creator as much as when we learn the emptiness of everything else.”

Human wisdom yields harm because it offers much but **disappoints** and **destroys**. Why? Because it is focused and fixated on oneself, in opposition to God. This was fully on display in the fall of man. Now, if we understand that these devastating qualities were in the lives of Christian teachers, that is dreadful!

<b>[B] The hope of heavenly wisdom – vv. 17-18</b>
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Whereas human wisdom is “earthly” the true wisdom of God is “from above” (ανωθεν). Divine wisdom challenges self-centeredness yet it brings hope, peace, and freedom to our lives. What are the characteristics of divine wisdom? Let’s see these as a “block” and not try to compare one quality to one quality in the other list.

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| 1. Pure         | <i>sincere, moral and spiritual integrity</i>                                     |
| 2. Peace-loving | <i>peaceable, loving, and promoting peace</i>                                     |
| 3. Gentle       | <i>humble patience, steadfastness, able to submit to injustice without malice</i> |
| 4. Reasonable   | <i>easily persuaded or compliant, willing to yield</i>                            |
| 5. Merciful     | <i>active sympathy to the suffering</i>   |
| 6. Fruitful     | <i>productive and purposeful</i>  |
| 7. Unwavering   | <i>wholehearted, not making distinctions</i>                                      |
| 8. Sincere      | <i>honest and free from hypocrisy</i>   |

Living this way means fully submitting our lives to the authority of Jesus Christ. We cannot be a part-time Christ follower. James urges believers to be “mature and complete, not lacking anything” (1:4). “If Christ is not all to you He is nothing to you. He will never go into partnership as a part Saviour of men. If He be something He must be everything, and if He be not everything He is nothing to you.” (Charles Spurgeon)

<b>Conclusion – see “Digging Deeper”</b>
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Do you battle bitterness? Does jealousy rear its ugly head in your life? These and all other aspects of “earthly wisdom” leads to great heaviness and harm. In the Gospel we are invited to embrace the “wisdom from above”. In [II Peter 1:16](#) Peter stated that the apostles did not follow “**cleverly contrived concoctions**” – the term means “to make wise” but in this context, it was to create a (lit.) “myth” (μυθος).

Rather, the apostles were firsthand witnesses of the power and presence of Jesus Christ. Are you giving into the myths that this world offers to you? Each of these, in some manner, is self-centered. When we live for ourselves, we are as short sighted as the man who moved into a cottage with a wood stove. When winter came, he grew cold and took boards off the house to build a fire. The fire was warm, but the house was still cold. More boards came off for a larger fire. After several days of this, he gave up and moved! (**Overhearing the Gospel** Fred B. Craddock, 36).

Do you long for healing, freedom, and salvation? You must embrace God’s wisdom! In [I Corinthians 1:18-25](#) we read that in an ultimate sense, who Jesus is and what He has accomplished is God’s wisdom, which stands in absolute contrast to the so-called wisdom of this world. Will you embrace Jesus today?

<b>“wisdom [that is] earthly” – v. 15</b>	<b>“wisdom from above” – v. 17</b>
<p>Bitter jealousy πικρον ζηλον</p> <p>Fierce desire (lit. zealous) to promote one’s own opinion - <b>tribalism</b></p>	<p>Pure αγνη</p> <p>Sincere, moral and spiritual integrity</p>
<p>Selfish ambition εριθειαν</p> <p>Partly rivalry and partly ambition - <b>credentialism</b></p>	<p>Peace-loving ειρηνικη</p> <p>Peaceable, loving, promoting peace</p>
<p>Arrogance κατακαυχασθε</p> <p>To (lit.) “exult over” and boast arrogantly or in triumph - <b>racism</b></p>	<p>Gentle or forbearing ειπεικης</p> <p>Humble patience, steadfastness; able to submit to injustice without hatred and malice</p>
<p>Lies ψευδεσθε κατα αληθειας</p> <p>To speak and act in contradiction to God’s truth – <b>relativism</b></p>	<p>Reasonable or compliant ευπειθης</p> <p>Easily persuaded, willing to yield; opposite of disobedient</p>
<p>Natural ψυχικη</p> <p>That which is unspiritual - <b>nihilism</b></p>	<p>Merciful ελεους</p>
<p>Demonic δαυνιβυωδης</p> <p>That which is in concert with the devil - <b>mysticism</b></p>	<p>Good fruits καρπων αγαθων</p>
<p>Disorder ακαταστασια</p> <p>Contentious and acting with anarchy - <b>anarchism</b></p>	<p>Unwavering or impartial αδιακριτος</p> <p>Wholehearted</p>
<p>Evil practice φ αυλον πραγμα</p> <p>Bad, foul, vile actions - <b>hedonism</b></p>	<p>Sincere and without hypocrisy ανυποκριτος</p>