

Wisdom From Heaven

Purity, Peace, Gentleness, Mercy, Maturity, and a Harvest of Righteousness

Program Summary

Pastor Mark Johnson concludes James 3 by examining wisdom from heaven: pure, peace-loving, considerate, submissive, full of mercy and good fruit, impartial, and sincere. The discussion shows how heavenly wisdom becomes visible through motives that seek to please God, words that build peace, a willingness to listen and yield, generous mercy, spiritual maturity, biblical handling of offenses, and impartial commitment to what is right. James closes with peacemakers sowing in peace and raising a harvest of righteousness.

Key Takeaways

Heavenly wisdom begins with a pure desire to please God.
Peace-loving people do not make every disagreement a battle.
Consideration means listening and seeking understanding before reacting.
Submission can prevent needless collisions, much like a yield sign.
Mercy offers generous action even when it is not deserved.
Repeated turmoil can reveal spiritual immaturity.
Mature believers address offenses biblically rather than gathering a crowd for validation.
Impartial wisdom stands for what is right even when someone close to me is wrong.
The fruit of the Spirit and heavenly wisdom should increasingly shape everyday conduct.
Peacemakers sow in peace and raise a harvest of righteousness.

Scripture References

James 3:17-18, James 3:13-16, 1 Samuel 2-4, Galatians 5:22-23, Ephesians 4:29-32, Matthew 18:15, Romans 12:18

Quote of the Day

"What motivates my life?"

Broadcast Notes

This is the second Mark & Friends recording from the new downstairs WLUI studio in Springfield, with roughly thirty friends gathered around the couches. Bishop Jonathan Franklin reads James 3:17-18 and Pastor Mark Johnson connects this week's heavenly wisdom with last week's warning about worldly wisdom. Memorable applications include purity of motive, not giving away too many 'pieces' of one's mind, refusing to get down in the mud with an insulting person, a highway yield sign as a picture of submission, the need for Christian maturity, dealing with offenses directly and biblically, and standing impartially for what is right.

Practical Applications

Ask what would please God before asking what would please me.
Let go of one disagreement that is not worth a kingdom battle.
Listen carefully before responding when offended.
Practice yielding when doing so does not compromise Scripture.
Offer mercy and patience to someone who is still growing.
Handle an offense directly and biblically instead of seeking public validation.
Ask whether repeated turmoil reveals an area where I need greater maturity.
Refuse favoritism when someone close to me is clearly wrong.
Pray for the Holy Spirit to make me more peace-loving and gentle.
Intentionally sow peace in one relationship this week.

Today's Challenge

For seven days, use James 3:17 as a daily wisdom checklist: pure, peace-loving, considerate, submissive, merciful, fruitful, impartial, and sincere. Each evening identify one quality where you struggled and ask God for one concrete way to practice it tomorrow.

Closing Prayer

Father, give me wisdom from heaven. Purify my motives so that my first desire is to please You. Make me peace-loving, considerate, willing to yield, full of mercy and good fruit, impartial, and sincere. Teach me to overlook lesser offenses, guard my words, listen carefully, and handle conflict maturely and biblically. Free me from pride, favoritism, and the need to win. Holy Spirit, shape my character so that heavenly wisdom is not merely something I can describe but something others can see in me. Help me sow peace and raise a harvest of righteousness for Your glory. In Jesus' name, Amen.

About Today's Speaker

Pastor Mark Johnson serves at Calvary Church in Springfield and regularly facilitates Mark & Friends verse-by-verse Bible discussions. A seasoned pastor, teacher, counselor, and storyteller, he brings years of ministry experience to practical conversations about applying God's Word to everyday life.

About Today's Host

Mark Burns is General Manager of the WLUJ Family of Stations and Great News Radio Network and host of Mark & Friends. For decades, Mark has served in Christian radio and ministry with a heart for helping listeners know Jesus and grow deeper in God's Word.

Proofread Broadcast Transcript

Reading from James chapter 3 verses 17 and 18. But the wisdom that comes from heaven is first of all pure, then peace-loving, considerate, submissive, full of mercy and good fruit, impartial and sincere.

Peacemakers who sow in peace raise a harvest of righteousness. That was James chapter 3 verses 17 and 18. And that was Bishop Jonathan Franklin who serves on our radio board.

Appreciate him being with us today along with a room of friends as we're going to be looking at James chapter 3 verses 17 and 18. Pastor Mark Johnson of Calvary Church here in Springfield will facilitate our discussion. Appreciate his heart for the Lord, his passion to reach the lost and equip the saints and be here faithfully every other week to record these programs with a group of friends and so many good friends that are becoming like a small group.

So it's great. We're all around the couches. This is our second time in this studio using this new facility here in Springfield, WLUJ 600 West Mason Street.

In fact, this coming Wednesday you can come join us at noon as we record two Friday programs. So we're excited to see how God will use this space to his glory as we divide his word. And I appreciate Mark.

He doesn't want just our opinions or our thoughts. He wants to know what has God taught us through his words. So we always want to be biblically centric and centered on his word.

And if you hear the guy outside blowing the leaves or working on the landscaping, hey, that's some of the sounds that will come into this studio. But we're excited to be able to sit on couches together and share and have kind of a small fellowship group together. Not so small.

I think we reached 30 or we're at 29 or 30. And so it's great to have people that love Jesus here together to divide God's word. And then we'll have food afterwards.

So I can't wait to see all the different spread that's set up for us. But Mark, we're still in Chapter 3. I think we'll finish it today. But 17 and 18 has some unique wisdom for us all.

Let me back up just a second. We think about last week's program. And last week's program, these two programs are tied together.

James takes a moment and he points out the root of worldly wisdom and the destructiveness of it. That's what we talked about last week. And I assume anybody can go to the website and go back and listen to that if they missed it.

At this point, he turns from worldly wisdom to heavenly wisdom. And he begins to show us the root of what builds heavenly wisdom. This wisdom that comes from heaven that is given to us as a fallen people so that we can know how to walk wisely in this world.

So that's a little bit about what we want to talk about today. Yeah, I think it's kind of interesting, this first statement. It's first of all, pure.

I really want to think that through and get some insights from others on that heavenly wisdom that comes down from God is first of all, pure. You think foundational or primary. He's laying this out and he's saying, no, it starts right here.

Here's where it starts. I had a man ask me a number of years ago about my relationship with our church board. I told him, I said, I have a great relationship with the church board.

We work in unity together. And he began to tell me some stories of church boards that didn't work together in unity and the turmoil that was in them. And that made me examine, well, why is ours good? And I found myself thinking about this verse and this idea that the men on our boards are first of all, they want to please God.

They want what God wants. What we back up to last week's verse, there's no selfish ambition. There's no envy.

And when you take that out of a church board or out of a home or out of a group, out of a choir, and everybody's there to glorify God, then there's no envy about who sings a solo or who gets the credit or anything like that. So first of all, he's talking about this idea of purity. It's about what motivates my life.

What motivates my life. Eli is a tragic story of one who is not pure. He was this great spiritual leader, had great spiritual impact in 1 Samuel.

He was a judge of Israel. He led them for many years. However, when his life ends, his family has been killed.

His nation is under siege. The ark of the glory of God has been lost. The place of worship is destroyed.

And again, Eli is never listed among heroes of faith. Why? Because his desire was more to live at peace with his sons who were breaking the law of God than it was to live at peace with God. And because of it, everything was lost.

So fundamentally, I have to be a person. The primary attribute of wisdom is purity, a pure desire to please God. He is first and foremost.

The nature of who God is, the character of who God is has to be first in my life. But isn't purity could also mean it's coming from God who is nothing but pure. It's not convoluted like we make things.

It's heavenly wisdom. Yes, that's what it comes from. It comes from the presence of God moving in us.

And the first thing that's going to move in us is a desire to be pleasing to God in everything. And the word purity, you don't hear anymore. It's almost scoffed at.

The Amplified says undefiled. It's interesting because I find that if I'm around other people that are spiritual like here, I do a lot better. I've said to people before that if I'm out there too much, around by bars or places that has the worst going on, then I tend to start losing that spirituality.

So that's why I come to places like this. But I found what helps praying for the Holy Spirit to be indwelling me at all times is the key, at least for me. And if that helps other people, I hope it does.

Pray to have the Holy Spirit throughout you at all times as it says right in here. When I'm reading this, I'm thinking this is a description of the wisdom itself, but this is also a description of what a Christian is supposed to be like that has this spiritual wisdom. It's going to change you.

And like he was saying, if you're around bad influences, you're going to act worse. This is how to act better. I love this about James.

It's like, what do you do on a day-to-day basis to be a better Christian? And the focus of that is this pure heart that wants to please God. I want to please God today. So it doesn't matter what all the rest of the world's doing.

It doesn't matter what my family's doing. All those things are not the things that are going to drive me. I've got to be thinking, is this pleasing to God? I'm not going to do it if it isn't.

So then it goes on and begins to describe how that plays out in our life. Wisdom from heaven is peaceable or peace-loving. This is a good place to check the fruit of our life in every place we go.

Is there war every place we go? Are you in conflict with people all the time? All the time. Peaceable people ask the question when they're offended. What's the big deal? What's the big deal? I didn't like that.

Somebody said something to me. Foolish people think they're funny to throw out an insult. They think they're wise and being strong when they throw out the insult.

I said it to them. They'll brag. I gave them a piece of my mind, which always brings up the joke.

Do you really have that many pieces to give away? I told him that he was stupid. Wise people overlook all wrongs. That's harder than being an insulting person.

To overlook things. That's not a big enough deal. They're a young Christian or they're not a Christian at all.

I'm not even going to get into that battle. I'm not going to do it. They don't make every issue a hill to die on.

They're not just going out looking for confrontation. Either do it my way or the words flow out that cause problems. No.

We can go along. This isn't evil. I'm not even going to speak to that.

The person insults us and we smile and we walk away. They may think, I say they wouldn't even stand up to me. I would stand up to you by not getting down in the mud with you.

And being a part of it. Never argue with an idiot. They can drag you down to their level and beat you with experience.

I'm also thinking, we've referred to this Pastor Mark a number of times, how there's so many parallels to the fruit of the Spirit. Love, joy, peace. The third part of the fruit that we should all have.

So being peace loving when we're operating in the Spirit and not in the flesh should be a natural thing. The person who loves peace asks different questions than the person who is selfish and has selfish ambition. The person who loves peace asks, how can I serve? They're not demanding to be served.

They're able to go along and let somebody else have their way. They can submit to authority and do that joyfully. They can let things go because they love peace.

Peacemakers guard their words only saying that which is beneficial and building others up. It's not that wisdom from heaven will never go to war. They just won't go to war over issues that are beneath the level of the kingdom's defense.

Sometimes I have to defend the kingdom. And yet, how I defend the kingdom comes next. Wisdom from heaven is gentle.

Even when I'm angry, the word here directs us to two thoughts. Considerate and seeking to understand. In other words, looking at the other person's opinion and considering it before I just rip it apart.

In all circumstances of life, it's not heavenly wisdom to be grumpy, harsh, nasty to others, period. That's just not the attitude of the believer. Can you see Jesus being grumpy? It's earthly wisdom that tries to get our way without considering others.

The ESV phrases it as open to reason. Is the other person being reasonable? Well, then even if you're mad about it, be quiet and listen. You may learn something.

Part of the call of Paul in Philippians is for us to be reasonable. What does that mean? That means that we can hear and reason through and see what's best that may not be, maybe in the moment, best for me, but it's best for others. It makes sense in the long run.

I'm working for the kingdom, not for myself. So this call, it's a willingness to yield. On the highway, there are traffic signs coming on the highway.

And it says yield. And that yield sign, what does it keep us from doing? From having wrecks. You know, somebody's got to yield.

And so they're telling you, no, it's your turn to yield. The sign's right there, yield. Heavenly wisdom says when possible, I will yield.

It's not about me getting my way. It's about the traffic flowing together. Word submission.

That's almost a dirty word today. Everybody's all about my rights. I'm being oppressed by everybody else, and I'm going to get in your face, and I'm going to fix this.

And I'm going, who is more oppressed than anybody? Jesus. And his example was, I'm going to be quiet. I'm going to do the right thing.

I'm going to take this. And, you know, you're talking about traffic signs. I'm going, that's a real good opportunity to see how genuine somebody's Christianity is, is riding a car with them.

You know, there you go. All this brings me back to unity. And that's James Majors in that thought of unity, community, family.

And submission to each other. And submission. And yeah, submission is not a dirty word in its right context.

So exactly what I was thinking of, without partiality and without hypocrisy, it's so important because our views are not somebody else's views. In a lot of ways, they may love the Lord in the same way, but they've not been exposed to the Lord in the same way you have. So it's important for us to be sensitive to the different cultures of how people are exposed to the Lord and where they are as a Christian, maybe Christian along the way, all the way to a mature Christian.

So it's vitally important to be sensitive to that today. And I was thinking, Pastor Mark, this word about being considerate, and we've talked a lot about listening. And sometimes to be considerate is to see where they're coming from, to seek out that understanding, to be a good listener.

And I think being a good listener and submissive, because sometimes we want to say things, but if we can submit ourselves and say, hey, yeah, I have things to say, but it's more important that I listen. Sometimes we just need to shut up. It's real simple.

We just need to be quiet and listen and then ask ourself, why is this stirring me up? Why am I getting upset? Is this absolutely a compromise of Scripture or is it because I'm losing something I like? I'm losing control. I'm losing control. Here I feel like I'm gaining.

Here I feel like I'm not losing control of anything. I'm just gaining from being in this place and hearing all of you because there are other places you go, places where people get real mean and being all the wrong way in this world. We're living in a culture and a world today where there are places that are good like this here that I've been seeing, and I'm saying that very truthfully and honestly, that there are places like this that are good here and you have other places you go to and people are just stirring up trouble all over the place.

I've been seeing that. So Mark, we've covered pure, peace-loving, considerate, submissive. What's this full of mercy and good fruit? Well, this is an interesting word.

It comes from offering something maybe that isn't deserved, but we offer it anyway. The mercy of God is given to us not because we earned it, because He's loving. So the life of heavenly wisdom is filled with generous action.

Are my actions generous? Am I patient with people? Am I long-suffering with people? If I want to be generous with actions, I want to be merciful. I may be merciful that they're a new Christian. I started reading a book by the missionary E. Stanley Jones, and it's called Christian Maturity.

And he says that the greatest need in the church today is for maturity. He said we are immature people who have been given great power, and because we're immature, we're misusing it, we're mishandling it. And we damage a lot of people because of our immaturity.

I have 13 grandchildren, and a bunch of them, about seven or eight of them are under five years of age. And you put them down in the basement together, and before long, there's turmoil. Somebody's in somebody's way, somebody's not giving me it.

And I don't want that at the dinner table with all my grown adult children. That dinner table should be peaceful. It should be long-suffering.

It should be merciful. And so it is a sign. What we're talking about here is when there's turmoil someplace, there's immaturity someplace.

There's somebody that's not willing to yield, not willing to give to somebody else, not willing to be patient with somebody else's faults. The Bible gives us real clear direction on how to deal with offenses as mature people. And yet, how many times do we ever see that practiced, where somebody's offended by somebody, and they go to them, and they say, can I share with you why my feelings were hurt about you, how that made me feel? That didn't happen.

They just go to all their friends and tell them why their feelings were hurt. On social media, they post it. It's like getting up and shouting in front of us, doing what's mature and biblical and dealing with the issue.

Most of the time, when you talk to someone, they didn't understand that they hurt your feelings. And we deepen it when we go around seeking validation of our offense rather than trying to actually figure out what happened. I would say this to everybody in the room.

Some friend of ours posts something, somebody we know a little bit else, don't agree with them. Just leave it alone. They shouldn't be doing that.

They should be dealing with it biblically. If you get a chance, you should talk to them and say, you know what, you're dealing with that in a crowded room, why don't you go deal with it biblically? Go deal with the issue, and instead you get all, oh, we're supporting you, we love you, you're so hurt, you're so wounded, and all this stuff, and you're sitting there, and you're hurting, and you're hurting. It's interesting about that, how people looking for support to being bad at someone else and glorifying themselves at the expense of someone else that later will come back to haunt you.

I just saw something on the internet yesterday. Somebody was showing this little clip of an interview with Dolly Parton, and they were trying to get her to trash talk somebody. And she was like, you just need to keep your mouth shut.

I was like, wow. Don Rickles, Phyllis Diller, that was their schtick. And it wasn't always that funny.

It's just a cheap joke. It's so easy to come up with. They're trying to be entertaining.

I would say one last thing. Wisdom from heaven is impartial. So it doesn't matter who the person is in my life.

I remember when I was a very young man, one of my relatives and their spouse moved to town. And because they were a relative, they got very involved in our family. They came to our family events.

They were at a lot of things. And the day came when my relative, the one that was my blood relative, left their spouse and had an affair and left them. And my dad came to me and he looked at me and he said, that's your cousin, but their spouse is right.

We're going to go stand with their spouse. It doesn't matter that it's our cousin. What matters is who's right and wrong scripturally.

That person became a great friend of mine throughout the years. So this ability to be able to look and say, my son is wrong, my daughter's wrong, my grandson is wrong, these people are wrong, and I'm going to stand impartially on what's right comes back to this pure desire to be pleasing to God. We're going to look at verse 18 of chapter 3 in James, Peacemakers.

That's what we want to be today. We want to sow in peace and raise a harvest of righteousness to God's glory. May that be true of us all today wherever we go, as we go as we proclaim the good news message of Jesus.

If you missed a portion of today's broadcast, want to hear it again or find all sorts of resources you can stop by greatnewsradio.org or wluj.org and you can click on the Mark & Friends tab and you can listen to this again anytime. Join us again next week. We'll be into James chapter 4, Lord willing.

We'll see how Mark leads us in the coming days. We appreciate Pastor Mark Johnson of Calvary Church here in Springfield. And this coming Wednesday we'll be in a part of our Radio Listening family.

This is Mark Burns, Pastor Mark Johnson and a room of friends. God bless you and have a great day, night and weekend.