

HOW TO RELATE WISELY TO OTHERS
Developing a Faith That Works - Part 9 of 15
James 3:13-18
Rick Warren

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"And those who are peacemakers will plant seeds of peace and reap a harvest of goodness."
vs. 18 (LB)

* wisdom is _____ (vs. 13)

"Who is wise and understanding among you? Let him show it by his good life..."

* Lack of wisdom causes _____ (vs. 14- 16)

"... disharmony and all other kinds of evil ..." (Ph)

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(verse 17)

1. IF I'M WISE, I WON'T COMPROMISE _____ .

"The wisdom that comes from heaven is first of all pure."

"The man of integrity walks securely" Prov. 10:9

2. IF I'M WISE, I WON'T ANTAGONIZE _____ .

"Wisdom is ... peace loving"

"Any fool can start arguments" the wise thing is to stay out of them." Prov. 20:3 (GN)

"A wise man controls his temper. He knows that anger causes mistakes." Prov. 14:29 (LB)

3. IF I'M WISE, I WON'T MINIMIZE _____ .

"Wisdom is ... considerate" "gentle" (GN) "courteous" (LB)

"Kind words bring life, but cruel words crush your spirit." Prov. 15:4

4. IF I'M WISE, I WON'T CRITICIZE _____ .

"Wisdom is ... submissive" Greek: "eupelthes"
"open to reason" (RSV) "it allows discussion" (LB)

"A fool thinks he needs no advice. A wise man listens to others." Prov. 12:15 (LB)

5. IF I'M WISE, I WON'T EMPHASIZE _____ .

"Wisdom is ... full of mercy and good fruit"

"Love forgets mistakes; nagging about them parts the best of friends." Prov. 17:9 (LB)

Gal. 6:1, Rom. 15:1, Mt. 7:3

6. IF I'M WISE, I WON'T DISGUISE _____ .

"Wisdom is ... impartial and sincere"

Greek: adiakritos & anypokritos
straightforward and without hypocrisy

"You will never succeed in life if you try to hide your sins" Prov. 28:13

"The secret is Christ himself; in him lie hidden all God's treasures of wisdom..."
Col. 2:3 (NEB)

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Every day you encounter many different kinds of people. Some are very delightful. Some are very difficult. Some of them are inspiring. Some of them are irritating, fascinating, intimidating. The fact is, a lot of the problems we have in life are because of personality conflicts. We don't get along with people. When your relationships are bad, life stinks. Life is miserable. You may have lots of money and lots of opportunities but if your relationships are bad, you're miserable. It's very important that we learn how to get along with other people.

James gives some practical advice. Today we're going to look at what he has to say about, "How do we relate wisely to other people". v. 18 is the key verse, *"And those who are peacemakers will plant seeds of peace and reap a harvest of goodness."* James says, every day in every relationship, you're planting seeds. Seeds of anger, jealousy, peace, confidence, insecurity, many different kinds of seeds. So you will inevitably reap in your relationships. How can I plant seeds of peace? How can I be a peacemaker? How can I have peaceful relationships?

Wisdom. We need to learn how to be wise in the way we act toward people. Often we treat people in very foolish ways and we provoke the exact opposite behavior of what we would normally like to see in them. Common sense is not so common. A lot of smart people are not too wise. They may be educated but they don't have wisdom. They may have all kinds of degrees but they're a washout with relationships. James, in this passage, does three things: he defines real wisdom, then he shows how it differs from human wisdom, then he details how it operates.

The first thing he says in v. 13, is that wisdom is a lifestyle. It has nothing to do with your intelligence. It has everything to do with your relationships and your character. *"Who is wise and understanding among you. Let him show it by his good life, by deeds done in humility that comes from wisdom."* Imagine James coming into Saddleback church and asking, "May I see the hands of those who are wise?" If you're dumb enough to raise your hand he would say, "Prove it! Show me. Show me your wisdom by your lifestyle." It's not a matter of what you say with your lips but a matter of what you live with your life. Not a matter of your words but of your works. Not so much the diplomas on the wall, but your disposition that really shows how wise you are. How do you get along with other people? That shows how wise you really are. It's a lifestyle.

Wisdom has more to do with character in relationships than it has to do with education and intelligence. Wisdom creates humility. Knowledge causes pride, but wisdom causes humility.

Verses 14-16 James says lack of wisdom causes problems -- all kinds of problems. v. 14 *"If you harbor bitter envy and selfish ambition in your heart don't boast about it and deny the truth. Such 'wisdom' does not come down from heaven but is earthly, unspiritual, even of the devil. For where you have envy and selfish ambition there you find disorder and every evil practice."* Lack of wisdom causes all kinds of disorder and problems, chaos and confusion. Do you have

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confusion in your home? Do you have chaos at work? Is your life a mess? If you can't get it all together you lack wisdom. It causes all kinds of problems in our lives.

How can I know if I'm wise in how I relate toward people? Today, we're going to take a wisdom test. We're going to test your wisdom -- see how wise you really are. James in v. 17, lists the characteristics of wise people. *"But wisdom that comes from heaven is first of all pure, then peace loving, considerate, submissive, full of mercy and good fruit, impartial and sincere."*

1. I'M WISE I WILL NOT COMPROMISE MY INTEGRITY.

"The wisdom that comes from heaven is first of all pure..." Pure means uncorrupted, authentic. In 1 John 3:3 this word is used to refer to Christ's character. Integrity. If I'm really genuine, if I'm wise, I'm not going to lie to you, I'm not going to cheat you, I'm not going to manipulate you, I'm not going to be deceitful. I'll be a person of integrity. Because all relationships are built on trust and respect. If you don't have honesty who's going to trust you? If you don't have honesty who's going to respect you? You have to have integrity in your life. Dr. Leonard Keeler, the man who invented the lie detector, tested 25,000 people and came to the conclusion that people are basically dishonest.

Proverbs 10:9. There are two books of wisdom in the Bible. James in the New Testament, Proverbs in the Old. They both talk about wisdom. *"The man of integrity walks securely."* He's not afraid of being found out because he doesn't say one thing to one group and something else to another group. Someone said, "No man has a good enough memory to be an habitual liar." Eventually you're going to slip up. If you've got integrity you've got confidence, you walk securely in your relationships. You know you're not putting people on. If I am wise I will not compromise my integrity.

2. IF I AM WISE I WILL NOT ANTAGONIZE YOUR ANGER.

I won't make you angry. Wise people work at maintaining harmony. They're not always looking for a fight. *"Wisdom is peace loving."* Have you ever met someone who is always arguing, always looking for a fight? I heard about one guy who was so argumentative he would only eat food that disagreed with him. If you're smart you don't antagonize people's anger. Proverbs 20:3 *"Any fool can start arguments. The wise thing is to stay out of them."* What causes arguments? Do you know? If you're wise you know because then you can avoid them. Three things that cause arguments. If you're wise you'll avoid these:

1. Comparing. "You're just like ...", "Why can't you be like ...", "When I was your age..." You're asking for a fight. "My first husband..." 2 Corinthians 10:12 says it's unwise to compare.

2. Condemning. "It's all your fault", "You should be ashamed." You lay on the guilt. "You always", "You never", "You ought to", "You should...", "You shouldn't..." Someone said, "You can bury a marriage with a lot of little digs."

3. Contradicting. How do you like to be interrupted in the middle of a sentence? It's irritating. James says, "If you are wise you don't sweat the small stuff." William James says, "The secret of

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wisdom is knowing what to overlook." Some things are just not worth the fight. Wisdom is peace loving.

If I'm smart, if I'm wise in relationships, I won't compromise my integrity and I won't antagonize your anger. Proverbs 14:29 *"A wise man controls his temper. He knows that anger causes mistakes."* How many of you have ever done something stupid in anger? Anger causes mistakes.

3. I WON'T MINIMIZE YOUR FEELINGS.

"Wisdom is considerate" and "considerate" means "mindful of the feelings of others". There is a common mistake that if I don't feel the way you feel then your feelings must be invalid or illogical or irrational or silly. James says, "Wise people are considerate; they don't minimize other people's feelings." If I'm wise I will not minimize your feelings. I don't have to accept them but I can understand them. Proverbs 15:4 *"Kind words bring life, but cruel words crush your spirit."* Typically when we react to people's emotions we say things that hurt. Often we belittle the feeling. We put people down, or we play psychologist. "I know why you feel that way..." We're condescending toward people. James says if I'm wise in relationships I will not minimize your feelings. I'll be considerate.

Do you ever play this game: My day can beat your day. Husband comes home worn out and starts complaining, "The traffic was bad, my boss got upset, the air conditioning went out." Wife says, "Oh, yeah? Junior dunked the cat down the toilet, the beans burned..." The fact is they both had a tough day. Wisdom is considerate. Allow your spouse to be tired without having to say, "I'm more tired than you are." The fact is, you're both tired. If you care you'll be aware.

4. I WON'T CRITICIZE YOUR DECISIONS/SUGGESTIONS.

A wise person can learn from anybody. He's not defensive. He's open to reason. He's not stubborn. He's willing to listen and learn. *"Wisdom is submissive"*. This word is used only one time in the New Testament. It doesn't really mean submissive. It really means reasonable, willing to listen, willing to be open to ideas and suggestions. The Revised Standard Version says, *"It's open to reason."* The Living Bible says, *"It allows discussion."* It's easy to be entreated.

Are you a reasonable person? Can your kids reason with you? The Bible says if you're wise, you're reasonable. You're open to suggestions. "Don't confuse me with the facts; I've made up my mind. When I want your opinion, I'll give it to you." A wise person does not antagonize your anger, does not minimize your feelings, and does not criticize your suggestions. Don't be defensive. Most of us are too oversensitive. If somebody makes a suggestion we take it as a personal criticism and we're defensive. James says that's dumb. A wise person can learn from anybody.

A new pastor preaches the first day. When it's over a guy walks out and says, "Pastor, that sermon stunk." Pastor is trying to be real open about it, reasonable, wise, "What didn't you like about it?" "In the first place you read it. In the second place you read it poorly. In the third place it wasn't worth reading in the first place." Another guy walks out right behind him and says, "Don't listen to old Jim. He just repeats what he hears everybody else say."

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If you're wise you'll be open to suggestions. Don't criticize. Don't get defensive. Proverbs 12:15 *"A fool thinks he needs no advice. A wise man listens to others."* If it's true, listen and learn from it. If it's false, ignore it and forget it. If I'm wise I'll be open to reason. I won't criticize your suggestions. I'll listen to them.

5. IF I'M WISE I WON'T EMPHASIZE YOUR MISTAKES.

"Wisdom is full of mercy and good fruit." Do you jump on people every time they blunder, every time they make a fault and fumble it? Do you always use everybody in your family as the butt of your joke. That's dumb. Wisdom is full of mercy. I won't emphasize your mistakes. Do you ever let people go, or do you keep hounding them about their past mistakes? Do you hold them in leverage, and they never can be set free even if they have asked forgiveness? "Remember the time you did..." You're always holding on and bringing up the past for leverage. That's dumb. If I'm wise, I won't emphasize your mistake. I'll be full of mercy. I'll give you what you need, not what you deserve.

Two guys at a convention with their wives. They were long-lost friends. They sat in the lobby all night talking. They knew they would be in trouble with their wives. They went back to their rooms. The next day they happened to see each other. "What did your wife think?" "I walked in the door and my wife got historical." "Don't you mean hysterical?" "No, historical. She told me everything I ever did wrong."

If I'm wise I won't emphasize your mistakes. Proverbs 17:9 *"Love forgets mistakes. Nagging about them parts even the best of friends."* If you're wise you don't rub it in, you rub it out. You don't hold it over their heads. You forget it. When somebody stumbles, you don't judge them. You encourage them. We don't need judgement. We need encouragement when we stumble. Are you that way at home? If somebody forgets something -- forgets to fill the car with gas and you run out on the freeway, somebody forgets to bring the mail in -- how are you? Do you rub it in or do you rub it out? The wise thing is to not emphasize the mistake.

Wisdom is full of mercy and good fruit." Good fruit is kind actions, it's something you do. You don't just show sympathy. You don't just say, "I feel for you... You brought it all on yourself." You do something about it. You take action. It's a kindness. It's being a doer of the word. James 2:12 *"Mercy triumphs over judgement."* Mercy is a greater principle than judging.

James says, "If I'm wise I won't emphasize your mistakes, I won't criticize your suggestions, I won't minimize your feelings, I won't antagonize your anger."

6. IF I'M WISE, I WON'T DISGUISE MY OWN WEAKNESSES.

A mark of a wise person is they don't try to hide and disguise their own weaknesses. *"Wisdom is impartial and sincere."* These two words in Greek sound similar. They sound like "hypocrite" and that is where we get the word from. It means "without hypocrisy" -- straightforward, right on. In the Greek theater they often would have just a couple or three actors playing an entire play. These people would change parts. They would hold masks in front of their face. One person would have five or six

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different masks and parts and that person, that actor, was called a hypocrite. They have all kinds of masks.

James says if you're smart and wise, you're not phoney. You don't wear masks and try to be something you're not. I've said before, if you're perfect this is not the church for you. If you're going to wear masks this isn't the church for you. This is for real people, with real sins, real hang ups, real faults, real emotional problems, real family problems. Real wise people are honest and open. They're not phoney. They're genuine. They're real and authentic. "What you see is what you get" with a really wise person. They don't attain or pretend perfection. If I'm wise I'm not going to disguise my weaknesses. There are so many phony relationships today. People try to be something they're not. The number one place you can see this is singles' bars. Phony relationships. Where else in our society do you offer to buy something for a total stranger? Phony! Trying to be something you're not.

Proverbs 28:13 *"You will never succeed in life if you try to hide your sins."* It's dumb to pretend that you're perfect, that you've got it all together because nobody does.

When you start telling people what your weaknesses are they're not going to be shocked because they already know. Everybody knows your weakness. You're the only one who won't admit it. We see each other's weaknesses all the time. Why do we walk around pretending that we don't know? We do. It's obvious to everybody. But we don't want to admit it.

If I'm wise I won't disguise my weaknesses. People appreciate honesty, being gut level and sharing where they are. It also helps them to be more open. They might be struggling with it too.

How do you rate on the wisdom test? Do you compromise your integrity? Do you use people, manipulate them and use them for the things you want? Do you tend to antagonize anger, always saying things that tick people off? You know if you say it, it will press their hot button, but you say it anyway. James says that's dumb. It's not being wise. If I'm wise I will not antagonize your anger. If I'm wise I won't minimize your feelings. Feelings are neither right nor wrong, they're just feelings. When my wife has a feeling it's valid. Whether it's logical, whether it makes sense, the fact is she feels it. If I'm wise I'm not going to minimize that. If I'm wise I won't criticize your suggestions. Can your kids make suggestions to you? Can your husband make suggestions to you, or your wife? If I'm wise I won't emphasize your mistakes. I don't rub it in, I rub it out. If I'm wise I don't try to disguise my feelings.

How do I get wisdom? How do I become one of those wise people in relationships so that I have that peace that everybody is talking about? Do I just make a New Year's Resolution -- today I'm going to be wise! No. This is the difference between knowledge and wisdom. Knowledge comes from education. Wisdom comes from God. To get knowledge you look around. To get wisdom you look up. Knowledge comes from reason. Wisdom comes from revelation. Knowledge is something you learn. Wisdom is a gift.

James 1:5 *"If any of you lacks wisdom, let him ask of God."* Wisdom is a gift from God. I sometimes ask 50 times a day, "God, give me wisdom." I want to be wise more than anything else. If

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I'm loving and I'm wise, I'm going to make it in life. If you're loving and wise you're going to make it in life. *"Ask of God who gives generously."* He loves to give.

Colossians 2:3 *"The secret is Christ Himself. In Him lie hidden all God's treasures of wisdom."* It's all wrapped up in a person, Jesus Christ. If you want God's wisdom get Jesus in your life. You invite Him into you life and say, "Christ, think Your thoughts through my mind and say Your words through my mouth. Help people through my hands. Love people with my heart. And put Your wisdom in my mind." The wisest thing I ever did was give my life to Jesus Christ. Why didn't I do it sooner? That's where wisdom comes from. When you get God's wisdom in your life, day by day, as you allow Him into your life and develop your character, you'll find your relationships getting better and better. Even if the person on the other end isn't making an improvement, they'll get better because you're getting better. You know how to relate wisely instead of stupidly to people.

Prayer:

How wise are you? Where do you need wisdom? Do you need wisdom in your marriage? Do you need wisdom with your kids? Do you need wisdom at work? How to relate to people? That cantankerous person who just ticks you off... a secretary... a boss... an associate -- you don't get along with them at all. Where do you get that kind of wisdom"? It's all wrapped up in Jesus Christ. The first step is to invite Him into your life. Wisdom begins with knowing God. Psalm 111:10 *"Reverence for the Lord is the beginning of wisdom."* It starts with salvation. Ask Him into your life. Then day-by-day you continually ask Him for wisdom and fellowship with other Christians. The Bible says, as iron sharpens iron, a wise friend sharpens another friend. A man is wise by the company he keeps. Read God's word. All God's word has wisdom. The more you read God's word, the wiser you'll be.

Pray in your heart right now, "Lord, I need Your wisdom in my relationships. Please give me Your wisdom. I'm asking in faith, as best as I know how. Lord, help me not to compromise my integrity in relationships. Help me to keep my life pure in an impure world. Help me not to give up my convictions just for a friendship. Lord, help me not to antagonize people's anger. You know I know what makes them mad and I tend to use it when I want to get even. Help me not to say those things or do those things. Help me to be wise. Help me not to minimize other people's feelings, that I'll respect it whether I agree with it or not and not put it down, whether I understand it or not. Help me to be wise and not be defensive and not criticize other people's suggestions but to be open to learn and to be reasonable and willing to talk things out, to discuss things. Lord, You've said that's a characteristic of being wise and I want to be that way. Help me not to emphasize other people's mistakes but to show mercy, because I sure need mercy. I make mistakes. Help me not to nag others about their past, things that are behind us. Help me not to disguise my weaknesses, to learn to be open and honest. God, that scares me but I want to be wise and You've said I can never succeed in life if I try to hide my sins. Jesus Christ, come into my life. Give me your wisdom." If you've never invited Him in say, "Make me a new person inside. I want You to direct me."

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Father, I thank You for Your word. I thank You that through it we become wise people in relating to others. I know there are a lot of smart, intelligent and educated people in the world that are really dumb in relationships. Yet You say that's where wisdom shows itself. Give us Your wisdom. In Jesus' name. Amen.