

The Humility Of Heavenly Wisdom

Memory Text: “Humble yourselves in the sight of the Lord, and He will lift you up.”
James 4:10

Illustration/Setting The Stage: Middle-management mentality. Attitude brought on when workers feel entitled to something they don't yet have (more respect, a raise, a promotion, etc.). Symptoms include flattering remarks to management or putting down fellow workers. Really, it's a “me” attitude. Major television news anchor made it to the top without leaving any “dead bodies.” Unfortunately selfish rivalry isn't just confined to the work place. This “worldly wisdom” is sometimes seen in the church as well.

Sunday – The Meekness Of Wisdom

James 3:13, 14; Deuteronomy 4:6

Read James 3:13-18. To be “wise and understanding” is to be desired. This is contrasted with being foolish (Eph. 5:15). King Solomon was made to be “wise and understanding” (1 Kings 3:12) when he put others interests ahead of his own. Israel was assured that the nations around them would marvel at their wisdom and understanding (Deut. 4:6) as they put God's interests ahead of their own.

What is biblical wisdom? Genuine wisdom is biblical knowledge applied. It's different from knowledge. Knowledge knows that a tomato is a fruit, but wisdom is knowing not to put it in a fruit salad.

“Show” – Genuine wisdom will be shown in works. A tree is known by the fruit it bears (see v. 12). A mother is known by her child. Cause is known by the effect. A Christian is known by his/her stellar character.

“Conduct” – manner of life. Paul said that his former “conduct” in Judah consisted in persecuting the Christians. It was his lifestyle. Paul admonishes the young Timothy to be an example to the believers in his “conduct.” (1 Tim. 4:12) Peter tells us that our “conduct” ought to be holy (1 Peter 1:15). So we're talking about lifestyle – the way we live our lives.

“Meekness” – gentleness. Meekness is not equivalent to being a doormat. The Bible says of Moses that he was the meekest man of all the men living at his time (Num 12:3). Was he a push over? Was his meekness used as an excuse to be complacent and lack initiative? That would be a false meekness. Think Jesus. He spoke and lived His convictions and implemented His plans in a gentle, though firm manner.

Someone said that “gentleness of spirit is most conducive to clear thinking as well as to calm administration.”

Biblical wisdom doesn't boast or show off its good works. Good deeds done in humility are the fruit of wisdom. And this is contrasted with “bitter envy [jealousy] and self-seeking [bias toward oneself] ” (v. 14). Men become envious over promoting their special interests and show little regard for the desires of others.

“Hearts” – What we need is a daily heart examination. “Lie against the truth” – Don't betray the truth we teach by the inconsistent life we live.

Monday – Two Kinds Of Wisdom

James 3:15-18; 1 Corinthians 13: 4-8; Colossians 3:1, 2

Just as James describes two kinds of faith (see 2:17) he describes two kinds of wisdom. **Read James 3:15, 16.**

“Worldly wisdom” – envy and self-seeking which brings confusion and every evil practice. We see this manifested in shrewdness and subtle arguments employed to promote ones self-interest.

When Armand Hammer, the chairman of Occidental Petroleum, died December of 1990, he was a legend. In his 92 years of life, he had done things people only dreamed about. He had become a successful businessman, a person of influence with presidents, and a generous philanthropist and patron of the arts.

Armand Hammer's image was actually a result of a carefully crafted public relations campaign that spanned seven decades. He manufactured much of his personal history. He continually controlled information about himself, hired ghostwriters to create fictitious autobiographies of his life, and even created a company, Armand Hammer Productions, whose mission was to make films promoting him. All these efforts were made to disguise a greedy, deceptive man who used people like objects and then threw them away like trash when he was finished with them.

Hammer had no friends. He allowed his father to go to prison for him. He neglected his only son. He hid himself from his only other child, an illegitimate daughter. He left a trail of broken marriages. It's no surprise that when Hammer's funeral was held on December 13, 1990, it was poorly attended. His son Julian did not appear. Neither did the family of his two brothers. His pallbearers were his chauffeur, his male nurse, and other personal employees.

Dwight L. Moody once told the fable of an eagle who was envious of another that could fly better than he could. One day the bird saw a sportsman with a bow and arrow and said to him, "I wish you would bring down that eagle up there." The man said he would if he had some feathers for his arrow. So the jealous eagle pulled one out of his wing. The arrow was shot, but it didn't quite reach the rival bird because he was flying too high. The first eagle pulled out another feather, then another until he had lost so many that he himself couldn't fly. The archer took advantage of the situation, turned around, and killed the helpless bird.

Moody made this application: if you are envious of others, the one you will hurt the most by your actions will be yourself.

“Earthly” – It only has this present life in view. “Sensual,” or unspiritual – Satisfies own desires. “Devilish” – The devil was not satisfied with the wisdom God gave him (see Ezek. 28:17). These are the three enemies of man – world, flesh, and the devil. And what does it produce? “Confusion”, or restlessness; and “evil”, or things that are good for nothing.

Read James 3:17, 18. “Wisdom from above” is first “pure” - free from selfish principles, pursuits, and goals; “peaceable” (Matt 5:9 – peacemaker) – avoids strife but doesn’t sacrifice the truth; “gentle” – reasonable, forbearing under provocation, and makes allowance for others mistakes; “willing to yield”; “full of mercy and good fruits”; “without partiality and without hypocrisy.”

Colossians 3:1, 2: “If then you were raised with Christ, seek those things which are above, where Christ is, sitting at the right hand of God. ² Set your mind on things above, not on things on the earth.”

1 Corinthians 13:4-7: “Love suffers long *and* is kind; love does not envy; love does not parade itself, is not puffed up; does not behave rudely, does not seek its own, is not provoked, thinks no evil; does not rejoice in iniquity, but rejoices in the truth; bears all things, believes all things, hopes all things, endures all things.”

Tuesday – Cause Of Conflict & Quarrels

James 4:1-3; Galatians 5:17

In James 4:1 & Galatians 5:17 what conflict do these passages describe? Basketball or racket ball game? War against self. Pride promotes strife. Bottom line. The root cause of all division and confusion is self-interest. “When the satisfaction of self-interest is the governing principle of man there is no end to quarrels. Each man sees in another the obstacle to full satisfaction of personal desire.” We are the opposition! And what happens in us can end up affecting those around us.

Read James 4:2, 3. What sinful desires are mentioned here and how are they affecting the church? “Lust”, something yearned for passionately. Self-interest left ungoverned leads to the sin of covetousness (Ex. 20:17); “hate,” “strife,” “fighting,” “misplaced faith.”

“Ask not” – they depended upon their own efforts for whatever they desired, instead of trust in God to provide what was best for them. Prayer implies we are willing to seek for what God is willing to give to us. “Receive not” – answer is dependent on nature or spirit, or wrong objectives or motives.

“It is the love of self that brings unrest. When we are born from above, the same mind will be in us that was in Jesus, the mind that led Him to humble Himself that we might be saved. Then we shall not be seeking the highest place. We shall sit at the feet of Jesus, and learn of Him.” (Desire of Ages, p. 330, 331)

Wednesday – Friendship With The World

James 4:4-6; Jeremiah 3:6-10

Read James 4:2-4. Why does James call his readers “adulterers and adulteresses”?

Jeremiah 3:6: “The LORD said also to me in the days of Josiah the king: “Have you seen what backsliding Israel has done? She has gone up on every high mountain and under every green tree, and there played the harlot. “ The practice of “worldly wisdom” leads a Christian to becoming unfaithful to Christ.

The chief aim of the world is to satisfy the desire for personal gratification. The gospel calls us back to a program of service. There should be a marked difference between the spirit and practice of the church and the world.

“The time is not far distant when the test will come to every soul. The mark of the beast will be urged upon us. Those who have step by step yielded to worldly demands and conformed to worldly customs will not find it a hard matter to yield to the powers that be, rather than subject themselves to derision, insult, threatened imprisonment, and death. The contest is between the commandments of God and the commandments of men. In this time the gold will be separated from the dross in the church.” (Testimonies for the Church, Vol. 5, p. 81)

Thursday – Submission To God

James 4:7-10; Psalm 24:3-6

10 imperatives in James 4:7-11 – submit, resist, draw nigh, cleanse hands, purify hearts, be afflicted, mourn, weep, humble yourself, speak not evil (full circle).