

Draw Near to God

Disclaimer: this is an automatically generated machine transcription - there may be small errors or mistranscriptions. Please refer to the original audio if you are in any doubt.

Date: 31 August 2025

Preacher: Christopher Baker

[0:00] And this morning we are in the book of James once again. And we're going to begin in James chapter 3 and read some of chapter 3 and a bit of chapter 4 this morning. So again, turn to the book of James towards the back of your Bible after Hebrews.

James chapter 3. And we're going to begin in verse 13 of chapter 3. And if you have found that, I'm going to ask if you're able, if you would stand this morning as we read God's Word together. James chapter 3 beginning in verse 13. And this is what God's Word shares with us today. Who is a wise man and endowed with knowledge among you?

Let him show out of a good conversation his works with gentleness of wisdom. But if you have bitter envying and strife in your hearts, glory not and lie not against the truth.

This wisdom descends not from above, but is earthly, sensual, devilish. For where envy and strife is, there is confusion and every evil work.

[1:05] But the wisdom that is from above is first pure, then peaceable, gentle, easy to be entreated, full of mercy and good fruits, without partiality and without hypocrisy.

And the fruit of righteousness is sown in peace of them that make peace. And then in chapter 4. From where come wars and fightings among you?

Come they not here even of your own lust that war in your members? You lust and you have not.

You kill and you desire to have and cannot obtain. You fight and war, yet you have not because you ask not.

You ask and receive not because you ask amiss that you may consume it upon your lusts. You adulterers and adulteresses, knowing not that friendship of the world is enmity with God.

Whosoever therefore will be a friend of the world is the enemy of God. Do you think that the scripture says in vain the spirit that dwells in us lusts to envy? But he gives more grace.

[2:07] Wherefore, he says, God resists the proud, but gives grace to the humble. Submit yourselves therefore to God. Resist the devil and he will flee from you.

Draw near to God and he will draw near to you. Cleanse your hands, you sinners. Purify your hearts, you double-minded. Let's pray together.

Lord God, once again, thank you for your presence here among us and we thank you for your word.

And Lord, we know this morning that you have a message for us. And Lord, remind us that that message is not for the person sitting next to us.

It's not for the person sitting in front of us, but it's for us. It's for each one of us that have ears to hear. So Lord, help us to open our ears, open our hearts to take in the message you have for us this morning.

Help it to challenge us. Lord, help it to just to draw a response from us. And Lord, I just pray that you would mold us and make us into the people that you want us to be.

[3:11] And we ask and pray these things in the name of Jesus Christ.

Amen. You can be seated this morning. Oh, thank you.

Got a little frog in my throat this morning. All right. So as we're looking at the book of James, we have talked about the fact that James, and that's one of the reasons I really like this book.

It is a very practical book, isn't it? I mean, it gets down to the bare bones of, as Christians, what should our behavior look like? And not just as Christians, but we've been talking, and James really, the advice that it gives to us as to how to live our lives, has an impact on how the family of God functions.

All the things that we talk about in James have an impact on how the family functions. We all know in families, families are always perfect.

There is never any disagreement and argument within a family, right? How many of you can say, I am from a family that never had any arguments? Raise your hand.

[4:19] Okay, look around. Anybody seen any hands? Okay, let me ask the flip side of that question. How many of you can say that I am from a family that we had some rough spots now and then?

That's reality, isn't it? In a family. And the same thing can happen in God's family, in the church family. We would like to think that because we're all Christians and everybody always gets along and everything is all sunshine and rainbows, but we know that's not always the truth.

But as James talks about things, he really gives us advice to how the family can be what God wants it to be. You know, we talked about in James chapter 1 the fact that we need to, when people come through the doors of the church and as we function as a family, how are we to treat each other?

Are we to show favorites? No, we're to treat each other equally and we're to value each person that comes through these doors. Because guess what? Each one of us are a creation of God, aren't we?

Yes. Does God love every one of us? Yes. So does that mean we're supposed to love every one of us? Yes. Yes. Is that always easy to do? No.

[5:31] Wow, that was a quick answer. But because God loves each one of us, we should understand that we are also to love each other. So we talked about that in James already. We also talked last week about something that has a huge impact on how we get along as family.

And that is our... Anybody remember? There was even a kid's corner about it last week. Remember the big cow tongue that Joe Doster had up here?

The book of James talks a lot about our tongues, the words we speak, and the impact that can have on each other, and the impact that it can have on our family.

So this morning, we're going to continue to look in James. And as we do, it talks about some things that have an impact on how the family functions. And the first question it asks, or the first question I would have for you, look in verse 13.

Who is a wise man and endowed with knowledge among you? That's a question, isn't it? At least my Bible has a question mark.

[6:32] Yep, you see that question mark right up there? So who is a wise man among you? That's the question. Who here is wise? Oh, we don't have anybody.

Yeah, pointing to your spouse. That's a good call. But that's a question it gives. Who is a dude with knowledge? Who among you is wise? We would all like to think we're wise, right?

I think the closest sometimes I get to that, I've been called a wise guy, but that's a whole different thing. But we would like to think that we're wise. And it asks who is wise, and look what it says after that.

Let him show, out of a good conversation or behavior, his works with meekness or gentleness of wisdom.

So it's talking about wisdom. But again, the book of James shows the difference between God's wisdom and the world's wisdom.

[7:31] Between spiritual wisdom and earthly wisdom. And God's wisdom that it talks about is meek and gentle. Do we have enough meekness and gentleness in this earth?

Guess what? That means there is not enough of God's wisdom. But then it goes on and talks about the earth's wisdom. Look what it has to say. But if you have bitter envy and strife in your hearts, glory not and lie not against the truth.

This wisdom, so it's talking about this earthly wisdom, descends not from above, but is earthly, sensual, devilish. Well, that doesn't sound like a very good description, does it?

So God's word is sharing that there are two types of wisdom that we could have in our lives. So the question then becomes, what type of wisdom do I have more of?

If the wisdom that comes from God is gentle, what kind of an impact do you think that's going to have on the church family? If we're gentle towards each other, how is that going to affect the

family?

[8:39] What does it mean to be gentle? Let me maybe ask that question. What does it mean to be gentle? Compassionate? Caring? When you're gentle with something, I want you to think about really what you're trying not to do when you're gentle with something.

You get out a carton of eggs. Are you gentle with eggs? Why? You don't want to break them. You pick up a baby chick or a baby whatever little critter.

Are you gentle with it? Yes. Why? Don't want to hurt it. You don't want to hurt it. So really, gentleness is best understood by what we don't want to do. Being gentle is our effort not to hurt, isn't it?

When you think about being gentle, it's really an effort not to hurt something, not to break that egg, not to hurt. Think of babies. How many of you have held a baby recently? So to pick up a baby, you grab them by the arm and hold them up like this, right?

None of you hold a baby like that. That's good. I'm glad to hear that first. Why not? Again, how do you hold them?

[9:54] And I remember when Hannah, our oldest, I remember when she was first born. And I remember the first time the doctor handed her to me. How did I look, dear?

Very, very uncomfortable. I was very uncomfortable. It was like this. And I thought, I'm going to break this tiny little thing. She's so delicate. And I was just worried every time I'd move them that I was going to break an arm or leg or something.

She's so tiny. And then I'd watch the nurses just grab them and do their thing with them. And I'd think, what are you doing? You're going to hurt it. I wanted them to be gentle so that they wouldn't hurt them.

And here's what it's saying. God's wisdom that He gives us should enable us to have a desire to be gentle with each other. That means in our interactions, one of the first things on our mind should be, I don't want to hurt this person.

What can I do to build them up not to hurt them? That's what it says God's wisdom is. Because to be real honest, you know what happens far too often in churches? There can be hurt.

[10:57] There are books written about people that are hurt because of this church situation or that church situation. I've talked with so many people over the years that, well, I don't go to church anymore because I had this situation and I was hurt and I just won't go back.

Folks, we should have a desire not to hurt. That's what being gentle is all about. Okay. So the earth's wisdom.

Verse 16. For where envy and strife is. That's talking about the earth's wisdom. Envy and strife.

That means the earth's wisdom, you know what it cultivates in us? You know what it grows in us? Selfishness. I want to get more. And I want to get my way. How many of us have a little bit of that in us?

We want to get our way. Okay. I want to ask you to raise your hand. I'm not going to do that to you, but admit it. Do you like to get your way? I mean, if we were honest, I think we would all say, yes, I'd like to get my way.

[12:01] Why? Because we think our way is right. And we want to get our way. How does that work in a family?

It doesn't work, does it? But that's the earthly wisdom to want to get our own way. But then in verse 17, it describes this godly wisdom that we should strive to have in our lives.

Look at the description in verse 17 that it gives. But the wisdom that is from above, who's above?

Who's it talking about? God. God's wisdom. Is first, what's the first word it uses?

Pure. Pure. Why does it use that word first? Unblemished. Unblemished. Unblemished.

Unblemished. Unblemished. Unblemished. On this earth, how many things are pure?

Not very many, are they? No. I mean, they might be close. I remember the old, was it Dove?

Commercial to Soap 99 point whatever percent pure. But that little point percentage can be a big deal, can't it?

[13:09] You know, the example I've always used is, I've got a cup of water here, not a bottle of water, but it's probably out of the tap,

right, Doug? Yeah, I don't mind it. I think it's fine. I grew up on well water.

But would you drink a cup of water out of the faucet? Or bottled water, would you drink it? What if it was mostly pure, would you drink it? What if I told you there's only one drop in that whole bottle of water, there's only one drop of sewer water in there?

Would you want it then? I mean, that would be like 99 point whatever pure. There's only one drop of sewer water. Would you drink it? No, that point whatever is pretty important, isn't it?

But it says the wisdom from above is pure. And you know, when I think of that wisdom that God gives us, and I think of the word pure, I think of the word our motives. Our motives as we interact with others are pure.

They're not like the earthly wisdom where it's all about self. When we have godly wisdom, our motives are pure, and we're not just concerned about ourselves. We're concerned about others.

[14:19] We're concerned about the church, something outside of ourselves. This wisdom from above is pure. And then what is the next thing it says? It's peaceable. That is a pretty important word, isn't it?

Peaceable means it strives for peace. Do you strive, and don't answer this out loud, but do you strive for peace in your relationships with other people? There are those that like to stir things up, and they like strife, right?

They like that chaos. They like that confusion. It says the wisdom that we should have from God should be peaceable. And then what's the next word again? We've already talked about this.

Gentle. And all these are about how we treat others. Look at this list. Gentle. Isn't that about towards others? Right? Being gentle to others.

What's the one after that? After gentleness? Easy to be entreated. What does that mean? You don't use that expression very often, right? It really means quick to agree.

[15:26] Again, that's about other people, isn't it? That we're quick to agree with others. That we don't just want to be argumentative to be argumentative. You ever know anybody like that?

And sometimes we're not like that every day, but maybe just some days. You ever wake up on the wrong side of the bed, and you just do not feel agreeable. Somebody could tell you the sky is blue, like Forrest said, and you'd say, Nope.

Did you see that little cloud over there? It's not all blue. Oh, what a wonderful day it is. No, I don't know. I don't really like it. You're just disagreeable. It says we're easy to be entreated.

We should seek out to agree with others. That makes for a peaceable situation, doesn't it? I know, and again, I keep using my kids as an example, because your family is what you spend so much time with.

But I remember when my kids were little, are children always agreeable? I'll pick on Cody. Madison, you were praising God for Mike and Mailey. Are they always agreeable?

[16:33] Madison's over here. Or anybody with children. Are they always agreeable? No. No. If they're tired, does that affect things? Yeah. They get a whole lot less agreeable in a hurry.

Yeah, and we talk about kids, but aren't we like that too? Easy to be entreated. What's after that? Full of mercy and good fruits. Well, mercy is something we show to other people, isn't it? All these are outside of us, how we treat the family, how we treat others.

Full of mercy. What does it mean to be full of mercy? What does that mean? Full of what?

Forgiveness. That's a big part of it. That you are ready to forgive.

Knowing that, you know what? People are going to offend you. People are going to sometimes do you wrong, and you should be ready to show them mercy. That's a tough one, isn't it?

[17:36] Instead, we sometimes, we're ready to be offended, but not so much on the ready to show mercy. These all do describe God's relationship with us first.

You understand that, right? Is God ready to show us mercy? Absolutely. We need to do the same towards others. That's a godly wisdom. What's after that?

Full of mercy and good fruits. Without? Partiality. That means we're impartial, again, towards others. We treat everybody the same. James already talked about this.

Whoever walks in the door, we're going to show them love. That's what it means, being impartial towards others. And finally, what is the last thing it says in that verse? Without hypocrisy. Without hypocrisy. What does that mean? It means we're sincere in all this. Again, we're doing it for sincere motives, not so we look good to other people, because it's what we want to do to please God.

[18:34] That's what it means to be without hypocrisy and sincere. This is godly wisdom. And when we have this, how do you think it affects the church body? Yeah, in a positive way.

It heals wounds. It brings people together. But again, it says earthly wisdom causes strife and contention. What does that do to a church body? It divides.

It separates. It causes hurts and wounds. That is the difference between godly wisdom and earthly wisdom. And the next chapter goes on to explain, you know, if we're not careful what this can all result in.

Look in chapter 4, because we're not done yet. First verse. From where come wars and fightings among you? Well, you can look at that and say war, and you think, oh, like, you know, war in the Middle East, and we can think of that kind of war and fightings.

But that's not really what it's talking about, because he says among you, right? So he's talking about the congregation. When he says wars and fighting, I believe he's talking about arguments, squabbles, grudges, feuds.

[19:46] Where do those come from? Because we sometimes have squabbles, don't we? We sometimes have arguments. We sometimes have disagreements. Where do those come from?

And they can grow, can't they? Have you known anybody that holds a grudge for like 40 years? It happens, doesn't it? Do you know anybody that kind of has a feud with somebody else that goes on for an awful long time?

I enjoy history, and, you know, when I was younger, you always heard about the Hatfield and McCoys, right? You know that was real, right? Two families that had a dispute.

I forget what state, southern state somewhere. There was a whole miniseries on it, I don't know, years ago. But two families that had a dispute. And what happened to that dispute?

It grew, and it got bigger and bigger until it involved the entire family, both families. And there were shootings and all kinds of bad things that resulted from this feud.

[20:52] Could it have been ended before all that? If they would have had easy to, quick to agree, if they were merciful, if they were impartial, if they were gentle.

Do you think that feud would have continued? No. Where come wars and fighting among you? Where does this stuff come from? What's the answer it gives?

Come they not hear even of your lusts that war in your members. So where do these things come from? Come from inside.

They come from in us. Some of this is our natural tendency, isn't it? From our own lusts, that's what it says, our desire to get our own way.

And that's what the second verse talks about. You lust and you have not. You kill and you desire to have and cannot obtain. You fight and you war. You have not because you ask not. It says you desire to have.

[21:51] That's where all these problems come from. What we want to have. And I was thinking about this in the list that I made. Because this can include a lot of things. We can want more things.

Can that ever cause problems? What we're willing to do to get those things? And you may say, well, that doesn't involve me. What about just wanting more praise from people?

Can that cause problems? What about wanting fame? Does that cause any problems in this world? Here's one.

Maybe this hits closer to home. What about wanting the last word? Oh, that's a little different, isn't it?

We can say, well, I don't want things. I don't want that. That's not going to cause any problems between me and anybody else. What about wanting the last word? Is that ever you? You may be having disagreement with somebody.

[22:48] And what do you want to get in? Last word. We joke in our house because we have a dog that's like that. Don't we, dear?

Yeah. You can tell the dog to do something or you can yell at her for doing something wrong. And inevitably, what does she do right again? Rawr. Rawr. You can holler at her again as soon as you get done.

Rawr. She's got to get in that little last word. But aren't we like that sometimes as people? I mean, we want that little last word. Is that ever us? Again, that originates inside from what we want.

How about the desire to prove that we're right? You ever have that? I want to just show them that I'm right and they're wrong. I know I saw it on a t-shirt the other day.

I don't argue with people. I just try to tell them why they're wrong. We want to get the last word and we want to prove that we're right. Folks, those are not recipes for a functioning, healthy church body family of God.

[23:56] In verse 5, do you think the scripture says in vain the spirit that dwells in us, lust to envy? It's talking about that lust that's in us, that desire for things, including proving we're right and having the last word.

But God gives more grace. He says, God resists the proud but gives grace to the humble. Submit yourselves therefore to God. Resist the devil and he will flee from you.

But here's the thing, it's not just the devil. It already said these things are already in us, didn't it? It's our own lust. It's the things that are already in us. Sometimes we like to just blame the devil. You ever hear anybody say, the devil made me do it?

No, he didn't. That lust that's already inside of you is what it says. Now is the devil real? Yes. Does he want you to do wrong? Yes.

But that wrongness is already in you. But what is the recipe for this? Submit to God.

[25:01] Submit yourselves, it says. We talked last week with the whole tongue thing. What was the answer to that? Give it to God. Don't try to do it on your own. Here it says the same answer.

Submit to God. And then finally, I want to close with verse 8 because this verse is vital, folks. This is really the recipe to all this. For each one of us in our lives, if we want to have this godly wisdom that helps the church body be healthy and functional and full of love, verse 8 is vital.

Draw near to God. That is the first thing that every one of us needs to do on a daily basis. Draw near to God. That is a choice we make, isn't it?

Isn't it? If you want to draw near... What does it mean to draw near to something? It means to get closer. If I want to draw near to Dean sitting over here, how do I do it?

Dean, get over here. Is that how you do it? No. Is that how you do it? What do you do? Just move in that direction. It says that first step needs to be ours.

[26:11] Draw near to God. That is a choice we make. How do you draw near to God? Well, there's a lot of ways. Pray. Get in the Word. Meditate and spend some devotional time with God.

Come to church. Be around the church family. All those are ways to draw near to God. Draw near to God. That is our step. But look at the results of that. It is amazing.

It says that when we draw near to God, what is going to happen? Draw near to God and He... What is this word right here? It starts with a W. What does that word mean?

It's going to happen. It means it's going to happen. He will do it. Not He might. Not maybe every other week He'll do it. It means He will. Draw near to God and He will draw near to you.

That is a first step. I don't know where you're at in your life. But every one of us need to focus on drawing near to God. That should be our desire. And maybe you don't have a relationship with Jesus.

[27:13] You need to draw near to God. And you know how you do that? You do it through Jesus Christ. Draw near to God and He will draw near to you. I've heard people say, Well, God just feels really distant.

Okay. We sometimes feel like that, don't we? You know the remedy for that? Pray. Get in the Word. God feels distant, then draw near to Him.

He didn't go anywhere. He's still there. Where'd you go? That's the question. Draw near to God. He'll draw near to you. That's the first step. If you've never done that and accepted Jesus Christ,

that is the first step.

Dick sang the song, There's going to come a day when we'll either die or Jesus is going to come back. Do you understand that? Guaranteed. That's one of those will things. You will either die or Jesus will come back.

One of those things you are going to experience in your life. When that happens, it is going to make all the difference whether you drew near to God or not. Whether you had Jesus Christ in your heart.

[28:13] Okay. Draw near to God. First step. And He'll draw near to you. What does it say after that? Cleanse your hands. Well, that's an action, isn't it?

Yep. When do you cleanse your hands in your life? It means wash your hands. When do you do that? When you're dirty. Where are you all the time?

Susan works with meat. You do it often, don't you? I'm glad. But when do you wash your hands? When they're dirty.

Here it says, Cleanse your hands. It's not talking physically about washing our hands. It's talking about our lives. Our action. It means bring them before God.

You know, when you get ready to eat, you wash your hands so you know they're clean. There's nothing junky on there. No germs, no dirt, no whatever. In our lives, there's only one way to cleanse ourselves, and that is by asking Jesus Christ for forgiveness.

[29:21] Draw near to God, and you do that by asking Jesus Christ into your heart and to forgive you. And here's the thing. How many of you have washed your hands today? So you're good.

You don't have to wash your hands anymore today. You're good, right? Actually, you're good for what? A week after you wash your hands? So you're good until next Sunday morning. Wash them again. That's not true.

We know that. You pick up dirt all over. You pick up germs all over. That's our lives, isn't it? We go through our lives. We sin. We fall short of what God wants, and we need to cleanse ourselves through Jesus Christ.

Cleanse your hands. And finally, purify your hearts. We started out by talking about being pure, didn't we?

Purify your heart. There's only one way we can do that, and that's through Jesus Christ. Folks, I don't know where you're at in your life with things, but I pray that you have this godly wisdom that it's talking about, a wisdom that is gentle with others, full of mercy towards others, forgiving towards others, wanting the best for others.

[30:35] I pray we have that wisdom, but you can't have that wisdom in the way you need it if you don't have Jesus in your heart. Draw near to God.

My prayer for everyone in this place this morning is that we will draw near to God through Jesus Christ. If you have never accepted Jesus Christ, don't wait. Don't wait.

The Bible says today is a day of salvation. Do it now. What's keeping you? Ask Jesus in your heart and forgive your sins. It's as simple as that. Maybe you've done that years ago.

Then examine yourself. Do you have this godly wisdom towards others that God desires to see in our lives? It's a challenge. But with God's help, it's a challenge that we can live up to.

Let's pray together. Lord God, thank you again for your word. I thank you for the challenges that it gives us, for the instruction that it gives us. And Lord, I pray that if there's anyone in this place this morning that has never accepted Jesus Christ as their Savior, that they would do that this morning.

[31:41] Just work in their heart, Lord. Give them a desire to come to you to cleanse their heart and their life. And Lord, for others, maybe they accepted Jesus years ago, I pray, Lord, that they'd examine their lives and see, are they using this godly wisdom towards others?

A wisdom that is gentle. A wisdom that is quick to agree. A wisdom that is peaceable with others.

Lord, that's what you desire to see in us. And I pray, Lord, that is what you actually see in us.

So just work in our hearts this morning, Lord. And we ask and pray these things in the name of Jesus Christ. Amen.