

Sermon or Lesson: James 3:13-16 (NIV based)
[Lesson Questions included]

TITLE: Godly Wisdom Has Humility And Contentment

INTRO: When you were young, perhaps you were repeatedly reminded of the saying, "It's not whether you win or lose, but how you play the game." In our continuing study about how our faith must be accompanied by both corresponding words and good deeds, we are going to look at an example of how God regards when we hold improper motives and techniques in our speaking. The content of what we speak is not the only important aspect, but also equally important are the underlying motives and actions - how you play the game so to speak.

READ: James 3:13-16, with verses 11-12 for context

v.13 - READ

[Lesson Question: What is the principle in each verse and what is its application in our lives?]

SECTION POINT: Speaking wisdom that is godly will be matched by good living and deeds done in humility.

- From the examples in verses 11-12, if a person has a characteristic that comprises his/her nature, the person will produce from that nature results that are consistent with that characteristic and within its bounds.
 - Going next to another example starting in verse 13, not every believer is wise and understanding.
 - But for those who have a nature that contains wisdom and understanding, their wisdom and understanding will show and be produced as good "behaviors" of their life and as good deeds. (Strong's #0391)
 - Furthermore, humility will also be evident and produced because humility is a main ingredient of true wisdom.
 - By implied extension then, wisdom is also needed to properly control one's tongue. (v.10)
 - Therefore, for proper practical faith, both in speaking words and in behaviors and in doing good deeds, wisdom is vital.
 - And like our faith, wisdom and understanding are intended by God to be put into action, which will show them to be righteous, to be from God, to be authentic, and to be pleasing to God. (see vv.14-15, 9-10)
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v.14 - READ

SECTION POINT: Wisdom that is motivated by envy and selfish ambition is corrupt.

-- We believers are being cautioned about using one's wisdom from a mindset of underlying sharp "bitter envy", or "piercing pungent" "discontent and resentment from the desire to possess the advantage that others have", or from the "fear of losing one's advantage". (Strong's #4089; *AHD* - "envy", "jealous")

-- This underlying sharp bitter envy may be accompanied by "selfish ambition", or "covertly scheming and striving in divisive conflict rivalry". (Strong's #2052; *AHD* - "contention", "intrigue", "faction")

-- If a person has bitter envy and selfish ambition in his/her heart, then there is no legitimate reason for him/her to boast about using wisdom because that person has impure motives, which God sees and disdains.

-- This person denying that he/she harbors bitter envy and selfish ambition is likewise futile and counterproductive because God sees the person's heart and is displeased with this person when using wisdom in this impure manner.

-- Do you secretly harbor envy and selfish ambition to gain status, prominence, respect, honor, and/or position of authority over others in a ministry you are involved in or are leading?

-- When another worker comes along and exhibits more God-given skill and empowering in doing ministry than you, do you secretly get envious and then covertly and intentionally manipulate to keep that person from gaining status in your ministry or church for fear of that person making you look inferior or incompetent?

---- Do you carry this even further by trying to drive this God-empowered worker out of your ministry and church?

---- How prevalent is this dynamic in the ministries you are familiar with or involved with?

---- If you truly had the entire Kingdom Of God in mind, how should you instead be regarding and treating this God-empowered worker?

-- Do you try to use wise words and actions in a covertly perverse manner to further your personal ambition agenda?

-- Do you attempt to hide or disguise your envy and selfish ambition?

---- Do you think you are successful at hiding these from God?

-- When someone with the spiritual gift of discernment is lead by God to bring up a concern with you about the presence of envy or selfish ambition in your ministry functioning, do you get all hostile, defensive, deflective, and accusatory as you deny the truth about your subsurface impure motives?

v.15 - READ

SECTION POINT: God in no way supports corrupted wisdom.

-- Wisdom used in this impure manner does not come from God. He does not infuse, nor cooperate with, nor empower this kind of wisdom.

- - - - The source for this kind of wisdom is from the person, from his/her worldly humanistic thinking, and has the help and/or influence from the Kingdom of Darkness. In other words, God in no way gets involved with this wisdom.

- - - - This is because the motives, method, and basis of this worldly wisdom are contrary to the righteous use of godly wisdom.

-- Are you convinced that your wisdom comes from and is empowered by God?

- - - - Before entrenching on such an assertion, perhaps you should first take some time to do some honest soul-searching regarding your motives.

- - - - If you have any hint of envy or selfish ambition, then whether you want to admit it or not, the reality is your wisdom is spiritually corrupted and you are bearing bad witness about God when you claim or boast that it comes from God.

- - - - What you need is a broken, contrite, and repentant heart (Psalm 51:17), along with a major shift in your ambitions in your doing of ministry.

v.16 - READ

SECTION POINT: Corrupted wisdom produces corrupted results.

-- The situation being described in these verses essentially is a dynamic of impure motives being coupled with an impure approach, for the specific purpose of achieving an impure agenda - in other words, using corrupted wisdom (v.1:5) in a perverse manner for perverse gain among other believers, against other believers, and with other believers as accomplices.

-- A person who tries to do ministry while harboring bitter envy and selfish ambition will exert significant adverse influence upon others in that ministry or church, producing "confusion, instability", "disorder, and every evil practice". (Strong's #0181 'disorder'; v.16)

-- This verse 16 is saying that now going beyond merely being influenced by the Kingdom of Darkness, the person using wisdom with bitter envy and selfish ambition has become a de facto agent of the Kingdom of Darkness, in disguise to look and sound wise but covertly functioning as a recruiter and catalyst for its subversion plan, and an active promoter of its evil agenda.

-- This implies the envious person is so driven to achieve his/her ambitions that he/she will resort to using whatever means necessary, even if it is grossly evil, conniving, divisive, abusive, and etc.

-- Those of you who have bitter envy and selfish ambition, do you really think God will bless you and your ministry if you perpetrate a coup, a forced takeover of authority, position, and power?

- - - - Do you really think God will not hold you responsible for what you did to that ministry and its previous leaders, and also that you recruited others in the planning and execution of your dastardly takeover?

- - - - Do you really think God is on your side?

BIG IDEA: A person who has genuinely God-empowered wisdom will also possess humility and contentment, with no trace of bitter envy and selfish ambition.

CLOSING APPLICATION:

- For those of you who inappropriately protect your ministry authority, if God wants you to relinquish your ministry authority, don't you think it would be better to cooperate with God rather than resist Him by thwarting the rise of your replacement?
 - For those of you who lust for a higher ministry status, if God wants to elevate you to higher authority within a ministry, then He will do that in His time.
 - - - Until then, why not let go of your bitter envy and your selfish ambition.
 - - - Be content with the place God has for you currently. (1 Corinthians 7:17)
 - - - And stop desiring and conspiring to take the ministry status that God has chosen to give to someone else.
 - - - Use godly wisdom in humility and contentment in your own life.
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