

## James: Learning Wisdom- James 3:13-18

Sunday 27 September 2020

### Before You Begin

Our hope is that this is a resource that will help us to engage meaningfully with God's word and invite us into a sense of worship, despite being unable to meet face-to-face. Use it in a way that feels comfortable and helpful to you.

A table of contents has been added to give you a sense of what will follow and allow you to move more easily through the worship elements.

#### *Prepare*

Have your Bible close by and some food and drink prepared for communion. It doesn't have to be bread and grape juice; it could be whatever is available (tea and a biscuit) to use in this symbolic time.

#### *Get into a 'Sacred' Space*

Be intentional. Sit somewhere. Have some visual representation of God (perhaps a small cross, your Bible, a symbol or image) or you might play some reflective music. Start with a few moments of silence and deep breathing.

#### *Consider your environment*

What will work for you in the space you have? If you have others in your house (housemates/family), consider sharing this time with them, each reading or participating as appropriate. You might simply reflect individually, in your own time and space. Afterwards, you might connect with others through technology to share your reflections, or an encouragement, with them.



### What's Inside

*On a computer, you can click these links*

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## Call to Worship

*Pat Greig*

Welcome to the Ringwood Church of Christ community as we continue exploring the book of James. You might like to join Brendan on Facebook Live at 10am on Sunday 27 September for an hour of 'singing along' with favourite worship songs.

[www.facebook.com/RingwoodChurchOfChrist/](http://www.facebook.com/RingwoodChurchOfChrist/)

Today's focus is 'Learning Wisdom' and it's very gratifying to note that our collective wisdom around adhering to Lockdown requirements here in Melbourne is having an impact and active cases of COVID-19 are continuing to reduce.

Wisdom is an interesting concept. Psychologists tend to agree that wisdom involves an integration of knowledge, experience and a deep understanding that is able to incorporate tolerance for the uncertainties of life. It's something that can be acquired through experience, but experience does not guarantee wisdom. The sociologist Monika Ardelt believes that individuals develop wisdom as personality characteristics encompassing reflection, compassion and the pursuit of truth. For Christians the pursuit of truth comes from engaging with and having a clear understanding of the word of God.

It is our prayer that as you share with us, God will speak to you and guide your thinking about what it means to express wisdom.

## Prayer

*Pat Greig*

God, thankyou that we can call you father.

We thank you that as our heavenly parent, your word gives us so many insights into your character and the kind of people you want us to be.

Open the eyes of our hearts Lord so that we may more fully understand and embrace the wisdom that is in your Word.

Give us discernment and wisdom in the choices that we make each day that we might better reflect you and your son Jesus to those we encounter in our day to day experience.

May our faith in you grow stronger every day and the wisdom that comes from you be used to praise and glorify you.

Amen.

## **Bible Reading: James 3:13 – 18 (NIV)**

*If you are with others perhaps take turns to read different sections*

Who is wise and understanding among you? Let them show it by their good life, by deeds done in the humility that comes from wisdom. But if you harbour bitter envy and selfish ambition in your hearts, do not boast about it or deny the truth. Such “wisdom” does not come down from heaven but is earthly, unspiritual, demonic. For where you have envy and selfish ambition, there you find disorder and every evil practice.

But the wisdom that comes from heaven is first of all pure; then peace-loving, considerate, submissive, full of mercy and good fruit, impartial and sincere. Peacemakers who sow in peace reap a harvest of righteousness.

THE HOLY BIBLE, NEW INTERNATIONAL VERSION®, NIV®  
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## **Wise Words**

*Pat Greig*

“Nannie! It’s not nice to call Poppy stupid!” Our oldest grandson, now 21, was about three when he chastised me for telling Bruce (my husband) that he was stupid. How right he was - even at a tender age he was learning wisdom (and he was teaching me) - to show kindness, to be compassionate, to mind my words etc. My response was to say how right he was and to rephrase my comment to Bruce. I also said a silent prayer of gratefulness that my daughter-in-law was instilling good values in her little boy and teaching him wisdom.

From where and from whom have you learned wisdom? On a wall in our home are old family photos. They include my mother and my maternal grandmother. From these two women I have learned the importance of faith and pressing into the wisdom from scripture. I have learned resilience and resourcefulness in times of challenge. From my mother, I learned the importance of hospitality and I learned that I did not need to be limited by my gender.

Some folks from our church community have been invited to share wisdom and learning that has been helpful to them...

**From Sue Green.** Words from Corrie Ten Boon:

*“If God sends us on strong paths we are provided with strong shoes.”  
The journey can be long and endurance hard and yet we have  
everything we need to withstand what comes.*

**From Joy-Anne Edwards.** Words spoken by a lovely mature lady at Sudan United Mission when Joy-Anne was 19 or 20 and seeking to discern her future

*“God can’t steer an anchored ship .....  
Take a step forward and see if the door opens or closes.”*

**From Sandy Hayward.**

*It wasn’t really quotes (wise words) that helped me after the shock of Foster’s death and feeling like half of me had died. It was people!*

*“The path to resilience for me was founded purely from the love and care from my family, friends and our church community who have helped me up these past 4½ years.”*

**From Pat Greig.** Words written in the front page of my Bible when I left home at just 16 to go to Adelaide to complete my schooling:

*“Study to show yourself approved to God, a worker who does not need to be ashamed, rightly dividing the word of truth.” 2 Timothy 2: 15*

And words spoken when our first child was born:

*“Put Bruce first. Your children are only on loan and he will be there long after they are gone (from your home).”*

You might like to make a note of any **wise words** you remember being given as you have journeyed through life. Alternatively, reflect on the words from an old hymn that was a favourite of my late father.

**Song: Be Thou My Vision**

Be Thou my Vision O Lord of my heart  
Naught be all else to me save that Thou art  
Thou my best thought by day or by night  
Waking or sleeping Thy presence my light

Be Thou my Wisdom and Thou my true Word  
I ever with Thee and Thou with me Lord  
Thou my great Father I Thy true son  
Thou in me dwelling and I with Thee one

High King of heaven my victory won  
May I reach heaven's joys bright heaven's Sun  
Heart of my own heart whatever befall  
Still be my Vision O Ruler of all  
Be Thou my Vision

CCLI Song # 7056332  
Eleanor Henrietta Hull | Mary Elizabeth Byrne | Russell Mauldin  
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## Personal Story: A Nurse's Perspective of COVID-19

*Joy-Anne Edwards*

My name is Joy-Anne and I am a Registered Nurse and I work at the Healesville Hospital Day Procedure theatre.

These are some of my experiences as a health care worker during this COVID-19 journey so far...

**Fear** of the virus and its impact generally. Fear that loved ones may be taken. Fear that our community would not work together to stop spread and protect the most vulnerable. Fear of after effects for those who contracted the virus and survived. Fear of our governments (both state and Federal) using the issue as a political football. Fear of personally contracting the virus and perhaps even spreading it unknowingly.

**Isolation** from loved ones, from colleagues, neighbours, friends and the rest of the world. Extended separation from my 22-year-old daughter who moved to Wodonga for work just prior to the second lot of restrictions. It has been 11 weeks now.

**Change!** My usual work involves elective surgery. Elective surgery has been cancelled at Healesville for the last 6 months. This has required me to work at Maroondah Hospital for a few months and then in a couple of different roles at Healesville.

I have been testing for COVID-19 in symptomatic patients and been on the front door of hospital, screening all who enter grounds of Healesville Hospital.

My husband has been working full time from home along with the threat of losing his job. My son has been on JobKeeper and at home most of the time.

Change of routines, workdays, exercise and social get togethers.

Patients having trouble understanding us talk under our masks, especially if hard of hearing when they can't see our lips.

Not being able to hold a frightened patient's hand without a glove.

Not being able to give a stressed colleague or friend a hug.

Having to turn away visitors and loved ones from seeing patients who are dying, due to visitor restrictions.

I greet people at the front door of the hospital with a security guard beside me. We screen to keep those inside safe. There we deal with people who are often stressed, angry, in pain or grieving. Sometimes just a little entitled too. So sadly, the security guard is a necessity in this time. We also help oversee the needle exchange program at the front of the hospital and the community shower for homeless. There is also the opportunity to welcome all who come through with a smile and a genuine, "How are you?" I have got to know lots of people from other departments which has been a delight.

There was a feeling of despair when the second wave of infections occurred, and in particular the way it happened.

There was anger at those who knowingly spread the virus. The people who believed it was a hoax and the anti-maskers too.

My training and experience as a nurse of over 30 years has helped me prepare for a time such as this. Whether it is knowledge of basic infection control, disaster response or community education, or counselling, these are all part of what we do.

Working together with a wide range of health professionals to provide care in our community has been a great team experience.

I have got great strength from my relationship with Christ, my husband, family and friends, small group and greater church family.

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*Zoom prayer meetings on Tuesday evening are awesome. Zoom small group on Friday nights and all the care, support, and prayer has been a gift.*

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Exercise, fresh air, gardening and connections with friends and family have all helped.

I have just completed an Immunisation course online which has been both a challenge and distraction during this time. I will hopefully be able to use this in a practical way soon.

My short 5-minute devotion, "Every day with Jesus" helps me begin my day in God's word. Daryl and I have been enjoying the worship resources together.

We nurses have received lovely gifts from the community and businesses to thank us. Patients and relatives just thanking us during our work has been encouraging.

Writing down some of these experiences on paper at times has really helped name some of the trauma or grief and then let it go.

I have felt very upheld during this time.

I also believe that my gifting and training is very much for a time such as this. I feel a purpose, productivity and involvement in a community that I enjoy.

That's what keeps me going during the tough days. It helps me to endure and persist. Over time this seems to naturally result in resilience.

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*Keeping connection with God and the people gifted to me as family and friends helps me be able to continue to work through these very unusual times.*

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## Message

Harley Kitchen

Today's message is about the getting of God's wisdom for the way we live – what James calls "heavenly wisdom" as against earthly wisdom.

Here in God's Word we have James putting to us that there is a difference between natural decision-making and God-directed thinking, leading to our decision-making and action.

God's inspiration – when we ask for that help. The Spirit of God working away in our lives inspiring us in our choosing of the way we speak and live as His people – as His Kingdom-building people. James calls us to live by "heavenly wisdom".

There's quite a history of the word "wisdom" in the Bible. In fact, in Proverbs 8 God's wisdom is almost like a person alongside Him at creation.

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*"The Lord possessed me at the beginning of His work...I was there when He set the heavens in place, when He marked out the horizon on the face of the deep...I was the craftsman at His side. I was filled with delight day after day... rejoicing in His whole world, delighting in mankind." (Proverbs 8)*

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The book of Proverbs is all about wisdom - one of the most well-known statements in Proverbs is "The fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom" and another, "Trust in the Lord with all your heart...and He will direct your paths."

And Jesus loved the book of Proverbs. In the New Bible Commentary, "Every now and then we get an echo of its language in His own teaching" e.g. the wise man who built his house on a rock/ the fool who built on sand. And how many people over the centuries have been stopped in their tracks when hearing His words, "there's a wide road that leads to destruction and many are on it, and a narrow way that leads to life and few find it..." (Matt 7:13)

So James says to us, "Go after heavenly wisdom" and here in verse 17 of chapter 3 the word he uses to describe it is "pure". "The wisdom that comes from heaven is first of all pure" – thoughts from the Holy Spirit are pure.

We need them, don't we? In a world full of dirty thinking, words and actions – dirt that can enter our own systems.

James highlights two bits of dirt – (v 14) "envy and selfish ambition". Envy of others can eat us up inside, can't it? And selfish ambition is described as "mean-spirited ambition". Trying to get the better of others – pulling them down to build yourself up." That can very easily be a human being's default position - and James says it leads to disorder - things falling apart.

What our Lord wants for us is becoming pure in our thinking. In the Bible, the word pure means clean – but as well as clean...fair dinkum...sincere...without ulterior motives.

You and I know we are weak human beings, failing to meet our own standards, let alone God's idea of purity. Our thinking VERY easily swings to what's best for me, making us jump to conclusions about things...and people...and say things wrong, or get things wrong. There is a bias within our nature that can make our reactions or responses to life quite impure.

And there is an answer to that – an answer that is there for us to choose. Paul says to the Corinthians, *“Christ Jesus has become for us wisdom from God – that is our righteousness...”* (1 Cor 1:30).

We sing, *“Lord I need you, every hour I need you...my righteousness... Where sin runs deep, Your grace is more...and then these words, “Holiness is Christ in me.”*

Christ in me. Not me trying to make myself holy. Not me trying to create pure wisdom from within. No, it's Christ in me. Paul wrote to the Colossians saying, *“Christ in you, the hope of glory”* (Col 1:27) and his prayer for them was, *“that they may know the mystery of God, namely Christ, in whom are hidden all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge.”* (Col 2:2).

You might say, *“Oh, I'm a mere mortal. I can't aspire to pure wisdom. My human nature gets in the way – I'm more a sinner than a saint...”*

When you are tempted this week to lash out - maybe at the restrictions we are living under – and there's quite a bit of that going on (!) or at someone who annoys or attacks you personally, remember:

- 1) Jesus being verbally attacked but not retaliating - as we read in 1 Peter 2, *“he committed the matter to the One who judges fairly”*.
- 2) Think of the price Jesus paid on the Cross as he paved the way for us to be cleaned within, and to live with God's pure life pulsing through our systems by His Spirit within us, giving us His wisdom for living. Constantly cleaned, over and over again, because our sinful nature will keep on being there...

It begins within us as we invite Christ into our lives – His purity begins to take shape within us – progressively through life the Spirit of God within us is making us more like Christ.

A song many of us will remember:

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*“Let the beauty of Jesus be seen in me  
All His wondrous compassion and purity.  
O thou Spirit divine, all my nature refine,  
Till the beauty of Jesus is seen in me”*

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God's wisdom in us is a result of Christ's life within us – overcoming selfishness - and is characterized, James says (v17), by *“peace-loving”*, which means a desire to promote peace between struggling factions. Characterized by being *“considerate”* - being reasonable in the demands it makes on others.



By being “submissive” - that’s a willingness to learn from others by being open to reason. “Full of mercy and good fruit” - offering compassion to those in distress, doing kind actions and helpful deeds to others. “Impartial and sincere” - without ulterior motives, genuine, fair dinkum.....

James then finishes these strong calls on us by saying, *“Those who sow in peace raise a harvest of righteousness”*. What a beautiful promise. A harvest of righteousness. In our own lives – and others finding peace with God through the saving power of Jesus’ righteousness, finding peace of mind through trusting Him and experiencing love, finding peace in their relationships in their families, in their lives. A harvest of righteousness.

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*No matter where we are on the Christian pathway, we are called to go deeper with God. Deeper in faith and understanding of God’s Word – and daily receiving cleansing - and wisdom for living, through which we are bringing peace into the lives of those around us.*

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Are you and I moving towards that?

## Questions for reflection and discussion

1. What situations in life need the peace-making wisdom of God and how can we be part of it?
2. What am I needing to bring to God in prayer today, asking for the purity of Christ and heavenly wisdom?

## Communion

*Pat Greig*

*Have some food and drink prepared for this time*

If you’re able, join us at 11am Sunday through Zoom to share in communion together at [rngwd.com/communion](https://rngwd.com/communion) or via Facebook live [rngwd.com/fbv](https://rngwd.com/fbv)

If you are unable to join us, then please use the following reflection to take communion in your own way today and after, consider who you can call to have a chat as you would on a Sunday morning after a church service.

Our daily devotion at present is coincidentally entitled “Wisdom”. The devotional series opens with these words from Proverbs 4:7: *“Wisdom is the principal thing; therefore get wisdom. And in all your getting, get understanding.”*

As we have journeyed through COVID-19 it has been clear that wisdom is so important in dealing with this horrible virus. Because it’s a novel virus, that wisdom has evolved and been added to, as scientists and medical experts have better understood it. And yet there have also been so many competing voices: those that have said it’s a hoax; those that have down played it and said it’s just like an ordinary flu; those who have said it will just go away.

Those competing voices have caused great anxiety and fear for some and anger for others and really highlight just how important it is that we seek truth and through that truth, wisdom.

There are numerous Biblical references to wisdom and as I reflect on life in Lockdown and what a COVID-normal might look like, there are a number of passages that for us can be helpful.

*“Be very careful then how you live – not as unwise but as wise, making the most of every opportunity, because the days are evil.”* Ephesians 5: 15-16.

*“If any of you lacks wisdom, you should ask God, who gives generously to all without finding fault.”* James 1:5.

*“The one who gets wisdom loves life; the one who cherishes understanding will soon prosper.”* Proverbs 19:8.

*“I keep asking that the God of our Lord Jesus Christ, the glorious Father, may give you the spirit of wisdom and revelation, so that you know Him better.”* Ephesians 1:17.

God wants us to seek His wisdom and He wants us to remember all that He has done for us. Jesus certainly understood the desire of His father’s heart so when he shared that final Passover meal with his friends he wanted to offer to them an easy way of remembering him so he selected unleavened bread and wine; two common and very familiar elements of that feast, as reminders of his body that was going to be broken and his blood that was going to be shed to fulfil the prophecy from Isaiah 53: *“He suffered and endured great pain for us... He was wounded and crushed because of our sins; by taking our punishment he made us completely well.”*

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*As you eat and drink whatever elements you have chosen, remember Jesus who suffered and died and then rose again, so that we could be free from the fear of death.*

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## **Connect cards online**

Click this link or enter it into your web browser [rngwd.com/connect](http://rngwd.com/connect).

We love to know that you have been able to connect through worship today. Please click on the link (or enter it into your web browser) to our online connect cards letting us know which ways you have been able to worship, and if you want to let us know how we can praying with you.

Thank you!