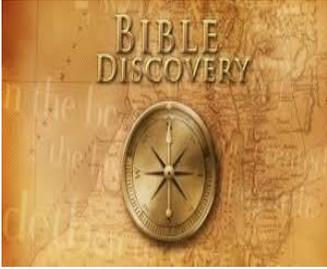


September 6, 2015

James 3:13-18

Living in God's Wisdom



Have you ever said: “I can’t understand the Bible”? Or “I just don’t get anything from reading it” or “I don’t think it applies today!” What I’ve discovered is the reason we don’t “get” the Bible – we don’t “get” God’s Word - is we’ve never really read God’s love letter to us *the way God wrote it*. We pick up God’s Word every now and then, mostly when it’s convenient or we need something *from* God. We fail to comprehend God sent His Word to speak into my life *and your life* giving us His Wisdom. In fact, we fail to recognize on every page of scripture is the *Living Word* of Christ who died, and lives, interceding for you and me. We fail to recognize in Christ is all knowledge and wisdom for He is the Living Word!

Today wisdom’s defined as “having knowledge and the ability to make right choices for any situation in a reasonable time”. But where do we look for that knowledge and ability? Do we look to higher and higher education? Do we look to Oprah, Dr. Phil, Dr. Oz, child psychologists, marriage therapists, self-help books, parenting books, Nanny 911? As Christians, our search for wisdom begins with God. Why? Because Proverbs 1:7 tells us, “*Fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom.*” And Psalm 111:10 reminds us, “*Wisdom begins with respect for the LORD; those who obey His orders have good understanding.*” Many speak of fearing God, standing in trepidation before an Almighty God –with good reason if they’ve chosen to walk their own path far

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from Him; but what our Heavenly Father seeks is far from a dark dread. God sent His own Son, Jesus to demonstrate to us His love and His compassion for us so we would understand *His* greatness, *His* supremacy, *His* sufficiency, giving Him and Him alone the respect so rightly due Him.

In this world there’s constant, intense debate over what’s wise, what’s true, what’s considered the right way to go, the right way to think. Confusion reigns as talk shows on TV and radio, periodicals, books; our educational system, our government; discussion around the workplace water cooler; not to mention blogs on the internet all vigorously promote opposing views, each believing they’re correct. Blogger, Douglas S. Winnail, writes “*Television, movies and the Internet are having an effect on mankind that would have been unimaginable even a century ago. The media—print and electronic—shape our lives and our minds in ways that most fail to realize, and with sobering effects!*” Modern media executives acknowledge “*television is undeniably the most powerful influence in our society today... we can communicate anything we choose almost anywhere in the world... instantaneously, in a puff of electrons*”. Communication professionals lament the average person is “*remarkably naïve*” on how mass media operates, the personal agendas of scriptwriters and producers even within the so called “unbiased news broadcasts” - the ultimate consequence to society is portrayed on screen with out our understanding of how it all affects us. If we look to such worldly ‘*thinkers*’ for wisdom and guidance, we’ll end up discouraged and confused because every viewpoint may seem plausible when considered in isolation – until the opposing argument’s presented. Such confusion may convince us there’s no such thing as truth, there’s no one “*right*” way to go. We feel lost and discouraged.

So what can we do? How can we live and raise children and impact our grandchildren in a society where religion’s all but abandoned or at least has been watered down, corrupted, and moral values are under constant attack by the most powerful

**How can we live where
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forces ever encountered? We're often placed in position where we need *wisdom* – at our jobs, in the home, with our children, with life itself – but if there's no truth, if there's no standard, if there's no absolute, if everything has a spin placed upon it, if someone else is controlling what we think, to what do we turn, on whom do we depend? What hope is there for the future? I truly believe the Bible provides informative answers. Bible teacher Lawrence E. Toombs explains,

“Wisdom is to be found with God, and nowhere else; and unless the quest for wisdom brings man to his knees in awe and reverence, knowing his own helplessness to make himself wise, wisdom remains for him a closed book.” Indeed as the Bible remains closed, we are all doomed.

We begin with understanding God not the pursuit of facts or opinions.

To counter this means we begin with wisdom, not knowledge. We begin with understanding God not the pursuit of facts or opinions. In James 3:17, the apostle lists seven marks of the wisdom that come from God. James shows being wise isn't a matter of intellectual capacity; it's an attitude, essentially, a life reflecting Jesus.

Today we could spend considerable time looking at what God's wisdom is not – James gives indication of this saying *“if you harbour bitter envy and selfish ambition in your hearts...such wisdom does not come down from heaven but is earthly, unspiritual, of the devil.”* [vs. 14-15] I think in our hearts we realize this – the disorder, the confusion, the pain and suffering, the longing for something better. Instead of dwelling on what we know so well, let's focus on the wisdom which does come down from heaven as blessings from God. To help us in that focus, James 3:17 provides the roadmap for understanding Godly wisdom; for following the path the Lord has laid out for us. Let's briefly take a look at them.

1) **Wisdom from God is first of all pure meaning pure of heart.**

Without guile or deception, cleansed of any sin - righteous in God's sight; are you getting the picture of the state of your life if you're to glean from God His wisdom & guidance? First, you must be in Christ; you must have accepted Jesus as your personal Saviour, confessed your wrong way of living and turned the 180 degrees to a course which follows God rather than your own way. Stop looking at what the world pursues – it doesn't get you anything. Instead, look to Jesus the author and perfecter of your faith and let Him wash you and make you pure. If this sounds a little familiar, perhaps you're recalling the Beatitudes, particularly Matthew 5:8, where Jesus taught, *“Blessed are the pure in heart, for they will see God.”*

2) **Those who pursue God's wisdom are also required to be peace-loving.**

What's that mean for you and me? First it means we do *whatever we can* to live peacefully with our neighbour and within our family – *even when outsiders aren't around*. How? Putting the needs of others first is a great place to start. Selfishness often leads to conflict – we want, we fight for what we want at the expense of others, often at the expense of those closest to us, the very ones whom should feel secure in our love. Wives and husbands become distant; children leave the security of home because they feel abandoned. Even when the family remains *“together”* they're isolated, each pursuing separate directions. When we let go of our own demands, our own pursuits and wait on God to provide, entertaining the needs of even strangers about us, there's a peace passing human understanding which only God provides. There's an outpouring of concern which brings harmony and understanding to all our relationships.

3) **James instructs we must be considerate.**

As we look to the needs of others, being considerate is giving the right of way, walking the extra mile, getting out of our comfort zone to meet other's needs. The boy scouts say they're always to be ready to *“do a good deed”*. I like the story singer/songwriter Bill Gaither tells of a woman who'd finished her house chores one Saturday, and as she sat, a little tired from the work, recalled a co-worker, a single mother of young children, who never seemed to have enough time to get everything caught up. Though tired, this woman got up, put on her shoes, drove to her co-worker's place and when the door was answered simply said, *“put me to work”*. She spent the rest of the day cleaning and helping this co-worker. Imagine being considerate like that!

4) **We're called to live in God's wisdom being submissive.**

Now that's a term our society today doesn't sit well with. We love to have control – whether it's the TV remote or our lives. But if we surrender to Christ, we give up being first, we give up control. If we would stop and think about it that's what Jesus did for us. *“Who being in very nature God, did not consider equality with God something to be grasped, but made himself nothing, taking the very nature of a servant, being made in human likeness.”* [Philippians 2:6-7] How have you submitted first to God and to others with a servant heart today?

5) **Wisdom from God is full of mercy.**

There's much to be said for payback in our world today. Getting even, getting the upper hand, an eye for an eye. But where would we be if God, who's righteous and holy, knowing our evil ways, held that point of view over our heads? How blessed we are to know God's undeserved forgiveness and mercy. Only as we treat others as God has treated us can we understand how God thinks, how God works. Only as we love the world because God loves the world and show mercy can we begin to win hearts and minds for Christ.

6) **Wisdom from God requires judging with impartiality and sincerity.**

Jumping to conclusions seems to be one of society's fastest growing sports today. Together with jumping in with the popular crowd. If you want to know who's sincere, align yourself with those who will tell you when you're wrong (*and I mean really wrong*) and love you, console you in your problems even when they're not so bad. Someone who'll weigh the evidence, consider the facts even at the risk of losing your friendship, losing their job, losing life itself. Standing on principle and following the Word of God even when everyone around them has decided God's Word no longer applies.

7) **Wisdom from God results in bearing good fruit.**

If you've been following in your Bibles, you'll have noticed I skipped this one from the order James provides us. I left it to the end because I think the other six points demonstrate how we bear good fruit – being pure in heart, peace-loving, considerate, submissive, full of mercy, and judging with impartiality and sincerity. Jesus says a bad tree can't bear good fruit but that a good tree can bear *only* good fruit. So we begin with being in Jesus, letting Jesus open our hearts and our minds, directing the way we should go. We accept that Jesus is the way, the truth and the life in all we do and say; in all we think and even long for. We let our motives be led by God, we let our goals be set by God, and we let our lives be stamped with the message of love that comes only from God.

If you would be truly wise and would therefore understand God's ways, prove it by living an honourable life, doing good works with the humility that comes from wisdom, so that these seven brief precepts will have taken root in your heart. To navigate successfully through life, making decisions that honour God requires we seek that Source of all wisdom. As James exhorts, *“If you need wisdom, ask our generous God, and He will give it to you”* [James 1:5].

So go ahead this week. Let your ears, your mind, your heart hear and receive God's Word. Pray for God to speak to you personally; ask Him to make your heart tender and humble that you might hear His voice. Be willing to pray this simple prayer,

“Open the eyes of my heart, Lord, to help me see and understand the wonderful things that come from your wisdom.”

And commit yourself to applying what the Lord teaches you. Pray He would show you where you need to *live out the truth* He reveals and pray He'll enable you do just that. Never be satisfied, rather continuously seek more and more of Jesus in your life, Pray for opportunities for Him to work through your life so what you've learned you may share with others. Yes, search for more, ponder His Word and learn to live in God's wisdom today and every day. To discuss further the impact of living in God's wisdom, give us a call or drop us an email and let us know your thoughts.

Blessings, Pastor Dave