

Calvary Chapel of Philadelphia



CHILDREN'S MINISTRY
TEACHER'S PACKET

3rd - 5th Grade

Sunday Morning

Study 6

Heavenly vs. Earthly Wisdom

Heavenly vs. Earthly Wisdom

The Objective is the key concept for this weeks lesson. It should be the main focus of the study

These are the key verses that you will find helpful in teaching your study this week. The “Main passage” is the basis of the study, where the other verse support the objective of the lesson.

There is a memory verse for the students that relates to every study. If a student can memorize the verse for the following week you may give them a prize from the “reward box” found on your cart.

An introductory activity or question that will settle the class, draw their attention to the study and prepare their hearts for God’s Word

Objective To teach that man-centered wisdom is selfish and filled with pride, while heavenly wisdom is humble and pure.

Key Verses

James 3:13-18—Main Teaching Passage

Memory Verse - James 3:17

“But the wisdom that is from above is first pure, then peaceable, gentle, willing to yield, full of mercy and good fruits, without partiality and without hypocrisy.”

Hook

Review last week’s memory verse, Psalm 141:3.

Open up a short time of discussion on the topic of good and bad attitudes. What does it mean to have a good attitude and what does that look like? What does it mean to have a bad attitude and what does that look like?

Ask the class if you can do a good thing (work) with a bad attitude?

What does the Bible say? This is where we will read a passage or series of passages that teach on the subject of the day.

BOOK

After its discourse on the tongue, James 3 then transitions into a teaching on wisdom, specifically a contrast between heavenly wisdom and earthly wisdom.

It begins by encouraging us again to good works, but this time by instructing us that our good works should be done with a good attitude. They are to be done with a meekness that comes from wisdom. James is referring back to chapter 2 and his instructions about faith and works working hand in hand. Here he shows that good works should not be done with bad motives or with a poor attitude.

Earthly wisdom would tell us to be proud of our works, boasting in the things that we have done. James, however, instructs us that heavenly wisdom tells us that our good works are done not for our own gain, nor to be seen by man, but for the glory and honor of the Lord and to be seen by Him. There is to be no self-seeking or envy; these things come from below. Rather we should be pure, peaceable, gentle, full of mercy, and without hypocrisy.

In effect, James is teaching us that pride and selfish ambition are filled with evil and oppose the work that God desires to do in us. We are to have faith which leads us to good works. These good works should be done humbly for the glory of God.

LOOK

A couple of weeks ago, we read in James 2 that if we say that we are believers in Christ, there should be actions that go along with our words. We should not only talk about our faith, but we should demonstrate our faith by what we do. This week we are going to read in James 3 that God cares about more than our actions or “works,” He cares about our attitudes as well.

Imagine that your mom asked you to clean your room. You sigh deeply and roll your eyes, then go up to your room, and the whole time that you are cleaning up, you are grumbling and complaining. When you are done you come downstairs and moan about how your mom made you clean up. Did you clean up your room? Yes, you did, and your mom might be happy that your room is clean. I am sure, however, that she is going to be disappointed about the way you acted while you did it. If instead you immediately went up to your room and cleaned up without complaining, your mom would be so much happier with you. Better yet, you could clean up your room before you were asked to.

The interpretation/
exegesis of the passage.
What does this passage
mean? How does this
passage apply to my
life?

LOOK (Continued)

Or, imagine that you cleaned up your room and then, for the next three days, whenever you spoke to someone, all you did was talk about how great you are because you cleaned your room. Your mom wanted you to do it because it was the right thing to do, but you were trying to get use that work to get other people to look up to you.

James says that earthly wisdom is self-seeking and proud. It tells us that we should promote ourselves and everything that we do. We should seek out the spotlight and desire everyone to look up to us. Heavenly wisdom, however, is different. It tells us that we should do all things for the glory of God, that we should do things with happy hearts, but most importantly we should do them so that God will be pleased and that His name will be known. It says that we should be modest and humble and seek to lift the Lord up.

John the Baptist is a great example of this for us. He was famous, popular, and well-loved, and people were coming from all around to hear him preach. But when John the Baptist met Jesus and saw who the true King was, he said this, "He must increase, but I must decrease." John didn't want to be famous, he wanted Jesus to be famous. John didn't want people listen to him preach, he wanted people to listen to Jesus preach. He could have tried to get glory for himself, but he wanted that glory to go to Jesus.

What is my response to this passage of Scripture? How should my life change according to what this passage teaches me? What are the practical things I can do throughout the week to make this true in my life.

TOOK

As a class memorize, James 3:17.

Open up time for a discussion about pride and humility. Ask, "Why is pride dangerous?"

Pray: Thank the Lord for the wisdom of His Word. Ask for His help to live according to heavenly wisdom.

Parent Question: Is your attitude important to God? Why?

FURTHER STUDY

Commentary on James 3:13-18 by David Guzik

B. The demonstration of a living faith in the presence of wisdom.

1. (13) Wisdom shows us how to do good works

Who is wise and understanding among you? Let him show by good conduct that his works are done in the meekness of wisdom.

a. **Who is wise and understanding among you?** At the beginning of James 3, the author addressed those who were teachers or wanted to be teachers among Christians. There he told such teachers how they should *talk*; here he speaks about how they should *live*.

i. “James addresses the person who is ‘wise and understanding.’ The word *sophos* (‘wise’) was the technical term among the Jews for the teacher, the scribe, the rabbi. It appears that the author is still speaking to those who would be teachers (cf. [James 3:1](#)); here it is not what they say that he is concerned with, but rather how they live.” (Burdick)

b. **Who is wise . . . Let him show by good conduct:** Wisdom is not mere head knowledge. Real wisdom and **understanding** will show in our lives, by our **good conduct**.

i. In this sense wisdom and understanding are like faith; they are invisible, inner qualities. If a person considers himself to be **wise** or **understanding**, it is fair to expect that this invisible inner quality would show itself in regular life. Here James told us how to judge if a person really is **wise and understanding**.

c. **His works are done in the meekness of wisdom:** True **wisdom** is also evident by its meek manner. Those who do their good works in a way designed to bring attention to themselves show they lack true wisdom.

i. On **meekness**: “*Prautes* is gentleness, but not a passive gentleness growing out of weakness or resignation. It is an active attitude of deliberate acceptance.” (Burdick)

2. (14-16) The character of earthly wisdom.

But if you have bitter envy and self-seeking in your hearts, do not boast and lie against the truth. This wisdom does not descend from above, but is earthly, sensual, demonic. For where envy and self-seeking exist, confusion and every evil thing are there.

a. **Bitter envy and self-seeking:** These are the opposite of *the meekness of wisdom* mentioned in [James 3:13](#). These words actually refer to someone who has a critical, contentious, fight-provoking manner.

i. “It is out of keeping with the temper of **bitter jealousy and rivalry** (i.e. party-spirit, selfish ambition, factiousness). **Do not pride yourselves on that**, on the intensity and harsh zeal which lead to such unscrupulous partisanship, which are sometimes justified as loyalty **to the truth**.” (Moffatt)

ii. “Religious people may be extremely provoking, and defeat their own ends by overbearing methods; right views and sound counsels may lose their effect if they are expressed by men who are self-seeking partisans or unscrupulous controversialists.” (Moffatt)

b. **Do not boast and lie against the truth:** Anyone who shows **bitter envy and self-seeking** should not deceive anyone – especially themselves – about how wise they are. They show a **wisdom** that is **earthly, sensual, and demonic**. Their wisdom is more characteristic of the world, the flesh, and the devil than of God.

i. “**This wisdom**” that James referred to was not really wisdom at all. “It is the wisdom claimed by the would-be teachers of [James 3:14](#) whose lives contradict their claims. Such ‘wisdom’ evaluates everything by worldly standards and makes personal gain life’s highest goal.” (Burdick)

ii. **Earthly, sensual, demonic:** Adam Clarke defined each term:

· **Earthly:** “Having this life only in view.”

· **Sensual:** “Animal-having for its object the gratification of the passions and animal propensities.”

· **Demonic:** “Demonic-inspired by demons, and maintained in the soul by their indwelling influence.”

c. **Confusion and every evil thing:** This is the fruit of human, earthly wisdom. The wisdom of the world, the flesh, and the devil may be able to accomplish things, but always with the ultimate fruit of **confusion and every evil thing**.

3. (17-18) The character of heavenly wisdom.

But the wisdom that is from above is first pure, then peaceable, gentle, willing to yield, full of mercy and good fruits, without partiality and without hypocrisy. Now the fruit of righteousness is sown in peace by those who make peace.

a. **But the wisdom that is from above:** God’s wisdom also has fruit. James here defined exactly what he meant by *the meekness of wisdom* in [James 3:13](#).

b. **First pure, then peaceable, gentle, willing to yield, full of mercy and good fruits, without partiality and without hypocrisy:** The character of this wisdom is wonderful. It is full of love and a giving heart, consistent with the holiness of God.

i. This wisdom is **first pure:** “The reference is not to sexual purity but to the absence of any sinful attitude or

motive.” (Burdick)

ii. This wisdom is **then peaceable**: “This is one of the great words of character description in the NT. In the LXX it is used mostly of God’s disposition as a King. He is gentle and kind, although in reality he has every reason to be stern and punitive toward men in their sin.” (Burdick)

iii. This wisdom is **gentle**: “The man who is *epieikes* is the man who knows when it is actually wrong to apply the strict letter of the law. He knows how to forgive when strict justice gives him a perfect right to condemn. . . . It is impossible to find an English word to translate this quality. Matthew Arnold called it ‘sweet reasonableness’ and it is the ability to extend to others the kindly consideration we would wish to receive ourselves.” (Barclay)

iv. This wisdom is **willing to yield**: “Not stubborn nor obstinate; of a yielding disposition in all indifferent things; obsequious, docile.” (Clarke) “**Conciliatory** (only here in N.T.) is the opposite of stiff and unbending.” (Moffatt) “*Eupeithes* can mean *easy to persuade*, not in the sense of being pliable and weak, but in the sense of not being stubborn and of being willing to listen to reason and to appeal. . . . true wisdom is not rigid but is willing to listen and skilled in knowing when wisely to yield.” (Barclay)

v. This wisdom is **full of mercy**: It does not judge others strictly on the basis of the law, but will extend a generous hand **full of mercy**. This wisdom knows that the same measure of mercy we grant to others is the same measure God will use with us (Matthew 7:2).

vi. This wisdom is **full of . . . good fruits**: This wisdom can *be seen by the fruit it produces*. It isn’t just the inner power to think and talk about things the right way; it is **full of . . . good fruits**.

vii. This wisdom is **without partiality**: “*Without partiality*; or, without judging, i.e. either a curious inquiring into the faults of others, to find matter for censures.” (Poole)

viii. This wisdom is **without hypocrisy**: “*Without pretending to be what it is not*; acting always in *its own character*; never *working under a mask*. Seeking nothing but God’s glory, and using no other means to attain it than those of his own prescribing.” (Clarke)

ix. “These last two words [**without partiality** and **without hypocrisy**] rule out the habit of using speech to half reveal and half conceal the mind of the speaker, who has something (as we say) at the back of his mind all the time.” (Moffatt)

c. **Now the fruit of righteousness is sown in peace**: This fruit is like a seed that will bear fruit as it is sown by **those who make peace**.

i. “*The fruit of righteousness*; either the fruit we bring forth, which is righteousness itself, Luke 3:8, 9; Romans 6:22; Philippians 1:11; or the fruit we reap, which is the reward of righteousness, viz. eternal life.” (Poole)

ii. “Far from being theoretical and speculative, James’s concept of wisdom is thoroughly practical. It is the understanding and attitude that result in true piety and godliness.” (Burdick)