

**SHOW ME: WISDOM**  
**SHOW ME SERIES - Part 6**  
**Dan Burrell**

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Good morning Life Fellowship. It is good to see you this morning. My name is Dan and I am one of the teaching pastors here. We have had a great summer and I am just so thankful that the pandemic is finally easing enough that people have been able to come back in person. We had a great full house in our first service this morning even in the midst of what is vacation time.

Which reminds me that many of you who are watching today on the Internet are folks who are regularly part of our church and now are on vacation, and we are thankful that you have taken a few moments this Sunday to spend with us online. As well there are many other people from around our community watching online who are still shut in a little bit because of the pandemic. And then there are some people who have moved to our area recently, and they like to visit a church online before they attend in person. We have had about a dozen families in the last month that had been watching us online and now they have been visiting with us in person. So if you are here in the room today because of that, or if you are watching online and are new to our community, we are glad that you are here and we hope you will join us in person as soon as you are able.

We are going to be in James Chapter 3 this morning, so please open your Bibles to James as we continue to study through the book of James that we are calling the 'Show Me Series.' Before we get into that I just want to mention that several have asked about our missionaries around the world who have been experiencing tough times. While things are getting better in most of this country as it relates to Covid, there are other areas that we have deep roots and partnerships with that are really struggling at this time. I want to just mention a couple of them with you so you can be praying for them.

First of all in Burma which is Myanmar, we have a partnership with a ministry there through our Missionaries Rick and Diane Wilson who are members of our church and were here in our first service today. They were also greeting people as they came in for the second service. They have an important work there that they have been doing for over a decade. It includes a children's home and a Bible institute and seminary.

Last January before Covid hit here I was over in Myanmar with Rick and Tim Parrish and a friend of mine from Vietnam, and we got to meet some of the people there. I met a guy there named Paul and if you would just please pray for Paul who is the director of the ministry there because he has Covid. He is on a respirator, and his whole family also has Covid, as well as eight kids from the children's home. And unless something changes in his trajectory we are going to lose him. So if you would please remember to pray for Paul. He still has children living at home and he is a great guy that has been doing a very important work. They are in a coup on top of it so it is really a tough time for them. And I also got another prayer request just this morning from another partner over there.

And then there is Cuba. Cuba has had a big resurgence of Covid going on right now. Maybe you are aware that they have been having some protests hoping they could

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make the government unstable. And because I have worked for many years in Cuba and because I have a south Florida connection, the media in reality is often really different than it is when it relates to Cuba. On our news media, because there are a lot of American Cubans that are protesting here in the United States, it looks like things are happening down there. But trust me, nothing is happening down there. They had three days of protests and then they have shut it down. They have a policeman on every corner and if you protest you disappear, it is that bad.

People who don't understand Communist and Socialist governments like what is in Cuba do not understand what they are all about. When they say something they mean it, and they do not mind making you disappear, or making your life as close to hell on earth as they can, or even with killing you. So they have suppression on every level. My Cuban friend has a son who is twenty and he was supposed to get married last week. That was cancelled because no legal transactions are happening. The stores are empty and they also have a lot of Covid. So please pray for our brothers and sisters in Christ around the world. Sometimes it is real easy for us to get comfortable in our condition and we lose perspective on things that are going on in other parts of the world.

The last thing I want to do before we get into the study this morning is I would like for all of us to look at this wall. Sometimes it is like when you have a cobweb in your house and it is there and you don't see it even though you pass by it so many times. That can happen with good things too. We put these on our wall over a year ago, and it says this: *'God, let us hear from you today through your Word and through your Spirit.'*

That was our prayer and that was our challenge, and we have it hanging up all over, but I wonder if we are really doing that. One of the things the elders challenged us to do as we began this calendar year was to engage; to engage in a meaningful way with the Word of God, engage with Living in community, Investing in growth, Finding your purpose and Embracing the Great Commission, and also engaging with the Holy Spirit who lives within us.

So as we get ready to open James Chapter 3 this morning may I ask you to engage by remembering this prayer that we have been praying: *'God, let us please hear from you this day through your Word but also through your Holy Spirit.'* So let's just take a moment and pray. If you would please pray for Paul and our brothers and sisters who are suffering around the world because of Covid and oppression, but then also would you take just a moment and ask God to help you today to hear from Him. You are not here by accident. You may think you are, but you are not. God has assigned this hour for all of us to examine our hearts in light of His Word and to listen to His Holy Spirit because He has something He wants us to learn, or change, or do, or address. So let's take just a moment and quietly focus and then we will open the Word.

*Now Father, we do pray that you would use this hour to touch eternity as we listen for you, as we obey your Word. Father, we do remember Paul and Noel and all of*

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*our partners around the world who are in some cases struggling mightily today. We pray that your mercy and your grace will be real to them at this time, to meet their needs at this time. Help us to be agents of your grace and provision in their lives where we are able. Father, in this room we have needs as well, and they are mostly spiritual needs, but they are significant needs. So Father, help us to be more like you when we leave than when we came. Speak to us, Lord, through your Word and through your Spirit this day. For it is in Christ's name I pray. Amen.*

James Chapter 3 is where we are in our Scripture as we continue 'Show Me.' This is James writing to the believers who were basically Hebrews spread around the world and James was the half-brother of Jesus. We have been going through it section by section, but James is one of those books that no matter how many times you teach it you can always find something new. There is no way that we can get through it and be able to mine every truth from every verse that we would like to, but we want to set you up so that you learn the basic themes, the basic principles and so you can study it on your own and learn more as well.

So in James Chapter 3 and beginning in verse 13 would you please follow along as I read aloud. James begins by asking a question in this section: ***"Who is wise and understanding among you?"*** And then James gives a directive, or a command. ***"By his good conduct let him show his works in the meekness of wisdom. But if you have bitter jealousy and selfish ambition in your hearts, do not boast and be false to the truth. This is not the wisdom that comes down from above, but is earthly, unspiritual, demonic. For where jealousy and selfish ambition exist, there will be disorder and every vile practice. But the wisdom from above is first pure, then peaceable, gentle, open to reason, full of mercy and good fruits, impartial and sincere. And a harvest of righteousness is sown in peace by those who make peace."***

We are going to take our time this morning through this Scripture, and there are different ways in which Pastor Ben and I approach these passages. Sometimes it is the matter of how the Holy Spirit is speaking to us through the Scripture as well. There are times when there will be very practical applications that we want to make, and we may give you four principles for this or that. Other times we may just see one great big idea. When they were teaching homiletics to us in Bible college they would say sometimes we should just find one nail and then nail it all the way in. Don't pick seven nails and try to nail on each one; pick just one and nail it all the way in. So we usually try to get the great big idea of a passage and then try to nail it all the way down.

Today I want us to walk. I want us to meander so to speak, just to kind of go through the garden of God's Word and let's pause from moment to moment and look to see what God is saying. I believe in a room this diverse that God may be saying different things to different people, but overall I think it is really, really clear what James is trying to say here. And that is as you walk in this world, you need to possess the right kind of

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wisdom. And sometimes in this world we don't follow the right kind of wisdom. We follow a false wisdom.

So as we go through this I want us to consider that because there are all kinds of wisdom, and we all do need wisdom. Many people think education is wisdom, that knowledge is wisdom, that having intellect and experience help us in terms of wisdom. But I want to note here that Charles Spurgeon who was one of the greatest preachers to ever live said this: *"Wisdom is the right use of knowledge, to know though is not to be wise. Many men know a great deal and all are the greater fools for it. There is no fool so great a fool as a knowing fool, but to know how to use knowledge is to have wisdom."*

And I think that is very, very true. You know I am a professor at Liberty University where I can enjoy the world of academia and so forth. I was talking to a group of students not long ago and they said something like this: *'I cannot wait until I get my doctorate because I just want to be able to hang around really, really smart people, and have that in common with them.'* And I said, *'Dude, if you are looking to hang around really smart people you need to choose your group better than a bunch of people with doctorates. I have one, and I can testify that there are a lot of overeducated idiots around.'*

All you have to do is pick up a newspaper and look at the experts and you will see this. And that is not to insult people who have worked hard and gotten a doctorate. If you have, then praise the Lord for that. But I am of the nature that says I also appreciate character more than I do education because both are great, but if you have to choose one remember you can borrow brains but you can't borrow character. So I am a big character guy. I love blue collar hardworking upright people. And if you get a doctorate that is fine, just make sure you also have wisdom, because knowledge and wisdom are two separate things as Spurgeon pointed out.

Some people think wisdom is how we think, and we are a free nation so we have all this liberty. And that is great but many Americans think we are it. We have the freeist nation therefore we must be the smartest nation as well. We have the freeist nation therefore we assume we are the richest nation. We have the freeist nation and sometimes we think we are the wisest nation. There is a co-relation, freedom is a great opportunity, but how to handle freedom is a matter of wisdom. And I think today if you look across our country you will see that we are filled with people who are absolutely free compared to most of the other people on the planet, and yet we are absolutely fools in our freedom.

Edmond Burke said this: *"For what is liberty without wisdom and without virtue. It is the greatest of all possible evils for it is folly, vice and madness without tuition or restraint."* I think what we see in our culture today is a group of people who are free and they are using, or abusing their freedom to do as they would rather than as they should, to

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do the things they could rather than what they ought. With freedom comes great responsibility and in order to use that responsibility we must have wisdom.

If that is true politically and in terms of human liberty, it is far more important spiritually. We are free in Christ; we are set free by the blood that Jesus shed for us. The Law no longer is the damnable constraint that it once was, that doomed us to an eternity without God. We have freedom if we have salvation. But I would say this as well, that is not a freedom that comes apart from using godly wisdom so that freedom is not abused, but rather used to glorify God and good for ourselves.

I believe in the United States Christian culture we have lost wisdom, or we never had it at all when it comes to using our freedom in Christ, because many of us pursue a form of Christianity that claims power in godliness yet has little. We are more concerned with blending into the world that standing apart from the world. And as we look at this passage in James I want you to understand the possession of biblical wisdom requires us to live separate from the world. We ought to look different, act different, have different priorities, have different values, and have a different direction. The things that we find funny or amusing or interesting ought to be a reflection of godly wisdom applied to biblical truths.

This is one of the things James is going to be talking to us about. So we need to know how to handle education and knowledge. We need to know how to handle freedom. We need to know how to handle our salvation wisely. Adoniram Judson said this: *“No mind, no wisdom -- temporary mind, temporary wisdom -- eternal mind, eternal wisdom.”* We need to think with godly wisdom.

So let's look at that a little bit, because we know there are all kinds of wisdom. There is the intellectual, the knowing, and there is the behavioral which is doing. We know that there is the knowledge or the application. We know that there is human wisdom and godly wisdom which Scripture talks about right here and we will study that this morning. But there is also a scientific type of wisdom, and there is also a spiritual or philosophical type of wisdom. There is intellect and then there is reason. There is intuition and then there is logic. There is the practical and there is the theoretical.

So this isn't just a real simple type of thing like either you are wise or you are a fool. This is complex. Yet the Scripture reduces it down to something that I believe if we will get ahold of will transform the way we think and the way we act, because our behavior is a reflection of what we really believe to be true. Unfortunately, that is also damning to us today, because if you look at the way the average professing Christian behaves; if you look at that you have to ask yourself if they really know God, and is He really their Lord.

And I think the conclusion we would draw many times is not the conclusion that we want, or that we should want. There is a problem in a Christianity that is more

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cultural than holy. There is a problem with a Christianity that is more interested in conformity than in Christ likeness. There is a problem with a Christianity that sees as a primary value blending in as opposed to standing up on biblical principles. And we need to be really aware of this if we are going to have wisdom, and if we are going to live according to wisdom.

So wisdom is important; it appears in the Old Testament over three hundred times. Even in the book of Proverbs, which is called 'the wisdom book,' it appears over one hundred times. Wisdom is the product of knowledge and discernment and experience and reason and intelligence and insight and comprehension and application. It is a wide topic. So the best thing I think we can do is go to this passage and meander through it.

Let's start with verse 13, and let's try to understand the context in which James is speaking. He begins with a rhetorical question which is a common communicative device that gets everyone's attention. You hear a question and then immediately you start answering it intellectually in your mind. Many times preachers will start with a question and this is what James has done. He says: "***Who is wise and understanding among you?***" Stop for a moment and ask yourself that question - who is wise and understanding?

Now when you look at this, and I like to do this when I study the Scriptures, and that is to look for key words and also I circle them, and I look to see if there is a connection between them. There are two key words here, he says among all of you who are reading this – who is wise and who is understanding? And I thought those were kind of synonymous; so is this like the two wheels on a two wheeled cart? What is going on here? So I studied the Greek a little bit and they are very similar but they are also unique. The word that we have here for wise or wisdom is the word *sophos*. And *sophos* is a general Greek word that is meant to describe kind of a speculative, a philosophical type of knowledge or theory. It deals with philosophy.

Maybe you wonder why that is important. It is because when we understand that this was the Jewish culture but it is being translated out of the Greek. Our culture has a respect for wisdom; our culture has a respect for this general knowledge. We are thinkers; we are intellectuals, so James is saying, '*Do you like to think of yourself as well educated? Do you like to think of yourself as being smarter than the average bear, as Yogi would say? And do you like to think of yourself as someone who looks below the surface.*'

And then James asks 'who is understanding', so not only is he talking about wisdom but he is also talking about understanding. And that word understanding is the Greek word *epistemon*. And *epistemon* means 'like an expert,' like 'a skilled craftsman,' or like someone who is 'specialized in their knowledge, like a tradesman.' If you were

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going to have something made you would want the best there is so you would look for someone who is *epistemon*.

Now I can build something because I have tools in my garage. I can't find them, but they are in there somewhere, and if you gave me enough time I could build you a planter, or a trellis for a grape vine or a rose bush. But I could not build a piece of furniture. I could not build this back drop. I do not possess that high quality *epistemon*. But Bruce here builds a lot of the stuff that you see around here. He is a craftsman, he is an expert. He probably has a lot better tools than I have, but regardless of his tools he has a lot more experience and talent than I have. He would be an *epistemon*. Where I would be the generalist, he would be the specialist.

Maybe you wonder why this is important. It is because we need to understand that James doesn't care if we are really educated or if we are really skilled. He doesn't care if we have a PhD in something or we are just someone who has a natural innate talent for something. And among all of this we ought to be asking ourselves questions about how we make decisions, how we live our lives, where we get our values, and what is our foundation. And so James begins with this question.

Then James follows it up with a directive: "***Who is wise and understanding among you? By his good conduct let him show his works in the meekness of wisdom.***" So he answers the question with a command: "***let him show.***" Now I am kind of a grammar geek because I used to teach high school English, so I look for different things. And in the Greek this is called imperative. In other words it is a direct expectation of obedience command. James starts off with a question but then he gets really serious. He wants us to think about the question but then this is what he wants us to do. So he circles back around and punches us between the eyes so to speak. And he says, '*Here is what I expect. You call yourself a Christian; you say you are a believer. Then you ought to have the right kind of wisdom if this is real wisdom.*'

He says this is what he expects to see and he lists three things in this passage. The first thing he talks about is good conduct. Now the way it is constructed it kind of puts this before the command, but he says he expects to see conduct that is worthy of wise biblical living. This is lifestyle, this is reputation, this is character, and this is what someone thinks of you when they hear your name. Boy, that is a powerful concept, isn't it? When people hear your name, what do they think? Do they think you are smart, you are lazy, you are crooked, you have character, you have compassion, you are shady, you are sketchy, or you are trustworthy?

And we all do that, don't we? My wife and I were starting our family and the first one is coming along and we are picking out names. That is always fun except if you are a school teacher. If you are a school teacher you know exactly what I am saying, don't you? Your spouse suggests a name for your kid and then you remember all the former students you had. And you say: '*No, no, no, I had a kid by that name in my class, so no,*

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*no, no.* And Julie and I were both school teachers so that eliminated about 98 percent of the names at that point because we could always think of someone who had that name and so we didn't want that same name.

And we all kind of do that, don't we? We attach impressions to names of people we know because of our interactions and engagements with them. So James is saying when it comes to your reputation, when it comes to your conduct, is it worthy of Christianity, is it worthy of truth, is it godly, is it true.

Then James moves on beyond good conduct and says, "***Let him show his works.***" Pastor Ben had a masterful sermon on faith without works being dead a few weeks back. There is an expectation that what you believe is demonstrated on how you behave. And the absence of good works is indicative of, to the discerning person, an issue with what you really believe. If you really believe it is true it is going to have an impact on what you do. James is hammering this nail one more time. He is saying it needs to show in your deeds and in your actions and your passion because this deals with endeavors and activities. Are you showing wisdom? Are you showing the values you possess in how you live your life, how you do your deeds and in your actions and passions. Are you showing them in what you love and what you hate, what you spend your time doing and your priorities? Are your endeavors and your activities consistent with someone who has godly biblical true wisdom?

Then there is the third one and that is meekness. And this one is kind of off the chart a little bit because it is unusual. And this has to deal with how you do what you do. This has to do with gentleness. Meekness is strength under control or controlled power. It is the tenderness and graciousness with which you use your authority and your power. Have you ever known someone who gets a promotion at work and then turns into a tyrant, just turns into someone you just want to take behind the barn and where I come from would say, 'to beat the tar out of them.'

Now someone is going to write me a note and say that is not a good way to show gentleness and meekness, and you are right. I am not wise in this area and I need to work on it. But there are some people who were just a nice person until they got some authority. Someone you liked working with until you had to work for them. What happened? They lost in their wisdom this spirit that would allow them to be more effective, and they forgot that getting authority, getting power, is not given to them so they can abuse others with it but so that they could bless others with it, so that they could encourage, and mentor, and motivate and so forth. Yes, sometimes it means they have to be tough and direct, but they don't have to be a jerk about it.

Again James is saying we may have the right information but it can be delivered in the wrong way. You may have the right position, the right authority, but what can happen is you may not be using it in a godly way. And wisdom is the difference between abusing and using. Wisdom is the difference between hurting and helping when

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you are in a position of authority. So this is what he is saying, that we are expected to model biblical wisdom and it is to be demonstrated in our conduct, in our work and in our meekness. The first point of wisdom is to discern what is false and the second point of wisdom is to determine what is true. James wants us to embody, identify and live out true wisdom.

J. I. Packer said this: *“Confidence that one’s impressions are God-given is no guarantee that this is really so, even when they persist and grow stronger through long seasons of prayer. Bible-based wisdom must judge them.”* So here is what we sometimes do, we kind of manipulate what people think of us. And we use spiritual terms like, *‘I’ve prayed about this.’ ‘God has led me.’* And he was saying beyond all of that, all the words we may say, even the spiritual exercises which we may claim to be important to us, when it comes right down to it you and I have a responsibility to use the Word of God to discern whether something is true or false, whether something is legitimate or illegitimate. And if you don’t know the standard of the Word of God then people are going to be able to hoodwink you, and they are going to be able to fool you, and they may even be able to abuse you. We need to know the Scriptures.

Watchman Nee said this: *“It is highly dangerous to receive the truths of the Bible with human wisdom, for this is a hidden and subtle method which invariably causes a believer to perfect with his flesh the work of the Holy Spirit.”* And there are many people who use the Word of God to bludgeon, the Word of God to rationalize, the Word of God for the image of spirituality to abuse. And we need to be wise, we need to be discerning, looking for these characteristics of biblical wisdom which are conduct, works and meekness.

So that is the first verse. Now let’s get into the meat of the passage where James says he is going to show you. And the outline is right there in Scripture and it is really clear. James says he is going to show us false wisdom and he is going to show us true wisdom. He is going to show us eternal wisdom and he is going to show us temporary wisdom. He is going to show us wisdom that is godly and he is going to show us wisdom that is worldly. So we are going to see this contrast as we get into it.

Let’s begin by looking in verse 14 and meander through it for a little bit. Here is what it says: ***“But if you have bitter jealousy and selfish ambition in your hearts, do not boast and be false to the truth.”*** There are four key words here and in them you have a motivation for false witness. This is the ‘why’ behind people who are unwise, this is the phony wisdom that we sometimes hear, and we need to be aware of it. He is warning those who are motivated by values that imply a form of wisdom but which is actually quite fake. He is saying to watch out for these people, because this deals with heart and our heart is our core value.

So look for these four things in verse 14. First of all there is jealousy and I am adding the word ‘bitter’ to jealousy because there is a connotation to the Greek word that

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has special emphasis. Because we might say, *'Oh I am just kind of jealous.'* But here this is a special degree of jealousy. This is bitter jealousy. In fact it is the same type of phraseology that James used earlier on when he talked about the bitter waters. So it is a real sharp, poignant, prickly, pungent type of jealousy that takes your breath away, just kind of surprises you or shocks you.

Have you ever picked up a drink and all of a sudden it tastes very bitter? Some of you are old enough, and if you are from the north maybe you remember Vernor's Ginger Ale. I am not talking about stuff with that same name they sell today. I am talking about the good stuff that was made back quite a while ago and was popular if you lived up in like Michigan and the northern tier of states. It is kind of like Bienheim Ginger Ale and if you are from South Carolina you know about Bienheim Ginger Ale. It will curl your hair especially if you get the spicy brand. But if you think you are going to take a sip of the traditional kind of ginger ale and you try Bienheim you will find it will kind of burn all the way down. And it surprises you.

Another example might be if you have ever drunk old milk. Maybe you don't look at the date on the container or maybe you have been on vacation and you just pour out some milk without noticing there are clumps in it. But when you put it in your mouth you will wonder what in the world you have put in your mouth. This has this connotation here that you are expecting a nice cold, sweet glass of something and instead it is something you need to spit out.

So this is the kind of jealousy that just eats you up from the inside out. It has a corrupt level of energy behind the jealousy that is harsh, sharp, cutting and distractive. And this is where jealousy leads us. It leads us to doing things that are outside of our character, and certainly outside of God's standards. That is why one of the Ten Commandments is 'don't envy,' because envy gives fruit to jealousy and jealousy gives fruit to all kinds of evil, wicked, manipulative, abusive behavior. And what happens is we get fixated on it and we go deeper and deeper into it.

Our entire culture is built on wanting something we don't have yet. Have you noticed that? We want the corner office. We get a promotion but someone else gets a bigger promotion. Or they got a better office, or they got a better view, or they get more benefits. You are watching television and the ads say if you want to be attractive, or sexy, you need to wear this or wear that, you have to try this or that, you have to use this perfume or aftershave, and you have to wear this brand of clothes. And honestly we need to remember this, you can look at that big old hunky guy with muscles, or the beautiful shapely woman and think if you just wore that outfit, if you just wore that perfume, if you just spent money on that outfit then your jealousy makes you think you could be like them. No, you won't.

I am older than I want to admit right now but there is nothing I can do to turn myself into one of those guys that has the perfect physique and so putting on a pair of

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overpriced jeans or a tank top is not going to make me look anything but a ridiculous looking old man. Okay? That is just the way it works. I may be a ridiculous old man that smells good, but that isn't going to get me anything. But we buy into the lie of 'if I just had the better office,' 'if I could drive a nicer car,' 'if I just had an extra bedroom,' 'if I just had a bigger boat,' 'if I just had more letters behind my name,' then you will have arrived. And that is not godly wisdom; that is not what we ought to spend our life pursuing. That is not what gives us worth in the eyes of God, and our pursuit of that is going to eat us up if we are not careful.

That takes us to the next one which is selfish ambition and is the Greek word *eritheia*, and it means strife, contentiousness, extreme selfishness. It is done only for personal gain. This word is often used in Greek literature by the way to talk about political office or business success. And some people are just eaten up with that idea. You can see them on the cable news shows, you can see them in the newspapers, you can see them in Hollywood, and you can see them on the Internet because they have this weird idea of having influence on social media.

And that is this selfish ambition that says, 'Look at me. Look at me. Listen to me. Listen to me. Think I am important. Think I am pretty.' And it is all self-focused. James is saying we need to watch out because that is a lousy motivation to live your life by. Trying to live your life to be famous, trying to live your life to be a celebrity, trying to live your life to be rich, trying to live your life to be powerful, trying to live your life to be an influence is a poor motivation that says you are living foolishly and wasting opportunities that are a part of God's design for us.

I am not saying that all ambition is bad, but I am saying that selfish ambition sure is. We ought to desire to be like God not like the guy with a hundred thousand followers on social media. We ought to desire to be like Scripture says not like the world's caricature of fame and fortune. And by the way, none of us are immune from it, because there is a whole generation of guys who call themselves pastors who think that their value is based on what kind of sneakers they wear or how many letters are behind their name or how many conferences they speak at. And if it will down a pastor it will take down everyone else in our culture because it is the great American dream to be able to look down on others. And James is saying it is selfish, foolish, wrong, and that it is false wisdom. Don't think that is where it is at, being boastful, arrogant, thinking it is all about me, and living a lie.

This is really an interesting phrase because it says in verse 14, "***be false to the truth.***" It basically means to be living a lie. How many people are living a lie trying to be something that they think makes them cool, makes them special, makes them popular rather than just being authentic. And those are characteristics of the non-believer, the false wisdom, the apostate. These are the people that change the truth of God into a lie and live like they are good with God, and they are not.

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So those are the motivations. Now let's look at the characteristics of false wisdom. Drop down to verse 15 where it says: "***This is not the wisdom that comes down from above, but is earthly, unspiritual, demonic.***" There's your three points right there. You don't have to have a PhD from a seminary to be able to figure these points out, right? It is really clear. Let's just stop and see what they mean though. So the first characteristic of false wisdom is earthly, which means 'of this world,' this present world, this material world, this world in which we are living right now. It is this current time and space construct that God has placed us in.

How many of us are spending our time as if this is all there really is? We are basically spiritual Nihilists, thinking that what we are experiencing now is as good as it is going to get, and that nothing we do really matters beyond that. Maybe you would say, 'Yeah, but we're a Christian and we believe in heaven.' Do we really; because if we did I think our values would be different. I think our conversation would be different. I think our agenda would be different. I think our priorities would be different.

The next characteristic is unspiritual. So if it is of the world when you talk about being unspiritual, it means of the flesh; it is either the flesh or the spirit, right? So the flesh means natural, sensual, fleshly, corrupted by, or since the fall. It just simply means this thing that got broken. God created us to live forever. God created us to be spiritual beings. God created us to be united with Him. And then Satan came along and broke us. And since that point we have become unspiritual, the opposite of what God wanted us to be. And we live for the flesh, we live for sensations, we live for feelings, we live apart from truth.

The third thing is demonic. Now it gets real serious because if you use the word demon you are scaring me. That crosses a line. Now what does it mean? It means simply that it is of the devil. It was originated by Satan himself and executed through Satan's agents. What was the original sin of all? It was pride. When Satan wanted what was not his to possess that began it all. And how much of our foolishness in life is a consequence of us wanting what is not ours to possess. What God has said is off limits. What God has said to stay away from. What God has said not to pursue. But we want that. And we pursue that; we feel entitled to that. And as a result we live lives of foolishness.

So those are some of the characteristics. Now let's look at the consequences. "***For where jealousy and selfish ambition exist.***" Haven't we seen those words before? Yes, we have at the very beginning when it talked about what our motivations are. "***If you have bitter jealousy and selfish ambition.***" So here we are again. If you have bitter jealousy and selfish ambition here are the consequences: "***There will be disorder and every vile practice.***" So there are two things. Disorder is the Greek word *akastastasia* and it means 'chaos, confusion, instability, chaotic, disarray, tumultuous, anarchy.' In other words everything is upside down; you can't trust anything. Everything is confusing, it is always in turmoil. 'Oh, if I could just have a few minutes of peace, a few minutes of rest. If I could just get away from this insanity.' That is the disorder.

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Next is every vile practice and that is a really broad category, right? It simply means this; it is all the results which are evil, worthless, contemptible. Practice here means ‘things.’ So in other words, everything in your life that is broken, everything in your life that is wrong, everything in your life that is destructive, everything in your life that is disorderly, everything in your life that is chaotic, everything in your life that makes you miserable – all these things are simply because we are not thinking straight, we are not thinking wisely. And let’s face it, all you have to do is turn on the news, all you have to do is talk to someone, all you have to do is hook into Twitter, all you have to do is open your Facebook page, and what do you hear people talking about? Confrontation, disunity, fake news, ‘*I heard.*’ ‘*I read.*’ ‘*I saw.*’ ‘*The world is getting worse.*’ ‘*Things are getting bad.*’ ‘*I’m confused.*’

And in the midst of all that it is chaos. No wonder people are killing themselves. No wonder people are depressed. No wonder people are confused. No wonder people are unsatisfied and they are looking for something else. And yet we live in the freest country, the richest country, the country with the greatest opportunities. Yet what do we want to do? Gripe, complain, and desire. Why? It is because we value the wrong things.

And this is what James was saying. We should be different. By the way James was not speaking to rich people, he was not speaking to people who lived in a free land, and he was not speaking to people who had prestige attached to their country. He was speaking to people who had been hated for generations, their enemies wanted to wipe them out, the diaspora had taken place, they had been chased out of their homeland and they were alone and isolated. And not only that, they had rejected their historical traditional religious system and now they were Christians and no longer Jews. James was saying that in the midst of all of that they needed to seek wisdom.

So it doesn’t matter whether you are rich or poor, it doesn’t matter whether you are educated or illiterate, it doesn’t matter whether you are in freedom or a slave, it doesn’t matter what condition in which you find yourself, James was saying that we have a responsibility to seek biblical true wisdom.

And what is true wisdom? Let’s look in verse 17 and I am getting ready to land the plane here. We are going to go through the same outline. What is the motivation? Verse 17 says it: “***But the wisdom from above is first pure.***” This is what we should be desiring. This is what we should be seeking and it is purity. And this word purity here is the Greek word *hagnos* and it means to be free of contamination, free of defilement, thinking like God thinks, living godly, desiring what God desires, having the priorities that God has. In some places the word is literally translated ‘holy.’

Have you noticed that very few of us really desire to be God-like in terms of our holiness? In fact many times even among Christians we almost look at being more like God to be a negative thing. We will say things like, ‘*I am not trying to be holier than you.*’ ‘*I am not puritanical.*’ ‘*I’m not a fanatic.*’ ‘*I am trying to be reasonable.*’ ‘*I am not better than you.*’ All of those are often cliché excuses to say this: ‘*You know what; I live like the devil too.*’ ‘*I am not trying to be godly.*’ ‘*I am not trying to be different.*’ ‘*I am not trying to be distinct.*’ ‘*I am not trying to be holy.*’ ‘*I am not trying to be pure.*’ ‘*I am not trying to be any of those things.*’

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And so we denigrate the values that we ought to be aspiring to. Virginity, purity, holiness, righteousness, character, integrity, honor are good words. They are worth aspiration. We ought to pursue them. They remind us of God. And we will fall short, but that is no excuse for not trying and desiring them. That is how we are to live differently. That is how we change a culture. That is how we exhibit biblical wisdom when our motivation is to be godly, to be holy, to be righteous, to be like God, to be pure. That is not a bad thing; it is a good thing. It ought to be a pure motivation.

Now let's look at some more characteristics that James gives us. ***“But the wisdom from above is first pure, then peaceable, gentle, open to reason, full of mercy and good fruits, impartial and sincere.”*** There is our outline right there of characteristics. Peaceable – that is not only the absence of conflict, but it is also the production of peace. It is two sides of the same coin. When you look at the peace coin it says: *‘I am not looking to fight, and I am looking to be at peace.’* So it is two sides and these are important. It is not just withdrawing, it is also pursuing.

Now by the way sometimes it is unavoidable because standing for truth offends. When Jesus was speaking to the His disciples getting ready for his transition to heaven didn't say, *‘I tell you what, guys, I just want you to know that now you are Christians it is going to be good, it is going to be easy, people are going to love you and give you seats of honor, they are going to tell you all kinds of good things, they are going to take extra good care of you and it is going to be so smooth that you are going to be glad you are Christians.’* No, He didn't say that, did He? He said people were going to hate them; they are going to abuse them, despise them and do all manner of evil against them. And of the twelve men sitting there eleven of them are going to die. That is the price they were going to pay. Jesus didn't come to bring peace on earth. He came to bring peace with God, but He brought conflict on earth. And that is what we need to learn to deal with. So peaceable says that the war we have is not a war that is about us but it is about truth and doing the right thing.

Then there is gentleness and this is a word that is kind of difficult to translate into English, but it has this meaning of equity, seemliness, fairness, moderation, and forbearance. It is more of a spirit that really endures dishonor and abuse patiently, even if it is mistreatment. It is almost unflappability, taking criticism, taking harshness, taking injustice and not returning evil for evil. But rather to say we are going to receive this with a spirit of Christlikeness who before His accusers only exhibited quiet confident godliness. *‘You are going to abuse me and I am not going to give you a reason to hate me on top of that. You are going to hate me for my position but not for my disposition. You are going to hate me because I speak truth and not because I am a jerk.’* These are some things that we as Christians need to remember.

You know this business of the Westboro Baptist Church has done more to damage the reputation of Christ that anything else, and I think it is satanic by the way. Those people who go to funerals and hold up signs that say, *‘God hates fags,’* and all that kind of stuff. And now all of a sudden everyone that is a Christian is lumped in with them. I could call myself a Chihuahua but I am not, and they can call themselves Christians or Baptists, but they are not because that is not the spirit of godly wisdom.

Maybe you are thinking, *‘But God does have a divine order for marriage and sexuality,’* and I get that, but He also has a divine order for how we conduct ourselves with others. And there is no way that that their spirit is consistent with the spirit we see in our Savior. He would

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He spoke the truth but He spoke the truth in love. ‘*Well, I am not carrying a sign or being a jerk,*’ you know we don’t have to be that extreme to be a jerk. I have been a jerk many times and didn’t even realize it. And do you know the difference between when I am a jerk and when I am not a jerk? It is biblical wisdom, letting the Holy Spirit take control and letting Dan take the backseat, listening to the Word of God and to the Spirit of God.

I need to hurry. Next is reasonableness which means open to reason, willing to yield without rancor or disputing, being teachable but not stubborn, submission to authority and rank. And there are times when we have to stand against authority but we are to do so with respect. We sometimes receive the consequences of disagreement and it is unjust and unfair, but we are to do so with gentleness. We are not called to be angry antagonists; we are called to be principled and truthful ambassadors, and there is a difference in our demonstration and that requires wisdom.

Then there is full of mercy and that is forgiving, helping others, good fruit. Those are the fruits of the spirit by the way. Same terms love, peace and joy. We talked about impartiality three weeks ago, being able to treat others equally regardless of their status or perceived rank. Next is sincerity and that means authentic, without hypocrisy. We get the word sincerity from a Greek term *sin* which means without or not, and *cere* which means wax, so it literally means without wax.

That comes from the potter who would make like a bowl or a pot of some kind out of clay. They would put it in the oven to dry it and make it hard, and sometimes if the heat was uneven the bowl or pot would crack a little bit. It would be okay for a little while but if you put too much heat in it the bowl would burst. They would still want to sell it and not have to throw it away so they would coat it with wax and polish it up to fill up the cracks and then it would look good and people would buy it. But when they would put something too hot into it the bowl would burst. So if you were a reputable merchant you would put ‘*sincere*’ on the outside of it meaning it was made without wax. And it meant it was authentic or real.

Now you understand that we all have cracks in us, but God’s way of dealing with our cracks is to heal us genuinely, to remake us. It is not to cover it up but to restore us. So authenticity on our part says, ‘*You know I have some cracks. I have messed up. I have never been perfect, but the grace that you see on the outside of me is transparent. I am strong today because Christ lives within me, not because I am a fake or a phony. The change that you see in me is the change that God has put in me.*’ So sincerity is telling our story, being honest, being authentic, not trying to be something we are not, but being honest about how much we need God’s grace in our lives.

Then there are the consequences of true wisdom. Look in verse 18: “***And a harvest of righteousness is sown in peace by those who make peace.***” What do we get? A harvest of righteousness means that is the fruit, the harvest, the product. Wisdom produces genuine righteousness as a part of the cycle of planting and harvesting that produces harmony around us. Our peace with God gives us the peace of God which allows us to live at peace with others.

Let me give you these principles and we are done. Number one, there is no real wisdom apart from truth, and truth is found in the Word of God and the person of Christ. That is why we keep saying this, ‘*Go back to the Book, go back to the Book, go back to*

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*the Book.* Don't care what Dan says, don't care what Ben says, don't care what the elders say, don't care whatever famous preacher you are watching on TV or wherever says, just care what the Book says because everything is done through this paradigm. And by the way the Word of God is both in written form and in living form through the person of Jesus Christ.

We understand that the Bible says in John Chapter 1, "***In the beginning was the Word and the Word was with God and the Word was God, the same was in the beginning with God. All things were made by Him and without Him was not anything made that was made.***" Who is John talking about? It was Jesus. Remember what Jason said in John Chapter 4 and verse 6, "***I am the way, the truth, and the life. No man comes to the Father but by me.***" That is a really narrow declarative statement there. He said, '*I am truth, you better listen, because you are not going to heaven apart from me.*' It is very clear. So we know Jesus and we know His Word, but do we have real wisdom?

Number two, the pursuit of wisdom begins and ends with God and is a lifelong endeavor. Many of us seek, desire, pursue and chase worldly wisdom whether it is for degrees, acclaim, attention, adulation, celebrity, whatever it is, the wisdom you and I are to desire begins and ends with being as much as we possibly can be like God's character, His nature, His response and His truth.

Number three, not everything that poses as wisdom really is and we need to be discerning to be able to tell what is false wisdom and what is true wisdom, because not everything that calls itself wise is wise, and not everything that looks to be wise is wise. The person who spends his entire life getting a little more, being a little more famous, a little more money, a little more power, a little more possessions, in the end is a fool. Remember the story of the rich fool. He said he would build his barns bigger, he would eat, drink and be merry and God said, '*You fool, tonight your soul is required of you and you will leave it all behind.*'

The last thing is this, wisdom is a product of discernment and discernment is a product of wisdom. And you and I need to be asking for God to give us the wisdom to be discerning because there are a lot of things in this world where we need to apply true biblical wisdom like with money, sex, politics, relationships, communication, priorities, parenting, business, and how we use our time; these are the issues you and I struggle with and where we need wisdom. How we spend our money, how we give, whether or not we are saving, things like modesty and reputation, how we use social media, our alignments and associations whether political or even in or business, how we handle and desire promotions and opportunities in our career, gender role, public stands on controversies, what we find amusing, what we go to for entertainment, what we spend our life doing and pursuing and wanting to be, with whom we identify, and how we identify ourselves as Christ followers. These are the issues of wisdom and discernment that James said we need to understand the difference between truth and error.

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And whether you are a fourteen year old who is getting ready to enter the 9<sup>th</sup> grade this fall, or whether you are a seventy year old at the golden years of your life who is trying to influence your children and grandchildren, whether you are a businessman or retired, whether you are a student male or female, whether you are a new Christian or an old goat Christian, all of us have work to do when it comes to possessing godly wisdom. And the fruit that comes from that is the fruit that remains, the fruit that glorifies God, and the fruit that touches eternity.

*The preceding transcript was completed using raw audio recordings. As much as possible, it includes the actual words of the message with minor grammatical changes and editorial clarifications to provide context. Hebrew and Greek words are spelled using Google Translator and the actual spelling may be different in some cases.*