



DAILY FAITH PRACTICES

Sunday, September 18-24 (B) – James 3:13-4:3; 7-8a

Focus: *Make Peace*

word of life

“And a harvest of righteousness is sown in peace for those who make peace.” (James 3:18 NRSV)

Read James 3:13-4:3; 7-8a

These verses begin with the question, “Who is wise and understanding among you?” (James 3:13 NRSV) Before you answer that question, take a minute to think about what it means to be wise.

1. *How do you define wisdom?*
2. *Describe someone who is wise.*
3. *How does someone evaluate his or her own degree of wisdom?*

The writer of James believes it is best to live a life of wisdom—rather than simply to talk about it. In that, these verses are consistent with an overall theme in James of doing God’s word in daily life. “If any of you is lacking in wisdom, ask God, who gives to all generously and ungrudgingly, and it will be given you.” (James 1:5 NRSV) Wisdom is a gift from God and reflects a connectedness to God.

Since wisdom comes from God, a person who is wise takes on godly behavior. “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)

4. *How do wise people reflect God in their daily life?*
5. *What else might be added to this list of characteristics describing wisdom from above?*

Those who are not of God and do not have God’s wisdom guiding their life may *think* they are wise and even boast about their personal wisdom. There is a certain irony in that they cannot see their own lack of wisdom. “Such wisdom does not come down from above, but is earthly, unspiritual, devilish. For where there is envy and selfish ambition, there will also be disorder and wickedness of every kind.” (James 3:15-16 NRSV)

6. *What are the repercussions in a Christian community when leaders do not rely on God’s wisdom?*
7. *How do you describe earthly wisdom?*

The author raises more questions. “Those conflicts and disputes among you, where do they come from? Do they not come from your cravings that are at war within you?” (James 4:1 NRSV) Without God’s Spirit in our lives creating us to be a new creation in Christ, we can be consumed by this inner war. Struggles with others reflect inner struggles. The author makes an alarming jump from struggles within a person to committing murder and coveting.

8. *How do you describe the connection between the war within you and outer struggles with others?*

The advice is simple: “Submit yourselves therefore to God...Draw near to God...” (James 4:7-8 NRSV) Allow God’s wisdom to shape and guide your life. “And a harvest of righteousness is sown in peace for those who make peace.” (James 3:18 NRSV)

9. *What does it mean to “make peace”?*
10. *How might peace be sown in the life of someone who makes peace?*

word among us

D.J. acts like he knows everything about everything. Well, D.J. only *thinks* he knows it all. When he enters the building for a church event, the planning team takes a deep breath, shutters, and sighs. They know their patience is about to be tested. It won't be long before D.J. will begin to pontificate about the ways the event could have been planned and implemented better. D.J. truly thinks he is wise, but in reality, not so. Instead, he simply stirs things up and causes conflicts.

1. *If you were on the planning team, how would you respond?*
2. *How do you handle those who think they are wise, but in reality live a life distant from God?*

The author of James believes interpersonal conflicts come from the inner war deep inside each person. People spend their energy seeking that which is not God. They covet and seek earthly things. Conflicts occur because of misdirected pursuits.

3. *What do you believe is the root of conflicts between people?*
4. *How might these verses be helpful to resolve conflicts?*
5. *What might happen if people who face conflicts might stop and pray for God's wisdom?*

There can be no wisdom without God. Wisdom without God is merely an illusion. Thus, we are encouraged to draw near to God. Since wisdom comes only from God, a wise person adopts godly behavior like peaceable, orderly, and gentle actions. A wise person need not boast about obtaining wisdom, because wisdom will be able to be observed by others.

6. *Name those people in your life who are wise. Describe them.*
7. *What have they taught you about wisdom?*

faith practice in daily life

Strive for justice and peace in all the earth

These verses on conflict do not mean the Christian life is conflict-free. Sometimes those who make peace and are faithful to Christ find themselves facing conflict and turmoil—because of their faithfulness to Christ. Making peace is more than being polite and keeping silent. Making peace includes seeing injustice in our communities, naming injustice and calling for change. There will not be peace until there is justice.

Striving for justice and peace in all the earth is a faith practice that is rooted in our baptism. We come out of baptismal waters commissioned to work for justice in our world. “And a harvest of righteousness is sown in peace for those who make peace.” (James 3:18 NRSV)

8. *How might “making peace” stir up conflict?*
9. *What are the challenges of “making peace”?*
10. *How does God's wisdom guide and inspire us to “make peace”?*

Prayer

Holy One, grant us wisdom and understanding to face this day. Bless us with a harvest of righteousness as we sow peace. Amen

last word

Decide on three ways to “make peace” during the coming week.

Daily Faith Practices

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