

## **URGENT PRAYER: EMILY SIMIONAITIS**

Hi Chris, I wanted to reach out and ask for prayer from the Church if possible. I am back in Khartoum, Sudan, I've been here almost a year, and 5 days ago there was a coup where the military took over the government and arrested the sovereign council who was leading the country. I'm here with a team of 12 international staff. Thankfully we still have internet but there are no flights out, our accounts can't receive money, and we can't withdraw from the bank, roads are barricaded in protests, and there could be food shortages in the next few days. The military has not become (very) violent yet, but that could change after today. We are ok for today, but that could change very quickly. Even if we can evacuate, we have to leave behind our Sudanese friends and coworkers who are scared and nervous about everything to come. If you and anyone in the church would be willing to pray we would really appreciate it!

## **WELCOME**

Alright, if you've got your Bibles, and I hope you do, please open them up to James chapter 3. James 3. That's where we're going to be.

We want every person to have a hand on their Bible. You can open your phone or tablet to James 3. If you open one of the hard-backed black bibles under your seat, James 3 will be on page **1012**.

## **INTRODUCTION**

Now, today is Halloween...or Reformation Day if you prefer...ok?

- On October 31<sup>st</sup>, 1517,
- Martin Luther nailed his Ninety-Five Theses
- to the door of All Saints' Church in Wittenberg, Germany
- essentially starting the Protestant Reformation.
- He was basically saying,
  - *"I've got 95 problems and the Pope is one!"*

So, whether you do anything for Halloween or not, Oct. 31<sup>st</sup> is a great day.

But my family does some Halloween stuff like trick-or-treating. And when I asked my daughter Harper what she wanted to be for Halloween this year she said she wanted to be a cat.

- Now, I don't know if that was just to perturb me,
- or if she really wanted to be a cat...
- but either way, I wasn't going to crush her dreams,
- so, I said, *"fine."*

Well, last year we did a family costume,

- which she won't want to do with me for too much longer,
- so, we dressed up as Toy Story. Here's a picture.

## **SLIDE**

So, last year I was Woody the Cowboy. But this year, if Harper was going to be a cat I said, *"Well, I guess we won't family costume this year!"*

To which she said,

- *"Dad, I'll be a cat..."*
- *Mom can be a ball of string...*
- *And you could be my litter box!"*

So, she's either evil or brilliant!

## TRANSITION

But with Halloween today, our text lends itself perfectly.

- Because on a day that some link specifically
- with Satan or the Devil,
- it's providential that we would be looking at a text
- that is concerned, in part, with the devil himself.

## CONTEXT

So, we're seven weeks into the book of James, and we've seen this theme running through the book:

**How do you know if you have genuine faith?**

- Well, we've seen that genuine faith perseveres in trials.
- Genuine faith doesn't simply hear the word, but does the word.
- Genuine faith doesn't show partiality or discrimination.
- Genuine faith is faith manifested in good works.
- And then last week we saw that genuine faith shows up in controlled and Godly speech.

And today we move on to the next trait of genuine faith, and that is:

**SLIDE GENUINE FAITH EXHIBITS GODLY WISDOM**

So, we're talking about wisdom today.

- And we talked about this a bit in our 1 Corinthians series...
- but the Greek word for wisdom is the word *sofos* or *sofia*.
- This is where we get our English word, *sophisticated*.

All people value the idea of wisdom or sophistication...even secular people.

## TRANSITION

But today, James is going to offer us two competing kinds of wisdom.

- He's going to contrast human wisdom...
- up against Godly wisdom.

So, let's go. James 3, look at verse 13:

## BLANK SLIDE

## JAMES 3:13

[13] Who is wise and understanding among you? By his good conduct let him show his works in the meekness of wisdom.

## EXPLAIN

So, this is James linking his previous thoughts with this current thought. He's bringing up the topic of wisdom, but he's doing so right on the heels of constantly saying, "*Prove it.*"

- *"You say you believe in God?"*
  - *Prove it with your works.*
- *You say you hear the Word of God?"*
  - *Show it with your actions.*
- *You say you love God?"*
  - *Demonstrate it with your words."*

And now he's using a rhetorical question again:

- *"You say you're wise?"*
  - *Show it in your behavior...*
  - *evidence that you do actually have Godly wisdom."*

So, remember what we said a few weeks ago:

- wisdom isn't knowledge.
- It does not mean information.

Wisdom is not WHAT I know...wisdom is HOW I live.

## TRANSITION

So, this is all connected to what we've seen the last 7 weeks!

Now, in verses 14-16 James gives the profile for human wisdom.

- So, let me read it
- and then there's some things
- I think we need to note about it.

## JAMES 3:14-16

[14] But if you have bitter jealousy and selfish ambition in your hearts, do not boast and be false to the truth. [15] This is not the wisdom that comes down from above, but is earthly, unspiritual, demonic. [16] For where jealousy and selfish ambition exist, there will be disorder and every vile practice.

## EXPLAIN: ENIMIES

So, James acknowledges that

- There is a *sofia* that comes from above...
  - We're calling that "Godly wisdom"
- but then there is *sofia* that does not come from above.
  - And we're calling that "human wisdom"

And there's a lot there, but I want us to focus in on three aspects of this human wisdom.

Those three markers are in verse 15. He calls that kind of wisdom:

- “earthly”
- “unspiritual”
- and “demonic”.

Now, those are very interesting traits.

Because ancient Christians believed that there were three enemies to the soul? Do you know what those three enemies were?

- The world,
- the flesh,
- and the devil.

So, do you notice the parallel here?

James is saying that **the wisdom that DOES NOT come from above** is first of all what?

- **earthly**...
  - that's the world;
- second, **unspiritual**, or that could be translated *sensual*,
  - that's the flesh;
- and third, **demonic**,
  - that's the devil.

This characterizes all human wisdom apart from God.

And again, providentially, I just finished reading a book by John Mark Comer called *Live No Lies* which dealt specifically with these three enemies. So, I'll be referring to that content a bunch.

## **EXPLAIN: DISCLAIMER**

But before we get into these three realities, I want to give a disclaimer:

- we are going to be tempted to think...
- that this human wisdom...
- is something that's out there. Ok?

BUT I want us to remember the context that James is writing in.

- He's taking to Christians
- about how to know if their faith is genuine.
- So, these two types of wisdom:
  - Godly wisdom...
  - and human wisdom...
- they are at war within you!

## **ILLUSTRATION: RUNNING**

Comer uses the illustration of running.

So, imagine you're out for a run,

- and as you go running,
- you have the wind at your back,
- just pushing you and giving you an extra step,
- and man, you feel like you're killing it.

That is, until you turn to run back home.

- And now, with the wind at your face,
  - it is working against you.

As you are running into the wind...

- you feel sluggish,
- and you feel the struggle,
- and you feel the battle.

And that's what this human wisdom is. It's like a head wind.

- It's the oppositional force...
- working against you...
- as you run the race...
- of following Christ.

So, it's not something "out there"...

- it's something in here...
- in each one of us...
- right now.

And we've gotta learn to fight against it.

## THE WORLD

So, what I want to do with the rest of our time today is to work through these three enemies of our soul...which animate human wisdom.

Let's start with the idea that human wisdom is earthly, or the world.

So, here's how Comer defines **SLIDE THE WORLD**.

*The world is a system of ideas, values, morals, practices, and social norms that are integrated into a culture, rebelling against God, and redefining good and evil.*



## ILLUSTRATION: NAPSTER

And, here's the illustration:

- in the year 2000,
  - which is before some of you college students were born.
- but many of us remember something revolutionary.
- It was a file sharing program called Napster.

With Napster,

- you could network to computers all over the world...
- to download pirated music...
- and then burn it to CDs.

To our college students here: burning CDs isn't what it sounds like.

- There is no fire involved.
- Imagine Spotify without cell service.
  - It's downloading songs...
  - for offline use...
  - on a 4 ¾ inch plastic circle.

Well, in 2000,

- the band Metallica...
  - college students: your parents loved them...
- Well, Metallica recorded a song for an upcoming movie,
  - and woke up one morning
  - to find that song
  - was being played on radio stations all over the world...
- BUT they hadn't even released it the song yet!
- It actually wasn't even finished being mastered!

And they traced it all the way back to this program, Napster.  
And thus began one of the most infamous fights in music history.

- Metallica sued Napster for \$10 million dollars...
- on the grounds of copyright infringement.
- And man, it got heated!

Napster's case was:

- Metallica is rich.
- We're poor college kids.
- We don't have money to buy their record.
- What's the big deal if we download their songs?

Metallica's case was:

- It's stealing.
- Stealing is wrong.

And here's the truth: Metallica was right. Stealing is a moral taboo in pretty much every culture in history.

This might be the only time in the history of the world where Metallica has been used to illustrate Godly wisdom in a sermon...

Now, in a moment of honesty...

- by a show of hands,
- how many people here ever imbibed...
- in listening to burned cds...
- of illegally downloaded music.
  - Come on!
  - I'll admit it.
  - I did this, too.

Even though

- the legal and ethical...
- right and wrong...
- were crystal clear...

Still, most people...

- moved the moral line
- to make Napster socially acceptable.

But even more so...

- if you were in a conservative Christian youth group at that point,
  - as I was,
- and someone offered you, say, the new Switchfoot album,
- burned illegally on a CD...
- and you said, *“Sorry, I don’t steal.”*

You would often be hated on with the retort, *“Who are you to judge, bro?”*

- You see, the morality of “judging” your friends was wrong...
- but stealing was just fine.

## **APPLICATION**

This is the wisdom of THE WORLD.

- It’s ideas, values, morals, practices, and norms...
- that are culturally accepted...
- but are in rebellion against God...
- and redefine good and evil.

Now, pirating music might be far from our minds today...but lest we think we are unstained by the wisdom of the world...think with me about some things:

- Lust has now been redefined as love.
- Marriage is not a covenant of lifelong fidelity,
  - but a contract for personal fulfillment.
- Divorce is an act of courage and authenticity,
  - rather than a breaking of vows.
- Objectification of women is lauded as female empowerment.
- Greed is now responsibility to shareholders.
- Environmental degradation is progress.
- Racism is a past issue.
- Marxism is touted as justice.
  - Notice, that's one example from the political left,
  - and one from the right...
  - human wisdom is ripe on both sides of the political aisle.

And I know I preached on abortion just a few weeks ago...

- but I cannot think of a more egregious example...
- as the greatest infanticide in human history...
- cast as reproductive justice.
- And yet, it has widespread acceptance!

And every follower of Jesus has to constantly ask the questions:

- In what ways have I been assimilated into the host culture?
- Where have I drifted?
- Where am I believing human wisdom?

This is the temptation for us, my brothers and sisters...

- not toward atheism or unbelief!
- But towards pure worldliness.

## THE FLESH

So, that's THE WORLD.

Now, the next trait of human wisdom is this: it's **unspiritual**.

- This could also be translated natural
- or sensual
- or fleshly.

## **SLIDE** THE FLESH

*The flesh is our base, primal, animalistic drive for self-gratification, especially as pertains to sensuality and survival.*

And the flesh shows up in popular slogans such as:

- *"The heart wants what it wants."*
- *"Follow your heart."*
- *"You do you."*
- *"Just do it."*
- *"Speak your truth."*
- *"Be true to yourself."*

## ILLUSTRATION: FROZEN

And this is summed up so perfectly in the words of the modern prophet...

Elsa from Disney's Frozen:

- *"It's funny how some distance makes everything seem small*
- *And the fears that once controlled me can't get to me at all*
- *It's time to see what I can do*
- *To test the limits and break through*
- *No right, no wrong, no rules for me*
- *I'm free...*

LET IT GO!"

Oh...you've been disciplined by her as well?

**Self is the new god!**

This is the wisdom of the flesh!

But hear me...**the things we do, do something to us.**

- They shape the people we become.
- What wisdom are you listening to?
- Is it fleshly?

**We make our decisions, and then our decisions make us.**

## THE DEVIL

So, that's the world, and the flesh, but the third way James describes this human wisdom, is that he calls it **demonic**. The world, the flesh, and

## **SLIDE** THE DEVIL

*The devil is a real, immaterial, but intelligent being whose end goal is to spread ruin in our souls and society, with his primary means of lies.*

In John chapter 8, Jesus calls the devil **the father of lies**.

- His main method...lies.
- His strategy is deception.

Lies that come in the form of deceptive ideas, are the devil's primary method of enslaving human beings and societies in a vicious cycle of ruin.

So, he uses the world, and the flesh against us!

- We talk about spiritual warfare...
- and the way the primary way devil wars against us is with lies.
- **We are in a war between truth and lies.**

## EXAMPLES

So, think of some of the insidious ways that lies creep into our lives:

- *"I can't trust my wife; she'll cheat on me just like my mom cheated on my dad."*
- *"Good things don't happen to me, so why even try to be successful?"*
- *"If I had that thing, then I would be happy."*
- *"My best days are all behind me."*
- *"God would never choose me. Not after how I've lived."*
- *"Stepping out in faith like this will end in disaster for me."*
- *"If anyone actually knew me, they would reject me."*

These are the types of lies that prey on us.

And notice they aren't completely untrue!

- The most effective lies are the one that are mostly true.
- So, it is with this type of wisdom.
  - It's going to sound right!
  - It's going to feel right!
  - It's going to promise you something!
- But it's meant to get you to love something other than Jesus...
  - and that thing will ultimately kill you!

*“Hey, you deserve to be happy!*

- *And you haven't been happy in your marriage in years.*
- *They just aren't the right fit for you.*
- *It happens.*
- *You married way too young.*
- *If you were to divorce there's*
- *bound to be someone else...*
- *who would be a better fit*
- *and make you happy.”*

We sin because we believe this wisdom.

We believe a lie about what will make us happy.

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## TRANSITION

This is human wisdom. It's characterized by...

- the world,
- the flesh,
- and the devil.



And James says it manifests in...

- bitter jealousy,
- selfish ambition,
- boasting,
- falsities,
- disorder,
- and every vile practice.

These are not the things that we want...and yet it's rampant in churches!

Remember, James is warning that it is out to undermine genuine faith!

But then he gives the antidote. Godly wisdom. Look at verse 17:

### **JAMES 3:17-18**

[17] But the wisdom from above is first pure, then peaceable, gentle, open to reason, full of mercy and good fruits, impartial and sincere. [18] And a harvest of righteousness is sown in peace by those who make peace.

### **EXPLAIN**

So, James lists many traits of Godly wisdom. These are the things that we want!

- Purity
- Peace
- Gentleness
- Reasonability
- Mercy
- Good fruit!

But how do we get there? How do we battle the human wisdom that seems so pervasive in this life...and so pervasive in our lives?

Well, let me offer three responses to the three enemies of our souls:

- think of these as counter winds...
- that can fight against the opposing forces...
  - of the world,
  - the flesh,
  - and the devil.

## THE WORD

So, those are in reverse order. But let's walk through them.

To battle THE DEVIL, those with genuine faith use **SLIDE THE WORD**

So, to quote Jesus again from John chapter 8...

- *"And you will know the truth, and the truth will set you free."*
- This is from the same exchange
- where Jesus calls Satan the **father of lies**,

The way to battle the lies of the enemy, is to use the words of truth.

## EXAMPLE: JESUS TEMPTED

So, consider Matthew 4 and Luke 4.

- These are the two gospel records...
- of Jesus being tempted by Satan in the desert.

And in both accounts,

- to the lies and accusations of the enemy,
- Jesus responds with the word of God.

And we do the same.

- We fight the devil's lies by choosing not to think about them.
  - But as we all know, you can't think about nothing.
- So, you give your mind something else to think about:
  - Scripture.
  - THE WORD.

You replace the devil's lies with God's truth.

## EXPLAIN: A WAR

The reason I think James is bringing this up to Christians...

- is that most of us don't even think we're in a fight with the devil.

I mean, we read James' list of the traits of Godly wisdom and we're like,

- *"Oh yeah,*
- *I'm open to reason.*
- *I'm impartial.*
- *I'm sincere!"*

But James is writing to Christians and his warning is...

the devil is aggressively working against you.

Listen, in Ephesians 6, which is the "Whole Armor of God" section...

- Do you remember what the Word of God compared to?
  - Yeah, a sword!
- And what is a sword?
  - It's a weapon.
- And why would you need a weapon?
  - BECAUSE WE ARE IN A WAR!

- And the only reason you wouldn't want a weapon,
- is if you didn't believe you were going to be attacked.

We are in a war!

- And when in a war you want a weapon.
- And the word of God is that weapon!

## THE CROSS

Second, to the flesh, we battle with **SLIDE THE CROSS**.

In Galatians 5, Paul says, "And those who belong to Christ Jesus have crucified the flesh with its passions and desires."

How do we fight our flesh?

- We crucify it.
- We nail it to the cross.
- It's how Jesus overcame sin and death...
- and it's how we fight our flesh.

## ILLUSTRATION: GATO

So, you know I was a youth pastor for 10 years...

- and one of the things that we did...
- was we took kids to Juarez, Mexico...
- for mission trips to build homes.

Well, on one such trip we were down in Juarez,

- and if you've been,
- there are stray animals everywhere.
- Like dogs, cats, all kinds of critters.

But on this trip one of our Jr. High girls took a liking to these stray cats.

- And she would bring them food.
- And cuddle them.
  - And I just kept my distance, because...well, you know...
- And one of the street cats in Mexico really took a liking to her...
  - probably cause she was giving it food!

But as we got on the bus to head back to America,

- this girl tried to sneak it in her bag to bring back into the States.
  - Until we heard it mewing in her duffle!
- And I was like,
  - *“Get that thing off the bus!*
  - *No, it doesn't love you...it loves to eat!*”

And she told me God was calling her to save all the homeless Mexican cats

- And I told her that God was NOT calling her to that.
- And we ditched that gato.

Now, I was reading a newspaper article

- about an Argentinian woman...
- who adopted a street cat,
  - very similar to this girl in my group,
- and she took it in,
- and named it,
- and fed it...
- but as it grew...it grew...and it grew...
- and it turned out it was a Puma.

Another reason NOT to like cats, alright!

## APPLICATION

And I know I've used this illustration before, but church, all too often, that's what we do with our sinful flesh.

- We treat it like a pet.
- And we let it come into our lives
  - when it seems small,
  - and innocent,
  - and inconsequential.
- But it will grow.
- And oh, by the way...
  - your sin is a puma!
- And one day it will attack you...
  - and take you down.

And what the cross bids us to is to come and die. To crucify our flesh.

And that means taking that puma...

- not on the bus home with you...
- not to train it...
- not to cuddle it...
- not to give it a name,
- and keep it as a pet.

But rather, to take it out into the street,

- and to put two bullets in the back of its head.
  - Just turn that thing 90-degrees
  - and do it executioner style. Ok?

And what are those two bullets?

Confession and repentance.

- You drag it into the light...
  - that's confession...
  - you tell someone.
- And then you turn away from it completely...
  - that's repentance...
  - you change directions.

**Don't give your sin a chance to kill you, but rather, put it to death!**

- You don't manage your flesh...
- or simply keep it in check—
- you launch a militant campaign to kill it.

## **THE CHURCH**

- So, you battle the devil with THE WORD.
- You battle the flesh, with THE CROSS.

And finally, you battle the world with **SLIDE THE CHURCH**

Proverbs 14:12 says:

**There is a way that seems right to a man,  
but its end is the way to death.**

Statistically, those who claim to be Christians, are moving away from the church in droves.

And what I hear all too often is this:

- *“I can be a Christian and not go to church.*
- *I don’t have to go to a church service...*
- *or be a church member...*
- *to have a relationship with Jesus.”*

But remember what I said earlier...

- the great temptation for us in the West...
- is not towards atheism and no faith at all...

But rather...

- it’s to a DIY faith...
- that’s a mix of Christianity...
- and Buddhistic enlightenment...
- and consumerism,
- and secular sex ethics,
- and radical individualism.

**But you need THE CHURCH to do battle against THE WORLD.**

I mean,

- after the dozens of hours of secular programming
  - coming into our minds all week long...
- we need the anchor of Sunday gatherings
  - to recenter our minds on truth...
  - and open our hearts back to God...
  - for healing and renewal.



And while church is not less than Sunday services, it is far more.

- It must become a thick web
- of interdependent relationships
- between disciples of Jesus
- if we are to stave off the draw of THE WORLD.

The call to follow Jesus is a call to join his community, the church.

- And by following Jesus together, not alone,
- we are able to engage all these human wisdom traits.
  - We are able to discern Jesus' truth from the devil's lies.
  - We are able to help one another override our flesh by the Spirit.
  - And we are able to form a robust community of deep relationships that functions as a counterculture to the world.

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## CONCLUSION

So, this is Godly wisdom vs. human wisdom.

James follows a clear line of thought.

- If one professes to be a Christian,
- he must prove it by living like a Christian.

Genuine faith is revealed in the way we live...through Godly wisdom.

So, ask yourself: Do I have the wisdom of God?

The answer is found in examining your life.

Are you more influenced by the world, the flesh, and the devil...

OR by THE WORD, THE CROSS, and THE CHURCH.

Let's pray. **LYRICS SLIDE W/PADS**

## RESPONSES:

Well, every week at Fathom we respond in 4 ways:

- COMMUNION – THE LORD’S SUPPER
- GIVING TITHES & OFFERINGS – [fathomchurch.org/give](http://fathomchurch.org/give)
- PRAYER - [fathomchurch.org/prayer](http://fathomchurch.org/prayer)
- SINGING

So, I’m going to read the Words of Institution from the Apostle Paul, we’ll take communion, and then we’ll sing:

### 1 CORINTHIANS 11:23–26 – WORDS OF INSTITUTION

[23] For I received from the Lord what I also delivered to you, that the Lord Jesus on the night when he was betrayed took bread, [24] and when he had given thanks, he broke it, and said, “This is my body, which is for you. Do this in remembrance of me.” **TAKE**

[25] In the same way also he took the cup, after supper, saying, “This cup is the new covenant in my blood. Do this, as often as you drink it, in remembrance of me.” **TAKE**

[26] For as often as you eat this bread and drink the cup, you proclaim the Lord’s death until he comes.

Love you church, let’s stand and sing together.

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