

BUT THE WISDOM FROM ABOVE IS FIRST OF ALL PURE, THEN PEACE-LOVING, GENTLE, ACCOMMODATING, FULL OF MERCY AND GOOD FRUIT, IMPARTIAL, AND SINCERE.

JAMES 3:17

STARTING WITH GOD

WISDOM FROM ABOVE

JAMES 3:13-17

By Tugi

Kindly allow me to interrupt our current series on Gideon and share with you some wisdom I've encountered this week. We will continue with Gideon's story in next week's post.

It has come to my attention, or rather it has been clarified for me further that we really need God in this life. We don't just need His presence and protection, but His wisdom. His way of thinking, viewing the world and understanding of His law. I love Scripture because it gives us everything we need to grow in wisdom. Before this week, it had not really occurred to me, until I returned to Scripture, that the world has its counterfeit version of wisdom. You will find worldly advice for everything on the internet, in conversations with people, in books and as philosophies that people share. The world has something to say about everything and oftentimes it is presented to us harmlessly.

They won't come out to you brazenly and point you away from God, no! You will be coerced, encouraged, shown a different perspective. Worldly wisdom will be offered to you as tips, tricks, hacks or even "the way things are done." In Kenya, for example, whenever you are going to a government office, or dealing with authorities of any kind, you are always encouraged and advised to have "something small" on the side to offer the officials. Essentially, you are being told that it is common practice to bribe. Some people believe that you can't get anything done without a bribe! Now, this is against Biblical living. It is ungodly to offer or receive bribes. The Bible tells us that God hates corruption and injustice. Yet, it is the 'wiser' thing to do in our society today. Wiser according to the world, not God.

JAMES 3:13-17

If you look at your life and the society we live in today, I'm sure this principle can apply to your own personal life- worldly wisdom is offered to you on a daily basis. It seems more shiny, less traditional and backward. You may applaud yourself for moving with the times, however, may also find yourself abandoning the Ancient of days and His life-giving principles.

I really like our passage today because it defines for us worldly wisdom and godly wisdom and the repercussions of following either. I must make it clear to you, there is a distinct difference between God's wisdom and the world's wisdom. You can be sure that following either will lead you to a certain type of life with distinct results. Each wisdom bears fruit. Let's read the passage:

James 3:13-17

13 Who is wise and understanding among you? Let him show it by his good conduct, by deeds done in the humility that comes from wisdom. 14 But if you harbor bitter jealousy and selfish ambition in your hearts, do not boast in it or deny the truth. 15 Such wisdom does not come from above, but is earthly, unspiritual, demonic. 16 For where jealousy and selfish ambition exist, there will be disorder and every evil practice. 17 But the wisdom from above is first of all pure, then peace-loving, gentle, accommodating, full of mercy and good fruit, impartial, and sincere.

Let's break it down. Verse 13 shows us that you will be tested. You will be asked to show the strength of your wisdom. This happens more often than we even realize. When you choose not to cheat in your exams because you know that it is wrong, instantly there seems to be a comparison. Will the cheaters get away with what they're doing? Are you really going to pass this exam now that you've chosen to do the right thing? This applies to business deals too and dealing with the government. Your choice to do the right thing and follow God's wisdom will always be challenged. You will always be tested, however remember that humility is key to carrying godly wisdom. You do not need to be proud or haughty when following God's way. Why? Because God is ultimately right and unchanging. Your success points back to Him and not your own goodness.

JAMES 3:13-17

So, as you show your wisdom and understanding, remember that this comes from God, this is not for you to puff up in pride because you are following His way. Being on God's side is a reminder of His mercy. As you start with God and follow His wisdom, you are reminded that God is the author, God is right, God deserves all the glory for your wisdom and success. God is the source of comfort as you are ridiculed or cast aside for following His way.

In verse 14 we are introduced to worldly wisdom. The 2 ingredients that set worldly wisdom away from Godly wisdom are jealousy and selfish ambition inside your heart. God looks at our hearts. Our decision to follow worldly wisdom or Godly wisdom is a result of the state of our hearts. Are you harbouring jealousy? Do you feel some type of way because everyone around you is in a romantic relationship? Or all your friends are getting promotions and buying bigger houses and cars. Are you fuelled by your own gain, selfish ambition and pride? The world preys on hearts like yours and sells you lies so that you can get ahead and fill this insatiable hunger inside of you. You are cautioned to examine your heart, look deeply and be honest about your intentions. Are you pursuing personal gain to get ahead of others? Are you really fighting for justice or are you feeding your ego?

So many verses come to mind to caution us against living our lives fueled by selfish ambition. Paul tells us to *3Do nothing out of selfish ambition or empty pride, but in humility consider others more important than yourselves. 4Each of you should look not only to your own interests, but also to the interests of others.* (Philippians 2:3-4) As believers we are called to be selfless and look out for the interests of others. This is in direct contradiction to worldly wisdom that encourages you to look for you own, protect your peace and be the only focus of your existence. Other scriptures that dissuade us from harboring jealousy and cultivating selfish ambition in our lives are: Mark 12:30-31 *30Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind and with all your strength.' 31The second is this: 'Love your neighbour as yourself.'* No other commandment is greater than these." You cannot be selfishly seeking your own and employing chaos and every evil thing while following the commandments to love God and your neighbour.

JAMES 3:13-17

You cannot detach yourself from the love of money and hold onto God, as we are encouraged to do in Hebrews 13:5 “*Keep your lives free from the love of money and be content with what you have, because God has said, “Never will I leave you; never will I forsake you.”*” Yet at the same time you are employing worldly and wicked methods to keep your ‘enemies’ and rivals at bay.

Jealousy is a dangerous poison. It is the cousin of comparison, something we all struggle with if we are being honest. God is aware of how fragile and wicked our hearts and minds are. So His word reminds us that “*godliness with contentment is great gain*” according to 1 Timothy 6:6. You are actually better off being content with what you have. It makes you a happier, more content and gracious human being. The world will encourage you to “go after what is yours,” “get that bread” and “hustle.” These are harmless phrases that our culture perpetuates, but there is an underlying desperation, greed and urgency driven by jealousy, selfishness and an ungodly desire for more. Is this the life that God is calling us to? Please hear me out, I am not saying that being ambitious is bad or that we shouldn’t work hard. In fact the Bible encourages us to work as unto the Lord and Paul said that if anyone doesn't work, they should not eat. This caution is to anyone who thinks that they can get ahead by abandoning God’s wisdom and doing what the world does. This is a call to anyone who feels like they must get ahead and be better than so-and-so or they are only worthy when they look, talk, drive, and have acquired assets more than someone else. You are not in competition with anyone. You do not need to acquire assets, looks or levels and lanes in life to be a worthy, healthy, happy or whole human being. You have everything you need in God, including wisdom that will preserve you and save your life. Kapish?

The Bible is very clear: *For where jealousy and selfish ambition exist, there will be disorder and every evil practice.* (vs. 16) This is why people are murdered, families are shattered, others fall ill and are unable to recover. Churches fall apart, people break up and countries fail to develop. There are so many people who are blinded by their selfish ambition that the lines between good and evil are blurred. It is anti-God to make the pursuit of wealth your sole life ambition.

JAMES 3:13-17

Please watch out that you are not being motivated by jealousy and selfish ambition in your career, ministry, relationships, family life, church life, politics and hobbies. We need to abandon earthly, unspiritual and demonic wisdom if we are going to start again with God! He calls us to His way and He has shed light on our path, all we need to do is walk in it and obey. (Psalm 119:105, Isaiah 30:20-21)

Let's get into the bible's definition of Godly wisdom: But the wisdom from above is first of all pure, then peace-loving, gentle, accommodating, full of mercy and good fruit, impartial, and sincere. The Bible encourages us to trust in the Lord with all our hearts, lean not on our own understanding and then in all our ways acknowledge Him and the promise is that He will make our paths straight. (Proverbs 3:5) A life governed by Godly wisdom is one that bears good fruit, one that promises refreshing, protection, mercy and peace. It does not take much experience in this life to know that you cannot substitute peace with anything else in this world. God's wisdom is pure. It does not come with hidden agendas or strings. It is peace-loving and "allergic" to chaos. It is not about the drama or strife or conflict. God's wisdom is gentle and accommodating. It is mature and a lot of times counterculture. It will take you away from conventional practice, but it will preserve your life. Lastly, it is full of mercy and good fruit. Who doesn't want mercy and good fruit? Also note, God's wisdom will require you to show mercy when you'd rather show anger and strife. It will pull you away from venting and revenge, but towards peace and letting go. It will feel like you are going against your nature and personality, but there are wonderful promises attached to living life God's way. Your life is essentially prolonged and preserved. Read the book of Proverbs and see how the wicked are destroyed, but the righteous are prospered. It really is quite simple.

So I encourage you to take stock of your life and evaluate which wisdom is running your life. Is it worldly wisdom driven by selfish ambition and jealousy? Or is it Godly wisdom that will preserve and prosper your life? Who are the people influencing you? Do you take the Word of God seriously or is it just an archaic suggestion to how you should live your life? Look towards the light, pursue God and your life will not be a waste. Will it be easy? No. Will you be different and weird around your peers and family? Most likely.

JAMES 3:13-17

Will it preserve your life? Absolutely. God's wisdom is foolishness to the perishing. (1 Corinthians 1:18) However, Jesus came so that we would have life and have it in abundance! (John 10:10) So embrace God's wisdom. Let go of jealousy, greed, selfishness and pursue God's way.

We are called to be the salt and the light, a city on a hill. We are a chosen people, a royal priesthood, a people set aside for God. It is only fitting that we look to Him to guide us, build us and help us as we live our lives for Him. I hope that you are encouraged and stirred to walk in a manner that is worthy of the call that you have received. If you are looking for a community of believers who you would like to join or if you are starting over with God and you're not sure where to look, please explore our website and see what activities you can plug into. Most importantly, read God's Word, pray to Him and seek to submit your life **daily** to Jesus! (Matthew 5:13-14, 1 Peter 2:9, Ephesians 4:1)

All the best, Ciao! 🙌

Scriptures Shared:

- James 3:13-17
- Philippians 2:3-4
- Hebrews 13:5
- 1 Timothy 6:6
- Psalm 119:105
- Isaiah 30:20-21
- Proverbs 3:5
- 1 Corinthians 1:18
- John 10:10
- Matthew 5:13-14
- 1 Peter 2:9,
- Ephesians 4:1