



Transformed Relationships

[James 3:13-18](#)

Sixth in a 14-part series titled: *Wholly Transformed*

Pastor Matt Friend – February 10 & 13, 2022

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– OUTLINE –

Two types of wisdom compared and contrasted:

WORLDLY WISDOM	GODLY WISDOM
Creates factions and division (v. <u>14</u>)	Creates peace and unity (vv. <u>17-18</u>)
Primarily does good for one's self (vv. <u>14</u> , <u>16</u>)	Primarily does good for others (v. <u>13</u>)
Boastful (v. <u>14</u>)	Humble (v. <u>13</u>)
Envious (vv. <u>14</u> , <u>16</u>)	Content, impartial and sincere (vv. <u>14</u> , <u>17</u>)
Sharp and prickly (v. <u>14</u>)	Considerate and gentle (v. <u>17</u>)
Concerned with earthly reward (v. <u>15</u>)	Concerned with future reward (v. <u>18</u>)
Unspiritual (v. <u>15</u>)	Pure and righteous (vv. <u>17-18</u>)
Demonic (v. <u>15</u>)	Heavenly (v. <u>17</u>)
Chaotic (v. <u>16</u>)	Submissive (v. <u>17</u>)
Evil (v. <u>16</u>)	Full of mercy and good fruit (v. <u>17</u>)

Today's big idea:

The wisest Christians heal relationships and make peace.

Today's takeaway (to use next time you're in conflict):

Ask, "What can I do to make peace with you?"

Recommended Book

[Peacemaking for Families:](#)

[A Biblical Guide to Managing Conflict in your Home](#)

By Ken Sande





Transformed Relationships

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– NOTES –

Introduction:

Today we continue our 14-week *Wholly Transformed* series, walking verse by verse through the New Testament book of James. We launched this series over a month ago. You can download all of its messages on our [app](#), on our [sermon podcast](#), or on the series page [here](#).

Life constantly sets choices before us. Many choices are mundane... If we say *yes* to Chick-fil-A, we are saying *no* to McDonald's. A *yes* to Ford is a *no* to Chevy. Tonight, a *yes* to the Cincinnati Bengals is a *no* to the Los Angeles Rams.

Some choices are much larger... Saying *yes* to marry one woman or man is saying *no* to all the others. For most people, saying *yes* to one vocation is saying *no* to others. Saying *yes* to one retirement plan is saying *no* to others.

The same principle applies to our moral and spiritual lives.

- The Old Testament wisdom literature (Job to Song of Solomon) divided wisdom into two realms: man's wisdom and God's wisdom.
- Jesus says there's a broad road that leads to destruction and a narrow road that leads to life. We can build our lives on the sand or on the rock that is Christ ([Matthew 7](#)).
- Joshua taught this same principle in the Old Testament when he said, "Choose this day whom you will serve" ([Joshua 24:14-15](#)).

James uses the same teaching format in our passage today ([3:13-18](#)). He compares and contrasts worldly wisdom with godly wisdom. Just as Jesus said, James tells us that there's a way to be



foolish and a way to be wise. There's a way that leads to death or a way that leads to life.

Two types of wisdom compared and contrasted:

For James, wisdom refers to much more than knowledge. It refers to the application of knowledge. Some of the other apostles and Bible writers dealt more with the topic of knowledge. However, like Solomon, Job, and Jesus... James is more concerned with the application of knowledge. He wants to know, "How are you taking what you know and putting it into practice? How are you relating your knowledge to everyday life situations?"

James certainly admits that it's important to know the right things; his point, however, is that we can't stop there. True wisdom is the application of knowledge.

The difference between wisdom and knowledge is the difference between knowing "honey is sweet" and knowing "This honey tastes sweet."

Don't confuse the world's knowledge and the world's wisdom. Certainly, there is a great deal of knowledge in our world today, and we all benefit from it; however, there's not much wisdom. Most of us have far more knowledge than we have wisdom. This is why we sin most of the time. To put it another way, we don't often sin because there's some nugget of truth that we lack. Instead, we most often sin because we're not implementing what we already know to be true.

In verses 13-18, James compares and contrasts worldly wisdom and godly wisdom...



WORLDLY WISDOM	GODLY WISDOM
Creates factions and division (v. 14)	Creates peace and unity (vv. 17-18)

Worldly wisdom creates factions and division ([v. 14](#)). The Greek word “ambition” doesn’t refer to healthy ambition as we see in other parts of the Bible. Instead, it refers to contentious and divisive rivalries over power, prestige, and control. James warns us to avoid such worldliness.

On the other hand, godly wisdom creates peace and unity ([vv. 17-18](#)). Christians with godly wisdom seek to build bridges and create peace within the community of faith. This is the polar opposite of selfish ambition and the discord it produces. This is why Jesus said what He did in His famous Sermon on the Mount, “Blessed are the peace-makers, for they will be called children of God” ([Matthew 5:9](#)).

WORLDLY WISDOM	GODLY WISDOM
Primarily does good for one’s self (vv. 14, 16)	Primarily does good for others (v. 13)

Worldly wisdom primarily does good for the benefit of one’s self ([vv. 14, 16](#)). Twice in this text, James identifies this as “selfish ambition.” Selfish ambition is a willingness and eagerness to split up a group of people in order to achieve personal power and prestige. It refers to trampling on others. It sees every interaction through the lens of, “What can I get out of this relationship?” Those whose lives are based on and motivated by human, ungodly wisdom are inevitably self-centered, living in a world in which their own personal ideas, desires, and standards are the measure of everything.

On the other hand, godly wisdom seeks to do good for others ([v. 13](#)). James builds on the truth he taught earlier in his book, “Faith without works is dead.” The word good here can be translated “beautiful.” In our vernacular, James is saying, “You don’t show your



wisdom by talking about what you know. Instead, you show your wisdom by how you live.

WORLDLY WISDOM	GODLY WISDOM
Boastful (v. 14)	Humble (v. 13)

Worldly wisdom is always boastful, either actively or passively (v. [14](#)). It seeks to compensate for some feeling of deficiency by making some part of one's life seem bigger or more important than it really is.

On the other hand, godly wisdom is humble. The truly wise man or woman is meek. This virtue isn't another name for cowardice or passivity; rather, it flows from a confident heart that trusts God and is free from anxious promotion.

WORLDLY WISDOM	GODLY WISDOM
Envious (vv. 14 , 16)	Content, impartial and sincere (vv. 14 , 17)

Worldly wisdom is envious (vv. [14](#), [16](#)). Some Bible versions translate this word as "jealous." Either word communicates the point James is making here. Selfish and unwise people yearn for what does not belong to them. They are in a constant state of wanting more. Their theme song would be "Never Enough" from *The Greatest Showman*.

On the other hand, godly wisdom is content with reality; that is, it's content with what's true (v. [14](#)). Along the same lines, godly wisdom is impartial and sincere. People with God's type of wisdom are consistent, unwavering, and undeterred by prejudice or bias. They fight against any hypocrisy that may reveal itself in their lives.

"The challenge then for God's people is to be able to tell the truth about the way the world is, and about the way wicked people are behaving, without it turning into a perpetual grumble,



and in particular without becoming someone whose appearance of ‘wisdom’ consists in being able to find a cutting word to say about everyone and everything. There is still, after all, a vast amount of beauty, love, generosity, and sheer goodness in the world. Those who follow Jesus ought not only to be celebrating it but contributing to it. It’s better, as the saying goes, to light a candle than to curse the darkness.” –N.T. Wright, *The Early Christian Letters for Everyone*

WORLDLY WISDOM	GODLY WISDOM
Sharp and prickly (v. 14)	Considerate and gentle (v. 17)

Worldly wisdom is sharp and prickly. The word “bitter” ([v. 14](#)) means pointed, sharp, prickly, or pungent. When combined with jealousy, it defines a harsh, resentful attitude toward others. This type of cynicism gives an appearance of wisdom; however, it’s only worldly wisdom.

“This refers to a spirit that is always carping and criticizing, which cannot let a nice word go by without adding a nasty one. And when someone with that kind of spirit claims to be healthy, James says such a person is boasting. They are telling lies against the truth.” – N.T. Wright

On the other hand, godly wisdom is considerate and gentle. “Considerate” refers to a kind and sweet reasonableness. A Christian with this type of attitude understands that mistreatment, difficulty, and suffering are normal parts of the Christian life. They submit to God’s sovereign will in these things, without any thought of hatred or revenge ([Matthew 5:5, 10, 11](#)). Abraham Lincoln displayed this virtue, which is why Carl Sandburg described him as a man of “velvet steel.”



WORLDLY WISDOM	GODLY WISDOM
Concerned with earthly reward (v. 15)	Concerned with future reward (v. 18)

Worldly wisdom is primarily concerned with earthly reward. It wants what it wants right now. It imbibes the “have it your way” mentality that pervades so much of today’s philosophy, education, politics, economics, sociology, and psychology. It shows up in how people spend their money and how they live their lives. In this way of thinking, there’s no room for suffering or loss.

On the other hand, godly wisdom is concerned with future reward, whether success is ever achieved in this life or not. In verse 18, James says that peacemakers can count on reaping a generous harvest in the afterlife. This is a farmer’s way of saying, “If you’re a peacemaker, you can count on being greatly rewarded by Jesus in the life to come.”

WORLDLY WISDOM	GODLY WISDOM
Unspiritual (v. 15)	Pure and righteous (vv. 17-18)

Worldly wisdom is unspiritual; that is, it sees the world as merely natural. The world’s wisdom has no regard for the unseen spiritual realm. It does not accept the Spirit of God or anything truly spiritual ([1 Corinthians 2:14](#)).

On the other hand, godly wisdom is pure and righteous. It always has one eye on spiritual integrity and moral sincerity ([Matthew 5:8](#)). It always strives to be wholly transformed into the image of Jesus. Righteousness flourishes in a climate of spiritual peace and harmony.



WORLDLY WISDOM	GODLY WISDOM
Demonic (v. 15)	Heavenly (v. 17)

Worldly wisdom is demonic ([v. 15](#)). Like Satan and his demons, worldly wisdom thinks it knows more than God and is smarter than God's Word. As in the case of Eve and Jesus' temptation events, Satan loves to promise us wisdom; nevertheless, that wisdom is (literally) "from beneath," from hell itself.

Modernity told us, "Truth is out there." Post-modernity told us, "Truth is in here." Both refuse to seek God's wisdom "up there." However, James says that no matter where we look for wisdom, if it doesn't coincide with God's wisdom "up there," it's from "down there" (from hell).

On the other hand, godly wisdom comes from "up there," that is, from God Himself. James says this kind of wisdom comes from heaven ([v. 17](#)). This is the kind of wisdom we desperately need. Thankfully, this kind of wisdom is initially given as a gift of faith ([James 1:5-6](#)) and grows in us as we saturate our hearts and minds with God's Word ([James 1:19-25](#)).

WORLDLY WISDOM	GODLY WISDOM
Chaotic and disorderly (v. 16)	Submissive and compliant (v. 17)

Worldly wisdom is chaotic and disorderly ([v. 16](#)). This is the confusion that results from the instability of human wisdom. The final result of such Satan-driven conflict can only be disorder and every vile practice.

On the other hand, godly wisdom is submissive and compliant ([v. 17](#)). It's reasonable, just as a soldier reasonably submits to his or her superiors. It takes its marching orders from God's standards ([Matthew 5:3](#)).



WORLDLY WISDOM	GODLY WISDOM
Evil (v. 16)	Full of mercy and good fruit (v. 17)

Worldly wisdom can be summed up in one word: *evil*.

On the other hand, godly wisdom is full of mercy and good fruit ([Matthew 5:6-7](#)).

Today's big idea:

The wisest Christians heal relationships and make peace.

Today's takeaway (to use next time you're in conflict):

Ask, "What can I do to make peace with you?"

***Why ask that question to someone with whom you're at odds?
Because:***

The wisest Christians heal relationships and make peace.