

True Wisdom Leads to Right Living

International Bible Lesson

James 3:1-18

Sunday, February 23, 2014

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“But the wisdom that is from above is first pure, then peaceable, gentle, and easy to be intreated, full of mercy and good fruits, without partiality, and without hypocrisy” (James 3:17—KJV).

“But the wisdom from above is first pure, then peaceable, gentle, willing to yield, full of mercy and good fruits, without a trace of partiality or hypocrisy” (James 3:17—NRSV).

James wrote that many evils and disorder are the result of envy and selfish ambition (James 3:16). For example, to achieve their selfish ambitions, some people goad the poor to envy the rich. Unfortunately, some people bring selfish ambition and envy into the church, which causes division and disorder. Therefore, James wrote that Christians need to act based on the pure wisdom of God as revealed in the Scriptures. Believers should love God supremely and promote what is best for all people. They should do what is best for the poor and the rich without being partial toward anyone. Christians need to practice speaking gently to others in an effort to remain at peace in so far as peace depends on them. When James wrote that Christians should be “willing to yield,” he did not mean people should yield to evil and let the wicked have their own way instead of trying to stop evil deeds. Rather, James meant that believers should be open to reason and should speak and act reasonably, because “love does not insist on its own way” (1 Corinthians 13:5). Not everyone will act upon the basis of biblical values and Christians do not speak and act perfectly all the time, so the Bible tells believers to show mercy toward everyone. Faith in Jesus Christ should enable believers to bear good fruits and do good to all without hidden or selfish motives. The way of grace, love, and mercy that the Bible teaches will turn some people away from envy and selfish ambition toward the truth, righteousness, and peace.

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Thinking Further

1. What reason did James give when he advised that not many believers should become teachers?

2. Name two things that James compared the tongue to that his readers would understand? Name two things that you might compare the tongue to that people should understand where you live today?

3. How can the tongue be compared to a small fire started in a forest?

4. How might the tongue cause problems in a church?

5. What did James write about the behavior of those who are wise and understanding in a church?