

**“Getting Along Together,
We Value Teamwork and Unity”**

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Thank you, Traci, so very much. For the last nine years Traci has served as secretary, support, and office assistant to me and I am so thankful for her life, her faith, and the fact that she not only is skilled in her work but is very gifted and uses her gifts to honor the Lord Jesus Christ. I am very thankful for that.

You know when you come to church on a morning like this and gather together it is amazing how that through the experience of worship, just getting out of a car and getting into a building like this and beginning to hear songs of praise that for a matter of moments it seems as though in each of our lives there is a sense of strength, a sense of release, a sense of comfort and you just wish that somehow you could gather all of the things that you often feel that somehow connect in a moment like this and could just take them with you through the course of the entire week. It would be nice if somehow life could just stay in nice and clearly defined concepts and that the spiritual truths of life could just be put in a notebook like we do in church and that that would just automatically take care of all of the needs, concerns, and burdens of the week to come. I don't know how your life experience is but I do know how mine is. For me, as much as I study and prepare to try to conceptualize truths of the Christian life and to bring them to bear in the pulpit Sunday after Sunday and as much as I enjoy coming and seeing all of the pieces of worship just sort of take the parts of my life and give me some release, when it gets to Sunday night and Monday morning and Tuesday morning and Wednesday morning, so many times the things that I have experienced or have somehow thought that I put together in worship seem to slip away. I find that while worship certainly needs to be a part of my life every day there is a much greater need. Maybe that is not the right phrase. There is an equally important need for another facet of life to come together and that is not only for worship but also for wisdom. The wisdom to take what I am hearing, the wisdom to take what I am learning, and to see it begin to connect with where I am living every day.

Our good friend Tony Evans defines wisdom as seeing and interpreting life from God's perspective and then making life's decisions based on that understanding. I just wish in my life that I could somehow keep the clarity Monday through Friday, or Monday through Saturday, that sometimes I feel like I have on Sunday. Have you ever felt that need for wisdom in your life? Have you possibly in the last five to seven days said, Lord, I need some wisdom? I tell you I have, many times. I suppose that of the needs of my life few things compare with the regular need that I feel for wisdom.

Now our friend James, whose book we have been studying and whose letter we have been reading now for several weeks, addresses this matter of wisdom over and over. This morning we are going to go and we are going to focus in on a specific portion of the Word of God that talks to us about wisdom and wisdom applied to life. It is found in James, Chapter 3. But you have to read no further than the opening five verses of the Book of James to discover that James talks to us about how we can get life together and

how faith can be real in life. He goes ahead, as though it were, grabs the bull by the horns and says, in life you are going to have trials. You are going to have tribulations. He says count it all joy when you fall into diverse trials and tribulations, problems in all shapes and sizes, pressures in all colors and varieties. You are going to experience those in your life. He says when that happens in your life, let me give you some encouragement. Verse five of James 1. If any of you lacks wisdom ask of God. With those five simple verses James outlines one of the crucial areas of life in which we need wisdom. We all need wisdom in the crises of life. When life goes into crisis mode, when life suddenly throws us a curve ball, every one of us comes to the moments in life where life is difficult because we are at a crisis where we are facing a trial and adversity, a tribulation point in life. One of the key areas of life where wisdom is needed, possibly the apex experience, is when I am in a crisis, when I am in a jam. God give me some wisdom!

Not only do we need wisdom for the crises of life. James goes on in the verses that continue in Chapter 1 to talk about the crossroads of life. Specifically he talks about temptation. He talks about the natural tendency we all have to stumble and to fall into temptation and how that in the course of life we constantly come to crossroad moments, defining moments of decision, where we have to make choices, we have to make decisions and we have to know that we are doing it with the wisdom of God and that we might be able to live in the will of God. Many times we come to that place and we need God's wisdom and like you many times I have prayed, God, help me to know the way. Lord, help me to choose what is right. Lord, give me direction in my life because in the temptation and resistance in the hard days of life sometimes it is just hard to make good and wise choices. It is easy to try to find the road of least resistance but that is not always the wisest choice to make.

Just this week some dear friends sent me something in the mail. It was a whole series of little stories and quotes. One I really enjoyed told about a little four-year-old girl who had been learning the Lord's Prayer. She was standing in front of her mother meticulously reciting every word of the Lord's prayer – four years old! As she was coming down near the end she said, and lead us not into temptation but deliver us some e-mail. Isn't that great! But deliver us some e-mail!

Have you ever in your life wanted to say, God, I just need an e-mail. I just need you to send me a little message, send me a little piece of paper that says to me, here is what I need to do. I know everyone of us at one time or another struggle with the need for wisdom at the crossroads of life so that life can begin to come together. Obviously this issue of wisdom is crucial because you find the word wisdom used throughout the Bible. In the Book of Proverbs the word wisdom appears over 100 times and then here in the Book of James that we are studying we keep hearing it – wisdom, wisdom, wisdom. We need wisdom at the crossroads. Wisdom at the crises.

There is another place where we need wisdom. That is in the conflicts of life. Because, inevitably, regardless of how warm and winsome and becoming you may be every one of us at one place or at one time or another face conflicts in life. I am talking about conflicts

in our relationships with people. We have a hard time getting along. We have a hard time keeping it together. Though we may indeed do our best to try to live at peace with others we find that there are conflicts that inevitably come into the path of every one of us in life. Frankly, we need wisdom in dealing with conflicts in life, conflicts in family, conflicts in the job, conflicts in the school, conflicts in friendships, conflicts in all arenas of life. You may have conflict with that person that waits on you at the restaurant today, it may be someone you don't even know, and you just conflict.

I don't know where I first heard it but I love it. It says, to dwell up above with those that we love oh that will be glory in the sweet by and by heaven some day. But to live here below with those that we know, well, that is a different story. Maybe you know exactly what I am talking about here. We live in an imperfect world. We are fallen and imperfect creatures. As a result, we end up in conflict with people and those conflicts are very difficult things to deal with. It is because of the fact that there are so many different kinds of people in the world. You know, some people are fascinating and other people are just plain irritating. Some people are very dynamic and other people are very, well, different. Some people are real energetic and other people are real lethargic. Some people are very gracious and other people are very gruff. Everywhere we turn in life we have to deal with all kinds of people. Whether it is the conflict of relationship, the crossroad of decision, the crisis of difficult circumstance, every one of us struggles to bring life together.

Can we go back to that triangle? Thank you. Perfect! Wouldn't it be nice if when you came to church you could just take all of the little compartments of your life and just put them together like that? I mean, you know, the triangle is the most stable and balanced of all the geometrical figures. Wouldn't it be nice if you could say, well, I have a little crisis, a little crossroad, and a little conflict and just put it all in nice little balance and just stay like that? But, you know, the fact of life is rarely do we feel when we are going through these things like we are stable. Rarely do we feel that we have the stability of a triangle. In fact, in my own life, I have discovered that over and over when I am going through crises and facing crossroads and enduring conflicts that rather than feeling that it is triangular and well established I feel much more like I am dealing with the tassels on the end of an unraveling rug. You know tassels are just that – they are just unraveled, they are just undone, they are just sort of here and there. They are sporadic. There is no rhyme or reason, they just are unraveled. So many times in life, the crises of life, the conflicts of life, the crossroads of life, call us to feel as though life is simply unraveling and we struggle with how to get it all together in light of the fact that life seems so easily unraveled.

In James, Chapter 3, James addresses getting life together. He addresses the issue of wisdom. He distinguishes between the wisdom of men and the wisdom of God. I want us to take time right now and just read James, Chapter 3, beginning in verse 13 and then continuing through the end of Chapter 3 and letting this be the guidance point in the remainder of the moments we have today to help us understand how we can gain wisdom for the crises, conflicts, and crossroads of life. Let's see what he says here James, Chapter 3, verse 13. Who is wise and understanding among you? I would like to do a

survey this morning. Anybody in here want to say I am wise, I am understanding? Don't lift your hand too quickly, you will show how unwise you are! You see, James really isn't taking a survey. He really isn't saying lift your hand if you are wise or you are understanding. What he is saying is, do you want to know what wisdom looks like in life? Do you want to know what a person looks like who has wisdom for facing the crises, conflicts, and crossroads of life? He said, let me tell you what that person looks like. He says, who is wise and understanding among you let him show by good conduct that his works are done in the meekness of wisdom. But if you have bitter envy and self-seeking in your hearts, do not boast and lie against the truth. This wisdom does not descend from above but is – read the next three words out loud with me in verse 15 – it is earthly, sensual, and demonic. Whew! That is strong isn't it? James says there is a wisdom that is earthly, sensual, and demonic. For where envy and self-seeking exists, confusion and every evil thing will be there. But the wisdom that is from above is first pure. Then it is peaceable, gentle, willing to lead, full of mercy and good fruits without partiality and without hypocrisy. Now, the fruit of righteousness is sown in peace by those who make peace. At the very end he just sort of summarizes everything he is saying about wisdom in life and he uses the picture, the metaphor, of sowing seeds. He says the fruit of righteousness is sown in peace by those who make peace. He shows the picture as though you and I are going through life every day and we are sowing seeds. We are either sowing seeds that increase the strife, the conflict, the pride, the jealousy, and the anger in our lives and in the lives of those around us or else we are sowing the seeds that promote peace and kindness, harmony and good spiritedness, and love and care in the lives of those around us. He said the whole issue has to do with what is the source of your seed. Where did you get your seed? Is the seed that you are sowing in life the seed that is the natural seed of man or is it the seed that comes from above? Is it the seed that God gives through his wisdom that allows you to deal with the crises, crossroads, and conflicts of life in a way that God intends?

Let us just take a moment and look at what James is telling us because it is really pretty simple. He is saying there are two kinds of wisdom and he is saying that in life, if you want your life to come together and you want your life to be in harmony, he says you must discern the difference between the wisdom of God and the wisdom of man. That's it! You have to discern the difference between the wisdom of God and the wisdom of man because there are two sources, there are two seeds of wisdom. One of those is earthly, sensual, and demonic. The other one is heavenly, is from above, and it takes on all of the fruitful expressions described in verse 17. But he said you have to discern the difference because when we talk about the wisdom of man we are talking about a wisdom that is very self-focused – it is earthly. Its whole point of view is of this earth, of this world. It is sensual. The word sensual is not so much in the idea of being feeling or something that is alluring, it is sensual in the sense that it is base. It is your base instincts. It is natural to man. There is an instinctiveness and intuitiveness that is the natural instinct of man, his natural gut reasoning, if you will, that the Bible says is sensual, it is natural. Then the Bible says it is demonic, literally that it is of the arena of the world in rebellion against God. Not so much demonic in the sense that it is just demon wisdom but it is the expression of the very attitudes of the demons themselves which defy the reasoning, the power, and the truth of God to choose their own way and to

live in rebellion against him. Aren't these the enemies that we face in the world in which we live? In the Book of Ephesians the Bible says that we face the battle of the world. We face the battle of the flesh. We face the battle of the devil.

In this life in which I live when I go through crises, crossroads, and conflicts, if I am not careful I can immediately find myself living in the zone of that which is earthly, sensual, and demonic, that which is of the world, the flesh, and the devil and that constantly the driving force of my life is a self-driven, self-seeking, self-focused form of wisdom. So the Bible warns us about that kind of wisdom. It qualifies it and describes in several different words the properties of self-directed wisdom. The properties of self-directed wisdom are these. First, envy. He says there in verse 14, but if you have bitter envy, the idea of bitter envy is zealous envy, it is the idea of being strongly self-promotional. He said that if the heart of your wisdom is to be self-promotional and self-preserving, you need to question the source of your wisdom.

He not only speaks of envy he speaks of strife. He says the wisdom that is from above is full of bitter envy and self-seeking, a self-seeking that causes us to play tug-of-war with one another. The idea there is of a partying spirit, of a feuding rivalry, that we are trying to take advantage of someone else so the Bible says there is a human wisdom that constantly seeks the advantage over others.

There is envy and there is strife. Then the Bible says boasting. Verse 14 – Do not boast and lie against the truth that the wisdom of man, the natural, sensual, earthly wisdom of man is a boasting, a seeking to get attention to himself and to draw attention and glory to himself. The Bible says that that same wisdom lies against the truth. It is a wisdom that is full of deceit. It is not based on truth but is using the truth, twisting the truth, for personal gain. The Bible simply says these are the properties of a self-directed wisdom, envy, strife, boasting, and deceit. It is natural, it is earthly, and it is demonic. But God doesn't want us living that way. In fact, the Bible says there is a way that seems right to man but the end thereof is the way of death. When we simply go by our base instincts we end up in trouble, we end up in destruction in life. So the Bible says there is an alternative. There is a wisdom that you can gain that is not natural it is supernatural it is not earthly, it is heavenly and it is not demonic, it is Godly. It is the wisdom that comes from above and the Bible describes the properties of a God-focused wisdom and what that wisdom does in life.

Look again, if you will, in James, Chapter 3, and verse 13. Who is wise and understanding among you let me show by good conduct. That phrase "good conduct" possibly in your Bible is translated good behavior. It is not the idea of being in prison and you get out early because of good behavior. That is not what it is talking about, okay? When the Bible speaks of good conduct and good behavior it is talking about an attitude, a disposition, and it says that if you are a person of wisdom and you are a person of understanding, that realistically when you face the crises, crossroads, and conflicts of life the first place that wisdom will show up is in your attitude. The root meaning of this word, good behavior, literally means change. You are changeable. You can be shaped through the experience rather than stubborn and resistant in the experience. The wisdom

of God shapes in us something that makes us becoming and conforming to the image of Christ rather than making us just simply assert ourselves naturally. That is how God's wisdom works. It works to change and to shape us. But not only that, the Bible goes on to say that the wisdom that is from above is shown by good conduct in that his works are done in the meekness of wisdom.

Let me be sure you understood what I said. The meekness of wisdom. Not the weakness of wisdom. Do you know that there is a difference between weakness and meekness? We have been talking in the Book of James about putting a bit and a bridle in the mouth of a horse and how that a mighty animal, a stallion, can be taken and can be trained by that bit and bridle. You know what you call it when you break a horse? When you meek a horse? That's it, it is meeking. It is taking something powerful and bringing it under control. What the Bible is saying here is that the wisdom of God not only brings us to the place of change so that we can be shaped but that it brings us to the place of strength so that we can be controlled, not living out of control but living under control, even in the crises, the conflicts, and the crossroads of life. You see, that is what James is talking about here.

Then he begins to describe that wisdom. There are seven specific characteristics of the wisdom from above, seven specific properties, if you will, of godly wisdom. While this is a little bit technical I think it is important because so many words are just strung together here. If we are not careful, we will just sort of glance over them and miss the impact of them. Let's just examine a minute what is this wisdom that is from above? What does it look like? What does it act like? The Bible says in verse 17 that the wisdom that is from above is first. First in order. It is a qualifying term. It is a term that sets apart the wisdom of God from the wisdom of man. The wisdom that is from above is first pure. Just the very word purity is a qualifier. It means something that is not mixed. It means something that is distinguished, something that is not polluted, something that is not sorted. It is something that is clear and definable. What the Bible is saying here is that the wisdom of God is pure because it is based on truth. We always have to begin with the foundation of truth and principal and integrity because that is where wisdom takes us. It takes us to the place where we have to get honest with God and honest with ourselves and we have to give up the shadowing places and we have to take away the deluded places and we have to understand that the wisdom of God is pure. Here is the thing we need to understand. If our wisdom is not first pure, it will never be peaceable. If the foundation is not purity, peace will never be the result. So what we see is a wisdom, the Bible says, that is first pure, that it understands the truth of God and the consequences of violating the truth of God and therefore we establish God's word, God's truth, God's principle as the qualifier of purity in our life. So the wisdom that is from above is first pure. First in order, first in quality, first in priority – pure. Then it is peaceable. Not peaceful, peaceable. Peaceful simply means tranquility, sit back. Peaceable means constantly adding and bringing peace even to the turbulence of the situation you may be going through. It is peaceable.

You know there is a very errant view in the world and in the church world today. That is that in the church it is always peace at any price. But I want you to know that when the

Bible speaks of unity and harmony in the church it is never peace at any price. It is peace that comes because of wisdom that is first pure and then peaceable because the peace is what gives the root, or has its roots, in purity. Therefore, to be peaceable we have to learn how to face the crises, how to navigate the crossroads, and how to deal with the conflicts of life. Peace is not passivity it is action and activity to see peace come.

When you are in a conflict in life with someone, when you are going through a crisis in life and you need peace, when you are faced with a crossroad and a decision has to come, there are several different ways to try to gain peace. One of the common ways that people try to gain peace in the difficult experiences of life is simply by flight. Just avoid it all together. Just close your eyes and say go away and come again another day. So many times we try the strategy of flight to just avoid, to just ignore, to just hope that it will pass on. But you know and I know, by experience, that peace doesn't come if you don't address things in your life. In fact, what does come is a greater trouble and a greater confusion. How many times could we have gained peace quicker if we could have just faced something? So one of the common ways that people try to gain peace is through flight.

Another way is through fight. You know, if you just go ahead and have the war then you can get it over with and then you can have peace. But the fact of life is that in the world today in places where we have fought peace did not come. The reason is is that peace is not something you establish simply with power, it is something that has to come from the heart and from wisdom and from decision making. We see that sometimes people try to gain peaceability not only through flight but also through fight. How is it we are to gain peace? It is when we face the conflict, when we face the crisis, when we face the crossroad. When we face it with a commitment to resolve and define the strength that is needed to see me through. Peace is not the absence of conflict it is the presence of strength. The wisdom of God makes life and makes my circumstances peaceable not because conflicts are gone, crises are avoided, crossroads are diverted, but because the presence of strength comes in my life. So God's wisdom makes me peaceable. It is pure, it is peaceable.

Then the Bible goes on here to say in verse 17, the wisdom that is from above is pure and peaceable and then it says it is gentle. Gentle. Gentleness. Now, let's be real sure we understand this morning that gentleness and softness are not the same thing. To be gentle doesn't necessarily mean to be soft. To be gentle simply means that you seek to bring the very best of strength in the most gracious way to the most difficult of circumstances. You see, to be gentle means that you use self-restraint but without compromise. To be gentle means that you would never deliberately bring injury but you don't ever avoid the truth. To be gentle is to be as someone described Abraham Lincoln. Boy, was there ever a leader who had a more difficult day to try to lead a nation then the days of Abraham Lincoln! But you know how they described him? One biographer described him as velvet steel. Velvet steel! He was steel on the inside. He was strong. He had convictions. He was courageous. But on the outside he wasn't just steel superstructure, he was velvet. There was warmth; there was tenderness, softness. Soft not in the sense

of soft from no structure but soft in that the softness was simply the covering of his strength. So the Bible says that the wisdom of God is gentle.

The Bible goes on to say that the wisdom that is from above is pure, peaceable, gentle, and then it says willing to yield. Literally this word was a word that was used in the ancient world as a military term. It literally meant submissiveness. To submit. To know your rank and to get into that rank. To abide under. That was the idea of submissiveness. Man's wisdom, our own wisdom, makes us stubborn. But the wisdom of God makes us submissive. It makes us submissive in crises. It makes us submissive in conflicts of relationship. It makes us submissive at the crossroads of life. It makes us a person who has yieldedness. You may even disagree but it takes away that disagreeableness in your nature because you are submissive.

Somewhere back, I don't remember, possibly in the Navigator ministry, somewhere I first heard that what God is really looking for is fat people. Did you know that? Fat people! Faithful, available, and teachable. God can do great things with a church full of fat people who are faithful, available, and teachable. Because when you are faithful and available and teachable you have the kind of wisdom working in your life that we are talking about here. It is wisdom of submissiveness. But sadly, today, I find that we have churches full of fat people. They are people who are fully fed, apathetic, and talkative. Fully fed, oh, they have a good meal. Over and over they are stuffed with Biblical buffet. They are apathetic though! Whew! That was good, we will eat another one as soon as I can have five minutes but don't ask me to do anything else. Don't ask me to get any exercise. Oh, you want to shoot the breeze about what I know about spiritual things? Sure, I will talk to you. You see, we are fully fed, we are apathetic, and we are talkative but we are not faithful, available, and teachable. What God wants to do is bring wisdom to our lives that in the hard things we are faithful, available and teachable.

He goes on to describe the wisdom of God as being pure, peaceable, gentle, and willing to yield. Then the Bible says full of mercy and good fruits. Full of mercy. That means that the wisdom of God always leads us to try to give the best advantage to others but also of good fruits. If you go to a brunch or a buffet this afternoon, one of the things that will make it appealing, beyond everything else will be the abundance of fruit that will be laid out on that table because there is something so beautiful, something so desirable about beautiful luscious fruit. What God does in the wisdom that he gives you in life is that he takes your life and he gives quality of mercy and then he adds the quality of goodness, of good works, of good fruits. The outworking is that your life begins to be a productive life living in a destructive world full of mercy and good fruits. Then he says, without partiality.

Just a few weeks ago I brought a message on partiality and we talked about prejudice. But that is not really what James is talking about here. He is not talking about that the wisdom of God is unprejudiced, although obviously that could be implied in this text. The real sense of this word is that the wisdom of God is decisive. You are not vacillating; you are not wandering and wavering. What the wisdom of God does is bring principles for decision making, promises for crises, principles and precepts for conflicts

in life so that we are decisive and directed in what we do with wisdom rather than letting the wisdom of life simply be just an expression of our emotion. The wisdom of God gives us clear direction.

Then he says, wisdom is without hypocrisy. The wisdom from above is not hypocritical but is sincere. It is not pretense but it is open and is honest. It honors God and it honors others. It seeks the highest good. That is what the wisdom of God looks like. Pure, peaceable, gentle, willing to yield, full of mercy and good fruits, and without partiality, and without hypocrisy. The Bible says this is the wisdom of God. You need to understand that that wisdom is very different from the base instincts, the natural wisdom of man. You have to discern the difference. But you also have to discover there is a different outcome because that is really the rest of what James says. He says there is a difference in the quality of the wisdom and you need to understand there is a difference in the outcome. The outcome of human wisdom and human wisdom alone is very clear. He says in verse 16, for where envy and self-seeking exists confusion and every evil thing will be there. The word confusion in that passage literally means anarchy. Where the wisdom of man is prevalent what you have is anarchy. Every man doing what is right in his own eyes.

Let me ask you something. What does our world look like today? What does America look like today? We no longer are a nation driven by principles and precepts based on the wisdom of God and the truth of God. We are a world and we are a society that is full of anarchy, confusion, and every evil thing. Law has no standard it is just simply something you use to find a loophole. Morality is not something to be embraced it is something to be abused and something to be selected, almost as if you are picking your vegetables at the buffet line. In the world in which we live today human wisdom, whether we look at it on a national scale or bring it right home to the personal experience in the crises, crossroads, and conflicts of life, what happens is that the wisdom of man only breeds confusion and every evil thing. The wisdom of God is a wisdom that brings blessing. It is a wisdom that brings fullness to life. It is a wisdom that sows the seeds of peace and allows us to bring about strength and peace in the difficult circumstances of life. The outworking of that is that the wisdom of God begins to strengthen and stabilize our lives so that even if we are in a crisis, even if we are at the crossroads, even if we are going through a conflict, the wisdom of God can begin to be the resource of our life. How I wish that this morning I could just mix up a transfusion and put it in you today for all the crises, crossroads, and conflicts that you are going to face this week! How I wish that I could just give you a little outline of what to do in each one of those circumstances! But I really can't do that. How I wish that I could just take a little computer diskette and could download the crucial personalized information for all the points of wisdom in your life this week and my life! But I can't and you can't.

There is something we can do. We can go to the right address to begin to connect our lives with wisdom. From that point we can begin to let the wisdom of God play out in the circumstances of our lives. If I had to give you the address, if I had to give you the hook up point for getting in contact with the wisdom of God in your life, I would say that you would not find it specifically here in James but you would find it in the Book of

Proverbs, Chapter 1, and verse 7. Proverbs, Chapter 1, and verse 7 – I have provided here on the screen for you this morning and I want us to read it together. Read it out loud with me if you will. “The fear of the Lord is the beginning of knowledge but fools despise wisdom and instruction.” Where does it all begin? It begins with the fear of the Lord. The hook up point for wisdom in your life and in my life is coming to a place where I give God the respect, the reverence, and the surrender that he deserves in my life. Where I confess that my wisdom is not adequate to live a life that will please him and my perspective is too limited to fulfill the obligations, rolls, and responsibilities of life without him. What happens in my life is that there is a hook up point with the fear of the Lord. That begins to be the place where the wisdom of God comes. You see, I want to download it. I want to have a little manual that will just help me in the next experience. But what God wants to do is to keep me and to keep you online with him so that in every moment of life we are living surrendered, submissive, and that we are living our life with a disposition and an attitude that says God shape me, God direct me through this experience. You see, that is what faith is. Faith is coming and giving it to God and then letting God just unfold it one step at a time. Frankly, folks, most of us just don’t like walking by faith. I will be the first to confess I don’t like it! I wish that after all these years, ten years of study, specifically of Bible college and seminary and working on a doctoral degree in theology and biblical languages, and all of those things, I wish that that just put it all together and I could just walk around and just spit out like an ATM, just little answers to everybody’s questions and needs. I tell you, every time I come to another crises and every time I come to another crossroad and every time I come to another conflict just like you I have to go back and say, God give me wisdom. Give me wisdom! I have to begin at the point of fearing God and seeking him and letting him do what he promises, that if anyone lacks wisdom, let him ask of him.

I want to ask that your heads be bowed and that your eyes be closed and that we just take a moment this morning to come to God at the place where we need wisdom today. Because without question, many of you this morning are living in one of those places – crises, crossroads, or conflicts. Just like I said it is not some little compartmentalized, triangular, and stable figure in your life, it is what makes your life feel like it is unraveling. Today you need God’s wisdom. You are in the right place. You are in a place of worship. You have just heard the right promise that the fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom. What you need to fear is not the circumstances of life. What you need to fear is not what you may lose. What you need to fear is not what is happening around you. Where fear needs to come in, not fright, but genuine fear is the fear that we might somehow miss the work of God in this moment. Fear that we might somehow choose our own way or try to create our own path and injure ourselves and injure others around us. God is looking for people who have a spirit that says I am yielded to you. Of course, the beginning point in the fear of the Lord is salvation for the Bible says the scriptures are given to make us wise unto salvation. That is to save us from our sins, our faults, our weaknesses, and our error. Jesus Christ is the Son of God who came, who came for this purpose that we might be able to experience salvation, deliverance, from the naturalness of our own wisdom and understand the wisdom of God. What is it? That God made him who knew no sin to be sin for us that we might be made righteous in him. That neither is there salvation in any other for there is no other name given unto heaven

whereby we must be saved, only in the name of Jesus. This morning, if you need to be saved, then in this moment call out for the wisdom of God from his word that you might be saved. Simply call out in this moment, dear Jesus, I know that I am a sinner. Lord, I want to be made wise in life. But Lord I know that wisdom begins with giving my life to Jesus Christ. Jesus, today I open my heart and I receive you as my Savior and Lord. Lord, I ask you to work in my life, in the crises, in the crossroads, and the conflicts and to let me know the wisdom of God and not just the wisdom of man.

Father, I thank you for working and moving and touching lives right now. Lord, not only the need for salvation but also the need for deliverance. So many are struggling today. So many need wisdom today. Father, we ask you for that wisdom right now. Father, we ask that you would let this moment be a defining moment of just surrender and obedience and shaping of our life and our will for your purpose. Lord, while we may not like what we are facing, I pray your wisdom would be the strength to see us through it. Thank you, Lord, for working in this place today and for what you are doing in lives and hearts in this moment. In Jesus' name. Amen.

I want to ask you to stand to your feet quietly and cautiously.

Sermon presented by David McKinley
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