How to Be a Wise Guy

James 3:13-18

Big Idea: Wisdom isn't just knowledge — it's skill in living. True wisdom starts with peace: peace with God, peace with others. Ask God for what you lack, study His Word, and find someone to walk with you.

Main Points

1. Wisdom is skill in living. Biblical wisdom is not merely knowing the right answers. It is the practical ability to apply divine truth to real-life situations.
2. True wisdom begins with God. James 1:5 reminds us that wisdom is available to anyone who asks God for it. Wisdom from above is pure, peaceable, gentle, open to reason, full of mercy, impartial, and sincere.
3. Earthly wisdom produces disorder. Bitter jealousy and selfish ambition are marks of wisdom that is earthly, unspiritual, and opposed to God. Where these exist, disorder and every vile practice follow.
4. Grace is the foundation. As we pursue transformation, we must never lose sight of God's grace. We lean into what Christ has done for us, not into our own effort or performance.
5. Wisdom requires community. Growing in wisdom does not happen in isolation. It requires studying God's Word consistently and having someone in your life who can walk alongside you, encourage you, and hold you accountable.

Scriptures:

- ◯ James 1:5
- ◯ James 2
- ◯ James 3:3
- ◯ Proverbs 1:7
- ◯ Philippians 2:4
- ◯ Galatians 5:16-23
- ◯ Matthew 10:16
- ◯ 2 Peter 3:8-12

Opening Question:

When you hear the word "wisdom," what comes to mind? Who is the wisest person you have ever known personally, and what made them stand out to you?

Discussion Questions:

Read James 3:13-18 together as a group. What contrasts do you notice between the two kinds of wisdom James describes? Make a list together.

James says that true wisdom is demonstrated by "good conduct" and "meekness." Meekness was described in the sermon as "power under control." What does that look like practically in your everyday relationships, at work, or at home?

James 3:14 warns against "bitter jealousy and selfish ambition." Why do you think James connects these attitudes specifically to wisdom, or the lack of it? Where do you see these attitudes showing up most naturally in your own life?

Verse 17 lists the qualities of wisdom from above: pure, peaceable, gentle, open to reason, full of mercy and good fruits, impartial, and sincere. Which of these qualities do you feel is most present in your life right now? Which one do you feel most challenged by?

The sermon used the illustration of a chess player who owns a manual but never studies it. In what ways does that picture apply to your own relationship with God's Word? What gets in the way of consistent, meaningful engagement with Scripture?

Pastor Tim said, "When we look at God's Word and feel the expectation of transformation, we can never forget grace." Why is it important to hold both of those things together? What happens when we focus on transformation without grace? What happens when we focus on grace without any expectation of change?

The sermon described the story of Alexander the Great confronting a soldier who shared his name and telling him to either change his conduct or change his name. How does that story challenge you personally in the way you represent Christ in your daily life?

Second Peter 3:11 asks, "What sort of people ought you to be in lives of holiness and godliness?" How does the reality of Christ's return shape the way you think about pursuing wisdom and godliness today?

Pastor Tim shared that his own discipler was his father, an ordinary man who loved Jesus, stayed in the Word, prayed consistently, and modeled faithfulness without fanfare. What qualities would you look for in a discipler or mentor? What qualities do you think you could offer to someone else?

Practical Applications:

1. Study the manual. Set aside a specific time each day this week to open God's Word with a simple prayer asking the Holy Spirit to teach you. Even fifteen minutes of intentional reading is a meaningful step.
2. Identify a discipleship relationship. Pray about whether God is calling you to pursue a mentor or to invest in someone else. Take one concrete step this week, whether that means reaching out to someone, talking to your pastor, or simply praying for God to bring the right person into your life.
3. Examine your heart for jealousy or selfish ambition. Ask God to show you one area of your life where either of these attitudes may be operating beneath the surface. Confess it, receive grace, and ask for wisdom to respond differently.
4. Practice one quality from James 3:17. Pick one of the characteristics of wisdom from above, such as being gentle, open to reason, or sincere, and make a conscious effort to live it out in a specific relationship this week.
5. Become a peacemaker. Is there a relationship in your life where peace needs to be restored? Take one step this week toward reconciliation, whether that means initiating a conversation, offering forgiveness, or simply praying for that person.

Closing Thought/Prayer:
Lord, help us humbly seek Your wisdom through Your Word, Your Spirit, and godly people, so our lives bear the fruit of peace, purity, and righteousness.