

11. Learning to Develop Godly Wisdom

In our last two topics, we have seen that we are to learn to control our tongue so that the words we speak will be beneficial to others. In order to help our physical and spiritual children learn to become more effective in their communication with others, we want to help them learn to speak with godly wisdom so the words they share will help people in their spiritual growth. That will be the focus of our topic today as we see how to help our children grow in godly wisdom.

In James 3:13, we read, “Who *is* wise and understanding among you? Let him show by good conduct *that* his works *are done* in the meekness of wisdom.” The word that is translated “wise” was used by the Jews to speak of a person who could apply Biblical knowledge to the situations we face in daily living. The word translated “understanding” is used only here in the New Testament and means one who can skillfully apply Biblical knowledge to practical situations. Here, we see that it should be the goal of every Christian to learn to apply the Word of God to the practical situations we face in our daily lives.

We see what will happen as we show our children how to apply the Word of God to the situations we face throughout the day each day. As we apply the Word of God, the Word will produce good conduct. The Lord will also develop the attitudes He desires in our lives. Here, we see that the Lord will work in our lives to produce gentleness or meekness. This will happen because we are seeking godly wisdom. Isaiah 55:8-9 says, “‘For My thoughts *are* not your thoughts, nor *are* your ways My ways,’ says the LORD. ‘For *as* the heavens are higher than the earth, so are My ways higher than your ways, and My thoughts than your thoughts.’” Godly wisdom makes it possible for us to see things from the viewpoint of God. Then, as we yield to the Lord, the Lord gives us His strength to carry out the actions that please Him. Our children learn, from our example, how to think and act in a Biblical manner instead of a worldly manner.

We see the contrast as we see the results of worldly thinking in the following verses. James 3:14-16 says, “But if you have bitter envy and self-seeking in your hearts, do not boast and lie against the truth. This wisdom does not descend from above, but *is* earthly, sensual, demonic. For where envy and self-seeking *exist*, confusion and every evil thing *are* there.” In these verses, we see several characteristics of worldly thinking. The word that is translated “bitter” is only used twice in the New Testament and both are in this chapter. In verse eleven, we see that a fountain cannot produce both bitter and sweet water. Bitter water is water that is so bad you cannot drink it. Bitter envy describes an attitude that is jealous and resentful of others. Many of the people in the world have this kind of attitude in their hearts toward others.

We see that worldly thinking also produces self-seeking in the hearts of people. The word that is translated “self-seeking” speaks of a person who is pushing himself forward. Philippians 2:3-4 says, “*Let nothing be done* through selfish ambition or conceit, but in lowliness of mind let each esteem others better than himself. Let each of you look out not only for his own interests, but also for the interests of others.” In these verses, the word used in James is translated “selfish ambition”. Philippians contrasts that attitude with a humble attitude and says that we are not to have a worldly attitude where we make decisions based on the worldly attitude of selfish ambition.

We see that the worldly wisdom that produces bitter envy and self-seeking in the heart will produce certain actions. Here, we see that these two attitudes will cause a person to boast and lie against the truth. When a person boasts, that person is lying about himself. This is spiritual pride. Worldly wisdom will also cause a person to lie against the truth. In John 14:6, we see that Christ is the truth. In John 17:17, Christ said that the Word of God is truth. John 8:32 tells us that Christ and His Word will set us free. That verse says, “And you shall know the truth, and the truth shall make you free.” Those who follow worldly wisdom will often speak against Christ and the Word of God. We want to help our children learn to enjoy the freedom that comes from godly wisdom.

We are also given the source of worldly wisdom when we see that such wisdom is earthly, sensual, and demonic. Earthly wisdom is focused on the things of the world instead of the spiritual thoughts that come from the Lord. A Christian who seldom talks about the Word of God with others is showing that his thoughts are controlled by earthly thinking. The word that is translated “sensual” speaks of the natural man and his thinking. 1 Corinthians 2:14 says, “But the natural man does not receive the things of the Spirit of God, for they are foolishness to him; nor can he know *them*, because they are spiritually discerned.” Then, Jude 19 says, “These are sensual persons, who cause divisions, not having the Spirit.” Here, we see that natural or sensual thinking is the result of worldly wisdom.

We also see a third thing about the source of worldly wisdom. We see that worldly wisdom actually has its source from Satan and is similar to the thinking of demons. In John 8:44, Christ told the Jews who rejected Him, “You are of *your* father the devil, and the desires of your father you want to do. He was a murderer from the beginning, and *does not* stand in the truth, because there is no truth in him. When he speaks a lie, he speaks from his own *resources*, for he is a liar and the father of it.” Here, we see that worldly wisdom is based on the desires of Satan and does not have truth as its source.

However, worldly wisdom affects more than just the attitudes of the heart and the thoughts and words of a person. James 3:16 also tells us that worldly wisdom also affects the actions of each person who follows worldly wisdom. James 3:16 says, “For where envy and self-seeking *exist*, confusion and every evil thing *are* there.” The word that is translated “confusion” speaks of things that produce conflicts and instability and is the opposite of what comes from God. 1 Corinthians 14:33 says, “For God is not *the author* of confusion but of peace, as in all the churches of the saints.” Worldly wisdom produces confusion and conflict. The word that is translated “evil” speaks of works that are worthless or evil. John 3:20 uses the same Greek word when it says, “For everyone practicing evil hates the light and does not come to the light, lest his deeds should be exposed.”

In contrast to worldly wisdom, James 3:17-18 tells us about godly wisdom. Those verses say, “But the wisdom that is from above is first pure, then peaceable, gentle, willing to yield, full of mercy and good fruits, without partiality and without hypocrisy. Now the fruit of righteousness is sown in peace by those who make peace.” Here, we see eight characteristics of godly wisdom. These characteristics cause us to realize why we want to help our children develop godly wisdom in their hearts, thoughts, words, and actions.

First, we see that godly wisdom is pure. The word that is translated “pure” speaks of being pure (free) from every fault. 1 John 3:3 says, “And everyone who has this hope in Him purifies himself, just as He is pure.” Those who have their hope in Christ desire to be pure as He is pure. Second, we see that godly wisdom is peaceable. The word that is translated “peaceable” speaks of those who love peace or bring peace. Hebrews 12:11 says, “Now no chastening seems to be joyful for the present, but painful; nevertheless, afterward it yields the peaceable fruit of righteousness to those who have been trained by it.” Here, we see that the discipline God allows in our lives is to train us to produce the fruit of righteousness.

Third, we see that godly wisdom is gentle. The word that is translated “gentle” means that we show our children how to *respond to others with gentleness (kindness or tenderness), even when they are mistreated*. Philippians 4:5 says, “Let your gentleness be known to all men. The Lord is at hand.” Here, we see that God wants Christians to be known for their gentleness. Fourth, we see that godly wisdom is willing to yield. The word that is translated “willing to yield” means *a person who has a teachable spirit which causes us to be obedient to the Lord*. Fifth, we see that godly wisdom is full of mercy. The phrase “full of mercy” speaks of a person who shows concern for those suffering difficulty or pain. Such mercy also produces forgiveness. Hebrews 4:15-16 says, “For we do not have a High Priest who cannot sympathize with our weaknesses, but was in all *points* tempted as *we are, yet* without sin. Let us therefore come boldly to the throne of grace, that we may obtain mercy and find grace to help in time of need.” Christ saw our suffering and pain because of sin. He was tempted, suffered, died, and rose again so that He could show mercy to us. Godly wisdom means that we show that same mercy to others even when they sin against us.

Sixth, we see that godly wisdom produces good fruits. John 15:8 says, “By this My Father is glorified, that you bear much fruit; so you will be My disciples.” Here, we see that we help our children bring glory to God as their lives bear good fruit for Him. Seventh, we see that godly wisdom is without partiality. This means that we do not favor some or reject some, as we are warned in chapter two of James. Finally, we see that godly wisdom does not practice hypocrisy. 1 Peter 1:22 says, “Since you have purified your souls in obeying the truth through the Spirit in sincere love of the brethren, love one another fervently with a pure heart.” Here, we see that we will love one another from a pure heart with no hypocrisy.

As we help our physical and spiritual children learn to develop godly wisdom in their lives, we see that we are actually helping them learn how to help others make peace with God because their lives are producing the fruit of righteousness in their lives. Here, we see that godly wisdom has a powerful impact in any life. May the Lord richly bless you as you show your children how to develop godly wisdom in their lives so that their lives cause others to learn how to have peace with God.