

BIBLE DISCUSSION GROUP STUDY QUESTIONS

In preparation for Sunday, Sept. 25, 2011

Passage: James 3:13-18

Memory Passage: James 3:17-18

DAY 1 – ASK FOR INSIGHT

READ THE PASSAGE

(a) **Read James 3:13-18.** I realize that we have rather consistently begun these lessons in James with context questions, but remember that this is an important key to Bible study, especially in James where one might think there are little or no connections between sections. So, what immediate connections do you see between these verses and what has just preceded? To what immediately follows? To the first 3 chapters of the book of James?

(b) Why does James begin v. 13 with a question? Is it rhetorical? Is the question connected to the 2nd half of the verse in any way, and how does answering this help you understand why he has asked the question?

(c) What does it mean to be “wise and understanding?” How does one recognize if they or anyone else is wise and understanding (answer from the context)? Would a stranger, walking with you every minute of the last week, consider you to be “wise & understanding?” Why or why not? What about your “conduct” would cause their answer? Would your conduct inspire the descriptor “meekness of wisdom?” Why or why not?

(d) *Family: Read James 3:13-18.* On your white board make two columns, one with the heading “Earthly Wisdom” and one with the heading “Heavenly Wisdom.” As you slowly reread this passage have your family recognize the characteristics presented for each type of wisdom and record them in the proper column (you will use these lists again on Days 3 & 4). Then ask your family for their definition of wisdom. Help them understand that wisdom is the knowledge & skill necessary to live a life that is obedient and pleasing to God. Then help them more fully understand wisdom & its benefits by reading/teaching any or all of the following passages: Prov. 1:1-7, 2:1-22, 3:13-35 & 8:1-36.

DAY 2 – ASK FOR INSIGHT

READ THE PASSAGE

(a) **Read James 3:13-18.** James teaches about 2 different kinds of wisdom in this passage. First, write a definition of wisdom. Then, give a title to each kind of wisdom of which James speaks. Finally, write down the characteristics of each type of wisdom in two columns so that you can easily compare them.

(b) Write down your own definition of “bitter jealousy” and “selfish ambition.” What does James say this kind of conduct produces (v. 16)? What is James’ warning to people who are acting in these ways (v. 15b)? Why would these kinds of conduct be “boast(ing) and false to the truth?”

(c) Have you ever seen these kinds of conduct produce this kind of fruit? If so, what did it look like? How would you approach a person, using “wisdom from above,” if they were to exhibit this kind of conduct in our body?

(d) Does your conduct ever approach “bitter jealousy” and/or “selfish wisdom?” If your answer is immediately, “no,” how do you know? Upon what basis did you evaluate this possibility? On what continuing basis should you evaluate your conduct so that you do not fall into these sinful lifestyles? Remember that selfishness, jealousy, and self-importance are sins that are crouching at your door and desiring to master you but you must master them (Gen. 4:7)! Be sure to understand when they are rising up to tempt you and have a plan of attack to kill them (Col 3:5: “Put to death therefore what is earthly in you.”)

(e) *Family: Read James 3:13a.* Ask your family, “What Bible characters can you think of that exhibited wisdom?” They may list several, but be ready to show them wisdom from the life of Solomon by reading **1 Kings 3:1-28** to show Solomon’s prayer for wisdom, God’s response, and an example of Solomon’s wisdom, and then **1 Kings 4:29-34** to show a summary of all of Solomon’s wisdom. You should read these passages in chunks so that you keep your family’s interest, explaining where needed and seeking feedback by asking questions as you read each section. Also remember to highlight both the “wisdom” and “understanding” mentioned in James 13a and which are prominent in the description & exercising of Solomon’s wisdom.

DAY 3 – ASK FOR INSIGHT

READ THE PASSAGE

(a) **Read James 3:13-18.** How does James describe wisdom that is not God’s wisdom (v. 15b)? Define what is meant by each of these 3 terms. How would you be able to recognize, in yourself or in others, wisdom that is earthly? Wisdom that is unspiritual? Wisdom that is demonic? Give specific characteristics that would mark these traits of wisdom not from God.

(b) What bearing does discerning this kind of wisdom have on your Christian life? How would you, using the first three chapters of James, answer this question: “I believe that I am to have God’s wisdom and not the world’s, but how do I do that?”

(c) **Read Mark 8:31-38.** How does Jesus describe Peter’s wisdom? Which kind of wisdom from James 3:13-18 does this resemble and why? Which kind of wisdom from James 3:13-18 do Jesus’ words resemble (vs.34-38) and why? What do you learn from these two examples that helps you order your own conduct with regard to wisdom?

(d) *Family: Read James 3:13-18.* Return to your white board and the list you made on Day 1. Help your family understand each of the characteristics of earthly wisdom by defining them, and then **Read Mark 8:31-33** and explain how these characteristics are found in Peter's response as identified by Jesus' rebuke. Then, to apply these truths, describe 2 or 3 examples from your own family's life in which your children will have to choose to act wisely (when tempted to lie, when faced with feelings of jealousy, etc.) and lead in a discussion of responses that would reveal earthly wisdom and responses that would reveal godly wisdom.

DAY 4 – ASK FOR INSIGHT

READ THE PASSAGE

(a) **Read James 3:13-18.** Write out a definition of each characteristic of godly wisdom found in v. 17. Then write down at least one example for each characteristic that would show wisdom demonstrating that particular characteristic.

(b) Notice how tightly wisdom is tied with our conduct in these verses. Godly wisdom is not something that one can claim to possess intellectually without it being shown through one's conduct. Think back on your last week of life and compare your actions with the list you wrote in (a) and describe how your conduct has shown your works in the meekness of wisdom (v. 13)

(c) *Family: Read James 3:17.* Be ready to help your family understand each of the characteristics you wrote down in the column, "Heavenly Wisdom" on Day 1. Give examples from your own life of times your conduct reflected each of these characteristics, or when you have seen other's conduct reflect them. Then give examples of ways that their conduct will reflect each of these characteristics by using examples that each of your kids might face in their daily lives.

DAY 5 – ASK FOR INSIGHT

READ THE PASSAGE

(a) **Read James 3:13-18.** What is the "harvest of righteousness" which is sown in peace? How does this phrase reflect the teaching on wisdom in this section? What does "peace" have to do with this harvest?

(b) How does one "sow in peace" and "make peace" (remember to answer from the context ☺)? Are there any boundaries to this peace (i.e. is the rule, "Peace at any cost?" or are there limits to this sowing in and making of peace)? If there are boundaries, how do you know where they are?

(c) How might one's desire to "make peace" actually allow or escalate "disorder" and "vile practices" (v. 16) in the church? Does making peace always entail avoiding conflict? How can we corporately at BCC increase our peacemaking efforts?

(d) Does a spirit of peace and a desire to make peace mark your thoughts and actions? If not, how will you endeavor to "sow in peace a harvest of righteousness" and "make peace" in the future?

(e) *Family: Read James 3:18.* Ask you family, "What is the definition of peace?" This will let you assess their understanding, and if necessary, expand or correct it. Teach them that what James is meaning when he refers to peace is not just the absence of conflict (e.g. a country being at peace rather than at war), but the concept of completeness, wholeness, and well-being (the OT concept of Shalom). Using your white board, lead your family in a discussion of how they, individually and as a family, can be involved in making peace in two areas: in your family & and in our church. Write down these actions and keep them posted for a while so that you can continually remind them of these plans and help them to implement them.

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A Tale of Two Wisdoms

James 3:13-18 teaches that our conduct reveals whether or not we are wise & understanding (v. 13) by comparing & contrasting the lives of those who exhibit 2 kinds of wisdom.