

Intro:

- It was a great week of Soccer Nights loving and serving our city. We were grateful to have our sending church with us from Open Door Baptist Church in Raleigh, NC and they all served with excellence.
- Last week our sending church pastor, Dwayne Milioni, shared a challenging word on the power of the tongue. A faith-controlled tongue can do a lot of good but an uncontrolled tongue can do immense damage. This is why James says, “Not many of you should become teachers” because our words invite greater judgment. In our passage today, James continues addressing the church community with his central concern the violent quarrels that are shaking and tearing them apart. He turns to the issue of wisdom that is at the heart of their dissension.

Initial stimulating question: why is wisdom so essential? J. I. Packer, the great author of *Knowing God*, says that receiving wisdom from God is like being taught to drive.

Illustration: I’m sure that most of you know that in Massachusetts you must obtain a driver’s education certificate before you can apply for a license. What is the purpose of this education? The RMV lists 11 “experiences” that it says a potential driver must be exposed to as part of their driver’s education.

1. Highway driving, including entering and exiting, changing lanes, and passing a vehicle
2. Navigating an intersection without traffic signals
3. Yielding to traffic and merging with traffic
4. Pulling off the road safely
5. Navigating a rotary or roundabout
6. Stopping for pedestrians
7. Varying vehicle speeds to accommodate driving setting and road conditions
8. Parking the vehicle in a parking space on the side of the road and in a parking lot
9. Backing the vehicle in and out of a parking space
10. Making three-point turns
11. Starting, stopping, and turning the vehicle on a hill

Is the goal of this education just to introduce a potential driver to these experiences? No!!! The goal is also to train a potential driver in how he/she should respond in each of these circumstances.

“What matters in driving is the speed and appropriateness of your reactions to things and the soundness of your judgment as to what scope a situation gives you. You do not ask yourself why the road should narrow or screw itself into a dogleg wiggle just where it does, nor why that van should be parked where it is, nor why the driver in front should hug the crown of the road so lovingly; you simply try to see and do the right thing in the actual situation that presents itself. The effect of wisdom is to enable you and me to do just that in the actual situations of everyday life” (J. I. Packer, *Knowing God*).

Transition: everyday you are faced with situations in which you need wisdom to respond. Today, James challenges us to put our wisdom on trial to inspect if it is from God or from man.

Read James 3:13-18

I. Honestly, Inspect your Wisdom (13).

- James invites those who claim to be wise to step forward so that he can analyze the legitimacy of their claim. This builds on the challenges of:
 - James 1:22: be doers of the Word and not merely hearers only, and...
 - James 2:14-26: faith apart from works is dead.
- James assesses their wisdom not on theological terms but on practical terms:
 - True wisdom produces good works.
 - It is not merely intellectual but practical
 - True wisdom produces humility and meekness.
 - Wisdom must always be accompanied by humility. This is the opposite of arrogance and self-promotion. Meekness doesn't come from weakness, cowardice or passivity but from trusting God and being set free from anxious self-promotion.
- What is wisdom? Wisdom is the skillful practice of applying knowledge to the matter of practical living.
- If your wisdom were taken for a road test, would you pass the inspection? If not, why not?

II. Reject Earthly Wisdom (14-16).

- As in typical OT wisdom literature, James divides wisdom into two realms (we might also call this the 'tale of two cities'): heavenly wisdom and earthly wisdom, or God's wisdom and man's wisdom.
- Earthly wisdom is characterized by jealousy and selfish ambition and produces disorder and every evil practice (14-16).
 - If you claim to have wisdom but you harbor bitter jealousy and selfish ambition in your heart, you are living a lie.

A. Characteristics of Earthly Wisdom

- Bitter Jealousy
 - This refers to a harsh and resentful attitude toward others.
 - What jealousy is in your heart right now and destroying relationships
- Selfish Ambition
 - This refers to self-seeking that cultivates antagonism and factionalism.
 - You will seek your agenda at any cost, even if that means trampling on others.
 - Your concern is more for personal power and prestige.

B. The Origin: Earthly, unspiritual and demonic

- The progression is from bad to worse.
- Earthly: limited to earth and narrow perspective that fails to consider God's realm and will.
- Unspiritual: characterized by humanness, frailty, an un sanctified heart, and an unredeemed spirit
- Demonic: generated by Satan's forces.

C. The Result: Disorder and every evil practice

- This connotes a chaotic frenzy of fighting in the church (cf. 4:1).
- There is nothing that Satan wants more than disorder and evil practices within the church.
- If we as a people at RHC do not reject earthly wisdom, we will not be able to unify around a common vision and shake the nations for the sake of the gospel. ‘

How can you be freed from your jealousy and envy?

- At the root of jealousy and selfish ambition is an elevation of self over God.
- Jealousy completely ignores the provision of God – you want what someone else has and yet fail to see all God has given you.
- Selfish ambition elevates self to the place of God – you want to make a name for yourself.
- But, true wisdom doesn't boast in self but boasts in the Lord.

“Thus says the LORD: ‘Let not the wise man boast in his wisdom, let not the mighty man boast in his might, let not the rich man boast in his riches, but let him who boasts boast in this, that he understands and knows me, that I am the LORD who practice steadfast love, justice, and righteousness in the earth. For in these things I delight, declares the Lord.’” (Jer 9:23-24).

- You must die to self.

III. Pursue Heavenly Wisdom (17-18).

- Heavenly wisdom is characterized by humility and produces peace. James also lists a number of other attributes that should accompany the humility of heavenly wisdom (similar to Gal 5:22-23).

A. Characteristics of Heavenly Wisdom:

- Pure
 - Connotes innocence, moral blamelessness, spiritual integrity and moral sincerity
 - This is the primary virtue with the rest providing dimensions of this overall purity
 - “Blessed are the pure in heart” (Matt 5:8)
- Peaceable
 - Peace-promoting: “Blessed are the peacemakers” (Matt 5:9)
 - This is the complete opposite of “selfish ambition” and the discord it produces
 - James’ community was in great need of peace and peacemakers
- Gentle (Considerate)
- Open to reason (Submissive, willing to yield, teachable)
- Full of mercy and good fruits
 - Showing concern for those who suffer pain and hardship
 - The ability to forgive
- Impartial
- Sincere (Without hypocrisy/not hypocritical)

B. The Origin: Heavenly

- Unlike earthly wisdom, divine wisdom doesn't come from mere observation, but from prayer, divine illumination, and faith (James 1:6-8). Ask God who gives generously to all.

C. The Result: Peace

- You will not pursue peace with others until you first find peace with God.
- Peace is one of the critical attributes of a true believer (Gal. 5:22; Heb 12:11).
 - “If possible, so far as it depends on you, live peaceably with all” (Rom 12:18).
 - “So then let us pursue what makes for peace and for mutual upbuilding” (Rom 14:19).
 - “Strive for peace with everyone” (Heb 12:14).
- The legacy of those who pursue heavenly wisdom and reject earthly wisdom is peace.

The Point: Seek after heavenly wisdom in order to bring the peace that God desires.

A Peacemaker's Checklist
Ken Sande, *The Peacemaker*

1. Glorify God

- a. How can I please and honor the Lord in this situation?

2. Get the Log Out of Your Own Eye

- a. How have I contributed to this conflict and what do I need to do about it?
- b. Am I guilty of reckless words, falsehood, gossip, or any other worthless talk?
- c. Have I kept my word and fulfilled my responsibilities?
- d. Have I abused my authority?
- e. Have I treated others the way I would want to be treated?

3. Go and Show Your Brother His Fault

- a. How can I help others to understand how they have contributed to this conflict?
- b. A sin is too serious to overlook if it:
 - i. Is dishonoring to God.
 - ii. Has damaged our relationship.
 - iii. Is hurting or might hurt other people.
 - iv. Is hurting the offender and diminishing that person's usefulness to God.
- c. When I need to confront others, by God's help I will:
 - i. Listen responsibly and wait patiently while others speak.
 - ii. Give hope and encouragement by ministering the gospel.
 - iii. Believe the best about the others until I have the facts to prove otherwise.
 - iv. Talk in person whenever possible.
 - v. Choose the time and place that will be conducive to a productive conversation.
- d. If I cannot resolve a dispute with someone in private, with God's help I will:
 - i. Seek out the counsel of others on how to be a more effective peacemaker.
 - ii. If necessary, arrange for one or two others to talk with the both of you.
 - iii. If necessary, seek help from the church and submit to its discipline.

4. Go and Be Reconciled

- a. How can I demonstrate forgiveness and encourage a reasonable solution to this conflict?
- b. When I am having a difficult time forgiving someone, I will remember how much God has forgiven me, not only in this situation but also in the past.
- c. When I forgive someone, with God's help I will make these promises:
 - i. I will no longer dwell on this incident.
 - ii. I will not bring up this incident again and use it against them.
 - iii. I will not talk to others about this incident.
 - iv. I will not allow this incident to stand between us or to hinder our personal relationship.

Conclusion: as you take your wisdom for a test drive, what does it reveal?

- Where do you need to grow in wisdom?
- What responses need God's empowerment to change?
- Is there jealousy or envy that needs to be repented of?
- Is there selfish ambition that needs to be crushed?
- Who do you need to initiate peacemaking with today?