



SERIES: (FEBRUARY – MARCH) FAITH IN REAL LIFE

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Friday, 03/11/2022

Scripture: James 3:13-15

TITLE: What Is True Wisdom?

As a teacher and as a seminary student, I do a lot of studying. Studying is a great thing -- you can gain a lot of knowledge. But as I look to the Bible, I am reminded that knowledge is not the same as wisdom. I could study all I want, but I cannot make myself wise.

In James 3:13-15 (ESV), James is speaking on the idea of wisdom when he says,

"Who is wise and understanding among you? 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."

Verse 13 shows that true wisdom is not just academic knowledge in our heads, but a level of understanding put into practice and lived out in our lives. Simply put, this is how I know the difference between knowledge and wisdom. Knowledge is having a lot of information stored up in your head; wisdom is knowing how to apply it and live it out! James goes on to explain that we demonstrate our meekness and demonstrate our wisdom through how we live.

Meekness is a strange word; I recently learned that meekness is not just gentleness or being weak but having power and knowing when and when not to use it. This means that someone living out meekness is living in control and submission to a higher authority; biblically speaking, a wise and meek person seeks to follow God and use their abilities when and how God says to use them.

In contrast to this control and submission to God, in verse 14, James talks about the opposite of wisdom. James tells us that jealousy, envy, and selfish ambition rule the hearts of those who don't walk in God's wisdom or truth but live out what is false. James warns these people not to boast in their selfish ambition, which makes me wonder when we try to give wisdom and instruction to others, who is it really for? Are we trying to help other people and guide them, or are we just trying to sound smart to build up our ego? Godly wisdom is not self-seeking but is God honoring.

At the end of this passage, in verse 15, James shows us that there are different kinds of wisdom. There is true and godly wisdom that comes from above, and therefore there must also be that type of wisdom that doesn't come from God, that comes from the world. There's a lot of earthly wisdom that sounds good, like the wise-sounding sayings you find in a fortune cookie, or from a horoscope reading for your zodiac sign, but that will ultimately get you nowhere. That's because

this kind of man-made wisdom is evil and demonic! Only the wisdom of God shows us the way to truth.

So, if we know that heavenly wisdom comes from heaven as a gift from God, will we be humble enough to ask for it? We know that God loves to give good gifts to his children, and he especially wants to give us his wisdom so that we might know how to walk with him through life and bring glory to Him and not ourselves.