

James 14 – The Fruit of Wisdom
Pastor Joe Oakley - GFC- 8/27/23

Are you wise? And if think you are wise, what kind of wisdom do you have?

We are continuing our journey through the book of James in our series called Wisdom for Everyday Life. Last week Pastor Anthony preached an excellent sermon called Heavenly Wisdom versus Earthly Wisdom. He laid the foundation by defining wisdom, teaching us the difference between wisdom and knowledge, teaching how to get wisdom, and showing how wisdom grows in the soil of humility. The text was James 3:13-16

Who is wise and understanding among you? Let him show it by his 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, of the devil. For where you have envy and selfish ambition, there you find confusion and every evil practice.

Today I'm teaching on The Fruit of Wisdom. James teaches us the difference between heavenly and earthly wisdom. And he shows us how to identify both types of wisdom. It's important to know what kind of wisdom you have. And you know it by its fruit, its results in your life.

The first two fruits he shows us that result from godly wisdom are humility and good works. Anthony taught on that. Next, James shows two fruits of worldly wisdom: envy and selfish ambition. Those two things usually show up together. If you are selfish, you tend to envy those who have things that you want. And our world today is full of envy and selfishness.

I'll talk more about selfishness next week, but today I want to teach on envy. What is envy? The Encarta Dictionary says envy is wanting what somebody else has: the resentful or unhappy feeling of wanting somebody else's success, good fortune, qualities, or possessions.

In other words, ENVY is saying... "I like what you've got, I don't like the fact that you have it, and I want it"!!!

It could be someone getting a promotion or a raise and you did not.

It could be someone's family seeming to be more together than yours.

It could be someone else having more money than you.

It could be you think someone is more talented or better looking.

In the Old Testament sense, envy is coveting what someone else has – their home, job, spouse, possessions. Or - how many of you have ever said, "How come God answers their prayers but not mine?"

Boom, envy has planted its seed in your heart. If you don't deal with it, a root of bitterness can spring up and defile you and those around you.

You can tell if you are envious by how you respond when someone else is blessed or promoted. In fact, it has been said that envy is the art of counting another's blessings instead of your own.

Romans 12:15 says to *Rejoice with them that rejoice*. That's the envy test. When you are envious – you cannot rejoice when others are blessed.

Envy is very similar to jealousy. The distinction lies in this: Jealousy desires to have what someone else has. Envy wants to deprive the other person of what they have. This is why it's never good to compare ourselves to one another. 2 Corinthians 10:12-13 says:

We do not dare to classify or compare ourselves with some who commend themselves. When they measure themselves by themselves and compare themselves with themselves, they are not wise.

We are talking about the fruit of wisdom. Worldly wisdom is based on comparing ourselves with others, but that is not heavenly wisdom. One reason it's not wise to compare is because it can cause jealousy. James 3:16 says:

For where you have envy and selfish ambition, there you find confusion and every evil practice.

In order to have heavenly wisdom, you must deal a death blow to envy. If you do not – it will result in confusion and evil.

Here's the thing about envy - envy kills! If we allow envy to fester inside of us – it can kill us – spiritually – and even physically. The end result of envy is death of some sort.

We see this all through the Bible. All the way back in Genesis 4 Cain killed Abel because he envied the fact that God accepted Cain's sacrifice, not his. King Saul was envious of David's success and tried to kill him. Joseph's brothers were envious of his relationship with their father and they tried to kill him – instead they sold him into slavery. The religious leaders of Jesus' day were envious of his success and they did kill him.

Envy plants the seeds of murder in our hearts. Not that we would actually kill someone. But we do often kill them with our words.

But the main person who envy kills is oneself! Proverbs 14:30 says:

A heart at peace gives life to the body, but envy rots the bones.

Envy is rottenness to our bones – it cripples us. Envy kills something in us. Here are some things envy kills.

ENVY KILLS OUR TRUST IN GOD

Bottom line – when we envy others we usually end up blaming God. “Why did they get blessed and I didn’t?”

People who envy have a scarcity mentality rather than an abundance mentality. They believe that God’s resources are limited and there’s only so much to go around. So, if you get a blessing, then there’s not enough blessing left for me.

Joseph’s brothers were envious of his relationship with their father, but ultimately their father had enough love for all of them.

ENVY KILLS OUR RELATIONSHIP WITH GOD & OTHERS

Envy killed Joseph’s relationship with his brothers. It also crippled the relationships between the other brothers who had to live with their actions for the rest of their lives. This burden was only broken by Joseph’s willingness to forgive many years later.

ENVY KILLS OUR ABILITY TO PRAISE GOD.

If we don’t trust God, we sure won’t enter into praise and worship.

Envy is a symptom of lack of gratefulness for how God has made us and what God has given us. When you envy you are in effect saying – God, I don’t like who I am and what I have – I’d rather be someone else.

When we are envious – we are not fully established in our identity in Christ. We are insecure in the grace of God. We are ungrateful for what God has done for us. We are not submitting to God’s sovereignty and wisdom. We are motivated by self-interest.

Until we are thankful for who we are in Christ and what God has done for us - we will never praise and worship because we enter His gates with thanksgiving.

ENVY KILLS OUR RESPECT FOR AUTHORITY/LEADERS.

Psalm 106:16 says:

In the camp they grew envious of Moses and of Aaron, who was consecrated to the Lord.

The dangerous thing that happens when we envy those who are in leadership - our pastor, boss, teacher - is that we risk being disrespectful to them. This can cost us our job.

In the case of Moses, envy began in the hearts of the people when they got upset about something their leader had said or done. And we do the same when we say to ourselves "How did they get to be in a position of authority anyways - I could do a better job than them!"

Oh really? Be careful. Read the results of the children of Israel rebelling against leadership because of their envy - God ended up bringing a plague against those whose envy led the rebellion. Envy kills.

ENVY KILLS OUR ABILITY TO ENJOY WHAT WE HAVE.

When we are envious of someone else – it can consume us to the point of us not being able to enjoy the blessings we do have.

People who watch HGTV all day can get dissatisfied with their house.

People who watch Lifetime can get dissatisfied with their spouse.

ENVY KILLS UNITY –

At home, at work, at church, wherever it rears its ugly head. Almost every time envy is listed in the New Testament – the word strife follows close behind.

Envy and strife work together to kill unity. Envy kills.

By the way – no one is exempt from envy. Not even pastors – maybe especially pastors. I've been to a lot of pastors meetings and I can tell you that many times there is underlying envy when pastors hear of another church doing well – growing – building. They may say the right things – but many times there is an underlying sense of satisfaction when another pastor falls or a church fails.

When you are envious you cannot rejoice with those who rejoice and you are secretly happy when they fail.

Envious people will not be able to rejoice with you.

Envious people will be jealous of what you have.

Envious people will not want you to have what you have attained.

So - they'll want to tear you down rather than build you up.

All of us have this potential inside of us.

There's only one way to deal with envy. You must kill it before it kills you.

You can overcome envy, but that victory only comes through the cross! Envy cannot be overcome through positive thinking or self-help. Why? Because self is the problem.

Envy is totally based on self – self-interest, self-preservation, and self-promotion. Since envy is based on self– the only way to deal with it is to die to self. The cross must do its work in this area of our lives.

How do we die to self?

By saying no to ourselves and yes to God

By saying no to self and yes to others

By rejoicing when someone else is more blessed than us

All these actions serve to bring the death blow to envy.

You can overcome envy by dying to self and choosing to act in the opposite spirit. What's the opposite spirit of envy? Love. 1 Corinthians 13:4 says:

Love does not envy.

Love is the cure for envy. When we truly love someone – we don't envy them. We want what's best for them. You might think you love someone, but what's in your heart will come to the surface when someone else seems to be more blessed than you.

When you love someone else you consider their needs to be more important than yours, so them getting blessed should make you happy.

For instance – think of that person you envy for getting what you wanted. Now suppose that the person who got what you wanted was your child. Everything would change. You'd be happy for them. You'd rejoice with them. It doesn't matter that they have it and you don't because they're your child and you want to see them blessed.

We know we've overcome envy when we are able to rejoice when others are blessed. When someone we truly love is being blessed with success – we can rejoice with them because love does not envy.

Choosing to love someone you envy will kill envy. And when you die to self and pass the envy test – when you truly begin to put others before yourself – the blessing of God can come to you. And you will have the fruit of godly wisdom. James 3:15-16 says:

Such "wisdom" does not come down from heaven but is earthly, unspiritual, of the devil. For where you have envy and selfish ambition, there you find confusion and every evil practice.

Worldly wisdom is earthly, unspiritual and of the devil.

That means that heavenly wisdom is heavenly, spiritual, and of God.

Notice that worldly wisdom not only produces the fruit of envy and selfishness, but also confusion and evil. If anything defines America today it is confusion.

People are confused about everything from who God is to who they are.

Sexual identity confusion is rampant.

People are so confused about evil that they call evil good and good evil.

They are so confused that they celebrate evil and denigrate good.
We see the fruit of ungodly wisdom everywhere we look.

But James contrasts that with heavenly wisdom in James 3:17-18.

But the wisdom that comes from heaven is first of all pure; then peace-loving, gentle, willing to yield, full of mercy and good fruit, impartial and without hypocrisy. Peacemakers who sow in peace raise a harvest of righteousness.

I'm not going to speak on peacemaking today because I covered that in the sermon called Mercy Triumphs. But, let's look at the other fruit of heavenly wisdom.

1- Pure –

Worldly wisdom is full of evil and impurity. But heavenly wisdom is pure. That means to be holy, undefiled, uncontaminated. But here's another definition of pure – unmixed. It is like 100% pure sugar. That does not mean that sugar is holy. It means it is unmixed with anything else.

And heavenly wisdom should not be mixed with worldly wisdom!
They are incompatible with each other.

One reason that there is confusion in so many believers is that they are trying to have one foot in the world and one foot in God's kingdom! That's what James called doublemindedness and that's why some believers are so unstable.

2- Peaceable – peace loving, someone who brings peace

When I was a district manager in retail – I used to tell my managers, “You carry two pails in your hands. One has water in it and one has gasoline in it. When you come across a conflict – you either throw water on it and put it out or you throw gas on it and flare it up.”

Some managers never got it. They could make any situation worse than it already was. Don't be a flame thrower. Be a peace maker.

3- Gentle – mild, appropriate, patient

4- Willing to Yield – easy to be entreated (asked)

I'm not saying you should always be the one to yield. But you should be willing to yield when necessary. And you should always be easy to approach and talk to. Wise people are always willing to be corrected. Proverbs 9:8-9 says:

Don't bother correcting mockers; they will only hate you. But correct the wise, and

they will love you. Instruct the wise, and they will be even wiser. Teach the righteous, and they will learn even more.

Are you wise? Only if you're teachable.

5- Full of Mercy – compassion, kindness

Remember James 2:13 - *Mercy triumphs over judgment!*

If we want mercy from God, we must be merciful.

Matthew 5:7 says: *Blessed are the merciful, for they shall obtain mercy.*

6- Without Partiality –

Wise people are not prejudiced. They do not discriminate against people because of their ethnicity, income level, education level, political beliefs, or anything else!

7- Without Hypocrisy

This means to be sincere, genuine, not pretending, not concealed – in other words – to be REAL!

In closing – what kind of wisdom do you have?

Is the fruit of your wisdom heavenly or earthly?

Here's how you know. By the fruit of wisdom.

Worldly wisdom results in pride but godly wisdom results in humility.

Worldly wisdom results in envy but godly wisdom results in love.

Worldly wisdom results in selfishness but godly wisdom results in selflessness.

Worldly wisdom results in confusion but godly wisdom results in clarity.

Worldly wisdom causes you to be confused about who God is and who you are but godly wisdom results in certainty.

Worldly wisdom results in evil but godly wisdom results in purity.

Godly wisdom results in peace but worldly wisdom results in conflict.

Godly wisdom results in gentleness but worldly wisdom results in harshness.

Godly wisdom results in you being teachable and approachable but worldly wisdom results in you being unteachable and unfriendly.

Godly wisdom results in mercy but worldly wisdom results in vengeance.

Godly wisdom results in impartiality but worldly wisdom results in discrimination.

Godly wisdom results in sincerity but worldly wisdom results in hypocrisy.

What kind of wisdom do you have?

James 1:5 says:

If any of you lacks wisdom, he should ask God, who gives generously to all without finding fault, and it will be given to him.