

Two Kinds of Wisdom

Learning to Recognize Godly Wisdom, Seek Good Counsel, and Take Inventory of My Life

Pastor Mark Johnson

Friday, August 21, 2026

Program Summary

In this Friday edition of Mark & Friends, Pastor Mark Johnson moves into James 3:13-15 and contrasts two kinds of wisdom: wisdom from God and wisdom shaped by envy, selfish ambition, and the values of the world. He defines wisdom as the ability to apply godly knowledge and insight, then urges listeners to examine not only what happened in their lives but how their own decisions, ignored warnings, and patterns helped bring them to where they are. Through candid stories about marriage, counseling, addiction, decision-making, and spiritual growth, the group emphasizes the importance of Scripture, the Holy Spirit, and wise counselors. The message closes with a practical invitation to take inventory of every area of life and ask whether the fruit being produced reflects God's wisdom or worldly foolishness.

Key Takeaways

- James 3 says wisdom is demonstrated by a good life, humble deeds, and conduct shaped by dependence on God.
- Godly wisdom is more than possessing information; it is the ability to apply godly knowledge and insight to real decisions.
- Wisdom asks not only, 'What happened to me?' but also, 'How did I get here, what warning signs did I miss, and what should I learn?'
- Prudence looks ahead and considers where today's choices are likely to lead tomorrow.
- Envy and selfish ambition are warning signs that the wisdom guiding me is earthly rather than from God.
- Wise counsel matters, but I should choose counselors whose lives show faithfulness and fruit in the area where I need help.
- I can be wise in one part of life and foolish in another, which is why I need the whole counsel of God's Word.
- Seeking help is not a spiritual failure; God often answers prayers for wisdom by placing trustworthy people around me.
- Knowledge is required for wisdom, but knowledge alone does not guarantee maturity or wise action.

- Galatians 5 provides a useful inventory: love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, and self-control reveal the Spirit's work in my life.

Scripture References

- James 3:13-15
- James 1:5
- Proverbs 11:14
- Proverbs 15:22
- Proverbs 19:20
- 2 Timothy 3:16-17
- Galatians 5:19-23
- Hebrews 4:12
- John 14:26
- James 3:1

Quote of the Day

“Wisdom is the ability to apply godly knowledge and godly insight.”

Broadcast Notes

Pastor Mark begins by defining wisdom as the proper application of godly knowledge and insight. He uses the example of a failed marriage to show that growth requires more than identifying another person's wrongdoing; wisdom also asks what warning signs were missed, what counsel was ignored, and what patterns need to change before the next decision. The group discusses recurring relationship patterns seen in recovery settings and the biblical value of a multitude of counselors. Stan then shares a candid testimony about a crisis in his own marriage nearly forty years ago. He initially wanted Pastor Mark to hear only his side, but godly counsel confronted his self-centeredness and helped open a path toward change and restoration. Pastor Mark urges listeners to take inventory because a person can be wise in business yet foolish in parenting, wise in marriage yet foolish in caring for the body. He stresses the whole counsel of Scripture, prayer for wisdom, and the way God often supplies wisdom through people with proven experience. The conversation closes by using Galatians 5 as a spiritual inventory and by reminding teachers and counselors that their words must rest on a biblical foundation.

♥■ Practical Applications

- Take inventory of one area of my life and ask where I see the fruit of wisdom and where I see repeated foolishness.
- When something goes wrong, ask not only what another person did but what choices, warning signs, motives, or ignored counsel contributed to my situation.
- Identify one area where I need counsel and seek someone whose life shows proven faithfulness in that specific area.
- Before making a major decision, ask what outcome my present course is likely to produce six months or five years from now.
- Pray James 1:5 personally and remain open to the possibility that God's answer may come through a trustworthy person He places in my path.
- Use Galatians 5:22-23 as an inventory: are love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, and self-control increasingly visible in me?
- Notice where envy, bitterness, selfish ambition, pride, or resentment may be influencing my decisions and bring those motives honestly to God.
- Refuse to choose counselors simply because they agree with me; seek people willing to tell me biblical truth with humility and care.
- Remember that I may need different mentors for different areas of life; I can learn from someone's strength without copying every part of that person's life.
- When I give advice or teach someone else, distinguish clearly between what Scripture directly says and what is my best prayerful judgment.

Today's Challenge

Choose three areas of my life—relationships, finances, health, work, parenting, habits, spiritual life, or another important area—and give each an honest wisdom inventory. For each one, write: What fruit am I seeing? What pattern keeps repeating? What does Scripture say? Whose godly counsel should I seek? Then pray James 1:5 and take one concrete step of obedience.

Closing Prayer

Father, I need Your wisdom. Help me do more than collect knowledge; teach me to apply Your truth with humility, prudence, and obedience. Show me where envy, selfish ambition, pride, bitterness, or denial are shaping my decisions. Give me courage to take an honest inventory of my life and to recognize patterns I have ignored. Lead me to wise counselors whose lives show the fruit I need to learn, and keep me from surrounding myself only with people who tell me what I want to hear. Let Your Word correct, reprove, train, and mature me. Holy Spirit, counsel me and produce Your fruit in my character. When I speak into someone else's life, help me distinguish Your clear truth from my own opinion. Make me wise and understanding, and let my good life and humble deeds

point others toward Jesus. In Jesus' name, Amen.

About Today's Speaker

Pastor Mark Johnson

Pastor of Calvary Church, Springfield

Pastor Mark Johnson serves at Calvary Church in Springfield and regularly joins the Mark & Friends studio audience for verse-by-verse Bible discussion. A seasoned pastor, teacher, counselor, and storyteller, he brings many years of ministry experience to practical conversations about applying God's Word to everyday life. His father also served as a pastor, giving Mark a lifelong connection to pastoral ministry. In this continuation through James, he challenges listeners to distinguish godly wisdom from worldly foolishness, seek trustworthy counsel, and allow Scripture and the Holy Spirit to shape every area of life.

Proofread Broadcast Transcript

Mark & Friends Welcome Song

*We're glad you're here, we're glad you're here,
Fellowship is sweeter, knowing you're near.
It's so good to see you, we hope that it's clear,
Everyone loves you, we're glad you're here.*

We're glad you're here. We're glad you're here. Fellowship is sweeter, knowing you're near.

It's so good to see you. We hope that it's clear. Everyone loves you.

We're glad you're here. We're glad you're here. We're glad you're here.

Fellowship is sweeter, knowing you're near. It's so good to see you. We hope that it's clear.

Everyone loves you. We're glad you're here. Reading from James chapter 3, verses 13 through 15.

Who is wise and understanding among you? Let them show it by their good life, by deeds done in the humility that comes from wisdom. But if you harbor bitter envy and selfish ambition in your hearts, do not boast about it or deny the truth. Such wisdom does not come down from heaven, but is earthly, unspiritual, demonic.

That was James chapter 3, verses 13 through 15. And that was June Agama doing our special reading. And I'm hoping you're prayed up and feeling prayed up.

And I know I say this many times, but before we begin the program, I don't know, half a dozen of us, six or seven, sometimes eight or nine, will pray for the program that God will use the message, what's said and shared, the stories that are spoken to maybe bring clarity or help you realize God's love for you, or you'll identify with an aspect or the biblical truth that'll maybe guide you through the day. So we always pray that for you and for ourselves, that we'll learn something from God's Word. It's living, it's active, it's sharper than a double-edged sword.

It will accomplish what God wants it to accomplish. So our prayer is, as we talk about this portion of James chapter 3, all of us will find points of application, we'll identify with God's plan for our lives, and we'll be more sensitive or in tune to the Holy Spirit's leading, because he has divine appointments for you today, and he's going to work in and through you. So we want to be receptive and guided by him and always look into God's Word as our truth-teller to guide and to lead us.

So we're going to be looking at today James chapter 3, verse 13 through 15. O magnify the Lord with me, let us exalt his name together. It's finally Friday, August 21, 2026.

Joining us in the studio, besides a room of friends, is Pastor Mark Johnson of Calvary Church here in Springfield. We appreciate his dedication to dividing God's Word, to sharing. He's a great storyteller, a seasoned pastor.

In fact, his father was a pastor, so it runs in the family, but he has many years of experience of counseling, of teaching God's Word, and so we appreciate him carving out time. So, Mark, I'm excited. We're going to look at two kinds of wisdom today, huh? That's right.

You know, the whole book of James is a book about wisdom, and right here we find some definitions. So wisdom is shown by a person's good life and by deeds that are done with humility. Understanding our dependence upon God is what we're talking about with humility.

And then foolishness in this passage, and there's a lot more to this than just these two things, is really the root of it, envy and selfish ambition. Those two things, if you have those in your life, they're going to lead to foolish actions. So I want you to think about this for a minute, not just in the light of these two things, but have you ever known somebody who acted foolishly, and you said, boy, that's a foolish young man, or that's a foolish person? Wisdom is the ability to apply knowledge and insight.

You know how to apply it. Or properly applying it, right? That's right. Wisdom is the ability to apply godly knowledge and godly insight.

And that requires both an understanding of causation in my life and to have prudence in life. So let me give an illustration for that. You see someone and they get married.

And a few months, years later, the marriage crumbles apart. And it doesn't last. And you ask this person, you know, what caused your marriage to fall apart? I was praying for you, what caused this to happen? And the person says, the other person was abusive.

The other person was selfish. The other person was unfaithful to me. They'll take that into a counselor's office, and the counselor will try to work them through their hurts and their pain.

But here's the question that rarely gets asked. Why did you marry a person who was abusive, selfish, and had the ability to be unfaithful? And they might say, well, I didn't notice it. Why didn't you notice it? Why didn't you see it? How did they keep it covered up long enough for you to think it was okay? What did you miss? And because they don't get that question answered, the fear, the likelihood is that they're going to go out and marry the next person who is just like them, just like the last person, does the very same things.

And so they don't work through the causation of what caused me to make this decision with this person. They put all of the blame on the other person. It's all about them.

It's nothing about me. And so when that thing crumbles, it's all about the other person instead of, wait a second, how did I get in this mess? How did this happen to me? Why did I make this decision? Were there any warning signs? What warning signs did I miss? Did anybody warn me and tell me, slow down? Did I miss anything? And because they never get to that point, they're working on their quote-unquote hurt from what's happened to them. They never get to the issue of how it became available to happen to them.

So wisdom is this idea of recognizing how I got here and then prudence to be able to look and say, if I do these things, what's the outcome going to be? I've got to be able to see the outcome. It's taking me someplace. So the wisdom is this application of this and the root of that, the root of finding that and knowing that and being aware of all of those things is the Word of God.

And I'm thinking, you asked the question, why did they miss it? But sometimes people intentionally want to miss it. I mean, it's evident, it's obvious to all, but they don't want to see it. That's foolishness.

Right, right. That's great foolishness. That's foolish.

That's ignoring the Word again. I've dealt with people who were so in love with the idea of being in love and getting married that they couldn't see the obvious. Yeah.

I was just going to say that in the 12-step meetings that we used to go to, Alcoholics Anonymous, Narcotics Anonymous, Al-Anon and Nar-Anon, in the Nar-Anon meetings that was with Narcotics Anonymous, those meetings, that kept getting brought up. How people kept finding, they'd give up their partner and just for those reasons, they'd drop their partner and then they'd go to find another partner and then another and then another after that and then another and over and over again they kept being faced with that the new partner they got at first, they seemed good and then it turned out he was an addict or she was an addict. That was an ongoing problem in Nar-Anon.

So that's a good point you brought up with all of that. Really good because that's the kind of thing people kept complaining about. Strong complaining too got brought up about that and then they had other things brought up, tough love and all of that where the children of the parents, you know.

One of the things the Bible teaches is that wisdom comes from a multitude of counselors. Now, I've got to be careful who my counselors are. I don't want to go to the guy who's been bankrupt five times and say, teach me how to run my finances.

I want to go to somebody who's had victory. I want to go to somebody who's been successful. I don't want to go to somebody who's raised a parcel full of kids that are all train wrecks.

I want to go to somebody who's raised a parcel full of kids and they're all walking in victory. I want to find what did you do? How did you get that done? I want to learn from that. But we don't want to, especially in marriages, it seems like we get this idea of, oh, we're enamored with each other so much that we don't listen to counsel.

This is the second most important decision I'm going to make in life. I need to listen to counsel. I need to have good counsel around me and listen to it.

But this goes through all of my life. Well, Pam and I were just talking about that on the way over here. And I said, hey, when we go to the Bible study at WLUJ, just know that I talk about you a lot.

So right then she gets very defensive like, what did you say about me? She's expecting the worst. And kind of this is what Pastor Mark was talking about, and again I've got to talk about Pastor Mark, that Pam is the one that I talk about all the time, and finally everybody gets to meet her. But she has put up with me for almost 40 years.

There was a time when she is a sweet, loving, innocent person, trusting, almost too trusting. Now, I say that because of what Pastor Mark had said of what draws people together. Back in the day, I was self-centered, and I could really lie.

And, yeah, so sometimes people lie to get their way. But Pam also had something that I wanted. That's another story.

So we were on the verge of probably that D word that nobody wants to talk about from our last meeting. And so I went to the church, Pastor Mark, and so I wanted him to hear all my complaints about her. And he looked at me and smiled.

He said, okay, in counseling I need to hear both sides. I said, no, no, no, no, no, no. I want you to only hear my side because my side is the right side.

Now, and Pam said, you said what? And I bring that up because oftentimes people may feel kind of bad for whatever the reasons may be. They want to, your friends are your friends because they will listen to you. And so because of that, I wanted the church to listen to only my side to say that she was wrong.

Now, that might be a common trait with people. So finally, we did meet. Pam did go into the office with me.

Pastor Mark was sitting there along with Pastor Paul. And they said, you have a small window, very small window to save this marriage. So that's not exactly what I wanted to hear.

So I thought, okay, well, these are godly men here. So am I doing something wrong? Now, I've already acknowledged that I lie a lot. I'm self-centered.

I'm egotistical, prideful. And everything I did was basically for me back in those days and probably still carries over now. But I'm trying to curb it now a little bit, trying to.

So that's where knowledge is a good thing that I got from Pastor Mark. Pam is acknowledging that he's trying to curb it a little bit, so we appreciate that, Pam. That's true.

He can't see that, but she's, yeah, he's trying. He's trying. And so that wisdom, okay, that was my knowledge was worldly.

But the heavenly wisdom came from Pastor Mark, where, Stan, you've got to change a little bit, okay? And so I thought, well, I could either listen to this or carry on with my tantrum and saying, oh, fully on everybody and everything, I'm going to do what I'm going to do. Well, for some reason, I like to think the Holy Spirit worked on me, and 40 years later, here we are. Praise God.

And I think we should start calling Pam Saint Pam. That's exactly right. So thank you, Pastor Mark.

Mark, I would tell the people who are listening, it's a good thing to take inventory of your life and to ask yourself, where am I seeing the fruit of wisdom? Where am I seeing the fruit of foolishness? Because a person may be wise in one area. They may be a very wise businessman and a foolish man in the way they're raising their kids.

They can be very wise in how they conduct their marriage and be foolish in how they take care of their body.

So I can be wise in areas and foolish in other areas. This is why we need the whole counsel of God's Word in our life. I need to turn to it and say, how does the Word of God tell me how I should conduct myself? And again, it comes back to getting good counsel.

I've actually had people tell me, I don't believe in counselors. Well, first of all, the Bible tells us to get good counsel. And second of all, the Holy Spirit's a counselor.

So I don't hear God condemning counseling. But looking at the area of my life and saying, I need counsel there. I need to talk to somebody.

I need people around me in this area of my life to help me. And that may be what our brother talked about a moment ago. It may be about addictions.

I need to get some people around me to help me get free from addictions. That may be pornography. That may be alcoholism.

It may be drug abuse. But I'm going to need some help to break this hold in my life. And so this seeking of wisdom is exactly what James tells us to do.

If any among you lack wisdom, let him ask it of God to give it to all men liberally and upbraideth not, and it shall be given him. So I begin to pray, God, give me wisdom. And so many times the first thing God does to give us wisdom is he says, here are some people that can help you with this issue.

And I'll tell you, there are people in my life when I was a young man that I looked at them and I said, I need to learn what they do in that area of life. I don't want to learn what they do in that area of life. I was able to segment it and say, I want to learn what they're doing here.

I don't need to learn what they're doing there. And so this idea of building a complete life, this is what Timothy says, what Paul says to Timothy when he says, you know, every Scripture is given by inspiration of God. It's profitable for correction.

It's profitable for reproof. It's profitable for, and he gives all these things it's profitable for, so that a man may be mature and complete, a complete man. So that's the power of Scripture for us.

Knowledge does not guarantee wisdom. However, knowledge is required for wisdom. So think of it this way.

A person may have the knowledge to be able to drive a car and not have the wisdom that's required to be able to drive a car. A 13 or 14 year old may be smart enough and have the knowledge to drive a car, but we're not sure they have the maturity to drive a car. Wisdom is gone.

We hope it comes in the next two years. Frankly, some people on their forties and they still haven't learned how to drive a car. They've learned how to control a car to a certain extent, but they haven't learned how to function on the highway.

So, well, Mark, I wrote down taking inventory, the, you know, looking at ourselves and, and seeking counsel. And you mentioned the Holy Spirit too. That's known as the counselor.

So we want to look at the Scripture. We want to pray through things, but the counsel that we seek, and I think there's been a couple of programs that you've talked about, Mark, we don't just seek counsel from our fans or those we like, or those we look up to because they might give bad counsel. So we need godly counsel from people that are experienced and have walked the talk.

Any, any counsel that comes outside of Scripture is bad counsel. So you have counselors many times in our secular schools that are confused. 14 year old walks in and says, I think I'm a boy, not a girl.

And they're confused counselors and they go to them. Well, then maybe you are, well, that's biblically wrong. Biblically confused.

It's clear in Scripture. God's created us just the way he created us. And what they need is they need biblical counsel.

Now listen to this Scripture in three 13, it says is calling us to recognize who has godly wisdom among us and to examine our own lives to see what kind of wisdom we are applying to our lives. That's what this whole passage is calling us to is to know who has godly wisdom and to examine our own lives. So here's what I would challenge people to do.

If you're going to take inventory of your life, a great place to start is in Galatians chapter five. Take a look at the wisdom of the world and then take a look at the fruit of the Spirit. Do I love people? Am I a joyful person? Am I a patient person? Do I have a sense of wanting to do good and right things in my life? Am I self-controlled? There's a beginning passage that reveals something about me that if I say, you know what? I have some people I hate pretty good.

I hate on them pretty good. I've got bitterness and envy in my life. Whoa, that's not the wisdom of God.

That's the wisdom of this world. Now I've got it. I've got to start praying my way through that.

I have a question. Yes. In James three one.

I think it starts off with I know you use the word counselor a lot. Is that the same thing as teachers should be careful about what they teach because they will be judged a little more strict that that Scripture is absolutely true. And I believe that applies it whether I'm teaching publicly or whether I'm teaching an individual.

I'm going to be held accountable for what I say to that person and what I teach them. I want everything. I say to have a biblical basis.

I want to have a biblical foundation and if it does and that's that's a sure foundation. So I will tell people Stan. I'll tell people sometimes in a in a situation where you don't have a clear Scripture that's descriptive or perscriptive.

I should say of what a person should do in those circumstances and I will say this is what I think the Scripture intends for us to understand. This is my best opinion. You've got to pray your way through that because it's on other than another thing sit and say this is perscriptive of what the Scripture says do this who is wise and understanding among you.

Let him let him or her show it by his good life by deeds done in humility that come from wisdom. But if you Harbor bitter Envy and selfish ambition in your hearts do not boast about it or deny the truth such wisdom does not come down from heaven but is earthly unspiritual of the devil all listening friends a lot of information here a lot of truth

here. Hopefully it can guide us through the day.

It can allow us to have that fragrance of Christ that we can be that faithful disciple that ambassador for God bringing hope and healing into this hurting world. But there are two kinds of wisdom wisdom that comes from God and wisdom of the devil that's filled of Envy and selfish ambition and vain conceit. These are the things that we don't want to exhibit but it takes the Lord working in our lives and maybe you haven't come into that relationship with Jesus Christ recognizing him as Lord and Savior.

Well today could be that day. It could be that born again experience where you recognize you need a Savior. We all do.

We're all sinners. We all fall short. We can't earn our way into heaven.

But because of what Jesus Christ did on behalf of us on the cross dying for our sins we can ask him into our hearts and see him as Savior. If you want to know how to do that or talk with a trained counselor it's a free call. Call 1-888-NEED-HIM.

1-888-NEED-HIM. It's a great call that you could make today that could forever change your life and your destiny. So call that today and find a good Bible believing church where they preach God's message this Sunday and I am trusting that God will put you into the right place where a fellowship of believers will embrace you, utilize your gifts to strengthen the body, to strengthen that church and make an impact in that community.

Well thanks for listening. Thanks for being a part of our Radio Listening family. This is Mark Burns and Pastor Mark Johnson with the ministry of Great News Media.

God bless you and have a great day and night.