

“How to Relate Wisely with Others”

The Rev. S. Shane Nanney – September 22, 2024

Janes 3:13-4:8, Mark 9:30-37

Every day you encounter many kinds of people. Some are very delightful. Some are very difficult. Some of them are inspiring. Some of them are irritating, fascinating, intimidating. The fact is a lot of the problems we have in life is because of personality conflicts. We don't get along with people. When your relationships are bad, life stinks. Life is miserable. You may have lots of money and lots of opportunities but if your relationships are bad, you're miserable. How many of you have ever felt like giving up and walking out on a relationship simply because you could not relate or get along with a person. It's very important that we learn how to get along with other people.

James gives some practical advice. Today we're going to look at what he has to say about, how do we relate wisely to other people. In v. 18, it says, "and those who are peacemakers will plant seeds of peace and reap a harvest of goodness." James tells us, every day in every relationship, you're planting seeds. Seeds of anger, jealousy, peace, confidence, insecurity, many kinds of seeds. So, you will inevitably reap what you sow in your relationships. How can I plant seeds of peace? How can I be a peacemaker? How can I have peaceful relationships?

Wisdom. We need to learn how to be wise in the way we act toward people. Often, we treat people in very foolish ways and we provoke the exact opposite behavior of what we would normally like to see in them. Common sense is not so common. A lot of smart people are not too wise. They may be educated but they don't have wisdom. They may have all kinds of degrees but they're a wash out with relationships. James, in this passage, does three things: he defines real wisdom, then he shows how it differs from human wisdom, then he details how it operates.

The first thing he says in v. 13, is that:

Wisdom Is A Lifestyle.

It has nothing to do with your intelligence. It has everything to do with your relationships and your character. "Who is wise and understanding among you. let him show it by his good life, by deeds done in humility that comes from wisdom." Imagine James coming into our church and asking, "May I see a show of hands of those who are wise?" If you would raise your hand he would say,

"Prove it! Show me. Show me your wisdom by your lifestyle." It's not a matter of what you say with your lips but a matter of what you live with your life. Not a matter of your words but of your works. Not so much the diplomas on the wall, but your disposition that really shows how wise you are. How do you get along with other people? That shows how wise you really are. It's a lifestyle. Wisdom is applying the knowledge you have in building better and stronger relationships. You can know right from wrong, that's knowledge, Wisdom is applying that knowledge to your life to make a positive impact on how you live your life in a proper relationship with others.

Next James Says That Lack of Godly Wisdom Causes Problems

In verses 14-16 James writes: "If you harbor bitter envy and selfish ambition in your heart don't boast about it and deny the truth. such `wisdom' does not come down from heaven but is earthly, unspiritual, even of the devil. For where you have envy and selfish ambition there you find disorder and every evil practice." The KJV says confusion, which means disorder and instability. Lack of wisdom causes all kinds of disorder and problems, and chaos. Do you have confusion in your home? Do you have chaos at work? Is your life a mess? If you can't get it all together you lack wisdom. It causes all kinds of problems in our lives.

How can I know if I'm wise in how I relate toward people? James in v. 17, lists the characteristics of wise people. "Remember wisdom that comes from heaven is first of all pure, then peace, loving, considerate, submissive, full of mercy and good fruit, impartial and sincere."

1. IF I'M WISE, I WILL NOT COMPROMISE MY INTEGRITY.

"The wisdom that comes from heaven is first of all pure..." Pure means uncorrupted, authentic. In I John 3:3 this word is used to refer to Christ's character. Integrity. If I'm genuine, if I'm wise, I'm not going to lie to you, I'm not going to cheat you, I'm not going to manipulate you, I'm not going to be deceitful. I'm not going to try to take advantage of you. I'll be a person of integrity. Because all relationships are built on trust and respect. If you don't have honesty who's going to trust you? If you don't have honesty who's going to respect you? You must have integrity in your life. If I am wise, I will not compromise my integrity.

2. IF I AM WISE, I WILL NOT ANTAGONIZE YOUR ANGER.

"Wisdom is peace loving." Have you ever met someone who is always arguing, always looking for a fight? I heard about one guy who was so argumentative that he would only eat food that disagreed with him. If you're smart you don't antagonize people's anger. Proverbs 20:3 "Any fool can start arguments. The wise thing is to stay out of them." What causes arguments? Do you know? If you're wise you know because then you can avoid them.

3. IF I AM WISE, I WON'T MINIMIZE YOUR FEELINGS.

"Wisdom is considerate" and "considerate" means "mindful of the feelings of others". There is a common mistake that if I don't feel the way you feel then your feelings must be invalid or illogical or irrational or silly. James says, wise people are considerate; they don't minimize other people's feelings.

4. IF I AM WISE, I WON'T CRITICIZE YOUR DECISIONS /SUGGESTIONS.

A wise person can learn from anybody. He's not defensive. He's open to reason. He's not stubborn. He's willing to listen and learn. "Wisdom is submissive". This word is used only once in the New Testament. It doesn't really mean submissive as we've come to use the word. It really means reasonable, willing to listen, willing to be open to ideas and suggestions. The Revised Standard Version says, "it's open to reason." The Living Bible says, "it allows discussion."

Have you ever heard someone say, "Don't confuse me with the facts; I've made up my mind. When I want your opinion, I'll give it to you." A wise person does not antagonize your anger, does not minimize your feelings, and does not criticize your suggestions. Don't be defensive. Most of us are too oversensitive. If somebody makes a suggestion, we take it as a personal criticism and we're defensive. James says that is dumb. A wise person can learn from anybody.

A new pastor preaches the first day. When it's over a guy walks out and says, "Pastor, that sermon stunk." Pastor is trying to be really open about it, reasonable, wise, "What didn't you like about it?" "In the first place you read it. In the second place you read it poorly. In the third place it wasn't worth reading in the first place." Another guy walks out right behind him and says, "Don't listen to old Jim. He just repeats what he hears everybody else say."

5. IF I'M WISE, I WON'T DISGUISE WHO I AM.

The mark of a wise person is they don't try to hide and disguise who they are. "wisdom is impartial and sincere." The King James says without hypocrisy. It means to be honest and sincere. It means to be straightforward.

James says if you're smart and wise, you're not phony. You don't wear masks and try to be something you're not. Be yourself, don't try to be something you are not just to impress others. I've said before, if you're perfect this is not the church for you. If you're going to wear masks, this isn't the church for you. This church is for real people, with real sins, real hang ups, real faults, real emotional problems, real family problems. Real wise people are honest and open. They're not phony. They're real and authentic. "What you see is what you get" with a wise person.

When you start telling people what your weaknesses are they're not going to be shocked because they already know. Everybody knows your weakness. You're just the only one who won't admit it. We see each other's weaknesses all the time. Why do we walk around pretending that we don't know? We do. It's obvious to everybody. But we don't want to admit it.

So, how do I get wisdom? How do I become one of those wise people in relationships so that I have that peace that everybody is talking about? Do I just make a New Year's Resolution -- Today I'm going to be wise! No. This is the difference between knowledge and wisdom. Knowledge comes from education. Wisdom comes from God. To get knowledge you look around. To get wisdom you look up. Knowledge comes from reason. Wisdom comes from revelation. Knowledge is something you learn. Wisdom is a gift.

James 1:5 "IF ANY OF YOU LACKS WISDOM, LET HIM ASK OF GOD." Wisdom is a gift from God. I ask 50 times a day, "God, give me wisdom." I often think I am wise, but then I am humbled and realize that I have a long way to go. Today's sermon is probably more for me than it is you, but if it helps, then we both are blessed. I just want to be wise more than anything else. If you ask God, who gives generously, then you might be on the path to wisdom.

It's all wrapped up in a person, Jesus Christ. If you want God's wisdom, get Jesus in your life. You invite Him into your life and say, "Christ, think Your thoughts through my mind and say Your words through my mouth. Help people through my hands. Love people with my heart. And put Your wisdom in my mind." The wisest thing I ever did was give my life to Jesus Christ.

The way to build a better and stronger relationship with others is to start by building a better and stronger relationship with God. Amen.