



June 29, 2025

Real Wisdom for a Messy World

LOOKING FOR REAL WISDOM

James 3:13-18



1. **Opening Discussion:** (You will probably want to use only one of these openers)

- a. Who is the wisest person you've ever known? Why did you think of him or her as wise? Can you describe a specific example of their wisdom?
- b. If you were hiring a person to fill a mid-level technical position in a manufacturing or service company, would you be more inclined to hire someone with a lot of knowledge or a lot of wisdom? Why? If you had to hire a manager in the same company, would your answer be the same? Why or why not?
- c. Describe a dispute, argument, or fight that you had to resolve between two children, if possible, one in which neither child was particularly in the wrong. Were you able to restore peace without reverting to the use of your authority as an adult? What mental resources did you have to draw on to defuse the situation?

2. **Prayer:**

- a. **Adoration** – Pray a Psalm or other Scripture to focus on praising God.
- b. **Confession** – Spend time confessing any known sins. 1 John 1:9
- c. **Thanksgiving** – Thank God for answered prayers, blessings, gifts, and opportunities to serve.
- d. **Supplications**
 - i. Pray for the activities of His Church locally and around the world.
 - ii. Pray for the spiritual and physical needs of others and yourself.
- e. **Least Reached People Group: Hindi-speaking Jains of India** (from the IMB “Loving the Lost Through Prayer” guide)

The Hindi-speaking Jains throughout India are known for their radical commitment not to harm or kill any living thing. Not only are they vegetarians, but many also avoid root vegetables, believing that eating these roots causes the unnecessary death of the entire plant. Many Jains wear a cloth mask over their mouth, hoping to keep themselves from accidentally inhaling or swallowing a small organism. Others carry soft brooms and sweep the ground ahead of them as they walk to avoid stepping on insects. Jains painstakingly keep these rules because they're afraid of earning bad karma or even causing harm to their ancestors in the afterlife.

3. **Sermon Key Points**

- a. **False Wisdom**
 - i. What motivates this wisdom?
 - ii. What are the characteristics of this wisdom?

- iii. Results of this wisdom.
- b. Godly Wisdom
 - i. What motivates this wisdom?
 - ii. What are the characteristics of this wisdom?
 - iii. Result of this wisdom.
- c. Application
 - i. Five to Thrive

4. Bible Study:

- a. ***Sunday Afternoon*** – As soon as possible after the sermon, make time to consider:
 - i. What stood out to you the most in this sermon?
 - ii. What new truth did you learn, or what truth were you reminded of?
 - iii. Is there a particular Scripture passage you feel God is leading you to meditate on or commit to memory?
 - iv. What is one thing God is leading you to do after hearing this message?
 - v. Did God convict you of a need to make any changes in your life and walk with Him?
- b. ***Monday:***
 - i. This week's focal passage, James 3:13-18, which addresses Wisdom, fits beautifully between the earlier section about Taming the Tongue (last week's sermon) and the next section about Worldliness, which begins in chapter 4. To see it in context, start the week by reading James 3:1 – 4:12 (if you have a Bible without headings and verse/chapter markings, using it will be helpful). After reading the entire passage, go back and carefully read 3:13-18, meditating on what James is saying.
 - ii. What are two or three key takeaways from the focal passage? How would you summarize these six verses in a sentence or two?
- c. ***Tuesday:***
 - i. Reread the focal passage today and meditate on verse 13 (you may find it helpful to read the verse in several translations).
 - ii. James begins with a question. Who is he addressing with this question? How might it relate to the first sentence of chapter 3?
 - iii. According to verse 13, how can we recognize (in ourselves and in others) the wisdom and understanding necessary for a teacher? What is the ruler or scale for making the measurement?
 - 1. How did Jesus address this issue in Matthew 7:15-20 and Luke 6:43-44?

- iv. Reading the last sentence of verse 13 carefully, what is James saying should be demonstrated? If we have that attitude, what trait will we display when doing good deeds or works?
- v. Jesus encouraged people to come learn from Him because He was “gentle and humble in heart” (Matthew 11:29). Paul asserted his authority as an apostle and teacher after invoking “the humility and gentleness of Christ” (2 Corinthians 10:1). Why do you think humility is such an essential sign of wisdom?

d. Wednesday:

- i. Read and meditate on James 3:14-16.
- ii. What is James describing in these three verses? Who would you expect to display such a condition?
- iii. How would you define or describe
 - 1. “bitter jealousy”? Why is the modifier “bitter” necessary (see Exodus 34:14, Joshua 24:19, and Nahum 1:2)?
 - 2. “selfish ambition”?
- iv. When James says to not “be false to the truth” (do not “deny the truth “ in the NIV), what truth is he talking about? What does John 8:44 say about the source of such a response? How does James make the same point in verse 15?
- v. How do “bitter jealousy” and “selfish ambition” affect a person’s ministry and the organization in which they minister (see verse 16)?
- vi. Why do you think envy and selfish ambition lead to disorder and evil practices (see Romans 1:18-32 & 4:17-19)?
 - 1. Disorder might seem a minor issue compared to “every evil practice”. What does Paul tell us about its importance in 1 Corinthians 14:26 & 40?
 - 2. How does Paul amplify on the notion of “every evil practice” in 2 Timothy 3:2-7? Do you think Paul could have been describing the same kind of results James is?

e. Thursday:

- i. Read the focal passage again, this time meditating on verses 17-18.
- ii. What is James describing in these two verses?
 - 1. How does James describe the source and characteristic of this in 1:17?
 - 2. Depending on the translation you are using, James provides a string of six or more pearls that describe the wisdom from heaven. What does each characteristic mean to you?
 - 3. When James says wisdom is first pure do you think he is just referring to a place on the list or is he establishing purity as an overarching category?
 - a. In what sense would purity be necessary for all of the other characteristics to be true?

- b. Read these verses and discuss what they teach about purity:
Matthew 5:8, 2 Corinthians 11:2, Philippians 1:9-11, 2:14, & 4:8, 1 Timothy 1:5 & 5:22, Titus 1:15, and Hebrews 7:26
 - 4. Compare the list of characteristics James provides with the Beatitudes Jesus taught in Matthew 5:3-12. What similarities do you see?
 - iii. Verse 18 reads quite differently in the NIV, ESV, and CSB, but all three make a similar connection between peacemaking and righteousness. Why do you suppose these two are connected? How would you put verse 18 in your own words?
- f. **Friday:**
 - i. James 3:13-18 is all about two kinds of wisdom. Study the passage and make a list comparing the wisdom of the world in verses 14-15 with the wisdom from God in verse 17. Then add to the lists the results of worldly wisdom in verse 16 and of heavenly wisdom in verses 17 and 18. Which list do you think would best represent the situation in most American churches today?
 - ii. Compare the lists you've made with the acts of the flesh and the Fruit of the Spirit Paul provides in Galatians 5:19-23. What does that suggest about the source of the wisdom James is discussing? What insights do Proverbs 9:10 and 1:7 provide?
 - iii. Looking at these passages, what are three sources of Christian wisdom?
 - 1. 1 Corinthians 1:24 & 30
 - 2. Ephesians 1:17
 - 3. 2 Timothy 3:15
- g. **Saturday:**
 - i. Read the focal passage, James 3:13-18, one final time.
 - ii. Then read the first four chapters of Proverbs, noting all of the instructions and warnings associated with wisdom.

5. Application:

- a. James makes a marked distinction between the wisdom of the world and the wisdom of heaven, which should cause us to pause and think about our decision-making. How often do we adopt practices in our churches that are based on or modeled after the best practices of the world's organizations? While there may not be anything inherently wrong with such practices, we should never forget that God's ways and His judgments are different from those of the world. For example, the church in Laodicea, which the world considered rich, God declared to be poor, while the poor church in Smyrna was said to be rich (see Revelation 2:9 and 3:14-22). Often, God's wisdom will lead us to do things that will seem ridiculous to those without such wisdom.
- b. Heavenly wisdom comes from God through the Son and the Holy Spirit. James tells us that God will give us wisdom if we ask (James 1:5), making prayer a key component. And of course, God's Word, the Bible, is a source of wisdom. If we seek God's wisdom, we must increase the time spent doing both.