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Proving Wisdom
James 3:13-18
November 15th, 2015, Steve Karadimas

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Hey, good morning everybody, I hope you're all doing well. I'm going to get all scientific on us this morning, and for those of you who know me that probably comes as a surprise, most of you were probably expecting far less from you're youth pastor but look at me, I'm maturing.

Anyways here's pictures of brains. This is a 5 year old, ten year old, 15 year old and twenty year old brain. The blue means your smart and all the other colours mean your not smart. So by the time your 15 most of your brain is pretty smart except this one corner. That happens to be the corner that correlates consequences with action.

Anyways when I was 15 my brain probably looked more like the ten year old brain than the 15 year old brain because I wasn't too smart, I never paid attention in school. One day I remember I was hanging out with a bunch of my friends and I was also with a girl I liked at the time which of course makes me even less smart, so at this point my brain was probably more along the lines of the 5 year old brain. And we were hanging out in this park, and in this park there was a pond with a tiny island in the middle and in the island there was a willow tree with branches hanging quite a bit over the pond. I told my friends, I bet you I could jump grab one of those branches and swing on it and land on that island. The first thing they said "**prove it.**" I said sure. I take a few steps back I get a good running start, get a decent jump grab hold of a branch... and I'm thinking yes, this is amazing, I'm going to do this and it's gonna be so cool and this girl is going to be so impressed for some reason, and as all of those thoughts are going on in my head I hear a crack, and the branch snaps. At that moment I knew that this wasn't going to go well for me. I look down at the pond that I'm about to fall in. I notice that there are a lot of geese in this pond, I also know that geese spend most of their lives pooping and as I fall into this pond I notice that it's much thicker than water and that at least half of this pond is goose poop.

I get up out of the pond and I realize that the girl really isn't all that impressed. I'm covered in goose poo water. Why did I do something so stupid? well first of all it's because teenage boys do stupid things for girls. But the second reason why I went ahead and did it is because I made the claim that I could, and my friend told my to prove it. The only way I could prove it was by doing it, so I gave it a try.

That leads me to my passage here, and I'm going to start by just reading James 3: 13

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James 3: 13 "If you are wise and understand God's ways, prove it by living an honourable life, doing good works with the humility that comes from wisdom."

There's only one way to prove it, by doing it. I could have come up with a theory as to why I was able to swing along that branch like Tarzan and make it on to the island. I could come up with scientific tests as to why my theory was possible. I could be the most confident guy in the world and continue to tell everyone why it would be easy for me to swing along those branches and get to that island. But until I do it, it's not proven.

So let's go back to James, ***"if you are wise and understand God's ways, prove it."*** This is James going back to his days in middle school, saying, yeah, you think you understand God, well prove it.

And today we have the same challenge, to prove our faith. Unfortunately our attempts to "prove it" are so often a joke. We read that verse and we think, yeah, I'll prove that I know God, and to prove it we learn about the bible and we learn theology and all of that, which is fine, but it doesn't prove that we have a relationship with God.

To prove it you got to do it! and in this case James says you prove it by ***"living an honourable life, doing good works with the humility that comes from wisdom."*** Remember what would happen in middle school if you said something but you couldn't prove it. There was always the kid who said that they were amazing at basketball or whatever and then they don't make the team. The whole school would laugh at him. They don't take you seriously, the kids wouldn't believe you and you would lose their respect.

It's the exact same in your faith, God's not going to laugh at you, he loves you even if you're a hypocrite, but the world, the rest of this city, yeah, they'll laugh at you, they won't respect you. If you say I am wise and I understand God, I'm a good christian and I know all the answers because I go to church but if you don't follow that up with actually living an honourable life doing good works in humility and wisdom, you're a joke. They're not going to take you seriously, you're a hypocrite, they called you on it and you couldn't prove it.

You see I believe most people want to see you prove it, Even though my friends were happy when they saw me in the goose poo pond, it would have been awesome if I could have actually proved my theory and swung along the branches and made it to that Island. The same way when you say you believe in God, people want to see proof of that, people want to see something special. Can you understand how disappointing it would be for a non Christian to start a friendship with a Christian who says he believes in a God that created the world and has power to do miracles on earth and he believes in Jesus who brought hope to the world. This non Christian would be saying prove it, this sounds exciting, can you imagine his disappointment when the Christian say's "ok I'll prove it, and then proceeds to give the non christian a bunch of information about the bible. That proves nothing, and it's so disappointing. People want to see you prove it by how you live, they want to see God's love in you, they want to see something special in you, that's how you prove it.

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Sorry, I talked a lot about that first verse, I really liked that verse, but it goes on and says this in verses 14-16 ***"But if you are bitterly jealous and there is selfish ambition in your heart, don't cover up the truth with boasting and lying. 15 For jealousy and selfishness are not God's kind of wisdom. Such things are earthly, unspiritual, and demonic. 16 For wherever there is jealousy and selfish ambition, there you will find disorder and evil of every kind."***

This is the contrast of the honourable life filled with good works and humility and wisdom, this is the opposite of wisdom and understanding God's ways. Let's unpack this a bit because there is a lot in here.

The things that oppose God's wisdom are:

Bitterness
Jealousy
Selfish ambition
Boasting and lying

I don't know about you but if I was asked what is the opposite of wisdom, I would not have said selfishness, lying and jealousy. When I think what opposes wisdom I think foolishness, or stupidity, or poor decision making. No, that's not the opposite of wisdom. The Bible says the opposite of wisdom is selfishness, lying and jealousy.

Being bitterly Jealous opposes wisdom. That's another thing that people don't automatically think of when they think of the opposite of wisdom. What does being bitterly jealous lead to? I remember when I was 10 my mom gave me and my friend each a pokemon toy and I was bummed because his looked so cool and mine was all lame looking. He had Pikachu and I got ghasly, for the ten of you out there that I know what I'm talking about. So I was jealous. But I wasn't just jealous about they toys, I was bitter that my mom gave him a cooler one so I started to say super mean things to him, we got in a fight, I don't think we hung out again for like a week. Which is a long time when you're ten. It put a wrench in my friendship, I said things that I couldn't take back.

You see how bitterness and jealousy can lead to doing terribly unwise things. Have you ever seen that in your life? has jealousy led you to unwise decisions? somebody else get's the job you want? somebody starts dating the person you like? somebody just on a whim buys a brand new truck and you're still driving the same thing you were in the 90's? I know I start to treat people differently if that happens. Jealousy isn't wisdom it destroys wisdom, when it comes into your life stop it, turn to God, give your jealousy up to him.

Next it says that selfishness opposes wisdom? why would selfishness oppose wisdom, according to the world being Selfish is great, you got to look out for number one. Our whole system capitalism runs on the fact that we can depend on people to be selfish, which is both hilarious and quite sad. One thing that we can count on is for people to be selfish, how does this oppose wisdom. Well wisdom is outside of you, if you look at what's best for you, you're missing out on seeing what's best for the 7 billion other people on the planet. you're missing out on seeing Gods plan.

Last of all it talks about boasting and lying opposing wisdom. And this is interesting because once again boasting and lying are the world's form of wisdom. If you can tell a lie that people believe that is wise, you've duped them. If you can boast and exaggerate a story so that people will believe you and think better of you that means you're wise according to the world. But where does that "wisdom" lead you to? It leads you to shame. It leads you to despair, it's hopeless.

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These are mankind's forms of wisdom and they are all hopeless. If we live life like that we'll have proven nothing about God. But let's see what real wisdom is according to James: ***But the wisdom from above is first of all pure. It is also peace loving, gentle at all times, and willing to yield to others. It is full of mercy and the fruit of good deeds. It shows no favoritism and is always sincere. 18 And those who are peacemakers will plant seeds of peace and reap a harvest of righteousness.[d]***

It starts off by saying wisdom is first of all pure. Why does it put that first of all? There's a lot in there, but mainly it says that because if it's pure it means it's about God and not you. You're not pure, your motives aren't pure and the "wise" things that you do are just for selfish gain. If it's pure it's about God. So real wisdom comes from God. Anything that comes from your motives, your mind, anything that comes from you isn't wise, that's a humbling thought isn't it. If it's a wise idea it's not your idea.

It says ***be gentle at all times***, when I first read this I thought it said be gentle at times, and I was like, "yeah, I can do that, i'll totally be gentle at times. Turns out that's not what it says. Be gentle at all times. I suck at this, when emotions get high or my patience gets tested the first thing to go is gentleness. I think that I'm pretty good at controlling anger, I don't burst out in fits of rage, and I don't yell, but when my patience gets tested and emotions are high gentleness gets tossed out the window.

I grew up in a very ungentle family, my dad wasn't gentle, my brother wasn't gentle, and my mom could be pretty blunt. Because of that I didn't have to learn how to be gentle, I didn't have to learn how to choose my words wisely because I could say the meanest things and nobody would care. I cannot repeat the names that I called my dad or my brother in a church, but when I used them it didn't matter. Nobody got hurt.

Now that's not the case, I have to learn how to be gentle with my wife, and choose my words wisely so that I don't hurt her. She's learning to be very patient with me as I'm learning. But I'm called to be gentle at all times, that's wisdom. I don't know about you but for me gentleness does not come naturally, my natural response is an ungentle one. I have to actually pause and speak slowly for gentle words to come across. Sarah makes fun of me now, I have my gentle voice that I do and she knows that there are ungentle thoughts in my head but I'm trying really hard to be gentle. It's not natural, but it's wise.

Wisdom is willing to yield to others. There was a movie that came out a while ago, and a bunch of you guys probably watched it and it's called God's not dead. And in the movie there's a college kid who is taking this class and the professor is an atheist. The professor gets all the kids to write on a piece of paper "God is dead." the main kid in the movie won't do it so he has a series of debates with the professor about arguments as to why God is real.

Near the end of the movie they're having a final debate, and the student poses this question to the professor: "why do you hate God" the professor cringes up and out of anger and hurt he responds: "Because God took everything away from me." It turns out that this professor's mom died when he was 12 and he was praying and praying for God to spare her life but she died anyways and that is why he hated God. And as the professor is standing there in pain because God didn't spare the life of his mom when he was a kid, the student looks at him while he's still in the class, still in the debate and he says "how can you hate someone who doesn't exist?"

Some of you are in your chairs thinking, "yes, take that atheist, we got you there." I would have used to have shared that response with you, but I would encourage you to take a step back, because when I first saw this it made me sad because it gives the completely wrong message on how to treat others and when to stop and care for people instead of winning an argument. It turns the professor into the enemy and when the christian is given a wide open door to extend

grace he walks in that door and punches the professor in the face. The professor said he hated God, and this student just gave him another huge reason to hate God. He was unyielding and selfish, he wanted to look good in front of everyone and win the argument.

Do you ever want to win the argument more than you want a relationship with the person you're arguing against? most likely if you're in an argument you would rather beat them than love them. and you know what's so ironic about it, is we confuse that for wisdom when actually it's the opposite. pummelling someone in an argument and appearing smarter than they are is unwise. I remember seeing a facebook thread not too long ago where someone was in this heated argument and they quoted all of these bible verses and scholars to prove why this one person was wrong and then someone comments on the thread, to the person who was just being so mean on facebook, and they commented "you're so wise."

That would be like you guys coming up to me after the service and saying Steve, you are the most civilized and cultured person that I have ever met, and you should enter a beard competition because you would clearly win. No that's not true, that's the opposite of true. It's not wise to destroy someone in an argument. Wisdom knows when to yield.

It says: **Wisdom is full of mercy and the fruit of good deeds.** I'm starting to see a trend of just how blatantly this opposes worldly wisdom, it's full of mercy? Mercy isn't wise, back in Jesus' time all the Jews would have said the wisest people among them were the pharisees, cuz they knew the answers.

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in matthew 9: 10-13 there's a really cool story that shows that that might not be the case: **10 Later, Matthew invited Jesus and his disciples to his home as dinner guests, along with many tax collectors and other disreputable sinners. 11 But when the Pharisees saw this, they asked his disciples, "Why does your teacher eat with such scum?[d]"**

12 When Jesus heard this, he said, "Healthy people don't need a doctor—sick people do." 13 Then he added, "Now go and learn the meaning of this Scripture: 'I want you to show mercy, not offer sacrifices.'[e] For I have come to call not those who think they are righteous, but those who know they are sinners."

You see, it doesn't matter how wise you are, God came to show us mercy. Mercy means we eat with tax collectors and sinners. And if you have mercy you are almost guaranteed to have good deeds and treat people well. Jesus had mercy on sinners and he ate with them. If you show mercy to the people around you, if you care for them like Jesus cared for them, then you will do good things for them. Mercy is wisdom.

next it says **wisdom shows no favouritism and is always sincere.** Favouritism leads to unwise choices. If we're to be honest we all show favouritism. I remember when I was in grade 11 french. I was possibly the worst in the whole school at french, I didn't understand any of it, it made no sense, it was like it was a whole different language or something. So my whole middle school and highschool french career I was always on the border of failing french, I was always like 50 to 55 percent in french. And for some reason my french teacher in grade 11 really liked me. It made no sense at all because I was a terrible student and I wasn't even a good person I was disrespectful and crude. But on our last day of french 11, which was my last day of ever having to take a french class, I walked into the class and I was like mrs. Webster, I'm never

going to have to take a french class ever again! and she responded by saying: oh, I'm so proud of you Steve, good job for making it so far. Then I sat down and this girl came and sat down behind me and she was like, Steve, this is going to be the last french class I ever take! and Mrs. Webster comes up to her and said to this girl "if you don't want to be here you can just leave right now, I'm not going to allow you're attitude in my classroom." And I just start laughing because the favouritism is obvious.

`You make poor decisions when you show favouritism, you hurt people when you show favouritism. I didn't have a problem with it this time because I was being favored, but when you're on the other end of that kind of stuff it sucks.

And finally it says wisdom is **peace loving**. and it ends with saying "**those who are peacemakers will plant seeds of peace and reap a harvest of righteousness.**" Wisdom loves peace. That's the big difference between wisdom and knowledge, because wisdom loves peace, knowledge doesn't love peace, knowledge loves war. 1 corinthians 8: 1b says "**knowledge puffs up while love builds up.**" I'll give you an example, I don't have a smartphone anymore, I have a dumb-phone. But when I had my smartphone I would hear people say stuff and think to myself, thats not true. And I would quick look up the facts on my phone and show it to them, and I would be like, "hey look at this, you're wrong and I'm right." I would love that, I quickly found out that everybody else didn't love it, they actually hated it. But I would use knowledge for war. Wisdom however is different, wisdom is peace loving. Wisdom is knowing when to keep your mouth shut, wisdom is realizing that the person is more important than winning a discussion point. Wisdom avoids war.

hopefully that convicts some of you guys who like to start arguments for the sake of arguing, it certainly convicts me. But there are some quiet people here who don't like to start arguments, for example my wife is wonderful, she almost never starts an argument, I'm starting to learn that if she starts an argument I should assume she's right because she would just not start an argument if there was even a chance of her being wrong. But she doesn't start arguments, she likes peace, and that's a good thing, but that's not to be confused with a false peace. Some of you might do everything you can to keep the peace even though there actually isn't any peace, and you might say that you are peace loving and therefore wise but I'm sorry, that is not the case, by keeping a false peace you actually destroy any real chance of having peace.

You can't have real peace just by pretending war is not there. That would be like having the whole world pull their forces out of Syria. We could take all the camera's out of Syria, we would make sure nobody writes about it or reports on it. And then we could say that Syria has achieved peace...Are ya sure about that? of course that wouldn't work, it would probably make things worse, why do we think that would work in or own lives, it just makes things worse. Having a false sense of peace is not peace loving. Just letting people step on you and saying their opinion and just taking a step back is not peace loving, it actually stops peace from being able happen.

Being peace loving means that you strive for peace. it means you plant seeds of peace, you know the best way to plant a seed of peace is to listen? do you know how much more peaceful the world would be if we would just listen? A little while ago in the news you might have seen a police officer grab a girl in her desk and he started throwing her across the classroom because she wouldn't give up her cellphone. I don't know all the details about the story because you get mixed reports and everything, but I do know that the girls parents both recently

passed away and she had just been put in foster care. maybe she needed someone to listen to her and find a peaceful solution instead of having a police officer throw her across the classroom.

Always be on the lookout for a peaceful solution in every conversation you have. do that by listening, by stating the facts, and by assuming the best in a person. I'll say that again, listen, state the facts and assume the best in a person, you guys should write that down, if you follow that it will lead to a much more peaceful life.

If you can remember this passage started with the demand to prove it. So you believe in God, you're wise and you understand Gods ways? well, prove it. Well, you prove it through mercy, you prove it through good deeds, you prove it through sincerity, you prove it through striving for peace. So we're all gathered here today learning about God, you say you have a relationship with God? well, now's your time to prove it.

Taming the Tongue
James 3:1-12
Week of November 8th, 2015

Objective of this study: To grow in godly wisdom to prove to the world that God can change lives

[Remember, the main goal of each Growth Group is to allow God's Word to change your heart so that others would see Jesus in you and be likewise changed to be like him. He wants to change the world through us]

Worship (5 – 10 minutes)

1. Sing a song or two of praise and thanksgiving to God.
2. Spend five minutes in silence asking God to prepare your heart for how he wants to speak to you.
3. After the five minutes have someone interrupt the silence and read proverbs 2 meditatively to the group. Pause after each phrase letting God speak to you.

Welcome (5 – 10 minutes)

Who is the wisest person you know? why them?

Word/Work(60-90 minutes)

1. What stood out from the sermon?
 2. Read James 3:13-18
 3. What words does James use to describe wisdom, are those how you would have described wisdom? why did he describe it like this?
 4. How does this passage contrast God's wisdom from worldly wisdom?
- Sermon Quote:** "There's only one way to prove it, by doing it."
5. What are some ways that we use to "prove" our faith to the world, how effective are they?
 6. What might be a more effective way to prove our faith to the world?
- Sermon Quote:** "That's the big difference between wisdom and knowledge, because wisdom loves peace but knowledge loves war."
7. Have you ever won a debate but hurt a friendship? what kind of wisdom are you pursuing when you do this?
 8. James says that wisdom is peace loving, how does that convict you?
 9. How do we learn from this and grow in Godly wisdom instead of worldly wisdom?