



Faith and Wisdom

James 3:13-4:12 |

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SUMMARY

According to James, the problem with our wisdom is not only that it's filled with jealousy and selfish ambition. It's that our wisdom is blind to what causes quarrels and fights among us (4:1). Our wisdom is warped by our pride-filled desires, you know, those things that we believe will bring us the joy and stability we crave. Our pride always leads us to say, "I deserve better...Forget God! I deserve what I want!"

J.I. Packer writes, *"Most of us live in a dream world, with our heads in the clouds and our feet off the ground; we never see the world, and our lives in it, as they really are. This deep-seated, sin-bred unrealism is one reason why there is so little wisdom among us—even the soundest and most orthodox of us. It takes more than sound doctrine to cure us of unrealism."*

"What causes quarrels and what causes fights among you?" James dives right into our troublesome existence as the church. He doesn't pretend that everything is okay, and he doesn't call it like he sees it, but rather he calls it like God sees it, which is to say, he brings everything back down to the heart level.

"You desire..." James says, and this is very true. The Christian faith, unlike many of its real life and fictional depictions over the years, is not about moral reformation. It's about a reformation of the heart, our inmost being, that God works in his children from the moment they believe until their dying breath.

And so when we desire, we desire wrongly, then murder, covet, fight, and refuse to ask and try to obtain what our souls most deeply desire through our own means. It's a jump all the way back to the garden lie. Our convex desires (self-centered and turned in upon ourselves) turn adulterous and hostile to God, the lover and king of our souls.

*"Or do you suppose it is to no purpose that the Scripture says, 'He yearns jealously over the spirit he has made to dwell in us? **But he gives more grace...**'"*

We struggle with God's right jealousy over us. We treat him like a crazed lover who bizarrely obsessed with us (cue Regina George from Mean Girls, "Why are you so obsessed with me?").

But we've gotten the plot all wrong. The biblical story has us cast as the bride who, after her wedding day, wakes up with daily amnesia about to whom she owes fidelity. Sometimes it gets really bad (have you read Hosea?), and we might rightly wonder, "How on earth does God find it in himself to find us, clean us up, and bring us home again?"

The answer is right there in James. "...he gives more grace..."

Take some time as a group to read through James 3:13-4:12. Then ask these questions:

1. What stood out to you as you read today?
2. What point does James seem to be making?
3. How does this portion of Scripture connect to what came before? How does it connect to what comes after?
4. What didn't make sense? What do you still wonder about?
5. "...he gives more grace..." What do you think that means? How has that played out in your life?