Two Ways of Looking At The World
Message 10 of 17 in *Practical Wisdom For Daily Living Series*
JAMES 3:13-18

Tonight as we continue with our study of the Book of James, I would like for you to turn in your Bibles to James chapter three, verses 13-18.

James 3:13-18

PRAYER

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INTRODUCTION

I saw a quote on a T-shirt the other day that went something like this:

“The difference between knowledge and wisdom is this: Knowledge is knowing that a tomato is a fruit. Wisdom is understanding you don’t put tomatoes in a fruit salad.”

The late George Burns once said, “Too bad all the people who really know how to run this country are driving taxis and cutting hair.”

All of us know people who are very intelligent and yet they can’t carry out the simplest of tasks in life. They may be a whiz on a computer but don’t know how to boil an egg. We commonly describe people like this as having “lots of book learnin’ but lacking in common horse sense.”
Throughout life we gain wisdom from a number of sources........

*There’s the wisdom we got from our parents and grandparents when we were young.

*There’s the wisdom we gleaned from certain teachers, Sunday School teachers and ministers.

*Perhaps you had a mentor or a very dear friend who imparted lots of wisdom.

*And of course we all gain wisdom through life’s experiences.

TRANSITION INTO SCRIPTURE TEXT

But in our scripture text tonight JAMES is talking to us about the kind of wisdom that is far superior to earthly wisdom and that is GODLY WISDOM.

David Jeremiah describes GODLY WISDOM this way........

“Godly wisdom is the special gift of the Lord for our quest to know His will. It is beyond intellect and knowledge. In a willing mind, Godly wisdom enables a person to hear with God’s ears and see with His eyes. Godly wisdom is inspired depth-perception into people and situations.

Godly wisdom is the vertical thrust of the mind of God into our minds, making discernment possible on the horizontal level of human affairs. With Godly wisdom we can penetrate the mysteries of God-----His nature, His plan and His purpose.

As we study these verses of scripture, James contrasts worldly wisdom and Godly wisdom in three different aspects.
First, James contrasts THE ORIGINS OF WISDOM (vs. 15, 17a) Secondly, he contrasts THE OPERATIONS OF WISDOM (vs.13,14,17) And thirdly, he contrasts THE OUTCOME OF WISDOM  (vs.16,18)

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First let’s consider the contrasts in ……………

I. The Origins of Wisdom vs. 15, 17a

1. Where does worldly wisdom come from? Look at verse 15.

   vs.15 Such wisdom does not come down from heaven
   but is earthly, unspiritual, of the devil.

2. Now contrast the origin of worldly wisdom with the origin of Godly wisdom. Look at the first part of verse 17.

   17a But the wisdom that comes from heaven…….
   (repeat)

3. TRUE WISDOM comes from above. FALSE WISDOM comes from below. In other words, there is a “heavenly wisdom” that comes from God , and there is a man-made wisdom that does not come from God.

   And whatever does not come from God is destined to fail no matter how successful or right it might seem at the time.

4. The Bible gives us many examples of the foolishness of man’s wisdom.

   *To Adam and Eve, eating the forbidden fruit in the Garden of Eden seemed like the right thing to do at the time, but look at all the chaos, death and destruction that foolish decision has brought upon the world.
* Building the Tower of Babel seemed like the wise thing to do at the time, but it ended in complete failure and confusion.

* King Saul thought it was wise to put his own armor on David when he went up against Goliath, but God’s plan was otherwise.

* The Disciples thought the wise thing to do was to dismiss the crowd of 5,000 and let them go find their own food, but Jesus had other plans.

5. Perhaps the apostle Paul said it best in I Corinthians 1:19

   For it is written: “I will destroy the wisdom of the wise; the intelligence of the intelligent I will frustrate.”

6. You notice in verse 15, James uses three terms to describe worldly wisdom.

   (a) It is EARTHLY vs.15

      The Greek word for earthly means…………… “that which is sensual or natural.” It is the exact opposite of spiritual.

      The idea James seems to be getting across here is when someone lives by worldly wisdom they oppose the wisdom of God. They believe they know more than God.

      We don’t have to look too hard to find people like that do we? Look at many of the college and university professors. Look at the politicians and the lawyers. Look at the people in Hollywood. They believe they know more than God.
(b) It is **UNSPIRITUAL** vs. 15

The Greek word James uses here for *unspiritual* means “*that which is merely human*”.

Simply put, James is saying worldly wisdom is based on man’s five senses: What he can **see**.....what he can **smell**........what he can **taste**......what he can **touch** and what he can **hear**.

> Worldly wisdom says, “If it feels good, do it!”
> “If lovin’ you is wrong, I don’t want to be right.”
> “You only go around once in life so you’ve got to grab for all the gusto you can.”

(c) It is **DEMONIC** vs. 15

The Greek word James uses here means it is wisdom that is “*of the devil*” or “wisdom that is *influenced by the devil*.”

A prime example of this is seen in **Genesis 3** when Satan successfully influenced Eve to eat the forbidden fruit. He told Eve the fruit from the Tree of Knowledge of Good and Evil would make her wise like God.

Satan has done the same thing with you and me many times. He convinced us something was right, that it was OK, then when we gave in we realized it was the wrong thing to do.

WORLDLY WISDOM is constantly changing. Each generation thinks it knows more than the previous generation. Each generation thinks it can improve on previous generations. If that is true, why is the world getting worse instead of better?
7. GODLY WISDOM on the other hand is not earthly……..it is not unspiritual……..it is not demonic. It is a wisdom that is “from above” or “from God in heaven.”

Remember earlier in James 1:17 James said, “Every good and perfect gift is from above, coming down from the Father of the Heavenly lights, who does not change like shifting shadows.”

Wisdom that is from God is GOOD!
Wisdom that is from God is PERFECT!
Wisdom that is from God does not change from one day to the next……..or one situation to the next…….or from one generation to the next.

The same wisdom that helped Abraham and Noah and David and Solomon thousands of years ago can help you and me today.

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Secondly JAMES has us contrast………………..

II. The Operations of Wisdom

1. First notice how WORLDLY WISDOM operates.

   vs. 14 But if you harbor bitter envy and selfish ambition in your hearts, do not boast about it or deny the truth.

James is revealing four ways in which worldly wisdom operates.

(a) Worldly wisdom operates in the realm of BITTER ENVY. vs. 14

   The person who operates by worldly wisdom is always seeking to be number one. He’s always pushing himself up by pushing someone else down.
He is envious of anyone who makes more money……anyone who has a better position……anyone who drives a nicer car……and anyone who owns a nicer house or lives in a nicer neighborhood. His worldly wisdom drives him to “beat that guy.”

(b) **Worldly wisdom also operates in the realm of SELFISH AMBITION.** vs.14

This word carries with it the idea of a man who uses others and manipulates others for his own personal gain.

Think of the person who uses his money and power to get elected to a political position. Think of the guilty man who uses his money to buy justice in the courtroom.

These people consider themselves “wise” because they know how to manipulate the system. But remember, this kind of wisdom comes from Satan.

(c) **Worldly wisdom also operates in the realm of PROUD ARROGANCE** vs. 14

That term “do not boast” is a warning against arrogant bragging.

*If you will look down just a few verses you notice* James says in chapter 4 verse 6 “God opposes the proud but gives grace to the humble.”

Remember that song country singer Mac Davis came out with in the 70’s. “Oh Lord it’s hard to be humble, when you’re perfect in every way. I can’t wait to look in the mirror, ’cos I get better lookin’ each day.”
The next time you are around someone who loves to boast about themselves, just remember they are displaying worldly wisdom and worldly wisdom comes from Satan.

(d) **Worldly wisdom also operates in the realm of DECEITFUL ACTIONS.**

**ILLUSTRATION:** In the 2002 movie, *Catch Me If You Can*, Leonardo DeCaprio played the part of real life con-man Frank Abagnale Jr.

Frank Abagnale scammed millions of dollars by impersonating a Pan American Airways Pilot……..a Georgia doctor……..a substitute teacher……..a Louisiana Attorney…..and a Louisiana Parish Prosecutor. Abagnale took great pride in his ability to outwit the FBI agent who tracked him down for years before finally putting an end to his crime spree.

Probably all of us has met someone at some time or another who took great pride in their ability to lie their way out of any situation. That’s how worldly wisdom operates.

2. Now compare that to how GODLY WISDOM operates.

(a) **Godly wisdom operates in the realm of HUMILITY vs. 13** There is a common misconception that “meekness means weakness” when in reality “meekness is power under control.”

The truly wise person does not boast about himself, but rather seeks to give all honor and glory to God.

(b) **Godly wisdom operates in the realm of PURITY vs. 17**

The truly wise peson does not operate with impure or alterior motives or have a hidden agenda.
(c) Godly wisdom operates in the realm of **PEACE.** vs. 17

**ILLUSTRATION:** Years ago I had a preacher call me one day to warn me about a man who had just started attending the Church where I was ministering. This preacher told me this man had just left his church after stirring up all kinds of trouble. And he knew of two other Churches where he had caused all kinds of problems.

As it turned out, that preacher was absolutely right. That same man ended up causing all kinds of problems in the Church where I was ministering. Trouble followed him every where he went.

One who truly lives by GODLY WISDOM will never be the source of conflict, problems or trouble in his Church, his job or his community.

(d) Godly wisdom operates in the realm of **GENTLENESS** vs. 17 A wise man does not deliberately cause fights, but at the same time he never compromises the truth. A man of GODLY WISDOM knows how to take a bold stand without causing injury to the Lord’s Church.

(e) Godly wisdom operates in the realm of **SUBMISSIVENESS** vs. 17 A wise man knows how to disagree without being disagreeable. A submissive person does not seek what is best for them personally, but what is best for the whole Church. A submissive person is not so bull-headed and closed minded that they refuse to listen to what anybody else has to say.

(f) Godly wisdom operates in the realm of **MERCY.** vs. 17

A wise man is quick to reach out to the poor and needy. A wise man is quick to reach down and help someone who has fallen in the Christian life.
(h) Godly wisdom operates in the realm of **GOOD FRUITS**. vs. 17 Acts 10:38 tells us “Jesus went around doing good.” That ought to be said of every Christian. The wise man leaves deeds of goodness and kindness every where he goes.

(i) Godly wisdom operates in the realm of **IMPARTIALITY** vs. 17 Remember James talked to us about impartiality in chapter 2, verses 1-13

Here the word means something slightly different than just treating all people equally. It is also referring to being consistent in all our dealings with people.

(j) Godly wisdom operates in the realm of **SINCERITY** vs. 17 Quite simply that means a wise man is not hypocritical.

Have you ever known someone who “talked out of both sides of his mouth?” He would tell you one thing, then turn around tell someone else the exact opposite. In other words he tells people what he thinks they want to hear. **That is hypocritical insincerity. A wise man doesn’t live that way.**

Well we have considered the CONTRAST IN ORIGINS of worldly wisdom and Godly wisdom. And we have considered the CONTRASTS IN OPERATIONS of worldly wisdom and Godly wisdom.

Finally James has us consider……
III. The Outcome of Wisdom vs. 16, 18

1. First, notice the OUTCOME of WORLDLY WISDOM.

   verse 16  For where you have envy and selfish ambition, there you find disorder and every evil practice.

Quite simply what James is saying is THE ORIGIN OF ONE’S WISDOM will determine THE OUTCOME OF ONE’S WISDOM.

Worldly wisdom produces worldly results.
Wrong thinking produces wrong living.

   Do you want to see the OUTCOME OF WORLDLY WISDOM? Just look at the Economic mess our country is in. Just look at the mess our Educational system is in. Just look at the mess our Judicial system is in.

CHAOS, DISORDER, DISUNITY, DISTRUST, SCANDAL, CORRUPTION, RACISM, PREJUDICE, BIGOTRY, CIVIL DISOBEDIENCE………these are just a few of the bi-products of WORLDLY WISDOM.

2. Now contrast that with the OUTCOME OF GODLY WISDOM.

   verse 18  Peacemakers who sow in peace raise a harvest righteousness.

If worldly wisdom produces worldly results, GODLY WISDOM produces GODLY RESULTS.

GODLY THINKING produces GODLY LIVING!

Warren Wiersbe says, “What we ARE is what we LIVE. What we LIVE is what we SOW. And what we SOW is what we REAP. If we live by GOD’S WISDOM, the WISDOM that is revealed in HIS HOLY WORD we will sow RIGHTEOUSNESS and PEACE and therefore we will reap God’s blessings.
CONCLUSION

At the famous Rockefeller Center in New York City are four large murals.

The first painting is of a PRIMITIVE MAN laboring with his bare hands in an attempt to survive his difficult environment.

The second is the portrayal of a MAN WHO HAS CREATED CRUDE TOOLS and multiplied his comforts in life.

The third mural is of a man who has MASTERED THE MACHINE and now controls his own destiny.

The fourth mural seems so out of place, so out of context with the other three. It is a picture of JESUS CHRIST presenting His Sermon on the Mount. Struggling to reach Jesus are masses of men, women and children. And underneath that fourth mural are inscribed these words:

“Man’s ultimate destiny depends not on whether he can learn new lessons or make new discoveries or conquests, but on his acceptance of the lesson that was taught him over 2,000 years ago.”

That my friend is TRUE wisdom!

If any of you lacks wisdom, he should ask of God, who gives generously to all without finding fault, and it will be given to him.

James 1:5 NIV