

m MASTERCLASS | JAMES

DAILY DEVOTION

DAY 15

READ

JAMES 3:17-18

FOCUS

¹⁷WHO 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. ¹⁸PEACEMAKERS WHO SOW IN PEACE REAP A HARVEST OF RIGHTEOUSNESS.

REFLECTION from PASTOR CODY SURRATT

When I was young, we would travel to Oklahoma once a year to visit my mother's side of the family. To be honest, the trip was usually pretty uneventful; we would hang out at my grandparents house with my cousins, play on the swing set in the backyard, and try not to die from the extreme summer heat. I will never forget one trip, it was when I was in second grade and I was playing on the swings with a cousin that was a couple years older than me. I decided to try and jump off mid-swing but didn't quite stick the landing and ended up taking a spill. It was at that moment I decided to throw out a new word I had learned at school to express my pain and frustration (a word that I can not repeat here). Apparently my cousin was also familiar with this word, but wasn't impressed with my expanded vocabulary. She made a beeline straight to my mother to inform her of what happened. Before I knew it, my mom had charged out the backdoor, pulled me inside, and stuck a giant bar of soap in my mouth in front of everyone. That was the moment I first learned the importance of my words. If you have been reading through Chapter 3 of James, that's the big message he is trying to communicate. Our words have the ability to bring life and death to every arena of our life, so we must use them wisely.

In the second part of this chapter, it seems like James switches topics and begins to talk about wisdom. However I think the two topics are connected. James argues that the tongue is wild and needs to be tamed, which raises the obvious question: how? His answer: it takes wisdom. Ok, and where do I get it from? His answer; God. He goes on to explain how we can tell wisdom is from God (not worldly "wisdom"): if it is "pure, peace-loving, considerate, submissive, full of mercy and good fruit, impartial and sincere." So here's my easy to remember bottom line from this chapter: Use Wise Words.

I cannot think of a more applicable and timely message than this. Our civil discourse has completely broken down, from the presidential debate stage to the dinner table, we are a mess. It is no longer about a respectful exchange of ideas and empathetic listening, but about scoring points and "owning" those who you disagree with. I remember when I first got married, my dad gave me a warning. He said, "Cody, you are good with your words, and you like to argue, fight, and always be right. That sweet girl you are marrying is the complete opposite, and unless you learn to fight fair and give her a voice, you might win all the battles but eventually you will lose the war." He gave me that advice 15 years ago and I have taken it very seriously. If I hadn't learned to not only use my words wisely, but to allow her to have a voice, eventually it would have destroyed our marriage. I had to change my mindset from trying to win an argument (which is fueled by pride/insecurity--but that's a topic for another day), to trying to build our marriage.

At one of our recent daily staff devotional times I asked, "What is our role as Christians during this season?" I think James has the answer. As everyone else is either yelling at or talking past one another, we have the opportunity to be different. With God's help, we can speak wisdom into the confusion and peace in the chaos.

QUESTIONS

- WHAT DO YOU SEE AS YOUR ROLE AS A CHRISTIAN IN THIS SEASON? IN YOUR FAMILY? IN YOUR NEIGHBORHOOD? IN OUR COMMUNITY AT LARGE?
- WHAT ADJUSTMENTS DO YOU NEED TO MAKE TO ENSURE YOU USE YOUR WORDS TO "FIGHT FAIR" AND GIVE THOSE YOU LOVE A VOICE (RATHER THAN JUST TO WIN ARGUMENTS)?