

Godly Wisdom in Action

Introduction and Review

- Last week we looked at the power of the tongue to influence people for good and/or evil.
- Believers who teach the scriptures are cautioned to take the responsibility of teaching very seriously (v. 1-2).
- We learned that a believer's words have great power to influence many people & must be brought under control (v. 3-5a).
- We also learned that a believer's mouth has tremendous potential for destruction & can only be controlled by the Holy Spirit working in the heart of the believer (5b-12).

I. Wisdom is Revealed in Daily Lifestyle (v. 13)

A. Who is wise (v. 13a)

This is a searching question for those who claim to be wise & claim to have spiritual insight about Christian living. James knows that many people in this congregation who were making this claim had no genuine understanding of how the bible is to be applied in a Christian's life.

B. How to be wise (v. 13b)

*James is teaching that wisdom is not determined by the level of **knowledge** of the bible, but rather the degree of **application**. Wisdom is not what you know, but rather what you do – “By his good conduct...” **Wisdom is seen and observed, not just heard; revealed in actions, not just words!** And godly wisdom always involves humility – “meekness”.*

II. Ungodly Wisdom (v. 14-16)

A. Description (v. 14-15)

*Ungodly wisdom involves jealousy & selfish ambition. Jealousy (**ζήλος**) is intense negative feelings over someone's achievements or success. Selfish ambition (**ἐριθεία**) means desiring success for personal gain. **Both have self-centered motives = the opposite of humility!** Do not boast of having godly wisdom when your lifestyle is full of jealousy & selfish ambition – denying the truth. This wisdom is earthly (man-centered), unspiritual (natural) & demonic (evil in origin).*

B. Result (v. 16)

*This ungodly wisdom is motivated by **attitudes** of jealousy & selfish ambition. This ungodly wisdom results in actions of disorder & all kinds of evil practices. Disorder means unstable & open defiance leading to disunity.*

III. Godly Wisdom (v. 17-18)

A. Description (v. 17)

*Godly wisdom produces godly qualities in a believer's life: **pure** (holiness is **primary**), **peaceable** (loving harmony), **gentle** (submissive), **open to reason** (willing to listen & obey), **full of mercy & good fruits** (acts of mercy to others), **impartial** (no favoritism) & **sincere** (no pretense).*

B. Result (v. 18)

Righteousness is simply conduct or a lifestyle that pleases God (1:20). Godly wisdom guides believers in making a peaceful environment that produces a lifestyle that pleases God (Mt. 5:9). Godly wisdom always leads to unity.

The result of ungodly wisdom is disorder & disunity, but the result of godly wisdom is righteousness & peace leading to joy (Rom. 14:17).

ILL: All students face some difficult assignments in school. Some students look for quick, easy & sometimes unethical solutions from the wrong people. Other students ask the teacher for help & get genuine long-lasting solutions to difficult assignments.

APPL: Likewise in the Christian life, we face difficulties where the solutions to problems are not obvious & we need wisdom. James has already told us to ask God for it (1:5-6, 17). True wisdom is a gracious gift from God to His children.

CONCLUSION

Every true & genuine Christian wants to be wise. No one really wants to think, speak or act foolishly. The OT provides wisdom & commands us to be wise. The NT provides wisdom & commands us to be wise (Eph. 5:15). Jesus commands us to be wise. The Holy Spirit instructs & guides us in the way of wisdom. God Himself has promised to give us wisdom. So then each of us must ask ourselves, “Am I wise?”, “Do I conduct my life in wisdom?”, “Do I speak in wisdom, act in wisdom, respond in wisdom...?” I’ll ask you to be quick to hear & slow to answer on this one. Are most of your words & actions designed to bring about peace with people, righteousness in your life & theirs? Pr. 14:1. Are you building up or tearing down – male or female: home, church, school, job, meetings, committees, etc.? If you discern that you create more disorder than peace, more disunity than unity, more ungodliness than godliness in people’s lives then you need God’s wisdom. He promises to give if we humbly & earnestly ask for it. HUMBLY ASK FOR IT.

If you are not a Christian, there is one and only one wise response for you today. Jesus has come into this world to live a perfect life in your place & He died as the perfect substitute for your sins. Jesus offers you salvation today. So the only wise response from you is to humbly accept His offer. And you know that you must believe in Christ to be saved...

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