

James 3:17 - 4:10

Day 1

Wisdom from Above. Read James 3:17-18

1. List the characteristics of “*wisdom from above*.” 3:17 (It is interesting to compare different Bible translations of these words.)

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FYI: “James tells us what **effects** divine wisdom should produce – for almost all of these adjectives describe what wisdom does rather than what it is. It is again clear that James...views wisdom...as a quality that motivates certain kinds of behavior. James’ description of the wisdom from above reminds us inevitably of Paul’s description of ‘the fruit of the Spirit’ in Galatians 5:22,23...The emphasis in both texts is on humility, peaceableness and upright behavior. What Paul says the Spirit produces, James says wisdom produces.” - Douglas Moo (135)

“James talks about the ‘**wisdom from above**.’ The question is not, what is this wisdom? but Who is this Wisdom? First Corinthians 1:24 says that Christ is the wisdom of God. Similarly, 1 Corinthians 1:30 says that Christ became wisdom for us...Colossians 2:2-3 says that all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge are found in Christ! John tells us that Jesus is the eternal Word who came from heaven to earth (John 1:14). Gaining wisdom is ultimately about knowing Him.” - David Platt

2. What is a believer’s motivation for **purity**? 1 John 3:2,3

FYI: “**Pure** ‘The absence of any sinful attitude or motive.’ (Burdick)” - David Guzik
“Jesus said: ‘*Blessed are the pure in heart, for they shall see God*’ (Matt. 5:8). Purity of thought and deed helps us see God working in all of our circumstances.” - Charles Swindoll (81)

“It is most significant that purity is positioned as the very first characteristic of wisdom from above. The scholar James Adamson says it is the key to all the qualities of wisdom to follow...The authenticity and intensity of one’s purity determines the outworking of the other qualities of wisdom.” - R. Kent Hughes (157)

3. How is being *peace-loving* (contrast 3:14; 4:1,2) related to the next two qualities?

FYI: Gentle/considerate/kindly Strong’s NT:1933 *epieikes*; appropriate, i.e. mild: KJV - patient, yielding
“The man or woman with this quality makes allowances for the weaknesses and ignorance of others and takes the kindest perspective whenever possible.” - R. Kent Hughes (159)

Submissive/reasonable/easy to be entreated/accommodating “Open to reason...It has the sense of ‘teachable,’ somebody who puts aside stubbornness and readily yields to the truth.” - Charles Swindoll (81)

4. How do you think mercy is connected to being “full of good fruit”?
Contrast 2:15-16

Digging Deeper

What mercy has the Lord extended to us?
Ephesians 2:4-6; Titus 3:5,6

FYI: “full of mercy and good fruit...Christian mercy (compassion) is extended even to those whose troubles are their own fault and is demonstrated by concrete action (‘good fruit’) and not just an emotional response. True wisdom reaches out to the unfortunate in practical ways, a point James never tires of making.” - Coleman (43)

“If grace is giving a person a blessing he or she doesn’t deserve, **mercy** is withholding a just punishment a person does deserve....While worldly wisdom would heap on ridicule or judgment, mercy shows kindness and benevolence.”
- Charles Swindoll (82)

5. Why is being “impartial” and “sincere/without hypocrisy” important to a believer’s witness? (See Paul’s example: 2 Corinthians 1:12; 2:17)

6. Which of the characteristics in 3:17 would you like to exhibit more in your life? (How can you develop this? James 1:5; Galatians 5:16)

7. How does the harvest of a “peacemaker” (3:18) compare to that of the unwise (3:14)?

FYI: “Righteousness...meant that conduct which is pleasing to God...That includes all the virtues listed in verse 17 and is the opposite of every vile practice’ (v. 16). This righteousness cannot be produced in the context of man’s anger but it can grow and flourish in the atmosphere of peace.”
- Douglas Moo (137)

8. Underline the exhortations given about peace.

- Romans 14:19-19 So then, let us pursue what makes for peace and for building up one another. NET
- Romans 12:18 If it is possible, as far as it depends on you, live at peace with everyone.
- Colossians 3:15 And let the peace of God rule in your hearts, to the which also ye are called in one body; and be ye thankful. KJV
- Philippians 2:14 Do all things without murmurings and questionings ASV

Applying the Word: When have you been the recipient of one of the wise responses of 3:17? How did that affect you?

Day 2

Prideful Desires from Within. Read James 4:1-3

9. What is the origin or cause of *fights/quarrels/conflicts*? 4:1 (See 1:14-16)

- What do the words *battle/wage war* indicate about the intensity of these conflicts? (See 1 Peter 2:11)

FYI: *Desire/pleasure/passions* Strong's NT:2237 *hedone*; sensual delight; by implication, desire: "In the Greek this word is *hedone*, from which we derive the English word **hedonism**, the belief that pleasure is the chief good in life." - R. Kent Hughes (167)

Battle/wage war Strong's NT:4754 *strateuomai*; to serve in a military campaign; figuratively, to contend with carnal inclinations

"James has addressed several problems among the Jewish Christians scattered around the world, including discrimination...and the wrong use of the tongue. Now he turns to the fights and quarrels... Refusal to listen and failure to obey the word are at the root of these conflicts and other sins." - The Africa Bible Commentary (1514)

10. What picture did Paul give of this battle in:

- Romans 7:18-21
- Galatians 5:17

11. To what can people's frustrated desires (4:2) lead? 4:2

FYI: "Is James saying Christians are never to passionately desire pleasure? The answer is a resounding 'No!'...The Scriptures, especially the Psalms, are filled with the language of enjoyment – joy – pleasure...The problem is that men and women in delusive sinfulness, even as Christians, so often seek it from the wrong source and in the wrong way." - R. Kent Hughes (170)

"This pattern...focuses on the way in which 'envy', 'jealousy', and related emotions inevitably lead to hostile acts, such as quarrels, wars and murder...Verbal argument, private violence or national conflict – the cause of them all can be traced back to the frustrated desire to want more than we have, to be envious of and covet what others have, whether it be their position or their possessions." - Douglas Moo (141)

12. Although James could have meant *kill* (4:2) in the literal sense, what else could this indicate? See 1 John 3:15

13. Compare 4:2 and 3:16 What does this indicate about these believers?

- What warning did Paul give believers in Galatians 5:15?
- What concern did he express in 2 Corinthians 12:20?

14. What is the a reason for not having or receiving what we want? 4:2d

- What is another reason? 4:3 (See Psalm 66:18) What does the word *asking* or *requesting* acknowledge about our control?

FYI: "Prayer is not magic...The point is that they are motivated by selfish desires and ask simply to gratify themselves. This is not the trusting child asking for a meal...but the spoiled child demanding his or her way. They are asking God to bless their schemes; God will have no part of it.' (David, GNC)" - Lyman Coleman (46)

15. What promise did God make about meeting our needs? Philippians 4:19

- What is the true source of pleasure? Psalm 16:11

Applying the Word: *What often leads to fight and quarrels in your life? Although you can't change others, what attitude can you can change in yourself that might help make the situation better?*

Day 3

Friendship with the World. Read James 4:4-6

16. List the phrases that describe how "*friendship with the world*" affects our relationship with God. 4:4

FYI: Friendship Strong's NT:5373 *philia*; fondness

World Strong's NT:2889 *kosmos*

"The present world, the present order of things, as opposed to the kingdom of Christ; and hence, always with the idea of transience, worthlessness, and evil both physical and moral, the seat of cares, temptations, irregular desires...Specifically the wealth and enjoyments of this world, this life's goods (Matt. 16:26...1 Corinthians 7:31; Galatians 6:14; James 4:4; 1 John 2:17)."

- The Complete Word Study Dictionary NT

17. Why do you think James labeled this *adultery*? (See Ezekiel 6:9) What would using this term indicate about the seriousness of the situation?

FYI: "Why does he call some of his readers '*adulteresses*'? Because they're cheating on God! Their attention, affection, and allegiance are not toward God and His people, but toward themselves and the world...the world system at odds with God...A heart beating to the rhythm of the world leads to anger with God and opposition to His words and works."
- Charles Swindoll (88)

"Rather than living in God's way, in the light of God's wisdom, his people are being molded by the values and desires of secular culture. They have, as it were, crossed over into the enemy's camp and decided to live there."
- Lyman Coleman (47)

"Throughout the Old Testament, God describes His relationship with His people like a marriage, and when His people forsake Him in sin, it is a picture of spiritual unfaithfulness or adultery."
- David Platt (Location: 1,669)

"Reading James suggests that there must have been many men and women with divided hearts in the groups to which he was writing. They were no different than those who doubt and who resemble 'a wave of the sea blown and tossed by the wind' (1:6)."
- The Africa Bible Commentary (1514)

18. How is friendship with the world expressed in:

- 1 John 2:15-17
- Ephesians 2:1-3
- John 15:18-19
- Matthew 6:24

19. What example would you give of being *friends with the world*? How does friendship with the world differ from intentionally interacting with an unbeliever?

20. What did James say about God's concern for our faithfulness? 4:5 (Cross-ref. Exodus 34:14)
TLB translation "the Holy Spirit, whom God has placed within us, watches over us with tender jealousy"

- What can we do to His Spirit when we sin? Ephesians 4:30

FYI: *Desires/longs/yearn* Strong's NT:1971 *epipotheo*; to yearn.

"To desire earnestly; long for...tend to."

– The Complete Word Study Dictionary NT

"God is infinitely jealous for His people, and He will oppose with divine force anything or anybody who threatens their good. God is jealous for the affections of your heart as a follower of Christ. This is not an insecure jealousy that is afraid you're going to find someone or something better, for there isn't anyone or anything better. This is a secure jealousy that seeks what is best for you by guarding your heart from adulterous pursuits. He tells us to run from the things of this world and cling to Him in order to find all that we need."
- David Platt

21. How does God help us combat our battles? 4:6a (What is grace *greater than*? See Romans 5:20b)

- How does God respond to the proud versus the humble? 4:6b (See also Proverbs 3:34)

Digging Deeper

How did the father in Jesus' parable respond to his prodigal son's repentance and humility? Luke 15:18-24

FYI: Humble Strong's NT:5011 *tapeino* "Low, not high, particularly of attitude and social positions."

- The Complete Word Study Dictionary NT

"To receive grace, a person must ask for it. To be able to ask, one must see the need to do so. The proud person can't and doesn't see such a need. Only the **humble** do."

- Lyman Coleman (47)

"**Pride** demands that God bless me in light of my merits, whether real or imagined. But grace will not deal with me on the basis of anything in me...but only on the basis of who God is."

- David Guzik

22. What is humility associated with in the following?

- Matthew 18:1-4
- Matthew 23:11,12
- Luke 18:9-14

Applying the Word: *Can you think of any way that your relationship with the Lord is blocked by an attitude of pride/arrogance?*

*It has been said that "God hates sin so much because He loves us so." How do **you** feel when those you love the most engage in sinful, self-destructive behaviors?*

*He giveth more grace when the burdens grow greater,
He sendeth more strength when the labours increase;
To added afflictions He addeth His mercy,
To multiplied trials, His multiplied peace.*

*When we have exhausted our store of endurance,
When our strength has failed ere the day is half done,
When we reach the end of our hoarded resources
Our Father's full giving is only begun...*

*His love has no limits, His grace has no measure,
His power no boundary known unto men;
For out of His infinite riches in Jesus
He giveth, and giveth, and giveth again.*

Annie Johnson Flint

Day 4

Submission to God. Read James 4:7-10

23. In a series of 10 commands, what is the first step in humbling ourselves? 4:7a What does this mean to you?

Digging Deeper
What picture does Romans 12:1-2 give you of submission?

FYI: Submit NT:5293 *hupotasso*; to subordinate; reflexively, to obey "To place under in an orderly fashion...To subject oneself, place onself in submission." - The Complete Word Study Dictionary NT

"Don't fight, resist, or push. Instead, surrender, resign, and relinquish. Yes, it goes against the grain of our natural tendency to fight; but God gives grace to do it. Say, 'Lord, I give up. I'm beaten.'" - Charles Swindoll (90)

"To submit to God is to recognize yur weakness, to stop fighting, and to surrender to Him as your ultimate and final authority (see Rom. 12:1-2)." - TheTony Evans Study Bible (1475)

24. What command and promise is given in 4:7b? For other assurances see 1 Peter 5:8,9; 2 Thessalonians 3:3)

Digging Deeper
From Ephesians 6:13-18, list the "armor of God" we use to stand against the Devil.

FYI: Resist Strong's NT:436 *anthistemi*; to stand against, i.e. oppose: KJV - resist, withstand.

"**Resist** comes from two Greek words: *stand* and *against*...Satan can be set running by the resistance of the lowliest believer who comes in the authority of what Jesus did on the cross." - David Guzik

"Sin is believing the lies of the prince of this world that say we need some thing or person or status, all the while disbelieving God who says, 'You need Me.' Resisit the Devil, and he will flee. Whatever power or influence the Devil may have, your life in Christ is far greater. When you are tempted to speak selfishly to your wife or husband or friend, resist him. When you are tempted to go to that site on the Internet, resist him. When you are tempted to anger, discouragement, doubt, pride, worry, resist him. Resist him, and he will flee." - David Pratt

25. What amazing call and promise is given in 4:8a? (Compare Psalm 145:18)

26. From the commands in 4:8b, how are we to address our external behavior and internal attitude? (What do the adjectives in 4:4,8 used in to describe the people indicate?)

FYI: "Our position in Christ...can never change. [Eph 4:30; 2 Peter 1:3] But James 4:8 is speaking about our daily relationship with God – our experiential growth in knowing Him and progressively becoming more like His Son." - Charles Swindoll (91)

"As His children in His Son, we are near. [Ephesians 2:13] But there is a nearer nearness available to all: '**Come near to God and He will come near to you.**' If you will take that step, a new nearness to God will be yours, and with it buoying tides of His grace." - R. Kent Hughes (187)

"The word used for **sinner** is *hamartolos*, which means the hardened sinner, the man whose sin is obvious and notorious.' (Barclay)" - David Guzik

27. How had James addressed doublemindedness (divided loyalty) in:

- 1:6-8
- 1:22
- 2:1
- 3:9
- 3:14-15
- 4:1
- 4:4

FYI: "To allow the world to entice us away from a total, single-minded allegiance to God is to become people who are divided in loyalties, 'double-minded' and spiritually unstable. James' readers, by exhibiting a jealousy and selfishness typical of this world (cf. 3:15), by failing to act on what they hear and say (1:19-2:26), in their 'double' use of the tongue (3:9-10) and in their violent disputes with one another (4:1-2), are guilty of this 'double-minded' attitude."
– Douglas Moo (149)

28. How should we regard our sinfulness? 4:9 Why? 2 Corinthians 7:10

FYI: "lament and mourn and weep, 'James speaks in terms of the Hebrew prophets' language about the anguish of repentance.' (Moffatt)"
– David Guzik

29. What will God do when we humble ourselves before Him? 4:10

- How did Jesus illustrate humility? Luke 18:9-14

Read Psalm 32 for David's experience in sharing His heart with the Lord.

Food for Thought: "Humble yourselves. Pride is the sin of the devil (I Timothy 3:6), and the most difficult human sin to overcome. One can even become proud of his humility!"
– Henry Morris

30. What do these 10 commands (*submit/resist/come near/wash/purify/grieve/mourn/wail/change/humble*) say about the seriousness of sin and rebellion against God?

Applying the Word: When have you seen the Lord "lift you up" after humbling yourself to His will? Explain.

Memory verses:

But the wisdom from above is first pure, then peace loving gentle, reasonable,
full of mercy and good fruits, impartial, free of hypocrisy. James 3:17 NASB