

## Huddle Overview - James Study Week 5

### **Discipleship Definition:**

*Learning to love and follow Jesus—together—by His strength, in everyday life.*

### **What are huddles at Foundations?**

- Groups of 3-8 people (or 3-4 couples) that meet for one hour per week at a time and location of your choosing. Larger groups should plan for 75 minutes.
- Huddles last for 8 weeks. At the end of each 8-week session, you can stay with your group, add to your group or even change groups and topics.
- While gathering on Sunday is vital to spiritual growth, so is connecting with others to encourage one another, discussing what it means to follow Jesus and praying for one another. These practices are detailed in our **RHYTHMS** course (which is not necessary to take part in huddles, but highly recommended).

### ***Our Mission at Foundations is to bring the extraordinary lifechanging message of Jesus Christ to a lost and broken world.***

- Huddles are one way we prepare to do this very thing, and we can't do that unless our lives are being transformed by Him.
- Hence, the goal of every session is that you will grow more like Jesus in some small way.
- In order to do this, we will focus on God's Word, encourage one another and commit to praying for one another.
- Each week, there are *individual rhythms* we encourage that will help you "love and follow Jesus."
- Similarly, there are *corporate rhythms* that help us in our spiritual formation.
- Consistent practice of these rhythms is part of the holistic development of disciples, and this booklet is designed to touch on that development.

## Rhythms Overview

**The individual rhythms** (for those who haven't taken the Rhythms course):

Prayer: Talking to God and listening to Him via His Word, His Spirit-Filled people and His creation. If you don't know how to pray, a good place to start is the Lord's Prayer in Matthew 5.

Abide in the Word: Reading the Bible and prayerfully asking God to show you who He is and what He wants for you. A good practice is to read with a pen in hand, and write your thoughts in a journal as He leads them.

Silence: Choosing to avoid speaking in order to listen to what He might want to say to us.

Solitude: Avoidance of interaction with others in order to be alone with Him. Silence enhances solitude. Have you intentionally gotten away to be alone (including technology/social media)?

Reflection (especially effective at the end of the day, maybe before sleep): Take some time in stillness to experience His presence. Tell God things you're thankful for. Make note of where you experienced Him today—or where you didn't. Note instances of loving your "neighbor" well—or failure to do so. Ask God for what He may want for you in the day tomorrow.

Other individual rhythms that will likely be practiced less frequently:

Fasting (food; if there's an area you are seeking specific guidance), giving joyfully (financially as an act of worship) and rest (setting aside time to enjoy your life and choosing to refrain from work).

**The corporate rhythms** (for those who haven't taken the Rhythms course):

Worship gathering: A time for our family to be together to participate corporately in the rhythms of worshipping together.

Participation in community: A time to engage in huddle, as well as other forms of being together as a church family (such as concerts, conferences/classes, events, etc.).

Lord's Supper: An opportunity for our family to reflect on the person and work of Jesus and to look forward in hope to His coming again.

Baptism: A one-time action of a declaration of faith in Christ. It is our hope that everyone be baptized, and that they also celebrate others who are being baptized.

Using your gifts to serve the Body: We have been given a gift to help the body of Christ come to maturity in faith, and we benefit by your presence.

Having a ministry of love for neighbors: We choose to exemplify the abundant life in order to fulfill our mission of bringing the extraordinary life of Jesus Christ to a lost and broken world.

## **Prayer, Day 1**

- If you are comfortable praying as a conversation with God, find some focused time to do so.
- Find a place where you can have silence and solitude, and talk to God. Be attentive to how He leads your thoughts and emotions.
- You may find it helpful to write down in a journal what you talked with God about and how He answered.
- If you are new to prayer, or struggle with focus, you may want to pray using Paul's prayer of thanksgiving for others as an example (from Ephesians 1:15-22): You can use this to pray for yourself and for others. Tell God you love Him. Ask God for spiritual wisdom and that He would reveal Himself in ways you can know Him more. Pray that you know the hope of His calling you. Pray that you would know the riches of glory of the inheritance of the saints. Ask God that you would know the power He gives to those who believe. Praise Him for being the God who is above all rule and authority and has the name above all other names. Thank Him for being the head of the church.

## **Time in the Word, Day 1, Read James 3:1**

### Background and Insights on the Reading:

Teaching is a more prominent role than many others in the body. Here "teachers" probably refers to those in an official capacity who have a recognized teaching position in the church. These people are in the spotlight and they have a lot of influence over others. Their words have the power to bring people to the truth or to mislead.

God has given every believer a spiritual gift and some have the gift of teaching. If someone has this gift, they should use it, but they should not use it loosely or haphazardly. Before speaking they should prayerfully go over their words and make sure they are in line with Scripture. Before giving advice to others or offering an opinion, it should be grounded in Scripture. Before teaching on a difficult topic, they should make sure to have studied it thoroughly and should measure their words carefully.

What this verse does not mean. We should not use this verse as an excuse to be silent and not share the gospel or encourage others to follow the Bible. The Great Commission still applies to all. Whether you have the gift of teaching or not, every person should pass on the things he has learned about God to others. We should be careful about the words we say. We need to make sure that the gospel we share is the same one that the apostles shared, and that the encouragement we give is from God's Word. If you speak God's Word you can't go wrong (c).

### Questions for Reflection:

- Why will a teacher incur stricter judgment?
- Does this mean you should not want to teach others about the Bible? If not, what can we learn from this verse?

## **Prayer, Day 2**

- If you are comfortable praying as a conversation with God, find some focused time to do so.
- Find a place where you can have silence and solitude and talk to God. Be attentive to how He leads your thoughts and emotions.
- You may find it helpful to write down in a journal what you talked with God about and how He answered.
- If you are new to prayer, or struggle with focus, you may want to pray using the Lord's Prayer as an outline (for your own words). Tell God how thankful you are for the privilege of calling the King of Kings, "our Father," and that He listens and hears. God is worthy of honor and worship. We should acknowledge that things on earth are not what they are supposed to be, and that we should ask God for an awareness of His presence and strive to see what He wants this world to be. We should let others see His Kingdom by how we live. We should be thankful that He provides our basic needs. We should pray for forgiveness and forgive others. We should name our weaknesses and our temptations, and ask for the Spirit to strengthen us. We should close with praise.

## **Time in the Word, Day 2, Read James 3:2**

### Background and Insights on the Reading:

We (James includes himself) all stumble or sin in many ways (Proverbs 10:19). To be a perfect person (teleios) means to be "mature." If one can bridle the tongue, the most insubordinate body part, he will be able to control the rest of his body as well (a).

What does it mean that he "is a perfect man?" There are two possible explanations for this. The first is that "perfect" truly means "perfect". That is, if a person is able to completely control his tongue, it is a sign of complete self-control and that person can control the rest of his body and be truly perfect. However, we know from verse 8 that no person can actually control their tongue. Rather, this is a hypothetical situation telling us that the tongue is the most difficult part of the body to control. The second possibility is that "perfect" means "mature" and shows that the spiritually mature can tame the tongue. Taming the tongue is very difficult and we need God's help (c).

### Questions for Reflection:

- What is an example of speech that you sometimes struggle with that causes you to stumble?
- What are some practical ways to control your tongue?
- Does this mean that you can really be perfect if you can control your tongue?

Additional resources - see appendix.

### **Prayer, Day 3**

- If you are comfortable praying as a conversation with God, find some focused time to do so.
- Find a place where you can have silence and solitude and talk to God. Be attentive to how He leads your thoughts and emotions.
- You may find it helpful to write down in a journal what you talked with God about and how He answered.
- If you are new to prayer, or struggle with focus, you may want to simply pray using a Psalm...they are really great prayers! Find one that you resonate with, and pray it aloud. Simply read through a Psalm, such as Psalm 23 or 51. Pray aloud, even if in a whisper, slowly and with concentration on the words. Try to be attentive to the thoughts that come to mind and discern if those may be something God is trying to tell you.

### **Time in the Word, Day 3, Read James 3:3-6**

#### Background and Insights on the Reading:

In trials, the tongue can veer out of control, evidencing pride, anger, and false wisdom. The tongue boasts of great beneficial things, such as encouraging others (Proverbs 10:21; 12:18). Negatively, the power of the tongue is like a small fire that has set aflame and destroyed an immense forest. One rumor can destroy numerous churches. Since most sins are initiated by speech, the tongue is the very world of iniquity (verse 6). It sets on fire the course of our life, such as provoking a broken marriage (a).

James compares the damage the tongue can do to a raging fire – the tongue’s wickedness has its source in hell itself. The uncontrolled tongue can do terrible damage. Satan uses the tongue to divide people and pit them against one another. Idle and hateful words are damaging because they spread destruction quickly, and no one can stop the results once they are spoken. We dare not be careless with what we say, thinking we can apologize later, because even if we do, the scars remain. A few words spoken in anger can destroy a relationship that took years to build. Before you speak, remember that words are like fire – you can neither control nor reverse the damage they can do (b).

#### Questions for Reflection:

- How does the uncontrolled tongue set the course of your life on fire?
- Consider how to use your words to encourage others. This week intentionally speak edifying words to build others up each day. For example, you can aim to give at least three compliments to your spouse every day this week!
- What are some practical ways that you can reduce evil speech?
- What are some practical ways that you can use your words for good?

Additional resources - see appendix.

## Prayer, Day 4

- If you are comfortable praying as a conversation with God, find some focused time to do so.
- Find a place where you can have silence and solitude and talk to God. Be attentive to how He leads your thoughts and emotions.
- You may find it helpful to write down in a journal what you talked with God about and how He answered.
- If you are new to prayer, or struggle with focus, you may want to pray using the ACTS method as an outline (for your own words). **Adoration** - (a time of worship), don't be afraid of "artistic expressions" here, or to use Psalms or hymns or other forms of praise. **Confession** - we all fall short and miss the mark. Confession of sin helps us in our relationship to God. **Thanksgiving** - simply tell God what you're thankful for. **Supplication** - ask God for needs of the world, our country and leaders, our church, and anything and everything else. God wants to hear from you.

## Time in the Word, Day 4, Read James 7-12

### Background and Insights on the Reading:

If no human being can control the tongue, why bother trying? Even if we may not achieve perfect control of our tongues, we can still learn enough control to reduce the damage our words can do. It is better to fight a fire than to go around setting new ones! Remember we are not fighting the tongue's fire in our own strength. The Holy Spirit will give us increasing power to monitor and control what we say, so that when we are offended, the Spirit will remind us of God's love, and we won't react in a hateful manner. When we are criticized, the Spirit will heal the hurt, and we won't lash out. When the Holy Spirit purifies the heart, He gives self-control so that the person will speak words that please God (b).

In James 3:9–12, James points out a fundamental tension in our use of the tongue. The tongue does two things at once—blessing and cursing! What three examples does he use in James 3:11–12 to show the absurdity and sinfulness of using the same tongue to bless God and curse people? (h).

### Questions for Reflection:

- Commit to praying daily for your speech this week. Be intentional to build up others.
- Why is the tongue so difficult to tame, so destructive?
- Think of a time when you witnessed someone be hurt by another's uncontrolled tongue. What are some ways you may have hurt someone with your speech?
- Besides destruction, what other potential does our tongue have?
- What does verse 9 tell us about our speech?

Additional resources - see appendix.

## **Prayer, Day 5**

- If you are comfortable praying as a conversation with God, find some focused time to do so.
- Find a place where you can have silence and solitude and talk to God. Be attentive to how He leads your thoughts and emotions.  
You may find it helpful to write down in a journal what you talked with God about and how He answered.
- If you are new to prayer, or struggle with focus, you may want to pray using the breath method. Simply read through a Psalm and breathe in as you read the first line, and then exhale on the second. Take deep, long, slow breaths. Good examples are Psalm 46 and 47, but almost every Psalm can be done this way. Try to focus on the ones that focus on God and/or resonate with where you are at the moment.

## **Time in the Word, Day 5, Read James 3:13-16**

### Background and Insights on the Reading:

James continued his warning about the tongue and described how true godly wisdom (“skill for living and applying God’s word”) will help curtail its destructiveness in the context of a church. Wisdom is best expressed in actions, not speech. A person who is wise will show this wisdom by his good behavior. Gentleness (prautes, “being kind-hearted in attitude and behavior without any harshness”) recalls Christ’s character (praus, Mathew 11:29)

The wisdom of selfish ambition is (1) earthly, limited to human understanding; (2) natural, emphasizing both strictly human values and characteristics, and the absence of the Spirit (1 Corinthians 2:14) and, (3) demonic (the work of Satan) (a).

### Questions for Reflection:

- Which believer exhibits godly wisdom: a Christian who lives out his beliefs in the world, or a Christian who lives like the world and also has his beliefs?
- How would others know if you are wise since wisdom is an invisible character quality?
- What are some of the key tenets of worldly wisdom?
- What are some of the key tenets of heavenly wisdom?

Additional resources - see appendix.

## **Prayer, Day 6: A Time for Reflection**

- Traditional time of Examen. This is a version of the five-step Daily Examen that St. Ignatius practiced.
- Become aware of God's presence. Breathe and slow down. Ask God to make you aware of His presence and to bring to mind moments of your day to focus on.
- Review the day with gratitude. Walk through your day and give thanks for areas where you saw God "show up" and for His blessings.
- Pay attention to your emotions. The things you feel when you review often highlight areas where God wants you to focus and what he wants to teach you. Often this results in confession when you see your emotions out of line with walking in the Spirit.
- Choose one feature of the day and pray about it. Ask God to show you moments where you loved others well (or, conversely, He may bring to mind an area you didn't). Give thanks or ask forgiveness as warranted.
- Look toward tomorrow. Think through your day tomorrow and ask God what He may be calling you to do or be in the upcoming day.

## **Time in the Word, Day 6, Read James 3:17-18**

### Background and Insights on the Reading:

Heavenly wisdom is first pure ("free from moral defect or stain"; in this context, promoting harmony and countering hypocrisy), then peaceable, gentle, and reasonable (necessary for unity). James illustrates the growth of righteousness in the church with the sowing of seed in the field. If the fruit desired is righteousness, the seed must be sown under the proper conditions, i.e., in peace. Anger cannot "grow" God's righteousness. Therefore, the ones who sow the seed must be peacemakers (a).

FULL OF MERCY. The wisdom from above, James says, is, among other things, "full of mercy" (James 3:17). The wise man or woman is not reluctant to extend mercy to another, but eager. For those who know the wisdom from above are the very ones who have been granted mercy in Christ. God, in Jesus, was "full of mercy" toward us. We have the glad privilege of extending that mercy accordingly to others (h).

### Questions for Reflection:

- In what way does verse 17 portray the characteristics of wisdom when it looks like it could just be a list of Christian virtues?
- Read James 3:17-18 and notice all the words James uses to describe a person marked by wisdom from above. How are those things opposed to bitter jealousy and selfish ambition?

Additional resources - see appendix.

## Huddle Meeting:

General Check-In (10 minutes)

Emotional Check-In (10 minutes)

- Using the SACHET wheel, describe how you're doing emotionally right now. You may want to write down some of these to pray for your huddle during the week.



Rhythms Check-In (10 minutes)

- Describe your experience with the individual rhythms this week.
- Describe your experience with the corporate rhythms this week.
- How can the huddle encourage you this week in these areas? Or.....How can you encourage the huddle this week in these areas?

Discussion for Growth (30 Minutes)

- Feel free to discuss any questions from the prior days' studies.
- Take some time to evaluate your speech. Write down one or more areas where the Spirit has convicted you this week because your speech has not honored God. Then spend some time in prayer. Confess your hurtful words to God. Ask Him to help you tame your tongue. If necessary, go and apologize to anyone you have hurt with your speech.
- Application: In what area do you need more wisdom from above? How will you get that wisdom?

## Appendix

### References

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### **Time in the Word, Day 1, James 3:1 Not many of you should become teachers, my brothers, for you know that we who teach will be judged with greater strictness.**

Many of the Jewish Christian readers longed to become Bible teachers. James was a Bible teacher and knew that he, along with all teachers, would incur a stricter judgement at the judgement seat of Christ (a).

#### Related Scripture:

- John 13:15 – I have set you an example that you should do as I have done for you.
- 1 Corinthians 12:27-31 – Now you are the body of Christ, and each one of you is a part of it. And God has placed in the church first of all apostles, second prophets, third teachers, then miracles, then gifts of healing, of helping, of guidance, and of different kinds of tongues. Are all apostles? Are all prophets? Are all teachers? Do all work miracles? Do all have gifts of healing? Do all speak in tongues? Do all interpret? Now eagerly desire the greater gifts.
- Hebrews 5:12 – In fact, though by this time you ought to be teachers, you need someone to teach you the elementary truths of God’s word all over again. You need milk, not solid food!

### **Time in the Word, Day2, James 3:2 For we all stumble in many ways. And if anyone does not stumble in what he says, he is a perfect man, able also to bridle his whole body.**

#### Related Scripture:

- Proverbs 10:19 - When words are many, transgression is not lacking, but whoever restrains his lips is prudent.

### **Time in the Word, Day 3, James 3:3-6 3 If we put bits into the mouths of horses so that they obey us, we guide their whole bodies as well. 4 Look at the ships also: though they are so**

**large and are driven by strong winds, they are guided by a very small rudder wherever the will of the pilot directs. 5 So also the tongue is a small member, yet it boasts of great things. How great a forest is set ablaze by such a small fire! 6 And the tongue is a fire, a world of unrighteousness. The tongue is set among our members, staining the whole body, setting on fire the entire course of life, and set on fire by hell.**

James often uses illustrations from everyday life or nature to prove his points. Maybe he learned this technique of parables from Jesus, his half-brother. Illustrations are effective because they bring lofty and sometimes difficult to understand concepts down to our realm of experience and understanding.

The illustration of the horse and bit and the ship and rudder – Both of these illustrations have the same meaning. Horses and ships are hard to control. But it is possible to control them. A small tool (bit and rudder) can help you to steer these powerful objects. The bit and rudder are small parts of their respective whole, but are extremely important if you want to control the whole. They are small but hold great power. In similar manner, the tongue is also very small, but it too holds great power.

The illustration of the fire and the forest – In verses 5-6 we see the amazing destructive capacity of the tongue. A fire starts off very small, but can spread quickly and devour millions of acres before it burns out. Often times fires are started by careless people. A little spark in the right conditions can lead to vast wildfires that destroy life and property. Just a few seconds of care on the front side can save vast devastation later.

The tongue is the same. Words, once spoken, cannot be unsaid. Kids on playgrounds like to say, “sticks and stones may break my bones, but words will never hurt me.” But the saying cannot be further from the truth. Words can hurt. They do hurt. You surely can remember times when people have spoken hurtful things to you, and that hurt may still be there.

King Solomon’s son, Rehoboam, found out the hard way the harm foolish words can do. After he became king, the eleven non-Judah tribes came to him to ask that their work load be lightened. The elders encouraged him to speak gently words knowing that a “gentle answer turns away wrath.” But Rehoboam instead listened to hotheads. See what he says. 1 Kings 12:8, 14 – But he abandoned the counsel that the old men gave him and took counsel with the young men who had grown up with him and stood before him. He spoke to them according to the counsel of the young men, saying, “My father made your yoke heavy, but I will add to your yoke. My father disciplined you with whips, but I will discipline you with scorpions.” So, the other tribes revolted. And there was war for generations.

A fire can damage in different ways. Not only does it burn, but smoke goes far beyond the actual fire, choking, stinging, and spreading an awful smell. Words also can spread far beyond what you expect and impact others even in faraway places.

We must learn to control our tongues for two reasons: First, there are still remnants of our old nature left. Some wrong desires are still there. Temptations rise up. We need to first not say the wrong thing, then confess the thought to the Lord and move on. If you speak it out, the problem will often grow. One lie will bring another will bring two and then three more. When you start to argue, it is very hard to stop. The other person will likely respond in kind and then you will respond in anger and it will grow. The solution is to stop it at the beginning. Secondly, our tongues are very fast. Sometimes they act before

our mind can really evaluate what they are saying. This is often the case with jokes or ridiculing others. In this case we need to apply James 1:19 and be quick to listen and slow to speak.

The other side of the coin is to speak positive words – The solution to the tongue problems is not to remain silent. Though the tongue is very powerful with the potential for great harm, so it also has the potential for great good. That is why God gave us tongues! Without speaking we cannot share the gospel. Without speaking we cannot encourage others. Let us learn to use our words to pursue peace and build up others (c).

#### Related Scripture:

- Ephesians 5:4 – Nor should there be obscenity, foolish talk or coarse joking, which are out of place, but rather thanksgiving.
- 2 Timothy 2:14 – Keep reminding God’s people of these things. Warn them before God against quarreling about words; it is of no value, and only ruins those who listen.
- Proverbs 10:19 – Sin is not ended by multiplying words, but the prudent hold their tongues.
- Psalms 39:1 – I said, “I will watch my ways and keep my tongue from sin; I will put a muzzle on my mouth while in the presence of the wicked.”
- Colossians 3:8-10 – But now you must also rid yourselves of all such things as these: anger, rage, malice, slander, and filthy language from your lips. Do not lie to each other, since you have taken off your old self with its practices and have put on the new self, which is being renewed in knowledge in the image of its Creator.
- Proverbs 10:21 - The lips of the righteous feed many, but fools die for lack of sense.
- Proverbs 12:18 - There is one whose rash words are like sword thrusts, but the tongue of the wise brings healing.

**Time in the Word, Day 4, James 7-12 7 For every kind of beast and bird, of reptile and sea creature, can be tamed and has been tamed by mankind, 8 but no human being can tame the tongue. It is a restless evil, full of deadly poison. 9 With it we bless our Lord and Father, and with it we curse people who are made in the likeness of God. 10 From the same mouth come blessing and cursing. My brothers, these things ought not to be so. 11 Does a spring pour forth from the same opening both fresh and salt water? 12 Can a fig tree, my brothers, bear olives, or a grapevine produce figs? Neither can a salt pond yield fresh water.**

James uses another example from nature, this time about wild beasts. His point is that although man can control and tame wild beasts, we cannot through our own power, control the tongue.

No man can tame the tongue – We are sinful and depraved. Without God’s help, we cannot hope to have victory or self-control in this area. But we do have hope. Our hope is in Christ. He gives us the strength to have victory (1 Cor 10:13) where the natural man can have none. A natural man may hope to suppress his tongue for a while, but like a lion that is not fully trained, it may spring up to attack at any time, surprising everyone around. Outbursts are inevitable unless the heart has been regenerated by the Spirit. As believers, we can walk by the Spirit (Galatians 5:26.) The fruit of the Spirit includes self-control. This is a winnable battle if we rely on God.

What steps can we take to win this battle?

- Have a close relationship to God first. Jesus said that apart from Him we can do nothing (John 15:5). Don't be fake or hypocritical. If you are trying to live the Christian life by your own strength, you will fail sooner or later.
- Think before we speak. Don't be hasty to share your opinion. There is nothing the matter with talking, but don't find yourself always the one talking on and on.
- If we have a temptation to sin with our words, pray immediately. It doesn't have to be long or complicated. Simply say, "God I am angry. Help me."
- Make a focused effort to proactively use our tongues to glorify God and bless man. Train yourselves to speak positive words through practice. The more that kind words flow from your mouth, the easier they will come. But the more that angry words flow from your mouth, the easier they will come.

Don't be a hypocrite (9-12) – These verses tell us that tongues reveal the hypocrisy in our hearts. If the heart is evil, sooner or later in some way a person's words will give it away. The tongue is too hard to control because it is so fast and seems to have a mind of its own. This was another kind of hypocrisy. God doesn't want this kind of false lip service. If you don't mean it, don't say it.

Yet the application for us is not to stop praising God, it is to stop using our tongues as weapons to hurt people. The solution is not to be hypocrites. We need to be real and sincere. Our faith in God should touch every part of our lives. It should change our behavior.

Have integrity. Oil and vinegar don't mix. Next time you are about to enter an argument, mock others, scoff, ridicule, boast, lie, etc. think about Sundays when you tell God how much you love Him, when you worship Him with your words. And remember that it is hypocrisy for both blessings and curses to come out of the same mouth. We are to speak to one another in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs (c).

#### Related Scripture:

- Titus 2:8 – And soundness of speech that cannot be condemned, so that those who oppose you may be ashamed because they have nothing bad to say about us.
- Proverbs 15:1-4 – A gentle answer turns away wrath, but a harsh word stirs up anger. The tongue of the wise adorns knowledge, but the mouth of the fool gushes folly. The eyes of the Lord are everywhere, keeping watch on the wicked and the good. The soothing tongue is a tree of life, but a perverse tongue crushes the spirit.
- 1 Peter 4:11 – If anyone speaks, they should do so as one who speaks the very words of God. If anyone serves, they should do so with the strength God provides, so that in all things God may be praised through Jesus Christ. To him be the glory and the power for ever and ever. Amen.
- Matthew 5:13 – You are the salt of the earth. But if the salt loses its saltiness, how can it be made salty again? It is no longer good for anything, except to be thrown out and trampled underfoot.

**Time in the Word, Day 5, James 3:13-16 13 Who is wise and understanding among you? By his good conduct let him show his works in the meekness of wisdom. 14 But if you have bitter jealousy and selfish ambition in your hearts, do not boast and be false to the truth. 15 This is**

**not the wisdom that comes down from above, but is earthly, unspiritual, demonic. 16 For where jealousy and selfish ambition exist, there will be disorder and every vile practice.**

Who is wise and understanding among you? – James often teaches by asking rhetorical question. Why? Asking rhetorical questions is a way to focus his message more directly on the recipients. It is intended to make people consider whether they are in this category or not. People are forced to consider his message instead of just thinking, “oh, he’s talking to someone else.” Rhetorical questions are frequently used because James is a book which focuses on practical application, living out one’s faith.

Earthly wisdom – Starting in verse 14 James begins describing earthly/worldly wisdom. He is giving a test by which we can measure if we are wise or not. We can look at our actions to see if we are living wisely.

What is worldly wisdom like? Bitter jealousy and selfish ambition both indicate a competitive and combative spirit. One wants what others have. His desire is to push himself forward no matter who he steps on along the way. He looks out for his own interests ahead of others. In conversations, he will probably boast about his worldly successes and talk about how to make more money and get a higher status. Earthly wisdom focuses on earthly riches. The end of verse 14 is saying that if you have this kind of attitude, but think you are wise, you are being arrogant and lying against the truth.

Two kinds of wisdom – The wisdom which says, “look out for number one” is a selfish mentality that has been spread by Satan from the beginning. It can sound good or reasonable on the surface, but is rotten to the core. But the Christian has a completely different foundation. We believe there is a God. We will be judged for how we live our lives. There is life after death. There is an absolute standard. Truth is absolute, not relative. Right is not about what is pleasant for us, but about what pleases God. Our actions are eternally significant. We are commanded to be unselfish and to put others first.

Different beliefs lead to radically different conclusions. We need to understand the HUGE differences between heavenly wisdom and worldly wisdom when making choices. Wise, for unbelievers is to do whatever brings you happiness. The wisest course of action possible, they think, is to please the one who sits on the throne (yourself) because there is no one else you will be finally accountable to.

Wise, for the believer, is to do whatever God tells us to do. The wisest course of action possible is to obey the one who sits on the throne and to whom we will be accountable for everything we do in our lives.

We must not simply follow the majority or go along with culture. We must instead critically evaluate every decision we make and most importantly evaluate our lives to see if they are in line with our beliefs. We need God’s wisdom to discern the truth and to stand up for it in a world growing ever more devoid of it (c).

Related Scripture:

- 1 Peter 2:12 – Live such good lives among the pagans that, though they accuse you of doing wrong, they may see your good deeds and glorify God on the day he visits us.
- Ecclesiastes 12:13-14 – Now all has been heard; here is the conclusion of the matter: Fear God and keep his commandments, for this is the duty of all mankind. For God will bring every deed into judgment, including every hidden thing, whether it is good or evil.

- Luke 22:25-26 – Jesus said to them, “The kings of the Gentiles lord it over them; and those who exercise authority over them call themselves Benefactors. But you are not to be like that. Instead, the greatest among you should be like the youngest, and the one who rules like the one who serves.
- Matthew 11:29 - Take my yoke upon you, and learn from me, for I am gentle and lowly in heart, and you will find rest for your souls.
- 1 Corinthians 2:14 - The natural person does not accept the things of the Spirit of God, for they are folly to him, and he is not able to understand them because they are spiritually discerned.

**Time in the Word, Day 6, James 17 But the wisdom from above is first pure, then peaceable, gentle, open to reason, full of mercy and good fruits, impartial and sincere. 18 And a harvest of righteousness is sown in peace by those who make peace.**

James talks about our words and heaven's wisdom. The one with perfect faith in God would have perfect control over his or her words. Worldly wisdom—envy and selfish ambition—with its me-first mentality is a source of disorder and evil in the world. God-trusting, self-sacrificing heavenly wisdom is the source of peace, gentleness, mercy and, ultimately, righteousness (j).

More on the wisdom from above – Verse 17 looks like a list of Christian virtues. What does it have to do with wisdom? A Christian wisely living out his faith will be doing these things.

- Pure – Similar to without hypocrisy. Full of integrity, sincere. Proper motivation.
- Peaceable and gentle – The opposite of aggressive and assertive. Jesus is the prime example.
- Reasonable – Bible teacher John MacArthur says “The original term described someone who was teachable, compliant, easily persuaded, and who willingly submitted to military discipline or moral and legal standards. For believers, it defines obedience to God’s standards.”
- Full of mercy – James already discussed that those with true religion will look after orphans and widows in their distress.
- Good fruits- The faithful person will bear fruit.
- Unwavering – We won’t give in when we face trials.
- Without hypocrisy – Being a hearer but not a doer or, blessing God and cursing man with the same mouth (c).