

“YOU MAKE ME CRAZY!”  
Wisdom Is The Key To Relationships  
James 3:13-18 (Adapted from Rich Warren’s Series)  
September 24:2017

In his writings about Rich Mullins, Brennan Manning shares this interesting encounter. He says, “The late musician Rich [Mullins] taught me an invaluable lesson about the true meaning of repentance. One rainy day he got into a blistering argument with his road manager, Gay Quisenberry. Angry words were hurled back and forth, and Rich stormed out the door.

“Early the following morning, Gay was awakened from a sound sleep by the loud buzz of a motor outside her house. Groggily, she looked out the window and saw Rich mowing her lawn!”<sup>1</sup>

So what do you do when people around you make you crazy? How do you react to those who seem to know how to push your buttons to get under your skin and drive you absolutely bananas? What do you do to resolve the conflict between you and the crazy makers? How can you escape the situations that often create abuse and hardship in your life? What can you do to keep the crazy-makers from making you crazy?

Today we begin the 5 week series called “You Drive Me Crazy!” We’ll look at the ways to deal with the people around us that create hardship in the relationships around us so that we might demonstrate a new and greater love that comes from the Lord God. You have the list in your bulletin of the sermon titles and the direction we’re going with this series. The importance is to remember that it is all about relationships with people.

Unfortunately we are the most foolish when it comes to relationships. So often we end up treating people in ways that are counter-productive, and we short-circuit the possibility of a good relationship with them because of the way that we treat others. We each have needs in our relationships, and we **all** want more fulfillment, more intimacy, more joy, more satisfaction, and more stability in those relationships. But often we try to get those things in all the wrong ways

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<sup>1</sup> (PreachingToday.com, *More Perfect Illustrations*, [Wheaton, IL: Tyndale House, 2003] pg. 231)

and the harder we try, the less likely we are to achieve our goals. Wisdom doesn't eliminate problems in relationships, but it definitely does reduce the number of problems.

So let's get started in looking at six keys to peace in relationships. James 3:13-18 gives us a great look at the two different kinds of wisdom that we have available to us. Listen to these important words. (READ James 3:13-18)

James offers the invitation for us to become wise AND to live in ways that demonstrates the wisdom of God through our relationships with one another. You'll not hear this from any other place in your life, for these verses teach us that wisdom is a way of relating with each other. It has to do with what you do, not what you think. Most people **think** that wisdom is intelligence, or knowledge, or education. No! The world is full of educated fools. The Bible says that **wisdom shows up primarily in your relationships**. It shows up in how you treat other people. It's about your life, not your lips. It's about what you do and what you say, **not** how many letters come before or after your name. Wisdom is about your disposition.

James 3:14-16 tells us that the wisdom **from the earth** creates the wrong kind of results in relationships. When we get bitter, when we get angry, when we get resentful, when we become jealous, when we have selfish ambition in relationships, we see that all of those are foolish ways that don't get you what you want and what you need out of the relationship.

Then, vs. 18 says, *"Those who are peacemakers plant seeds of peace and reap a harvest of goodness."* Every day you plant seeds in the midst of your relationships, and those seeds will produce a certain crop. Planting seeds of distrust, anger, or animosity will result in a relationship loaded with those things. Planting seeds of trust, peace or love will bring about those things within the relationship. So how do we plant peaceful seeds? We need the wisdom of the Lord. We need to make wise decisions and live in wise ways based on the wisdom of heaven to develop healthy relationships.

In James 3:17 we have a checklist to the keys of the **wisdom that comes from Heaven**.

We're going to look at the six things that wise people **NEVER Do** in Relationships. In the future series in weeks to come we'll be looking at the crazy makers in your life, how to diffuse, deflect, and defend yourself against their crazy, chaotic, earthly ways that drive us crazy. **But in any relationship half of the problem is you.** It's how you respond. When you respond incorrectly to the crazy makers in your life, you actually make it worse. So let's get right into it.

**The first thing we see is that Wisdom from heaven is first pure.** On your worksheets, circle the word "pure" in verse 17. What James is talking about is **integrity** – an uncorrupted, clean, unpolluted, clear and untainted life. He says that the foundation of all good relationships is first and foremost integrity.

Integrity is listed first because wisdom starts in the heart, not in the head. All good relationships are established and built on trust. No trust, no relationship. And trust is built on truth. If you don't have truth in your life there will never be trust, and if you don't have trust there will not be a good relationship.

In order for Linda and I to have a good relationship, trust has to be the greatest virtue! When I do things that creates distrust in Linda, if I don't share the truth about the things going on in my life, she will always suspect that there is something missing and it will distance her from me so that the relationship is difficult. But when I consistently tell the truth, she can trust me, and that helps build the relationship we have. Because relationships are built on truth, because truth is the foundation of trust, **honesty is the bedrock of all relationships.** We've got to be honest with each other in all things, otherwise there will not be a relationship!

But unfortunately we have the amazing ability of deceiving ourselves into thinking that everything is right and good when they're not. Jeremiah 17:9 tells us "*The heart is deceitful above all things and beyond cure. Who can understand it?*" We must start with integrity in our relationships. Ephesians 4:25 says, "*No more lying, then! Each of you must tell the truth to the other believers, because we are all members together in the body of Christ.*"

So here is the first mark of wisdom. If you want your relationships to get better remember this: **If I want to be wise in my relationships I won't compromise my integrity.** That means I won't violate my conscience. I won't compromise my convictions. I won't live a double life. I won't lie to you. I'll tell you the truth. Because trust is built on truth I will be honest. Proverbs 2:7 says, "*God grants a treasure of good sense to the godly. He is their shield, protecting those who walk with integrity.*" God will help us in our relationships when integrity is the very first mark within it. God becomes our shield against the crazy makers, but that demands that we walk with integrity. Only then can God begin to shield us.

Moving on to **the second part of verse 17, wisdom from heaven is peace loving.** In other words, wise people are peacemakers, not troublemakers. Wise people don't carry a chip on their shoulders, always looking for a fight.

Now it's not hard to see that some people love fights. They are not wise. Just look at the internet and you'll see all kinds of folks who use their words to pick a fight with others. They'll say things just to get others angry enough to respond and it becomes a fight. Foolish people love to fight and argue. They are intent upon mixing it up with others just so they can have a good fight. Folks, fools love to fight. It's dumb; it's not smart; it's foolish. James tells us that wisdom is peace loving.

So here's number 2: **If I want to be wise I won't antagonize anger.** In other words I won't push your hot buttons intentionally to provoke your anger. I won't egg you on into a fight.

Problem is, once we get to know a person in a relationship, we soon find out what irritates them, and we file that into our memory banks to use when we get into arguments. It's the weapon of mass destruction that is guaranteed to push the button of the other one that we can use it whenever they say something hurtful, or something offensive, or even something that slights you in any way. It's the big gun that is guaranteed to wipe out the "enemy." You push their button to create the irritation and the flack starts flying. **IT WORKS EVERY TIME!**

But the Bible calls that stupid! This strategy doesn't help you get resolution to the problems you face! It's not helping the relationship, but rather spirals it downward toward destruction. If I'm wise I won't antagonize your anger! I won't use that weapon of mass destruction to tick you off, even if you've already pushed my button and struck out at me.

Proverbs 20:3 says it well: "*Any fool can start arguments: the wise thing is to stay out of them.*" Don't be baited by those who want to fight. They say something intentionally that's way off the wall and it gets you! Don't even give these folks another look. Don't get baited. Don't antagonize peoples' anger!

Let me share briefly three techniques that those who love to fight use to get you going.

1) **Comparing** – when you compare a person with anyone else it always gets anger to erupt. "You're just like – so and so!" "Why can't you be more like him or her?" "You sound just like your mother or father!" Well, no they aren't, because everyone is unique. Comparing is foolish and it antagonizes anger. 2 Corinthians 2:10 tells us, "*Anybody who compares is a fool.*" Don't do it!

2) **Condemning** – when you start laying on the guilt in a relationship, you start trying to make people feel guilty for what they've done, you start trying to make them feel ashamed. But all you are doing is ripping apart the foundation of that relationship one brick at a time.

Ladies, let me explain something to you. Every man is fighting his conscience all the time, whether he realizes is it or not. When you decide to be the man's conscience, guess who he gets angry at. He takes all that anger he's fighting against himself in his own conscience and his own ethics and he just turns it on you. Is that what you want? No, that's not what you want. So it's a foolish thing to try to be somebody else's god. Don't try to be somebody else's conscience. Using statements like "You should, you must, you ought, you need to, you always, you never..." doesn't get you the result you want, because your man is going to fight against you AS IF YOU ARE HIS CONSCIENCE. It's the fastest way to turn him against you and provoke his anger.

3) **Contradictions** – correcting every detail of a story that’s being told as the person is telling it is irritating! If I’m wise, I won’t antagonize your anger by constantly correcting everything you say, just so that I can look better and “get the story straight.” Don’t sweat the small stuff. William James, the famous psychologist said, ‘Wisdom is the art of knowing what to overlook!’ And there’s some stuff you just need to over look and not try to make a big deal of it. Proverbs 14:29 says, “*A wise man controls his temper. He knows that anger causes mistakes.*” Saying or doing something out of anger creates lots of mistakes. And the problem is that once we say or do something, there’s no taking it back. Anger drives us into territory that brings avalanches of mistakes and only accelerates anger.

The third thing James tells us is that the **wisdom from heaven is gentle at all times.** What that means is that we are courteous or considerate. Philippians 4:5 tells us, “*Let everyone see that you are considerate in...*” most of the things you do... Sorry, it doesn’t say that. It says, “*Let everybody see that you are considerate in ALL that you do.*”

**Now that’s hard!** It means all the time, in all situations, before everybody, even if they are inconsiderate to you. It means being considerate to clerks who are jerks. It means we are kind to people when they are rude with us. It means treating others with respect even though they might call you names, or are rude to you, or slur your good behavior, or do something nasty to you. It means that we are considerate to EVERYONE no matter what they do to us. Being considerate of others, even if they are blasting away at you, is the antidote to the mistakes we make in responding to others. Mistake 1 is reacting to what people **say** and ignoring how people **feel**. Mistake 2 is **invalidating the feelings** of others.

To react to what people say rather than paying attention to how they feel is dumb. The words really don’t matter; it’s what is going on in their life that matters. People say really crazy stuff when they are angry or hurt; things they really don’t mean. But we often get sucked into their **words** rather than investigating the **feelings behind** the words. So if we are wise in a

relationship, we stop focusing on what your kids or your boy/girl friend or your husband/wife or your boss **says** that just ticks you off. **Start looking behind the words** to find the emotion they're feeling! What's making them say the words in the first place?

Being gentle and considerate with each other means being mindful of the feelings of others – not the words, but the feelings behind the words. Let the words roll right off of your back and investigate the life of that person. Treat them as more important than yourself and put some energy into finding out what's making them cranky or irritated or rude. Unkind people are the ones that need your kindness the most. They need massive doses of kindness because of the pain they are feeling. So look beyond their words to find the feelings behind the words. Romans 15:2 tells us, *“We must be considerate of the doubts and the fears of others. Let's please the other person, not ourselves, in doing what is good for them and build them up.”* And we do that by downplaying the **words** and paying greater attention to the **feelings**.

Being gentle and considerate with others also means that we don't **dismiss** the things they are feeling just because we don't feel them ourselves. We're not them, so how can we feel what they are feeling. Dismissing the feelings of others is just ignoring, and even more, devaluing that person. Invalidation of feelings creates frustration and shows a lack of consideration.

Guys, if your girlfriend or wife says to you, “I feel ugly!” don't dismiss it and try to tell her, “You're not ugly!” That doesn't help. Something in her is creating a feeling of ugliness, and the best thing we can do is to go beyond the words to find out the reason for the feeling. A better response would be “What would make you say that? Why do you feel ugly?” Then a conversation begins with her sharing the feelings she has. But for you to just say, “You're not ugly,” is not helpful. Take the time to get behind the feelings rather than just dismissing them as irrational or silly.

It's like this – someone says, “I'm afraid!” and the response comes back, “Well, don't be.” Thank you very much! That was very helpful. I really felt your moral support right there.

I'm scared to death and you say, "Don't!" Thank you very much! You see, minimizing another's feelings doesn't help them. It only makes them feel worthless and small. That doesn't help with a relationship. Spend the time to begin to understand the feeling behind the words.

Folks, this is very important! In fact this is one of the most important things we can ever learn. Feelings are neither right nor wrong – they're just there. They're not facts, so you don't need to argue about them; they're just feelings. We shouldn't have to defend our feelings. Rather we should begin to get to the bottom of the feelings to see what can be done about them.

So the third thing to understand is that **if I want to be wise, I won't minimize your feelings.** Wisdom acknowledges your feelings and doesn't diminish them, but so often we respond to the feelings by either belittling the one expressing the feeling or we play psychologist and try to fix the other with remedies of why they are feeling the way they are. We tell them, "Don't be an idiot – you know that's not true!" Or we try to change the feeling by explaining why they feel the way they do. "You feel that way because during your childhood..." Both of these things are wrong, because they don't help us get beyond the feelings; they only make us feel bad about having the feelings in the first place.

Proverbs 15:4 says, "*Kind words bring life, but cruel words crush your spirit.*" Minimizing the feelings of the other does not help in building a relationship. Rather it helps it to disintegrate and degrade that relationship. Listen to the one expressing the feelings and try to understand why they are feeling that way. Be gentle and considerate for the feelings of others.

James goes on with the wisdom from heaven. He says **Wisdom from heaven is willing to yield to others.** This means that we are to be open to reason. Be willing to discuss an issue, ready to really hear the person out before you question them. It means you're not stubborn or defensive. So the wise person begins to listen to others – **I mean really listen.**

Ever be in a conversation and you find yourself finishing the other person's sentences? You want to move things along, so you stop listening to what the person is really saying and you

finish their sentence rather than letting them say what they wanted to say. Cutting people off is not a sign of wisdom, but rather foolishness, because we're jumping to conclusions about what they are saying. Yielding to others means that we're willing to listen and learn and to be open to reason from the other person's perspective.

If you are a reasonable person it will be ok for others to disagree with you. If we're wise, we'll come to understand that even the most cantankerous person can have good ideas. The question is can we talk about the ideas that come, regardless who they come from? Can we reason with people and talk about what they are saying regardless of who they are?

Many folks have the attitude, "Don't confuse me with the facts. My mind is made up. When I want your opinion, I'll give it to you." But this is being unreasonable, unwilling to yield to dialogue with each other, even if a great idea is lifted up from the most unlikely person. If you need an example of this, just look at congress, how Republicans and Democrats can't talk with each other and reason with each other because their minds are already made up about an issue, so there's no reason to talk. What hogwash! In order for the best policy to be made for the people, conversation and genuine listening to each other is vital.

The tough thing about listening to other people and hearing their suggestions is you've got to put yourself out there. And it can hurt sometimes. **But if I'm going to be wise, I won't criticize your suggestions.** A wise person can learn from anybody. Even a broken clock is right twice a day. So people in your life are going to be right – even if it comes from the wrong person. Even the crazy makers of your life will at some point have an idea or lift up something that is worthwhile! Question is, will you yield to them and hear their idea. Or will you mark it off immediately as another bad idea just because they lifted it up? Proverbs 18:15 tells us, *"Intelligent people are always open to new ideas. In fact, they look for them."* So look for those new ideas anywhere and everywhere and don't discount anyone!

So if people have stupid ideas, listen to them, but then let them go just as you would with

one of your own stupid ideas. If it's a good idea, learn from it and move on. Don't waste your time trying to prove a stupid idea right or wrong. Don't criticize the suggestion, but move on.

The next thing we hear from James is that the **wisdom from heaven is full of mercy and good deeds**. Please circle "mercy." This means it's wise to show grace to people when they mess up, when they blow it, when they sin, when they fumble, when they flub up, when they have faults, when they fail. It's wise to show mercy; cut them some slack when they mess up.

Let me put it this way: Who is the wisest person in the universe? God. Who is the most merciful person in the universe? God. You see the connection? Yes, fools are judgmental: wise people are merciful.

Everything that we have is a gift of God: life, breath, sight, hearing, touch, smell - every blessing in your life is a gift from God. Now God knows what we deserve and **that is NOT** His blessings. If God gave us what we deserve, we'd all be dead right now. No, God gives us **what we need**, not what we deserve. That's mercy; that's wisdom.

So #5, **if I want to be wise, I won't emphasize your mistakes!** Being merciful means that we don't rub it in; rather we rub it out. Sins against us, mistakes, problems - being wise means we let them go and never bring them back up.

Unfortunately, we'd rather point out everyone's mistakes and faults. We lift up the faults with statements like "Way to go Grace! Nice footwork Mr. Klutz!" We love to pick on everyone else's mistakes and we criticize their efforts instead of looking for opportunities to extend mercy. And not just in the present time, but we tend to go on and on about everything that we've done wrong. We'd rather criticize others rather than giving mercy. Just look at most of the TV talk shows. Very rarely do they look for what is good in the lives of others. It's all about picking apart someone they disagree with or something they think has been done wrong. And what do we do? We laugh at it, and we see it as though that's what is right to do. No, the wise thing is to let the fault's go and focus on the positive things.

Proverbs 17:9 tells us, “*Love forgets mistakes; nagging about them parts the best of friends.*” Anybody here perfect? Anybody here not made any mistakes in their life? You know what it feels like to have someone point out a mistake and rub it in so hard you thought they were using sandpaper. It hurts, and it usually brings anger, and we respond with raising one of their mistakes, and it all goes from bad to worse. Instead of delighting in pointing out the other’s faults, **forgive**; show mercy; touch the life of that one in such a positive way that the mistake helps the other to learn. **Don’t grind it in until there’s a great chasm between you.** Show mercy and good deeds. Change the life of the other by demonstrating such wisdom and love by not resurrecting the dead mistakes, but rather forgiving and showing mercy.

The last **wisdom from heaven is impartial and always sincere.** Now this means that we’re genuine, without hypocrisy, the real deal. It’s what we call “authentic.”

So the sixth key to relationships is, **if I want to be wise in my relationships, I won’t disguise my intentions.** I won’t wear a mask. I won’t fake it. I won’t pretend. I won’t try to be somebody that I’m not. I won’t lie to you. I won’t cheat you. I won’t trick you. I won’t fake you out. I won’t take advantage of you. I won’t deliberately mislead you.

Here’s the point: Fools are fakes. They try to hide who they really are to impress you with something they are not. They seek to be perfect instead of letting you see their warts and all. They make themselves something that they are not. They seem genuine, but they aren’t. They seem caring, but it’s only an act. They seem to look out for your interests, but they are only in it for themselves. Wise people are none of these, but are authentic, real, genuine and not afraid of letting you see who they really are, and what they are really up to.

We see this most prominently today in online conversations and in dating relationships. Both are trying to impress another with everything they are not. But it just doesn’t work because everything is made up. It’s set up to show the best side of a person, but being real? That sure wouldn’t work, now would it? Laughing at things that aren’t really funny, putting on a show for

the other to model how sweet or caring you are, wearing dress clothes, perfume or cologne? Get Real! Be Yourself! Everyone can spot a fake, but if you are genuine, even to the point of letting the real you be seen, it will let you show the world how God made you for His glory.

Proverbs 10:18 tells us this: “*The lips of the liar conceal hostility and whoever spreads accusations is a fool.*” And Psalm 12:2 says, “*...their flattering lips speak with deception.*” We need to be living billboards of who we really are, not faking anything, not spicing it up, not glossing over who we really are.

When I was in high school I desperately wanted to be in the group of jocks. I idolized the guy who was the quarterback of the football team, the starting forward of the basketball team and the most popular guy in our class. I talked with him one day and asked him, “Mike, I want to be like you. How can I do that?” I remember his wise words to me as if he spoke them to me yesterday. He said, “You can’t be me. You can only be yourself. Don’t worry about what others think about you. People can spot a phony a mile away. You be you and if they don’t like you for who you are, that’s their problem. You can only be yourself.” **I know**, from a high school jock? Such wisdom! Just be genuinely you, after all its how God made you. Be sincere!

So let’s sum this all up. How wise are you in your relationships? Do you ever compromise on your integrity? Stop! That’s not wise. Do you antagonize other people’s anger and push their buttons intentionally just to get even? How’s that working? It’s not wise. Do you minimize feelings? Take some time to listen and learn why those feelings are there. Do you criticize suggestions? You’re missing out on a lot of good stuff. That’s not wise. Do you emphasize mistakes and rub it in rather than rub them out? Watch how fast people shut down on you. That’s not wise. Do you disguise your intentions? Why not let the real you shine out?

I invite you to begin seeking God’s wisdom and really use these keys to building good relationships with those around you so that you can **grow** that relationship to be what you want it to be – an intimate, satisfying and soul-satisfying relationship – the kind God wants for you.

But there are only two ways to get this wisdom so that you can stop making the mistakes we've been talking about. The first is to learn and know God's Word, and the second is to apply it in your daily life. **Knowing** the Word is vital, but **doing it** is absolutely essential. Knowing Jesus is the first step, and allowing the Holy Spirit to guide you to doing it is the second step. Colossians 2:3 tells us clearly, "*Jesus is the key that opens all the hidden treasures of God's wisdom and knowledge.*"

Let's pray: Father, thank You for these words of truth from Your Word. Help us to begin using these six keys of wisdom in our relationships so that we might delight in You and grow closer together as Your people. This we pray in Jesus' Name. AMEN.