



LIBERATING
FAITH STUDIES

MANY
faces of
WISDOM

The Order of Service

- I. Bell tap or organ voluntary
as a signal for silence
 - II. Singing
 - III. The Apostles' Creed
 - IV. Prayer, closing with the
Lord's Prayer in concert
 - V. Singing
 - VI. Calling roll of officers and teachers
 - VII. Responsive reading
of the lesson text by school
 - VIII. The Decalogue
-

The Lesson

- I. Organ interlude while
the classes are being arranged
 - II. Class study of the lesson
 - III. Warning bell — 5 minutes
 - IV. Closing bell — silence
-

The Closing

- I. Singing
- II. Review and application
of the lesson
- III. Secretary's report
- IV. The Church School Creed
- V. Singing
- VI. Benediction

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— Lessons —

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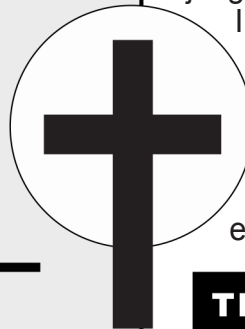
The Apostles' Creed

I believe in God the Father Almighty, maker of heaven and earth and in Jesus Christ, His only Son, our Lord who was conceived by the Holy Spirit, born of the Virgin Mary, suffered under Pontius Pilate, was crucified, dead and buried; the third day He arose from the dead, He ascended into heaven and sitteth on the right hand of God the Father Almighty; from thence He shall come to judge the quick and the dead.

I believe in the Holy Spirit, the Church Universal, the communion of the saints, the forgiveness of sins, the resurrection of the body, and the life everlasting.

The Church School Creed

I believe my A.M.E. Church School must grow and grow; and that I must make it a top priority to make it so. Every member a Christian, every Christian a worker, every worker trained so that a worker need not be ashamed. This we ask in Jesus' name.



The Call of Wisdom

Lesson Scripture: Proverbs 1

Focus Scripture: Proverbs 1:1-4, 7-8, 10, 20-22, 32-33

Key Verse: The fear of the Lord is the beginning of knowledge; fools despise wisdom and instruction. Proverbs 1:7 (NRSV)

PROVERBS 1:1-4, 7-8, 10, 20-22, 32-33 (NRSV) Proverbs 1:1-4

1 The proverbs of Solomon son of David, king of Israel:

2 For learning about wisdom and instruction, for understanding words of insight,

3 for gaining instruction in wise dealing, righteousness, justice, and equity;

4 to teach shrewdness to the simple, knowledge and prudence to the young—...

7-8

7 The fear of the Lord is the beginning of knowledge; fools despise wisdom and instruction.

8 Hear, my child, your father's instruction, and do not reject your mother's teaching;...

10

10 My child, if sinners entice you, do not consent.

20-22

20 Wisdom cries out in the street; in the squares she raises her voice.

21 At the busiest corner she cries out; at the entrance of the city gates she speaks:

22 "How long, O simple ones, will you love being simple? How long will scoffers delight in their scoffing and fools hate knowledge?"

32-33

32 "For waywardness kills the simple, and the complacency of fools destroys them;

33 but those who listen to me will be secure and will live at ease, without dread of disaster."

PROVERBS 1:1-4, 7-8, 10, 20-22, 32-33 (KJV) Proverbs 1:1-4

1 The proverbs of Solomon the son of David, king of Israel;

2 To know wisdom and instruction; to perceive the words of understanding;

3 To receive the instruction of wisdom, justice, and judgment, and equity;

4 To give subtilty to the simple, to the young man knowledge and discretion.

7-8

7 The fear of the Lord is the beginning of knowledge; but fools despise wisdom and instruction.

8 My son, hear the instruction of thy father, and forsake not the law of thy mother:...

10

10 My son, if sinners entice thee, consent thou not.

20-22

20 Wisdom crieth without; she uttereth her voice in the streets:

21 She crieth in the chief place of concourse, in the openings of the gates: in the city she uttereth her words, saying,

22 How long, ye simple ones, will ye love simplicity? and the scornors delight in their scorning, and fools hate knowledge?

32-33

32 For the turning away of the simple shall slay them, and the prosperity of fools shall destroy them.

33 But whoso hearkeneth unto me shall dwell safely, and shall be quiet from fear of evil.

KEY TERMS

- **Wise Dealing** – Show oneself attentive.
- **Simple** – Lacking depth of understanding; inexperienced.
- **Scoffers** – Mockers.
- **Equity** – Even, level, upright.
- **Prudence** – Skill and good judgment.
- **Fear** – Reverence, deep respect.
- **Shrewdness** – Power of devising; discretion.
- **Waywardness** – Turning away, renunciation of belief.
- **Complacency** – Self-satisfaction accompanied by unawareness of deficiencies.

INTRODUCTION

Growing up, my parents and grandparents had a lot of sayings and idioms that they would recite when trying to get us kids to learn a lesson. They would share their experiences and offer us insights that would help us when making our own decisions. Out of fear and respect, mostly fear, we listened to what they said; but, we did not receive it as relevant to our current situations.



What makes
one ignore wisdom
and not answer
wisdom's call?

Like a lot of young people, we dismissed their words as being outdated, because as DJ Jazzy Jeff and The Fresh Prince put it, “Parents Just Don’t Understand.” It would be years before we were able to heed their warnings or even comprehend what they were trying to say to us and the value of it. What made us or anyone so resistant to wisdom? What makes one ignore wisdom and not answer wisdom’s call? And, what exactly is wisdom?

TELLING THE BIBLE STORY

The author in today’s text opens the book of Proverbs by first explaining the need for wisdom. He tells of the ways

that wisdom benefits us and how, if followed, it will enhance our lives greatly. The writer goes on to encourage us to heed the instruction and advice of those in authority over us. But, despite all the author’s push to get others to seek wisdom, wisdom is not being accepted. Instead of wisdom receiving a warm

embrace, wisdom is being pushed away. Wisdom is calling but being rejected. She is calling but being mocked. Wisdom is

calling but being ridiculed and ignored. As a result, the people are being destroyed and worse, dying. So, how do we get people to tune their ear to wisdom's call? How do we reverse their desire to go their own way and instead live secure and at ease?

SANKOFA

Our history is filled with many stories of leaders who have risen out of the ashes to lead people into a better life. It usually starts with a traumatic event, which causes them to acquire a new, more liberating perspective, resulting in their desire to enlighten others of this alternative reality. Harriet Tubman was one such person. Because Ms. Tubman had experienced freedom, it was not enough. She wanted to bring others along the journey with her; but, many were apprehensive, the most apprehensive being Ms. Tubman's sister. Her sister was unable to see past her current reality. The cost seemed too high a price. She was complacent where she was because she felt it was safer. Her love for her children and fear

of her master caused her to reject Ms. Tubman's advice despite her experience and knowledge of a free life. Her sister chose not to listen; and, it ultimately cost her sister her life.

CASE STUDY

Though the actual details of Harriet Tubman's journeys are in question, they are not important. The fact that she was

able to save a group of enslaved Africans is. The number who were freed is not as important as is finding out why so many chose to stay. We acknowledge that many were never given the opportunity to escape to freedom; but, some were. The fact that the number of people Ms. Tubman freed was significantly lower than



So, how do
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wisdom's call?

the total number of those enslaved who might have had the option to escape says that there were those who were resistant to wisdom. They did not believe in what she was selling. Though Ms. Tubman had experienced a better life and had access to an alternate reality that allowed both black and white to walk and work side by side, so many turned a deaf ear. They

could not see past the limitations of their own experience and knowledge, and they rejected her and her idea of freedom.

To them, freedom was working less hours, or being in the master's house. Freedom was being able to marry and/or keeping their children and family together. Freedom was being able to worship freely and attend Sunday services. The conditions of their life were not the greatest; but, it could be worse, and they were not willing to sacrifice the little they had for the unknown.

LIFE APPLICATION

It is the same with so many today. It is the reason women (and men) stay in abusive relationships. It is why a person will not leave the terrible conditions of a job. It is the reason a working mother will continue to get assistance and not a "better" job. Sometimes, the resistance to wisdom is not due to immaturity, laziness, or any other judgments we may have. Wisdom requires risks, and the results, on the surface, seem unstable. Why give up stability for the unknown when

things are already consistent? If one has not experienced what wisdom is putting out, then one cannot begin to grasp or understand.

So, how then do we influence those who resist wisdom? How do we get those persons to heed the advice? Do we use scare tactics and emphasize the destruction as laid out in verses 8-19? Or, do we do as my parents and grandparents did by sharing their stories – allow them to come to wisdom on their own with instruction and teaching as their guide?

Or, do we...allow them to come to wisdom on their own with instruction and teaching as their guide?

QUESTIONS

1. How do you define wisdom?
2. How do we generally handle rejection of our wisdom? Do we in turn reject the person (or group of people) or do we change our tactics?
3. What is something you want to tell your younger self? What is something your younger self wants to tell (or remind) you.

CLOSING DEVOTIONS**Lessons to Myself from My Younger and Older Self.**

We commonly hear of people writing lessons to their younger selves - warnings, things they wished they would have known, advice, etc. But, one thing we do not hear asked is for a person to recall lessons from their younger selves. We tend to think that we can only learn from our mature, educated, “been through

some things” self when the truth is, there is plenty we have forgotten. Sometimes, we need our younger self to recall and remind us.

For devotions this week, each person is challenged to go back and remember. Remember the person you used to be, the inhibitions and courage you used to have, and the value it brought to your life. It’s time to learn from our younger selves, so we can teach our older selves, and influence others even more.

HOME DAILY BIBLE READINGS**June 1–June 7**

Monday	Acts 6:1-7 (Faith Community Discerns Path of Wisdom)
Tuesday	2 Timothy 1:3-9a (Parents Joyfully Pass on the Faith)
Wednesday	Psalms 34:11-18 (Learning the Fear of the Lord)
Thursday	Matthew 26:47-52 (Violence Not a Wise Choice)
Friday	1 Kings 4:29-34 (Vast Scope of Solomon’s Wisdom)
Saturday	Proverbs 4:1-9 (Prize Wisdom and Insight)
Sunday	Proverbs 1:1-4, 7-8, 10-11, 20-22, 32-33 (Godly Wisdom for Life’s Decisions)

THE VALUE OF WISDOM

Lesson Scripture: Genesis 39; Proverbs 2

Focus Scripture: Proverbs 2:1-11

*Key Verse: "For the Lord gives wisdom; from his mouth come knowledge and understanding."
Proverbs 2:6 (NRSV)*

PROVERBS 2:1-11 (NRSV)

- 1 My child, if you accept my words and treasure up my commandments within you,
- 2 making your ear attentive to wisdom and inclining your heart to understanding;
- 3 if you indeed cry out for insight, and raise your voice for understanding;
- 4 if you seek it like silver, and search for it as for hidden treasures—
- 5 then you will understand the fear of the Lord and find the knowledge of God.
- 6 For the Lord gives wisdom; from his mouth come knowledge and understanding;
- 7 he stores up sound wisdom for the upright; he is a shield to those who walk blamelessly,
- 8 guarding the paths of justice and preserving the way of his faithful ones.
- 9 Then you will understand righteousness and justice and equity, every good path;
- 10 for wisdom will come into your heart, and knowledge will be pleasant to your soul;
- 11 prudence will watch over you; and understanding will guard you.

PROVERBS 2:1-11 (KJV)

- 1 My son, if thou wilt receive my words, and hide my commandments with thee;
- 2 So that thou incline thine ear unto wisdom, and apply thine heart to understanding;
- 3 Yea, if thou criest after knowledge, and liftest up thy voice for understanding;
- 4 If thou seekest her as silver, and searchest for her as for hid treasures;
- 5 Then shalt thou understand the fear of the Lord, and find the knowledge of God.
- 6 For the Lord giveth wisdom: out of his mouth cometh knowledge and understanding.
- 7 He layeth up sound wisdom for the righteous: he is a buckler to them that walk uprightly.
- 8 He keepeth the paths of judgment, and preserveth the way of his saints.
- 9 Then shalt thou understand righteousness, and judgment, and equity; yea, every good path.
- 10 When wisdom entereth into thine heart, and knowledge is pleasant unto thy soul;
- 11 Discretion shall preserve thee, understanding shall keep thee:...

KEY TERMS

- **Incline** – To lean towards.
- **Faithful** – Active practice of kindness or piety, loyalty rooted in belief.
- **Scoffers** – Those who make fun of/show contempt.
- **Upright** – Morally correct behavior or thinking.
- **Good** – Pleasant and agreeable.
- **Fear** – Reverence, deep respect.
- **Blameless** – Having integrity/without fault.
- **Soul** – Inner being of a person.
- **Complacency** – Self-satisfaction accompanied by unawareness of deficiencies.

INTRODUCTION

Growing up, children played a lot of games that required active listening and obedience. Games like *Simon Says* taught children the importance of listening, in particular to the one who was giving commands. In order for children to engage certain behaviors, they had to listen for the two words “Simon Says...” If Simon did not say, they

had to remain still and take no action, but when Simon “said,” they had to move.

Other games like *Mother May I?* taught children the importance of asking permission and seeking council before making decisions. Because they were limited in their questions, children had to carefully consider each question they would ask in order to get closer to their goal. Each question built on the previous one, and cleared a path towards victory. Impulse and impatience caused players to be removed from the game until the next round. Though very simple in nature, these games and others like them were fun ways for children to learn obedience and how to tune their ears to listen for who was speaking: not only for safety’s

sake, but for the sake of accomplishing the goal at hand. The same can be applied to gaining wisdom.

With this over saturated availability of books, blogs, etc., how does one learn to tune their ears to God, the One with the ultimate plan?

There are many people talking and lots of advice being given. Bookstores are loaded with self-help books, and it seems a new book or blog or podcast is always being released and launched. With this

over saturated availability of books, blogs, etc., how does one learn to tune their

ears to God, the One with the ultimate plan? Or get the courage to listen and follow? What are the benefits of doing so? How does listening to wisdom and seeking understanding help one along life's journey?

Wisdom is acquired as one grows and engages in various life experiences, and it happens in stages.

The scriptures provide clear instructions for how we are to go about acquiring wisdom, and tell us what happens when we do. Wisdom is acquired as one grows and engages in various life experiences, and it happens in stages.

Hence the *"If-Then"*

TELLING THE BIBLE STORY

Just like childhood games, Proverbs 2 is filled with several "if-then" statements.

IF...	THEN...
you accept my words...	you will understand the fear of the Lord.
you treasure my commandments within you...	you will find the knowledge of God.
you make your ear attentive to wisdom...	you will understand righteousness, justice, equity.
you incline your heart to understanding...	you will understand every good path.
you cry out for insight...	wisdom will come into your heart.
you raise your voice for understanding...	knowledge will be pleasant to your soul.
you seek wisdom like silver...	prudence will watch over you.
you search for wisdom as for hidden treasures...	understanding will guard you.

statements. For example, if one cries out for insight, he or she will find the knowledge of God. Using the chart above, match the IF... statement with the THEN... statement.

SANKOFA

In the previous lesson, we discussed Harriet Tubman's sister. Today we look at the woman called Moses. Born Araminta Ross, she was the daughter of an enslaved couple. After suffering a traumatic head injury, she began to experience episodes of dizziness and spells, which led to her having strange visions. Moses saw these visions as messages from God and committed her life to God's following. After refusing to allow herself to be sold and her family broken up, she fled her master's home and ran away to freedom. Having only the direction of the pastor,

Moses made it all the way from Maryland to Philadelphia. It would not be long until Moses started to receive messages again from God about the state of her family. She returned to Maryland only to find a group of family members awaiting escape. Not sure of how to move so many people at once, she knelt down and prayed to God waiting for a word or sign. By following God's wisdom and maintaining constant communication throughout her journey, Moses was able to move several people from enslavement to freedom.

CASE STUDY

The Ball brothers, Lonzo, LiAngelo, and LaMelo Ball, have been playing basketball since they were able to hold a ball. Their father, a former basketball player himself, had an unorthodox way of playing the game. From the way the boys shoot, to the way they play, to the teams they play for, they have been unconventional. Having a natural talent for basketball, they could have easily decided to follow the methods of Jordan

or Johnson or Hardaway, but they took heed to their father's voice. They listened to the advice and instruction he gave. Though sometimes grueling, the boys followed his practices, and it has generated great reward for them. Not just money or fame, but drive, perseverance, and trust.

What their father was instilling in them was something that will bring them much success, on and off the court. It will sustain them, even after basketball is long gone. It is not about the sport as much as it is about commitment, dedication, and hard work. The value of wisdom is using the teachings and lessons you have been given, to work for the life you want, while maintaining your integrity and character along the

way.

By following
God's wisdom and
maintaining constant
communication
throughout her journey,
Moses was able to
move several people
from enslavement to
freedom.

LIFE APPLICATION

"Things My Momma/Poppa Taught Me"

Think about some things a parent or guardian said to you when you were

younger, or is probably still saying. Did you take heed? And if you didn't, how did things turn out? As we grow and mature, we place more value on those words of advice and guidance than when we heard them in our maturing years. Our maturity and perspective affect how we apply those long-taught teachings, and we appreciate their value as we mature. This might be a good time to reflect on these teachings and if still applicable, apply them to your life.

QUESTIONS

1. What is the value of having wisdom?
2. How does wisdom guide your everyday life?
3. What are some ways to teach others about the value of wisdom?

CLOSING DEVOTION

Lead me, guide me along the way,
 For if you lead me I cannot stray.
 Lord, let me walk each day with thee.
 Lead me, oh Lord, lead me.
 This is my prayer today and every day.
 Amen.

HOME DAILY BIBLE READINGS

June 8 – June 14

Monday	Galatians 6:1-10 (Work for the Good of All)
Tuesday	Romans 15:1-6 (Live Together in Harmony)
Wednesday	2 John 4-11 (Wisdom Is Walking Together in Love)
Thursday	Genesis 39:6b-18 (Joseph Resists Temptation)
Friday	Proverbs 2:12-19 (Wisdom Saves from Temptation)
Saturday	Proverbs 2:20-22; 4:24-27 (Walk on Just and Good Paths)
Sunday	Proverbs 2:1-11 (Following Godly Wisdom Pays)

THE GIFTS OF WISDOM

Lesson Scripture: Job 1; 42; Proverbs 8

Focus Scripture: Proverbs 8:8-14, 17-21

Key Verse: Take my instruction instead of silver, and knowledge rather than choice gold; for wisdom is better than jewels, and all that you may desire cannot compare with her. Proverbs 8:10-11 (NRSV)

PROVERBS 8:8-14, 17-21 (NRSV)

Proverbs 8:8-14

8 All the words of my mouth are righteous; there is nothing twisted or crooked in them.

9 They are all straight to one who understands and right to those who find knowledge.

10 Take my instruction instead of silver, and knowledge rather than choice gold;

11 for wisdom is better than jewels, and all that you may desire cannot compare with her.

12 I, wisdom, live with prudence, and I attain knowledge and discretion.

13 The fear of the Lord is hatred of evil. Pride and arrogance and the way of evil and perverted speech I hate.

14 I have good advice and sound wisdom; I have insight, I have strength.

17-21

17 I love those who love me, and those who seek me diligently find me.

18 Riches and honor are with me, enduring wealth and prosperity.

19 My fruit is better than gold, even fine gold, and my yield than choice silver.

20 I walk in the way of righteousness, along the paths of justice,

21 endowing with wealth those who love me, and filling their treasuries.

PROVERBS 8:8-14, 17-21 (KJV)

Proverbs 8:8-14

8 All the words of my mouth are in righteousness; there is nothing froward or perverse in them.

9 They are all plain to him that understandeth, and right to them that find knowledge.

10 Receive my instruction, and not silver; and knowledge rather than choice gold.

11 For wisdom is better than rubies; and all the things that may be desired are not to be compared to it.

12 I wisdom dwell with prudence, and find out knowledge of witty inventions.

13 The fear of the Lord is to hate evil: pride, and arrogancy, and the evil way, and the froward mouth, do I hate.

14 Counsel is mine, and sound wisdom: I am understanding; I have strength.

17-21

17 I love them that love me; and those that seek me early shall find me.

18 Riches and honour are with me; yea, durable riches and righteousness.

19 My fruit is better than gold, yea, than fine gold; and my revenue than choice silver.

20 I lead in the way of righteousness, in the midst of the paths of judgment:

21 That I may cause those that love me to inherit substance; and I will fill their treasures.

KEY TERMS

- **Twisted** – Tortuous/not straight.
- **Right** – Pleasing.
- **Yield** – Revenue.
- **Crooked** – Perverted.
- **Choice** – Option.
- **Endowing** – Giving possession of.
- **Straight** – Plain, straightforward.
- **Enduring** – Surpassing/lasting.
- **Treasury** – Storehouse.

INTRODUCTION

Riley B. King, the son of sharecroppers, spent his formative years in the fields picking cotton and going to church. He dropped out of school during his teenage years and, instead, continued his work in the fields while playing odd gigs. Throughout his life, he received all types of accolades, awards, and even honorary degrees for being a pioneer in the blues genre of music. He was successful. The world knew King's name. There was one thing he never acquired, which he pushed the younger generation to obtain, and that

When you learn the voice of wisdom and buy in to the need to pursue her, only then does one learn to trust wisdom's words.

was an education.

In the 2008 interview with Billy Walker of *USA Today*, King described the significance of the then brand new \$15 million B.B. King Museum and Delta Interpretive Center. Knowing the benefits and rewards of education, Riley "B.B." King wanted it "to help people who are hungry for knowledge." He was not shy about sharing his own fears of what life would have been like without his music, since he himself did not have an education. He acknowledged the struggles he encountered despite his

fame and notoriety. He held the firm belief that education was and is important, and wanted young people to understand "that (his brain and their brain) is like a sponge." And, King urged them to be "interested in anything out there." Why? Because King knew "the beautiful thing about learning is nobody can take it away from you."


TELLING THE BIBLE STORY

When you learn the voice of wisdom and buy in to the need to pursue her, only then does one learn to trust

wisdom's words. Verses 8 and 9 begin by reassuring us that we can trust what wisdom is saying, for she has proven her dependability. From previous passages, we have seen how valuable wisdom is. Wisdom helps us to make decisions of right from wrong, fair from unjust. She shows us what happens when her words are not considered. We were instructed to listen to wisdom's voice and follow her advice. Now, we are being urged to choose to continue the pursuit of knowledge and instruction over worldly riches. Why? Because it is in advice and insight that we find the greatest wealth. As we pursue and seek wisdom diligently, we begin to receive her gifts. But, what are wisdom's gifts? What exactly do we receive as wisdom is acquired?

SANKOFA

"Peace has not yet really been established in South Vietnam. In these circumstances it is impossible for me to accept the 1973 Nobel Prize for Peace which the committee has bestowed on me." – Le Duc Tho, North Vietnamese Leader



For Tho, the treaty was nothing more than words, for action had not been taken.

The war had been raging on with no end in sight. Bombs were being dropped. Cities destroyed. The U.S. was making matters worse. But, two men, both responsible for their fair share of the war, decided to come together to discuss a truce. Though the meetings began long before the official announcement, in 1973, Henry Kissinger and Le Duc Tho announced a peace treaty. In that same year, both men were honored for their negotiations and work contributed to bring an end to the violence, by receiving the Nobel Peace Prize. Many celebrated, while others protested. The person most against the award was one of the recipients himself: Tho.

For Tho, the treaty was nothing more than words, for action had not been taken. Peace was not executed, and the war continued. Sadly, it would be another two years before an end would come, exasperating Tho's decision to reject the prize. For him, the peace of his country was more important than an award and money. He wanted so much more. For the first and only time in the history of the Nobel Peace Prize, the

prize was rejected.

Tho’s decision to not accept the prize created a huge stir, and for the first time in history, the committee was so much at odds that two members resigned. What could have driven Tho to turn away from such notoriety? What information did he have that informed his decision? Was his experience throughout the war evidence of what was to come? Or, was he simply using sound wisdom because the gift of peace is better than the gift of a prize?

CASE STUDY

Education of Profession?

One of the greatest difficulties facing many young people is deciding whether or not to: (1) fully engage in courses of study in grade school, (2) attend college or a trade school after high school graduation, and/or (3) go straight into the workforce. With the rising cost of higher education, the seeming lack of benefits upon graduation, and the constant rise in living wages, it becomes more and more difficult to choose knowledge over money.

Wisdom is gained in many forms; some pursue formal education (primary, secondary, and then higher education); others enter the workforce or begin a trade, often receiving on-the-job training and gaining knowledge and skill through

practice. Reflect on each of these paths to gaining wisdom. What can be involved with each? Which is preferred? How does one make a determination on which is better for an individual? The *Education (formal education)* group will list all the ways their topic affirms Proverbs 8. The *Profession (learning while working)* group will list all the ways their topic affirms Proverbs 8.

EDUCATION	PROFESSION

LIFE APPLICATION

In his 1967 tale, “Don’t Be a Dropout,” James Brown tells the sad story of what happens when one takes for granted the learning happening in structured spaces like school. At a time when education was a big push, his friend decided he would fare better out in the world. As a result, he rejected the teachings he learned and advice he was given. He saw no value in it until he reached a place where he needed it to get to the next level. Unable to go any further than where he was, he

laments over his choice to turn from instruction and knowledge. Though harsh in its messaging, the truth remains that “without an education (sound advice, instruction, understanding, and insight) you might as well be dead”... though not physically.

Education is the gift that keeps on giving. The more we learn, the more we position ourselves to receive.

CLOSING DEVOTION

The Gifts According To

PROVERBS 8

“Education is the gift that keeps on giving. The more we learn, the more we position ourselves to receive.

As a closing act of devotion for this study session, reflect on these gifts of wisdom as recorded in Proverbs 8. Meditate on the list and identify the gifts which you want to acquire and how to use wisdom to go about acquiring them.

Good Advice (v. 14)

Sound Wisdom (v. 14)

Insight (v. 14)

Love (v. 17)

Riches (v. 18)

Honor (v. 18)

Wealth (v. 18)

Prosperity (v. 18)

Righteous Ways (v. 20)

Paths of Justice (v. 20)

HOME DAILY BIBLE READINGS	
June 15-June 21	
Monday	1 Corinthians 1:18-25 (Christ, the Wisdom of God)
Tuesday	Job 1:1-5 (God Abundantly Rewards Job’s Faithfulness)
Wednesday	Job 42:10-17 (God Restores Job’s Family and Wealth)
Thursday	Proverbs 8:1-7 (Wisdom Calls the People to Respond)
Friday	Proverbs 8:22-31 (Wisdom Present and Active During Creation)
Saturday	Proverbs 8:32-36 (Choose Wisdom and Live)
Sunday	Proverbs 8:8-14, 17-21 (Wisdom Affects All of Life)

WISDOM'S FEAST

Lesson Scripture: Proverbs 9

Focus Scripture: Proverbs 9:1-6, 8-10, 13-18

*Key Verse: Lay aside immaturity, and live, and walk in the way of insight.
Proverbs 9:6 (NRSV)*

PROVERBS 9:1-6, 8-10, 13-18 (NRSV)

Proverbs 9:1-6

1 Wisdom has built her house, she has hewn her seven pillars.

2 She has slaughtered her animals, she has mixed her wine, she has also set her table.

3 She has sent out her servant-girls, she calls from the highest places in the town,

4 "You that are simple, turn in here!" To those without sense she says,

5 "Come, eat of my bread and drink of the wine I have mixed.

6 Lay aside immaturity, and live, and walk in the way of insight."

8-10

8 A scoffer who is rebuked will only hate you; the wise, when rebuked, will love you.

9 Give instruction to the wise, and they will become wiser still; teach the righteous and they will gain in learning.

10 The fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom, and the knowledge of the Holy One is insight.

13-18

13 The foolish woman is loud; she is ignorant and knows nothing.

14 She sits at the door of her house, on a seat at the high places of the town,

15 calling to those who pass by, who are going straight on their way,

16 "You who are simple, turn in here!" And to those without sense she says,

17 "Stolen water is sweet, and bread eaten in secret is pleasant."

PROVERBS 9:1-6, 8-10, 13-18 (KJV)

Proverbs 9:1-6

1 Wisdom hath builded her house, she hath hewn out her seven pillars:

2 She hath killed her beasts; she hath mingled her wine; she hath also furnished her table.

3 She hath sent forth her maidens: she crieth upon the highest places of the city,

4 Whoso is simple, let him turn in hither: as for him that wanteth understanding, she saith to him,

5 Come, eat of my bread, and drink of the wine which I have mingled.

6 Forsake the foolish, and live; and go in the way of understanding.

8-10

8 Reprove not a scorner, lest he hate thee: rebuke a wise man, and he will love thee.

9 Give instruction to a wise man, and he will be yet wiser: teach a just man, and he will increase in learning.

10 The fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom: and the knowledge of the holy is understanding.

13-18

13 A foolish woman is clamorous: she is simple, and knoweth nothing.

14 For she sitteth at the door of her house, on a seat in the high places of the city,

15 To call passengers who go right on their ways:

16 Whoso is simple, let him turn in hither: and as for him that wanteth understanding, she saith to him,

17 Stolen waters are sweet, and bread eaten in secret is pleasant.

18 But they do not know that the dead are there, that her guests are in the depths of Sheol.

18 But he knoweth not that the dead are there; and that her guests are in the depths of hell.

KEY TERMS

- **Hewn** – Chop or cleave, carved.
- **Faithful** – Active practice of kindness or piety, loyalty rooted in belief.
- **Scoffers** – Mockers.
- **Without Sense** – Lacking knowledge and understanding.
- **Good** – Pleasant and agreeable.
- **Fear** – Reverence, deep respect.
- **Blameless** – Completeness, integrity.
- **Soul** – Inner being of a person.
- **Complacency** – Self-satisfaction accompanied by unawareness of deficiencies.

Before wisdom (the woman) could begin to utter a word, she first had to prepare a place to receive those who inclined their ear to listen.

in search of and practicing wisdom. We recalled the sayings taught to us by our parents/guardians, and looked at ways we can implement them into our own lives, and the lives of those whom we influence. Now is the time to put it all into action and bring others along.

TELLING THE BIBLE STORY

The writer of Proverbs 9 has decided to use the concept of a feast to bring forth the final message of wisdom for this unit of lessons. There are a few major themes to pull out in order to fully understand how to introduce wisdom to others. First, it begins with preparation.

Before wisdom (the woman) could begin to utter a word, she first had to prepare a place to receive those who inclined their ear to listen. Preparations began with the physical building of a space, and in this space, she set up seven pillars to display not only the capacity of the space, but the security of it. She wanted her guests to

INTRODUCTION

We have spent the last few weeks discussing the value, the gifts, and the call of wisdom. We have looked at ways to discern sound advice from foolish words and what comes from living a life

feel safe and secure.

Next, she made a feast fit for a king. She spared no resource as she wanted to assure her guests they would not only enjoy themselves, but be satisfied without distractions.

Having everything set, the woman used her servants to sound the dinner bells. She extended an open invitation to come and share in the festivities. Ironically, her invitation was not geared towards the best or the brightest, or the most pious. She personally called out to and opened her home and her table to those on whom others would have turned their back. It was an invitation for those with room left to grow, to come and learn an alternate way to live life. A life not built on promiscuity, immaturity, or fleeting riches, but a life filled with lasting knowledge, skills, and instruction, which yields riches better than money or wealth.

This was not the time to bash wisdom's guests and condemn them to hell. It was an opportunity to allow them to spend

time with her in a less threatening and judgmental environment.

SANKOFA

"Food is for more than survival, it's a moment when memories are created and survival commemorated." – Kelley D. Evans

The term "Sunday Dinner" is familiar in African American households. To those without insight into its history, it is more than just a time to eat. To those leading in and indulging in the tradition, it is a time when the matriarch of the family beckons all her children to gather. They do not merely come together to eat — they are an integral part of the preparation.

Some of the greatest lessons come from the kitchen where the women usually gather, or the couch where the men often gather. The women use the ingredients and their quantities, the food preparation, the stove or oven temperatures, etc. as teaching aids. The men usually use sports and movies, and the stories of past times as teaching aids.

A life not built on
promiscuity, immaturity,
or fleeting riches, but
a life filled with lasting
knowledge, skills,
and instruction, which
yields riches better than
money or wealth.

These practical tools allow the younger generation to hear the stories of those before, and allow these sages to share parables and anecdotes about life, family, and being black in America.

The stories are not accusatory, nor are they used to induce shame. They are simply life lessons learned through the power of another's narrative. By the time everyone comes to the table, much wisdom has already been passed along. When the time to eat draws closer, and everyone gathers around the table, there is a spirit of receptivity, trust, and love, even when the conversations and stories are not so pleasant.

Wisdom gathers her children around food, for she knows she can provide them nourishment for their stomachs and their spirits.

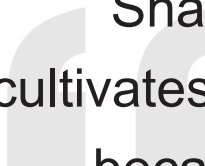
CASE STUDY

There are many ways and many reasons we come together. Sometimes, we come together for happy occasions,

and other times, sad occasions. Whatever the case, there is something special about setting aside time to be with those who we care about. Sharing a meal is a simple, yet sacred occasion. It's therapeutic, gives us an excuse to converse, and opens the door for reflection. Sharing food cultivates community because the implications of sharing a meal extend beyond the time of eating. It is a universal

act that is important to building relationships within people or groups. Intentionally eating together creates time and space to engage in the spiritual and intellectual levels that are unique to human beings.

While there are other places people meet, gathering around a meal is the most accessible because if nothing else, everyone eats. Everyone needs to eat, and a meal brings everyone together in a really tangible way that reflects a greater purpose. The communal meals transform the moment into something more unique and meaningful. Those who participate



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become part of something greater than themselves as individuals.

Co-founders Lennon Flowers and Rev. Jennifer Bailey, an AME itinerant elder, have encapsulated this concept with *The People's Supper*. Through consultation and advisement, they have traveled all over, teaching leaders how to create and convene spaces of meaningful connections and engagement in difficult discourse. The spaces they created are much like the feast prepared in today's text.

LIFE APPLICATION

In life, we often have to make choices. Sometimes the options vary greatly and are obvious in their difference; however, sometimes, discernment is harder.

Even the study passage for today from Proverbs makes clear that sometimes *wisdom* and *folly* seem to have a lot in common. They both have two houses. They both prepare a meal. They both extend an invitation. We have to choose. One house will stand; the other will eventually fall. One meal brings life and health; the other diminished life, even

death. One invitation is for our good; the other seeks to separate us from God's will. The similarities as well as the differences make discernment such an important practice for the Christian. We must constantly pray for discernment that will lead us to accept wisdom's invitation.

Together in small groups, design a gathering much like the one in Proverbs 9; plan the decor, food, volunteers, invitations, and itinerary. Decide who would be responsible for spreading the word, who would prepare the meal, and who would host the gathering. Consider those whom you would like to invite and how you would go about making sure they are comfortable. Set a date before the end of this quarter to host this gathering. Share your event with your classmates when led by your teacher.

Even the study passage for today from Proverbs makes clear that sometimes *wisdom* and *folly* seem to have a lot in common.

QUESTIONS:

1. What would it look like if our churches created more "spaces" for connection rather than condemnation?
2. What are some of the challenges to creating this type of space?

3. Considering the lessons from the previous weeks, create an outline of what a *Wisdom Feast* would look like.

CLOSING DEVOTIONS

We will close out this lesson with the

Life Lessons Playlist, "79 Best Songs That Give Life Advice."

<https://spinditty.com/playlists/Life-Lessons-Playlist-35-Best-Songs-With-A-Message>

Go through the list and see which one speaks to you, and if there is another that is not on this list, add it and share with the class.

Remember, each of us is on different parts of the path of wisdom. The wisdom you need now may look different from what you need later. Close this session with a prayer for discerning God's wisdom for this unique moment in your life.

HOME DAILY BIBLE READINGS

June 22–June 28

Monday	Psalm 119:97-104 (Law Provides the Edge)
Tuesday	Matthew 25:1-13 (Wise and Foolish Bridesmaids)
Wednesday	Ephesians 3:7-13 (Church Proclaims the Wisdom of God)
Thursday	1 Corinthians 6:1-6 (No Wise Person Among You?)
Friday	Matthew 7:24-27 (Wise and Foolish Builders)
Saturday	Psalm 1 (Benefits of Making the Wise Choice)
Sunday	Proverbs 9:1-6, 8-10, 13-18 (Wisdom Delivers Many Benefits)

WISDOM'S VINDICATION

Lesson Scripture: Matthew 11:1-19

Focus Scripture: Matthew 11:7-19

Key Verse: The Son of Man came eating and drinking, and they say, "Look, a glutton and a drunkard, a friend of tax-collectors and sinners!" Yet wisdom is vindicated by her deeds.

Matthew 11:19 (NRSV)

MATTHEW 11:7-19 (NRSV)

7 As they went away, Jesus began to speak to the crowds about John: "What did you go out into the wilderness to look at? A reed shaken by the wind?

8 What then did you go out to see? Someone dressed in soft robes? Look, those who wear soft robes are in royal palaces.

9 What then did you go out to see? A prophet? Yes, I tell you, and more than a prophet.

10 This is the one about whom it is written, 'See, I am sending my messenger ahead of you, who will prepare your way before you.'

11 Truly I tell you, among those born of women no one has arisen greater than John the Baptist; yet the least in the kingdom of heaven is greater than he.

12 From the days of John the Baptist until now the kingdom of heaven has suffered violence, and the violent take it by force.

13 For all the prophets and the law prophesied until John came;

14 and if you are willing to accept it, he is Elijah who is to come.

15 Let anyone with ears listen!

16 But to what will I compare this generation? It is like children sitting in the marketplaces and calling to one another,

17 'We played the flute for you, and you did not dance; we wailed, and you did not mourn.'

18 For John came neither eating nor drinking, and they say, 'He has a demon';

19 the Son of Man came eating and drinking, and they say, 'Look, a glutton and a drunkard, a

MATTHEW 11:7-19 (KJV)

7 And as they departed, Jesus began to say unto the multitudes concerning John, What went ye out into the wilderness to see? A reed shaken with the wind?

8 But what went ye out for to see? A man clothed in soft raiment? behold, they that wear soft clothing are in kings' houses.

9 But what went ye out for to see? A prophet? yea, I say unto you, and more than a prophet.

10 For this is he, of whom it is written, Behold, I send my messenger before thy face, which shall prepare thy way before thee.

11 Verily I say unto you, Among them that are born of women there hath not risen a greater than John the Baptist: notwithstanding he that is least in the kingdom of heaven is greater than he.

12 And from the days of John the Baptist until now the kingdom of heaven suffereth violence, and the violent take it by force.

13 For all the prophets and the law prophesied until John.

14 And if ye will receive it, this is Elias, which was for to come.

15 He that hath ears to hear, let him hear.

16 But whereunto shall I liken this generation? It is like unto children sitting in the markets, and calling unto their fellows,

17 'And saying, We have piped unto you, and ye have not danced; we have mourned unto you, and ye have not lamented.

18 For John came neither eating nor drinking, and they say, He hath a devil.

19 The Son of man came eating and drinking,

friend of tax collectors and sinners!' Yet wisdom is vindicated by her deeds."

and they say, Behold a man gluttonous, and a winebibber, a friend of publicans and sinners. But wisdom is justified of her children.

KEY TERMS

- **Wilderness** – Lack of population; bare; an untamed land.
- **Reed** – A tall, slender-leaved plant.
- **Soft robes** – Fine clothing
- **Prophet** – One who speaks forth by divine inspiration.
- **Messenger** – Person delegated to carry a message.
- **Amaze** – To remove from a standing (fixed) mindset.
- **Astonish** – Strike with panic or shock.
- **Anxiety** – Painful sorrow; uneasiness.
- **Obedient** – Under arrangement.

Here's the truth, we all have a set of biases that exist within us.

event. What do you expect?

- c. A bishop, pastor, general officer, director, etc. is coming. What do you expect?

Now, if someone says to you, "I know things are changing, the present atmosphere is negatively affecting the lives of the working class. It costs to be healthy. It costs to stay alive, BUT there is a Savior who will come and turn it around!" What would you expect?

Here's the truth, we all have a set of biases that exist within us. Whether we want to admit it or not, we attribute certain behaviors to certain people, and we exclude those whom we do not deem

INTRODUCTION

What Do You Expect?

When someone says:

- Children will be coming to visit. What do you expect?
- Young adults will be at your

"eligible" based on our biases. There are expectations we have for certain people in certain positions, and if someone does not fit that mold, and acts and reacts outside of the status quo, or does not conform to already established covert

rules and guidelines, we immediately resist and often meet them with rejection.

TELLING THE BIBLE STORY

This is what the author was portraying in Matthew 11. The people had been hearing for years that a savior was coming, and he would be the King of Kings and Lord of Lords. As the story has it, there may have been details added about the type of savior to expect based on the current context of who was king, and their past experiences of those who had previously taken over. It is not unlikely that the people imagined a Moses figure who would come and bring plagues on the land until Pharaoh conceded, or a David figure who would come in like a warrior and tear down the place, or a king who would walk around in fine clothing because, after all, that's what kings did.

That was not the case with John the Baptist or Jesus. They did not look like any of the expectations that people had. They were not from immediate royalty,

neither did they have the background people expected. They did not talk about the things they thought a savior and messenger should. And, Jesus and John certainly conducted themselves in really strange ways. What did the people do? They did what most people do: they crafted rumors and undermined John and Jesus' authority and their works. Because John and Jesus did not fit their

Because John and Jesus did not fit their mold or idea of what persons in their roles should look like and do, they dismissed them.

However, Jesus let none of that affect him.

mold or idea of what persons in their roles should look like and do, they dismissed them. However, Jesus let none of that affect him. In fact, Jesus responded with a simple line "yet wisdom is vindicated by her deeds" (v.19). In others words, "May the works I've done (and am going to do) speak for me."

SANKOFA

In 1996, Kirk Franklin and the Family released their hit single, "Whatcha Lookin 4." In the song, they talked about the ways Jesus showed up for them when they were at their lowest moments. Using the lyrics of the song, list the ways Jesus proved Jesus was the one they were

looking for.

Lyrics:

I was searchin'

For someone to love me right

Hear me when I cry

Keep me late at night

Jesus came even in my misery

Wiped the tears from my eyes

This is what he said

Chorus: Whatcha lookin' 4

I'm the One you're lookin' 4

Whatcha searchin' 4

You don't have to search no more

Give you peace and joy

Fill your life with happiness

Don't you look no more

'Cause I'm the One you're lookin' 4

L-O-V-E love never meant that much to me

'Til I saw your face

I felt your amazing grace

But in the midnight hour

When I held my pillow tight

He wiped the tears so I could see

This is what he said

Chorus

I never knew love could be so sweet

The joy you give to me

Peace and harmony

I love you so

More than you'll ever know

What is this that I found that

Never never lets me down

Chorus

Whatcha

What you want

I've got it

What you need, I'm the One you're lookin' 4

It's yours

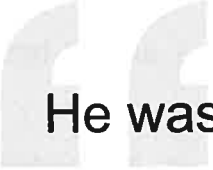
I'm the One you're lookin' 4

CASE STUDY

2008 saw the release of some major blockbusters: *Iron Man*, *The Incredible Hulk*, *Kung Fu Panda*, and *Indiana Jones and the Last Crusade*, to name a few. But, among those hits was Columbia's production *Hancock* featuring Will Smith portraying an alcoholic, homeless man with an uncanny source of strength, invulnerability, and the ability to fly. The crime in Los Angeles is on the rise, and police officers really have their hands filled trying to control it. Every now and

then, Hancock inserts himself trying to help, but is often shunned and ridiculed by both the police and citizens as being reckless, careless, and a downright contemptible person.

Seeing the good in his gifts, a public relations specialist attempts to save Hancock's image in order to make him more palatable to the community. He convinces him to turn himself in, go to jail, and to attend therapy. Reluctantly, Hancock obliges and the crime in LA rises to an all-time high. Unable to do anything about it, the PR specialist suggests using Hancock, who has to use his newfound "wisdom" in order to handle the situation in a more calm and rational way, which he does. Hancock goes on to become the city's hero, making crime almost non-existent. He was the savior the people needed, but was initially rejected because of the packaging he was in.

 He was the savior
the people needed,
but was initially
rejected because of
the packaging he was
in.

LIFE APPLICATION

The same way people in our text came to learn Jesus was the One for whom they were looking, Kirk Franklin and the Family eventually came to learn the same. How? It was by Jesus' actions. Verse 19 in the scripture reminds us that wisdom is vindicated by her actions. That means Jesus' behavior showed them that Jesus

was who they had been searching, waiting, longing for. Actions spoke louder than words, expectations, and prejudices.

QUESTIONS

1. Looking back at the **Introduction**, what are some ways we can use those prejudices we reversed to encourage people to use their unique skills and abilities for a greater good?
2. What types of works have each of these groups done that indicate their ability to be a part of the solution?

CLOSING DEVOTION

Prayer: My God, let us not judge by

our own expectations and prejudices they've done speak for them. In Jesus' but use godly wisdom to see past and name. AMEN. through them. May the works she, he,

HOME DAILY BIBLE READINGS

June 29 – July 5

Monday	Matthew 10:16-23 (Wise Counsel for Defending Your Faith)
Tuesday	Isaiah 35:3-10 (Wise Deeds of the Coming Messiah)
Wednesday	Luke 7:24-28 (John the Baptist, God's Messenger)
Thursday	Matthew 11:1-6 (The Messiah's Wise Deeds)
Friday	Matthew 11:20-24 (Woes on Unwise Cities)
Saturday	Matthew 11:25-30 (Wisdom's Invitation to Come and Rest)
Sunday	Matthew 11:7-19 (Wisdom Is Vindicated by Her Deeds)

THE BOY JESUS

Lesson Scripture: Ecclesiastes 3:1-15; Luke 2:39-52

Focus Scripture: Ecclesiastes 3:1, 7b; Luke 2:39-52

Key Verse: The child grew and became strong, filled with wisdom; and the favor of God was upon him. Luke 2:40 (NRSV)

ECCLESIASTES 3:1, 7B; LUKE 2:39-52 (NRSV)

Ecclesiastes 3:1

1 For everything there is a season, and a time for every matter under heaven:...

7b

7b ...a time to keep silence, and a time to speak;...

Luke 2:39-52

39 When they had finished everything required by the law of the Lord, they returned to Galilee, to their own town of Nazareth.

40 The child grew and became strong, filled with wisdom; and the favor of God was upon him.

41 Now every year his parents went to Jerusalem for the festival of the Passover.

42 And when he was twelve years old, they went up as usual for the festival.

43 When the festival was ended and they started to return, the boy Jesus stayed behind in Jerusalem, but his parents did not know it.

44 Assuming that he was in the group of travelers, they went a day's journey. Then they started to look for him among their relatives and friends.

45 When they did not find him, they returned to Jerusalem to search for him.

46 After three days they found him in the temple, sitting among the teachers, listening to them and asking them questions.

47 And all who heard him were amazed at his understanding and his answers.

48 When his parents saw him they were astonished; and his mother said to him, "Child, why have you treated us like this? Look, your father and I have been searching for you in great

ECCLESIASTES 3:1, 7B; LUKE 2:39-52 (KJV)

Ecclesiastes 3:1

1 To every thing there is a season, and a time to every purpose under the heaven:...

7b

7b ...a time to keep silence, and a time to speak;...

Luke 2:39-52

39 And when they had performed all things according to the law of the Lord, they returned into Galilee, to their own city Nazareth.

40 And the child grew, and waxed strong in spirit, filled with wisdom: and the grace of God was upon him.

41 Now his parents went to Jerusalem every year at the feast of the passover.

42 And when he was twelve years old, they went up to Jerusalem after the custom of the feast.

43 And when they had fulfilled the days, as they returned, the child Jesus tarried behind in Jerusalem; and Joseph and his mother knew not of it.

44 But they, supposing him to have been in the company, went a day's journey; and they sought him among their kinsfolk and acquaintance.

45 And when they found him not, they turned back again to Jerusalem, seeking him.

46 And it came to pass, that after three days they found him in the temple, sitting in the midst of the doctors, both hearing them, and asking them questions.

47 And all that heard him were astonished at his understanding and answers.

anxiety.”

49 He said to them, “Why were you searching for me? Did you not know that I must be in my Father’s house?”

50 But they did not understand what he said to them.

51 Then he went down with them and came to Nazareth, and was obedient to them. His mother treasured all these things in her heart.

52 And Jesus increased in wisdom and in years, and in divine and human favor.

48 And when they saw him, they were amazed: and his mother said unto him, Son, why hast thou thus dealt with us? behold, thy father and I have sought thee sorrowing.

49 And he said unto them, How is it that ye sought me? wist ye not that I must be about my Father’s business?

50 And they understood not the saying which he spake unto them.

51 And he went down with them, and came to Nazareth, and was subject unto them: but his mother kept all these sayings in her heart.

52 And Jesus increased in wisdom and stature, and in favour with God and man.

KEY TERMS

- **Season** – An appointed time.
- **Wisdom** – Clarity.
- **Astonish** – Strike with panic or shock.
- **Grow** – Gain mastery; improve.

INTRODUCTION

In the 1993 sequel of the movie, *Sister Act*, Rita Watson, a young girl from the lower parts of San Francisco, made a decision that would change the relationship between Rita and her mother forever. Rita wanted to sing. She loved to sing. It brought Rita great joy when she

Rita and her mother forever. Rita wanted to sing. She loved to sing. It brought Rita great joy when she was singing; and, she had teachers and friends who so believed in her gift, that they let Rita lead the choir.

was singing; and, she had teachers and friends who so believed in her gift, that they let Rita lead the choir. They did this knowing it would risk Rita missing and possibly quitting school.

Rita’s mother wanted Rita nowhere near music and forbade her to participate in the choir. In a desperate attempt to live out her dreams, Rita disobeyed her

mother’s refusal to allow her to compete and attended the competition with her schoolmates. On her return home from work, Rita’s mother found an empty house and a note that Rita left, explaining that she “never meant to hurt (her), but (she) had to follow (her) heart.” Shortly after in

the movie, you see Rita's mother at the competition, visibly upset — just as Rita is about to sing. Mom quietly takes her seat but is less than thrilled by her daughter's actions. After staring shamefully at her mother and missing her cue twice, Rita looks away, takes a big gulp, and belts out the most beautiful rendition of "Joyful, Joyful"! The choir, with their upbeat version of the classic won the competition.

The celebration is short-lived once Rita comes face-to-face with her mother. She immediately begins to remorsefully apologize; but her mother stops her. Beaming with joy, Rita's mother affirms her daughter's gift and tells her how proud of her she is. We don't know what happened to Rita when she returned

home. One thing we do know is that Rita never had to hide her gift again, for she now had the full support of her mother.

TELLING THE BIBLE STORY

The reading from Luke is one that is all too familiar. We marvel at how Jesus at Jesus' age was able to be in the spaces

of his elders and engage in dialogue and discourse. Not only was it unusual because of Jesus' age, but because of Jesus' audacity and courage to do what only trained and prepared scholars were allowed to do. Though the teachers stood in amazement, not everyone was pleased with Jesus' actions.

Jesus' disappearance into the temple temporarily caused Mary and Joseph

concern, and their reactions must have mirrored those of any parent in a similar circumstance. When Mary and Joseph finally found Jesus, they were dismayed that Jesus was in the temple. And, too, Jesus responded to them in an unexpected way. Given Jesus' parents' innate concern for their son, it is easy

to see how Jesus' actions could have been interpreted as disrespectful. Jesus' actions and response were of contempt, amplifying Mary and Joseph's distress. Was Jesus wrong? Should Jesus have remained silent and only listened to his parents' rebuke?

Not only was it unusual because of Jesus' age, but because of Jesus' audacity and courage to do what only trained and prepared scholars were allowed to do.

SANKOFA

In 1969, a young and talented Nina Simone composed and released a single entitled, "To Be Young, Gifted, and Black (YGB)." Ms. Simone believed that her composition was given to her by deceased Lorraine Hansberry, the youngest black playwright in history and author of *A Raisin in the Sun*. Simone believed Hansberry was among the young, gifted, and black, and wanted to use her platform not only to promote Hansberry's works, but encourage other young, gifted, and black girls and boys to use their gifts to get involved in the fight for justice.

Simone, knowing her greatness and wanting to speak to the horrific conditions of blacks in America, wrote "To Be YGB" as an encouragement to "make black children all over the world feel good about themselves." She made it her business to "somehow make (black people) curious enough, or persuade them, by hook or crook, to get them more aware of themselves and where they came from and what they are into and

what is already there, and just bring it out...by whatever means is necessary." This song broke the stereotypical cultural beliefs and negative connotations surrounding the idea that only a few were gifted enough to find a place in America (and the world). The song encouraged those who were once YGB to begin to tell the youth "(t)here's a world waiting for you. Yours is a quest that's just begun."

CASE STUDY

The song encouraged those who were once YGB to begin to tell the youth "(t)here's a world waiting for you. Yours is a quest that's just begun."

Parents and guardians are taught to care for their children, and teach them basics like the alphabet, numbers, and colors. What happens when the child learns these basics in less than a year? And, if that is not odd enough, the child has an IQ of 145, learns numbers in another language, and by four years old, knows the capitals of the fifty states? The child becomes one of the youngest members inducted into Mensa, an organization for the 2% of people with the highest IQs. The parent/guardian would not be prouder! Videos are recorded of the child showing off his/her genius skills, with parents/guardians

beaming with pride.

When asked about the child's smartness, the child responds that not only is s/he very smart, s/he is smarter than the parent/guardian(s)! So much so that the child corrects grammar and any erroneous information uttered from the parent/guardian(s). The child's IQ is truly a gift, and if properly honed, will be a global asset. But, for now, where are the lines of demarcation between the child's giftedness and respect for the parent/guardian's limited knowledge and status?

LIFE APPLICATION

Everyone is born with a set of unique gifts, and as God sees fit, the time will come when those gifts are anointed for action. The question is not *if* space will be made for gifts, the question is *when*? There is a generation of leaders who show signs of wisdom beyond their years, and they are ready to take leadership. Will the church be embarrassed or shocked by youths' (not just in age but in experience) audacity to speak up? Will we take the stance of the elders in Jesus' case and

allow the space for learning? Or, will we not only accept the gift, but hone it?

Remember, Jesus was not known as Jesus Christ during the time of this event told in the scripture. Though we know in hindsight that Jesus was chosen by God, the people of that time did not. Several times in scripture and history, God rejected the "qualified" and picked the unlikely person. Jesus was no different.

Jesus was the son of a carpenter and had an extraordinary gift as well as the challenges of any gifted person who decides to accept and use his or her gift. Jesus needed people who would create space for Jesus to sharpen his gift, as Jesus waited for God's appointed time. Despite Jesus' connection to God,

Jesus had to wait for the appropriate time to be the Savior. God's anointing and timing shaped Jesus' chosen destiny.

Everyone is born with
a set of unique gifts,
and as God sees fit, the
time will come when
those gifts are anointed
for action.

QUESTIONS

1. Many say that a child is to be seen and not heard. When is the time (season) for a child to "speak"? Discuss ways that

we might unintentionally contribute to stifling the maturing process of youth's gifts?

2. When we observe and experience bold and courageous youth, how do we respond? What are some of the ways we might discourage youth because of their age?
3. How can the church be more intentional about nurturing and enhancing youth's gifts?

CLOSING DEVOTIONS

Listen to Tasha Cobbs Leonard's, "Your Spirit." Let it remind us that all we do is not by our own might or power, but by God's Spirit. Therefore, anyone, no matter how young or old or seasoned or inexperienced, can be the fire, voice, and light of God.

Prayer: Father, give us wisdom to guide and nurture our youth and set godly examples that they may follow. Amen.

HOME DAILY BIBLE READINGS

July 6–July 12

Monday	Ecclesiastes 3:2-8 (Everything Has Its Time and Season)
Tuesday	Ecclesiastes 3:9-15 (Perform Your God-Given Task)
Wednesday	Numbers 3:11-13 (The Firstborn Belong to God)
Thursday	Luke 2:21-24 (Jesus Presented to the Lord)
Friday	Luke 2:25-35 (Simeon Praises God for the Child)
Saturday	Luke 2:36-38 (Anna Speaks About the Christ Child)
Sunday	Ecclesiastes 3:1, 7b; Luke 2:39-52 (The Wise Boy Jesus Amazes Teachers)

THE WISDOM OF JESUS

Lesson Scripture: Mark 6:1-6; 7:1-23

Focus Scripture:

Key Verses: On the sabbath he began to teach in the synagogue, and many who heard him were astounded. They said, "Where did this man get all this? What is this wisdom that has been given to him? ..." And they took offense at him. Mark 6:2-3 (NRSV)

MARK 6:1-6 (NRSV)

1 He left that place and came to his hometown, and his disciples followed him.

2 On the sabbath he began to teach in the synagogue, and many who heard him were astounded. They said, "Where did this man get all this? What is this wisdom that has been given to him? What deeds of power are being done by his hands!

3 Is not this the carpenter, the son of Mary and brother of James and Joses and Judas and Simon, and are not his sisters here with us?" And they took offense at him.

4 Then Jesus said to them, "Prophets are not without honor, except in their hometown, and among their own kin, and in their own house."

5 And he could do no deed of power there, except that he laid his hands on a few sick people and cured them.

6 And he was amazed at their unbelief.

MARK 6:1-6 (KJV)

1 And he went out from thence, and came into his own country; and his disciples follow him.

2 And when the sabbath day was come, he began to teach in the synagogue: and many hearing him were astonished, saying, From whence hath this man these things? and what wisdom is this which is given unto him, that even such mighty works are wrought by his hands?

3 Is not this the carpenter, the son of Mary, the brother of James, and Joses, and of Juda, and Simon? and are not his sisters here with us? And they were offended at him.

4 But Jesus said unto them, A prophet is not without honour, but in his own country, and among his own kin, and in his own house.

5 And he could there do no mighty work, save that he laid his hands upon a few sick folk, and healed them.

6 And he marvelled because of their unbelief. And he went round about the villages, teaching.

KEY TERMS

- **Wilderness** – A place that is lacking/barren.
- **Reed** – A tall, slender-leaved plant.
- **Soft Robes** – Fine clothing.
- **Prophet** – One who speaks forth by divine inspiration.
- **Messenger** – Delegate.
- **Obedient** – Under arrangement.
- **Astonish** – Strike with panic or shock.
- **Anxiety** – Painful sorrow; uneasiness.

INTRODUCTION

“I Know Who You Are”

It is difficult for people to accept who you've become when they know who you were. This is more prevalent in places where you grew up before people's eyes. Sometimes, despite all your good works and all you have accomplished, people can only see what they remember about you, especially if their impression of you is smaller than God's anointing and calling on your life.

TELLING THE BIBLE STORY

This was the case with Jesus: John the Baptist had already done the leg-work and prepared the people for Jesus' arrival. To solidify his foretelling, Jesus allowed John to baptize Jesus. A dove descended, and God spoke from the clouds anointing Jesus as God's son with whom God was “well pleased.” Jesus was led off to be tempted, launched an

itinerant ministry, set apart some disciples, cast out demons, performed healings, and cleansed lepers – all before the end of Mark 1. By the time Jesus returned home, Jesus had twelve devout disciples, an active itinerant ministry that reached thousands, numerous conversions, performed exorcisms,

and had thriving Bible studies. Yet, all Jesus' anointing, accomplishments, and gifts were met with ridicule and criticism. He was “the carpenter's son” because of who Jesus' parents were, and they could not see Jesus' identity beyond that. Even Jesus' birth did not change their thinking. Because of Jesus' limited formal

“
Jesus' anointing,
accomplishments, and
gifts were met with
ridicule and criticism.”

education, they could not see Jesus as a teacher. Because Jesus lacked formal religious training, they couldn't see Jesus as qualified to preach, exorcise, or heal. They could not and did not accept Jesus. At home, Jesus' calling and ministry meant nothing!

SANKOFA

Queen Nzinga endured an experience much like Jesus. Though of royal lineage, the state of her mother, a slave woman, caused great resistance when the time came for her to assume the throne. Despite her negotiations with the Portuguese, which led to a peace treaty, her position as queen was questioned and rejected, both because she was the daughter of a slave woman and she was a woman. None of her previous accomplishments, diplomatic tactics, or defense skills mattered. The people knew who and what she was, and they refused to accept her as the heiress to the throne. However, Queen Nzinga would not allow others to take away what she knew her bloodline afforded her, so she fought.

She found an ally, she joined forces, and Queen Nzinga fought back. This queen was determined not to let anything or anyone get in the way of her mission.

CASE STUDY

Tanya was 23 years old. She had grown up in the church and every organization Tanya was able to join, she did. Anything she could do to help, Tanya was there.

She loved the church. It was the place where she felt safe, where Tanya felt she could be herself. That is, until Tanya found herself in an unfortunate situation. Then the place that was her sanctuary turned into her pain.

Despite her success, one unfortunate event now marked Tanya's life. Following that life-changing event, "I remember when..." became the resounding theme in Tanya's speech. No matter how much the ministries in her church grew as a result of her influence, Tanya was limited to what people remembered of her past. No matter how many people were converted, committed to, or joined the church, Tanya

**She found an ally,
she joined forces, and
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back. This queen was
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anything or anyone
get in the way of her
mission.**

felt unable to move beyond her past. It took Tanya's moving away for many years and her gifts being used in major ways, for Tanya's "I remember when...", to turn into "I'm so proud."

LIFE APPLICATION

Though generic in form, this is a story that is all too familiar. Growing up in one location makes it difficult for hometown people to see past what they imagined or thought of you. If you were a star athlete in high school, then all judgments would go through that prejudice. If you were extremely smart, the same. There is an expectation you are to meet, and if you do not, it is met with disappointment.

The same happens in a reverse situation. We place judgments based on other's upbringing, familial status, behavior, physical appearance, etc. Look at Queen Nzinga. She was rejected not because she was an incapable or incompetent ruler. She was rejected simply because she was a woman. Unfortunately, she, like so

many, was only as great as her context. Everything from that point forward was screened through that one experience.

Jesus had a gift that didn't come from man. Jesus, like Queen Nzinga, had a gift that came from God, his Father. Every year, Jesus would go to the temple with his parents to celebrate Passover. He would sit at the feet of the elders and listen. By the time Jesus was twelve, he would

engage in discourse and ask questions. By the time Jesus became an adult, Jesus was well versed and saw God in the simplest things in life, hence Jesus' use of parables. Jesus' abilities came from God, and Jesus' knowledge through experience. But, his upbringing as a carpenter's son stained people's idea of who

and what Jesus was, and was to be. Jesus was different. Jesus broke traditions and went against the unwritten rules.

QUESTIONS

1. How has someone's prejudice prevented you from doing the work you know you were capable of doing?

We place
judgments based on
other's upbringing,
familial status,
behavior, physical
appearance, etc.

2. What was it about Jesus that made so many question his ministry?
3. Can you recall a time you broke traditions to serve others? Share your experience.

CLOSING DEVOTION

God, from this day forward, we dare to

“break the mold, go off the wall, be in the world but not of it. (Go) against the grain, less of the same, (and) walk out what love is.” Even if it means rejection. People’s idea of me will not stop who God called me to be. I’m going to march to the beat of a different drum. In Jesus’ name. Amen.

HOME DAILY BIBLE READINGS

July 13 – July 19

Monday	Mark 5:35-43 (Jesus Restores Leader’s Daughter to Life)
Tuesday	John 4:27-29, 39-42 (Samaritans Testify to Wisdom of Jesus)
Wednesday	Colossians 2:1-5 (All Wisdom Dwells in Christ)
Thursday	Mark 7:1-8 (Jesus Denounces Human Traditions)
Friday	Mark 7:9-15 (God’s Wisdom Trumps Human Commands)
Saturday	Mark 7:17-23 (The Heart Not the Stomach Defiles)
Sunday	Mark 6:1-6 (Jesus’ Wisdom Astonishes His Hometown People)

WISDOM: THE WAY, TRUTH, AND LIFE

Lesson Scripture: Proverbs 3:17; 8:32-36; John 14:1-14

Focus Scripture: John 14:1-14

Key Verse: Jesus said to him, "I am the way, and the truth, and the life. No one comes to the Father except through me." John 14:6 (NRSV)

JOHN 14:1-14 (NRSV)

- 1 "Do not let your hearts be troubled. Believe in God, believe also in me.
- 2 In my Father's house there are many dwelling places. If it were not so, would I have told you that I go to prepare a place for you?
- 3 And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again and will take you to myself, so that where I am, there you may be also.
- 4 And you know the way to the place where I am going."
- 5 Thomas said to him, "Lord, we do not know where you are going. How can we know the way?"
- 6 Jesus said to him, "I am the way, and the truth, and the life. No one comes to the Father except through me.
- 7 If you know me, you will know my Father also. From now on you do know him and have seen him."
- 8 Philip said to him, "Lord, show us the Father, and we will be satisfied."
- 9 Jesus said to him, "Have I been with you all this time, Philip, and you still do not know me? Whoever has seen me has seen the Father. How can you say, 'Show us the Father'?"
- 10 Do you not believe that I am in the Father and the Father is in me? The words that I say to you I do not speak on my own; but the Father who dwells in me does his works.
- 11 Believe me that I am in the Father and the Father is in me; but if you do not, then believe me because of the works themselves.
- 12 Very truly, I tell you, the one who believes in me will also do the works that I do and, in fact, will do greater works than these, because I am

JOHN 14:1-14 (KJV)

- 1 Let not your heart be troubled: ye believe in God, believe also in me.
- 2 In my Father's house are many mansions: if it were not so, I would have told you. I go to prepare a place for you.
- 3 And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again, and receive you unto myself; that where I am, there ye may be also.
- 4 And whither I go ye know, and the way ye know.
- 5 Thomas saith unto him, Lord, we know not whither thou goest; and how can we know the way?
- 6 Jesus saith unto him, I am the way, the truth, and the life: no man cometh unto the Father, but by me.
- 7 If ye had known me, ye should have known my Father also: and from henceforth ye know him, and have seen him.
- 8 Philip saith unto him, Lord, shew us the Father, and it sufficeth us.
- 9 Jesus saith unto him, Have I been so long time with you, and yet hast thou not known me, Philip? he that hath seen me hath seen the Father; and how sayest thou then, Shew us the Father?
- 10 Believest thou not that I am in the Father, and the Father in me? the words that I speak unto you I speak not of myself: but the Father that dwelleth in me, he doeth the works.
- 11 Believe me that I am in the Father, and the Father in me: or else believe me for the very works' sake.
- 12 Verily, verily, I say unto you, He that believeth on me, the works that I do shall he do

going to the Father.

13 I will do whatever you ask in my name, so that the Father may be glorified in the Son.

14 If in my name you ask me for anything, I will do it."

also; and greater works than these shall he do; because I go unto my Father.

13 And whatsoever ye shall ask in my name, that will I do, that the Father may be glorified in the Son.

14 If ye shall ask any thing in my name, I will do it.

KEY TERMS

- **Heart** – "The feeling, mood, center of our being."
- **Troubled** – Stirred up inside.
- **Believe** – Have confidence in.
- **Place** – A spot where one can settle, abide, dwell.
- **Way** – Path, journey.
- **Truth** – Fact, reality.
- **Name** – The character or essence of.

The disciples had just learned that Jesus was leaving (John 13). They were confused and probably anxious or upset.

and then commenced with the reason for the meeting. (S)he announces that it is time for her/him to go. The pastor's work is complete and (s)he is moving to

a new assignment. The pastor, to whom church members had been devoted and followed for years, is leaving, and you cannot join the pastor. You have no information about the pastor's departure – reason, replacement pastor, or the location of the pastor's new assignment. Just that the time has come for

the pastor to move on. What feelings are likely to arise within the congregation?

INTRODUCTION

"It's Time for Me to Go"

It's Monday evening and an impromptu church conference has been called. No one knows what to expect. No information was given. All that is known is the pastor is sitting in the front of the room waiting for everyone to get seated. (S)he begins with a song of praise, prayer, and scripture

TELLING THE BIBLE STORY

"Let Not Your Heart Be Troubled"

This is what's happening in our text. The disciples had just learned that Jesus was leaving (John 13). They were confused and probably anxious or upset.


Jesus saw the pain on their faces and immediately tried to ease their minds by finally letting them know where he was going. Jesus said he was going with his father and would make room for them, and when the time was right, Jesus would return, and they would know the way to Jesus.

To the disciples, this was not satisfactory. They began asking more questions. "How are we supposed to know the way? We still don't know where you're going. How are we going to get where you are if we don't even know where you are?!" Again, Jesus tried to ease their minds, this time telling them he is the way, truth, and the life. That meant nothing to them, as they still did not understand what Jesus was saying.

SANKOFA

Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. was an extremely influential man. Wherever he went, he drew crowds of people, some in opposition to him and what he stood for, but most in support. Dr. King was normally

a man of composure and one ready to work. But, on the night of his speech in Memphis, Tennessee, something was different. Dr. King was in his hotel feeling very ill. He knew something was amiss and did not want to leave. His friends and supporters convinced Dr. King not to cancel the speech, and to show up, for the people were waiting to see and hear him. So, he did.



**Dr. King spoke like
a leader who knew his
transition was coming.**

There was gravity in his tone. He spoke as if he knew transcendence was on the way. He spoke as if he knew the time had come for him to leave. Dr. King spoke like a leader who knew his transition was coming. People did not understand what Dr. King was saying. They were too engulfed in his cry for

unity and economic resistance. They were so enthralled by the cadence and tone of his voice, that they missed his announcement that his life had come to its end. And, when he was assassinated the next day, they were left in awe, in shock, and in a state of confusion. Like Jesus, Dr. King had shown them the

way. He exposed the truth to them, and told them of the realities of the time and times to come. And, he showed them the life. He saw what was ahead, and was preparing them for it. For what was Dr. King preparing the people? What was the way, truth, and life he laid out?

CASE STUDY

What would it look like for us as a people to recognize that Christians have varying life goals but the path to get there is the same? The path takes time, commitment, and work to move closer to one's goals. As we get on the path of fulfillment of our goals, we should ultimately depend on God's lead to guide us to the destiny of our goals. The Spanish drama film, *The Way*, is an excellent adaptation of how one man's journey to moral and spiritual significance turns into a journey of grief, love, recovery, and inspiration for four perfect strangers. It tells the tale of four strangers, each on a path to re-establish their own lives, ultimately discovering life along the same path. Though their destinations in

life were different – a father grieving for his son, a woman fleeing from abuse, a man fighting for his marriage, and a boy seeking his voice, there was only one way they knew how to get there, the Camino de Santiago (the Way of St. James). Christians' life goals should include a journey via *the way, the truth, and the life*.

LIFE APPLICATION

Jesus said, *I AM...*

The Way...

The Truth..

The Life...

What did you observe about me over the past few years we were together?

Using Lesson 5 (Matthew 11:7-19), Lesson 6 (Ecclesiastes 3:1, 7b; Luke 2:39-52), and Lesson 7 (Mark

6:1-6), list the examples of Jesus being *the way, the truth, and the life*. Write the book, chapter, and verse.

The Way

The Truth

The Life

Jesus trying to get the disciples?

2. How do you prepare for transitions in your life?
3. How do the words in the scripture speak to God's will for people today to be globally minded?

QUESTIONS

1. Figuratively speaking, to where was

CLOSING DEVOTION

As you go throughout your week, consider all the ways Jesus has shown up as the way, truth, and life. Write them down and recite them each morning as a reminder.

HOME DAILY BIBLE READINGS

July 20-July 26

Monday	Proverbs 3:13-18 (Wisdom, Source of Abundant Life)
Tuesday	John 5:19-24 (Jesus Does What the Father Does)
Wednesday	John 13:31-35 (Love as I Loved You)
Thursday	John 14:15-17 (Spirit of Truth Dwells in You)
Friday	John 14:18-24 (Love Binds Believers to God)
Saturday	John 14:25-31 (Spirit of Wisdom Promised to All)
Sunday	John 14:1-14 (Jesus, the Way to the Father)

FAITH AND WISDOM

Lesson Scripture: James 1:1-11

Focus Scripture: James 1:1-11

Key Verse: If any of you is lacking in wisdom, ask God, who gives to all generously and ungrudgingly, and it will be given you. James 1:5 (NRSV)

JAMES 1:1-11 (NRSV)

1 James, a servant of God and of the Lord Jesus Christ, to the twelve tribes in the Dispersion: Greetings.

2 My brothers and sisters, whenever you face trials of any kind, consider it nothing but joy,

3 because you know that the testing of your faith produces endurance;

4 and let endurance have its full effect, so that you may be mature and complete, lacking in nothing.

5 If any of you is lacking in wisdom, ask God, who gives to all generously and ungrudgingly, and it will be given you.

6 But ask in faith, never doubting, for the one who doubts is like a wave of the sea, driven and tossed by the wind;

7, 8 for the doubter, being double-minded and unstable in every way, must not expect to receive anything from the Lord.

9 Let the believer who is lowly boast in being raised up,

10 and the rich in being brought low, because the rich will disappear like a flower in the field.

11 For the sun rises with its scorching heat and withers the field; its flower falls, and its beauty perishes. It is the same way with the rich; in the midst of a busy life, they will wither away.

JAMES 1:1-11 (KJV)

1 James, a servant of God and of the Lord Jesus Christ, to the twelve tribes which are scattered abroad, greeting.

2 My brethren, count it all joy when ye fall into divers temptations;

3 Knowing this, that the trying of your faith worketh patience.

4 But let patience have her perfect work, that ye may be perfect and entire, wanting nothing.

5 If any of you lack wisdom, let him ask of God, that giveth to all men liberally, and upbraideth not; and it shall be given him.

6 But let him ask in faith, nothing wavering. For he that wavereth is like a wave of the sea driven with the wind and tossed.

7 For let not that man think that he shall receive any thing of the Lord.

8 A double minded man is unstable in all his ways.

9 Let the brother of low degree rejoice in that he is exalted:

10 But the rich, in that he is made low: because as the flower of the grass he shall pass away.

11 For the sun is no sooner risen with a burning heat, but it withereth the grass, and the flower thereof falleth, and the grace of the fashion of it perisheth: so also shall the rich man fade away in his ways.

KEY TERMS

- **Joy** – Favor, grace.
- **Lowly** – Humble.
- **Trial** – Test or temptation.
- **Produce** – Accomplish.
- **Endurance** – Steadfastness
- **Complete** – Whole.
- **Lacking (vs. 4)** – Lagging, being inferior.
- **Generously** – Holding nothing back; opposite of *grudgingly*.
- **Double-minded** – Split in decision making.
- **Doubting** – Not having trust or confidence.

INTRODUCTION

“The world and our lives unfold like a literary plot in which there are stops, starts, setbacks, and temporary transformations, which make life meaningful.” Dr. Edward P. Wimberly, *No Shame in Wesley’s Gospel: A Twenty-First Century Pastoral Theology*

Life is filled with ups and down. There

will be moments of great joy, but there will also be days of great sorrow. When trials come, we are not to be afraid nor discouraged. James tells us we are to be glad. *Even rejoice*, because trials are God’s way of making us whole, making sure that we reach our highest potential, so we will be inferior to no one and no situation. But, in order to do so, we need the wisdom which God gives freely to all who are decisive and do not waver.

...trials are God’s way of making us whole, making sure that we reach our highest potential, so we will be inferior to no one and no situation.

TELLING THE BIBLE STORY

To fully understand this passage, we must first understand the writer behind it. Though James was a common name during these times, the James who wrote this book was someone who

was close to Jesus and followed Jesus’ teachings very closely. This James was a humble man, considering himself a servant of God, “who willingly live(d) under Christ’s authority as his devoted follower” (BibleHub dictionary). James considered Jesus his Lord. This man was James, the brother of Jesus, but he never

used that connection to elevate himself.

James could have easily gone around and boasted about being Jesus' brother. He could have tried to operate and do ministry like Jesus. Instead, he chose humility. He chose to identify as a follower rather than a relative. He chose to glean and learn from Jesus, allowing Jesus to be his Savior and Lord. James chose the lowest status which did not prevent him from experiencing affliction. If anything, his desire to follow Jesus meant doing things in untraditional ways, and there were those who were not in agreement who punished him for it.

James confirms that trials are inevitable. This means that it is crucial to seek God's wisdom in order to

endure life's trials. Tides can and often will turn; but, the faithful are called to seek God's wisdom and hold firm to the faith that God is with us even in the midst of trials and tribulations.

SANKOFA

"Faith is born out of suffering,

and suffering is faith's most powerful contradiction. This is the Christian dilemma."

Matriarch Mrs. Fannie Lou Hamer experienced great tragedy and suffering over the course of her life. From unknowingly being sterilized to being badly beaten, she faced affliction no human being should ever have to face.

But, in spite of all she endured, Mrs. Hamer never let her troubles stop her from fighting for justice for herself and others.

Through the use of spirituals, she led various groups on the journey of reclaiming their God-given rights. She begged the question during her 1964 Democratic National Convention

testimony, "Is this America, the land of the free and the home of the brave, where we have to sleep with our telephones off the hooks because our lives be threatened daily because we want to live as decent human beings in America?" She used her abuse to fuel her passion and fire, going on to become co-founder and vice-chair

James could have easily gone around and boasted about being Jesus' brother. He could have tried to operate and do ministry like Jesus. Instead, he chose humility.

of the Freedom Democratic Party. Her experience became her voice and made space for her work.

How would you have responded if you were there with Mrs. Hamer? Would you join the fight knowing you would be persecuted? Would you resist and endure suffering?

CASE STUDY

What is endurance?

The Cambridge Dictionary defines endurance as “the ability to continue doing something for a long time” or “the ability to keep doing something difficult, unpleasant, or painful for a long time.” *Merrill-Webster* defines endurance as “the ability to withstand hardship or adversity; especially, the ability to sustain a prolonged stressful effort or activity.”

As black people living in America and throughout the world, we have experienced and continue to experience threats, trauma, and trials. The burden we carry from the cruelty inflicted on us still affects us years after it all has “ended.”

But, we are resilient.

Artists Jefferson Pinder and Sherman Fleming use the human body to show the ways in which endurance and resilience shows up in us despite grueling conditions. Through a series of contortions and awkward positioning, the body conveys the stamina and duration necessary “to remain self-possessed and authentic within the social and institutionalized construct of racism and sexism.”

Take a moment to visit their sites and discuss what their work teaches us about endurance.

<http://www.jeffersonpinder.com/the-art-of-black-endurance>

<http://www.washingtonart.net/fleming/sherman.html>

Her experience
became her voice and
made space for her
work.

LIFE APPLICATION

Endurance is not meant to convey being absent from some degrees of difficulty. Trials are going to come. James did not say “if” or “perhaps.” He said “when” meaning trials are inevitable. If we have

built up our endurance, we will be able to fully withstand the storm we are facing wholly and with maturity. We will not be inferior in any way, and we will stand strong and firm. Endurance strengthens our heart, eases our mind, and helps stabilize our mental health. Therefore, it is not produced overnight. Endurance is a skill acquired through an elongated process of stress and strain, and it requires wisdom. Without wisdom, we lack “the ability to make good judgments based on what (we) have learned from (our) experience, or the knowledge and understanding that gives (us) this ability” (*Cambridge Dictionary*).

Dr. Tudor Bompa, a sports scientist, is credited with developing the periodization method of endurance training. In his method, there are four building blocks – preparation, base, build, and race. Each block is necessary for stabilizing the heart, to keep it steady during periods of high stress; regulating breathing, to keep air flow consistent and steady; building muscles, for strength and agility; and stretching of muscles to keep the body loose, to prevent tension.

Using Dr. Bompa's model, identify ways to build your spiritual endurance.

Preparation
Base
Build
Race

QUESTIONS

1. James warns against anger, is there a proper role or function of anger in the life of the believer? Why? How?
2. Why is it important to have endurance?
3. Why is endurance necessary in the life of the believer?
4. In what ways would you resist and/or endure suffering?

CLOSING DEVOTIONS

When others fail to.” ~S.J. Goldner

“Endurance is trudging on a little
bit longer

It is not giving up—but getting
stronger.

Endurance is growing taller

When you want to grow smaller,

It is believing in you

Prayer: Dear God, give us the
wisdom and the strength to endure and
thrive in the midst of trials and suffering.
Show us when to listen and when to
speak, when to sit and when to stand
up, when to wait and when to move. In
Jesus’ name. AMEN.

HOME DAILY BIBLE READINGS**July 27 – August 2**

Monday	Colossians 1:24-29 (Suffering on Behalf of the Church)
Tuesday	Titus 3:3-7 (Saved by God’s Mercy)
Wednesday	Luke 11:9-13 (Ask: God Will Supply Your Needs)
Thursday	Romans 5:1-5 (Rejoice in Your Sufferings)
Friday	Romans 5:6-11 (God’s Loving Actions Toward Sinners)
Saturday	Isaiah 40:1-8 (Grass Withers but God’s Word Stands)
Sunday	James 1:1-11 (Wisdom Overcomes Trials and Temptations)

HEARING AND DOING THE WORD

Lesson Scripture: James 1:19-27

Focus Scripture: Same

*Key Verse: Be doers of the word, and not merely hearers who deceive themselves.
James 1:22 (NRSV)*

JAMES 1:19-27 (NRSV)

19 You must understand this, my beloved: let everyone be quick to listen, slow to speak, slow to anger;

20 for your anger does not produce God's righteousness.

21 Therefore rid yourselves of all sordidness and rank growth of wickedness, and welcome with meekness the implanted word that has the power to save your souls.

22 But be doers of the word, and not merely hearers who deceive themselves.

23 For if any are hearers of the word and not doers, they are like those who look at themselves in a mirror;

24 for they look at themselves and, on going away, immediately forget what they were like.

25 But those who look into the perfect law, the law of liberty, and persevere, being not hearers who forget but doers who act—they will be blessed in their doing.

26 If any think they are religious, and do not bridle their tongues but deceive their hearts, their religion is worthless.

27 Religion that is pure and undefiled before God, the Father, is this: to care for orphans and widows in their distress, and to keep oneself unstained by the world.

JAMES 1:19-27 (KJV)

19 Wherefore, my beloved brethren, let every man be swift to hear, slow to speak, slow to wrath:

20 For the wrath of man worketh not the righteousness of God.

21 Wherefore lay apart all filthiness and superfluity of naughtiness, and receive with meekness the engrafted word, which is able to save your souls.

22 But be ye doers of the word, and not hearers only, deceiving your own selves.

23 For if any be a hearer of the word, and not a doer, he is like unto a man beholding his natural face in a glass:

24 For he beholdeth himself, and goeth his way, and straightway forgetteth what manner of man he was.

25 But whoso looketh into the perfect law of liberty, and continueth therein, he being not a forgetful hearer, but a doer of the work, this man shall be blessed in his deed.

26 If any man among you seem to be religious, and brideth not his tongue, but deceiveth his own heart, this man's religion is vain.

27 Pure religion and undefiled before God and the Father is this, To visit the fatherless and widows in their affliction, and to keep himself unspotted from the world.

KEY TERMS

- **Law** – A force or influence impelling to action.
- **Sordidness** – Filth, moral defilement.
- **Save** – Deliver into safety.
- **Rank Growth** – Abundance.
- **Anger** – Full of, swarming with unsettled opposition.
- **Wickedness** – Malice, ill-will, desire to injure.
- **Implanted** – Placed in, which enables something to develop.

all after loving God with all our being is to care for others, especially the lowest among us. This is how people will identify us as believers — by the love we share with and show to others. If we are honest, we do not always follow this command as we should.

TELLING THE BIBLE STORY

James began this chapter by encouraging us to press through the trials we face, for they are necessary in developing our whole being. Not only do our trials make us whole, they help us to reach our full capacity in order to be effective in the kingdom.

So, it is no surprise that James ends the

Not only do our trials
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INTRODUCTION

The Bible is filled with many laws, rules, and commandments that believers are to follow. There are commandments about how we are to care for our homes and the resources with which God has entrusted us. There are instructions about work life, taxes, tithes, etc. and information about spreading the gospel and praise and worship. The greatest commandment of

chapter by telling us how we are to handle difficult situations: we are to be ready to hear what is being said. By listening intently, we leave very little room for snappy or quick responses. It also keeps us from swelling with anger. This positions us to use what we've learned to bring freedom and salvation to others, which we are commanded to do.

We are not only to listen to God's Word, but also follow the Word's commands.

SANKOFA

“Does the practice of our religion reflect the God we serve?” – Ken Pell

1954 was the year *Brown v. Board of Education* was finalized. The case was named after Rev. Oliver Brown, an AME pastor. The United States rendered laws establishing segregation in public schools unconstitutional. It was concluded that the separate schools were not equal, and states needed to be intentional and deliberate about ending the separation. However, southern states were not pleased with the ruling and ignored the judgment of the Supreme Court. Some white southerners boycotted their schools which were forced to segregate, while others lined up in droves and boycotted black southerners who dared oblige the ruling of the court.

In New Orleans, Louisiana, and

Little Rock, Arkansas, despite the straightforward and non-negotiable command, white southerners opted not to be doers. They proclaimed to be Christian, but their actions and words presented an uglier, hateful side. As a result, the villainous behavior of those against segregation rang loudly. Pictures and audios of their evil towards black students are forever part of their history.

It was concluded that the separate schools were not equal, and states needed to be intentional and deliberate about ending the separation.

Their unrighteousness and refusal to uphold the command tempted them to keep black students in the bondage of unequal educational settings. But, with the help of the National Guard and federal government, the students were liberated, and the schools integrated.

“There’s a lot of people who talk about doing good, and a lot of people who argue about what’s good and what’s not good, but there are other folks who just put their lives on the line for what is right.” – Robert Coles, *The Moral Life of Children*

CASE STUDY

"If you don't want your child separated, then don't bring them across the border illegally." – Former U.S. Attorney General, Jeff Sessions.

In 2018, the "zero tolerance" immigration policy publicly went into effect, separating children from their adult family members who tried to enter the United States by way of the Mexican border. After an investigation revealed that the children were being held in terrible conditions, it was also released that the practice was in effect for over a year. Despite the immigrants' only crime being the desire for a better life, they were treated as criminals. Parents and guardians were imprisoned, and children were housed in cages and small spaces. The scene was horrific. Who was at the forefront? Those who proclaimed to embody the name of Jesus, Christians. Despite James' command to "be doers of the word, and not merely hearers who deceive themselves... (and) to care for orphans and widows in their distress, and

It is taught that being a hearer and not a doer is like someone looking into a mirror, but not able to picture their face once (s)he is away from the mirror.

to keep oneself unstained by the world," some Christians did not act nor respond in the way of Christ. Yes, statements were written, and some even spoke out against it. Very little action was taken to protect one of the most vulnerable groups in the world. To date, more than 5,000 children remain separated from their families, which is unfathomable, considering the number started at 700 and a policy was written to reunify the families. How will the church respond?

LIFE APPLICATION**Who Are You? A Hearer or a Doer?**

James 1:23-24 is often interpreted as a statement of physicality. It is taught that being a hearer and not a doer is like someone looking into a mirror, but not able to picture their face once (s)he is away from the mirror. But, that is not the total truth. Verse 24 ends with the phrase "forget what they were like." It does not say *look* like. It says *were* like, bringing attention to the person's manner or quality of being.

This phrase goes beyond the

traditional interpretation of a mirror as a looking glass to observe one's physical nature. In this context, the mirror is a metaphor for reflection; taking a look at oneself, observing, soul searching, having a revelation about the character one exudes, whether good or bad, and seeing oneself as one is. As soon as that period of reflection is over, one forgets everything that was revealed to her/him.

(S)he forgets the flaws that were exposed, or on the opposite end, forgets the gifts that were highlighted.

(S)he forgets her/his character, temperament, and even what initially led to the meditation. (S)he is sensitive, and open in the moment, but once the moment passes, it's back to business as usual. No conversion. No transformation. No repentance.

That is what it is like when we hear the Word, but don't do the Word. It goes in one ear, stays for a few minutes (depending on how long we're in the Word), and then comes out the other. We must be careful. We have to make sure we are listening to the right Word. We must put

the words of those we follow to the test, proof-checking them with the Word of God. We cannot just depend on a Word preached on Sundays and midweek Bible study teaching. We have to read God's Word for ourselves, in its entirety, and in context so that we are not deceived by over-highlighted passages and half-truths. The right Word pricks our heart, motivates us to change, and inspires us

to be better. We have to move past just hearing and start to take action.



The right Word pricks our heart, motivates us to change, and inspires us to be better.

QUESTIONS

1. Verse 21 says the Word has the power to save our souls. How does the Word save our souls?
2. Verse 25a says the Word will liberate us. How?
3. Verse 25b says the Word will open the doors for blessings. Explain how the Word opens doors for blessings?
4. The lesson highlights the history of desegregation in U.S. schools and the current U.S. immigration policies and how some Christians

have responded to these as actions that do not match God's Word. Are there other examples in current events that demonstrate how believers' actions do not match God's Word? Share and discuss.

CLOSING DEVOTIONS

"What does being a doer look like?"

Over the next few days, take the time to look through today's text and identify all the ways we are to be doers. Write your list below. Take time each morning (or evening) and ask yourself: Am I a doer in this way? How so?

Ask God to reveal to you which areas

of your doing need to be stronger, and if it is your desire, pray that God strengthens your action in these areas.

Remember, "Those who look into the perfect law, the law of liberty, and persevere, being not hearers who forget but doers who act – they will be blessed in their doing." James 1:25

HOME DAILY BIBLE READINGS

August 3 – August 9

Monday	Leviticus 19:13-18 (Impartial Relationships with One Another)
Tuesday	2 Thessalonians 1:3-5, 11-12 (Praised for Steadfast Faith in Persecution)
Wednesday	Luke 6:20-26 (The Poor Blessed; the Rich Criticized)
Thursday	1 Peter 3:13-19 (Suffering for Doing the Right Thing)
Friday	1 Corinthians 1:26-31 (God's Choice—the Foolish, Weak, Lowly)
Saturday	James 2:1-7 (Treat the Rich and Poor Impartially)
Sunday	James 1:19-27 (The Wise Hear and Do Good)

FAITH WITHOUT WORKS IS DEAD

Lesson Scripture: James 2:14-26

Focus Scripture: James 2:14-26

Key Verse: Just as the body without the spirit is dead, so faith without works is also dead.
James 2:26 (NRSV)

JAMES 2:14-26 (NRSV)

14 What good is it, my brothers and sisters, if you say you have faith but do not have works? Can faith save you?

15 If a brother or sister is naked and lacks daily food,

16 and one of you says to them, "Go in peace; keep warm and eat your fill," and yet you do not supply their bodily needs, what is the good of that?

17 So faith by itself, if it has no works, is dead.

18 But someone will say, "You have faith and I have works." Show me your faith apart from your works, and I by my works will show you my faith.

19 You believe that God is one; you do well. Even the demons believe—and shudder.

20 Do you want to be shown, you senseless person, that faith apart from works is barren?

21 Was not our ancestor Abraham justified by works when he offered his son Isaac on the altar?

22 You see that faith was active along with his works, and faith was brought to completion by the works.

23 Thus the scripture was fulfilled that says, "Abraham believed God, and it was reckoned to him as righteousness," and he was called the friend of God.

24 You see that a person is justified by works and not by faith alone.

25 Likewise, was not Rahab the prostitute also justified by works when she welcomed the messengers and sent them out by another road?

26 For just as the body without the spirit is dead, so faith without works is also dead.

JAMES 2:14-26 (KJV)

14 What doth it profit, my brethren, though a man say he hath faith, and have not works? can faith save him?

15 If a brother or sister be naked, and destitute of daily food,

16 And one of you say unto them, Depart in peace, be ye warmed and filled; notwithstanding ye give them not those things which are needful to the body; what doth it profit?

17 Even so faith, if it hath not works, is dead, being alone.

18 Yea, a man may say, Thou hast faith, and I have works: shew me thy faith without thy works, and I will shew thee my faith by my works.

19 Thou believest that there is one God; thou doest well: the devils also believe, and tremble.

20 But wilt thou know, O vain man, that faith without works is dead?

21 Was not Abraham our father justified by works, when he had offered Isaac his son upon the altar?

22 Seest thou how faith wrought with his works, and by works was faith made perfect?

23 And the scripture was fulfilled which saith, Abraham believed God, and it was imputed unto him for righteousness: and he was called the Friend of God.

24 Ye see then how that by works a man is justified, and not by faith only.

25 Likewise also was not Rahab the harlot justified by works, when she had received the messengers, and had sent them out another way?

26 For as the body without the spirit is dead, so faith without works is dead also.

KEY TERMS

- **Faith** – Having trust in.
- **Works** – Deeds that carry out an inner desire (intention, purpose).
- **Demons** – Fallen angels/devils.
- **Shudder** – Shiver from fear.
- **Barren** – Inactive, idle.
- **Justified** – Approved, to show what is right.
- **Reckoned** – Logical conclusion.
- **Friend** – Someone dearly loved and often trusted.
- **Law** – A force or influence impelling to action


INTRODUCTION**“A Prayer for Healing”**

Many churches have a *Sick and Shut-In* list where people who are in need are placed. During the announcements or the pastor’s word, we hear about difficult situations congregants or community members may be facing. We call their names. We ask God to turn their situations around, and we move on. Because we had faith enough to pray, we leave the rest up to God to do whatever

work needs to be done to accomplish what is being asked for.

What if God is waiting for us? What if the healing or turnaround people need depends on our actions? What if our works have the deliverance people are awaiting? The author of James tells us that in addition to faith, there is work that must be done. What work does God need

us to do? What route does God need us to take in order for us to accomplish what needs to be done?



What route does God need us to take in order for us to accomplish what needs to be done?

TELLING THE BIBLE STORY

Multiple times throughout the book of Genesis, God told Abraham he would have an abundance of offspring. One of the last times God said it,

Abraham and Sarah were well beyond childbearing age, making God’s words difficult to accept. Abraham had so much faith in God that he accepted and continued to follow where God led him.

When Isaac was born, Abraham and Sarah were beyond grateful to see God’s promise begin to unfold; but, this promise

came with a test. A test that required Abraham to do the exact opposite of what would make him the father of many nations: to kill Isaac, which meant killing God's promise. But, if Abraham truly had faith in God the way Abraham proclaimed, then he had to allow his faith to be shown through his actions. Thankfully, because of Abraham's action-filled faith, God blessed Abraham far beyond what Abraham could have imagined.

It was the same with Rahab. Moses had just transitioned, and Joshua was now in charge. Joshua received a command from God to move to a new land, but it required him to go in and take possession of the land. Before going into Jericho, Joshua sent two of his men ahead to survey the land.

While they were there, Rahab took the men in and hid them from the town officials who wanted to capture them. She had heard of the ways in which God had previously moved for the men and the places that were already overtaken, and she was afraid. In an act of faith, she

helped the men escape in exchange for protection of her and her family. The men obliged, and when Joshua and his men came into Jericho, Rahab and her family were saved. Rahab's faith and the works of Rahab protected her and her family from being overtaken and destroyed. It is this type of faith and action that the author of James is calling for in our passage today.

Rahab's faith and the works of Rahab protected her and her family from being overtaken and destroyed. It is this type of faith and action that the author of James is calling for in our passage today.

SANKOFA

The Black Church has historically always been a site of gathering and empowerment for believers, in light of unfair treatment and conditions of its people. For African American believers, the church was not only the place where one would go to strengthen their relationship with God, it was also the place where they learned to turn their faith into actions.

During the times of slavery, the Black Church joined the Underground Railroad, which provided a safe haven for persons fleeing enslavement. After the abolishment of slavery, the Black Church became the site of planning and

community meetings. People gathered from all over to receive instruction and guidance on engaging in public faith that fought against injustice and created better, stronger communities.

Their religion was not just for Sunday morning, and more than shouting and praising took place. The kitchens were always hot from cooking. Thread was constantly spinning from the various garments made. Children were disciplined as the neighborhood took responsibility for their upbringing. Problems were not just individual but communal. In addition to personal piety, the Black Church served as a resource for discovering what a life of faithful works looked like.

CASE STUDY

"If a brother or sister is naked and lacks daily food, and one of you says to them, 'Go in peace; keep warm and eat your fill,' and yet you do not supply their bodily needs, what is the good of that?"
James 2:15-16

A.J. Burgess, a two-year old boy, was

born without a working kidney and needed a donor to have a fighting chance at life. Naturally, the first step was to test the closest family members. Lo and behold, A.J.'s father was the perfect match. Surgery was scheduled, and the family, for the first time in a while, was hopeful that little A.J. would actually live. Five days before the scheduled operation, A.J.'s father was arrested. Though he

was released the day before the surgery, the procedure was cancelled by the hospital due to his father's criminal behavior, leaving A.J. without a donor.

A.J.'s mom went to the media pleading for help for her son. The story made national news. Community and faith-based organizations alongside city officials sprang into action. They did not sit in a meeting to discuss the situation or simply pray. They showed up at Emory Hospital in great numbers to protest the decision of the hospital. For days "Shame on Emory and shame on us," was the chant outside the hospital. It was not enough to have faith. They wanted action. They

Being their religion was not just for Sunday morning, and more than shouting and praising took place.

demanded that the Emory University Hospital healthcare team meet with them and discuss better plans for moving forward that did not delay the care for this young boy. Their desire was granted after several days of protests. In the midst of all the discussions, A.J. received a kidney from an anonymous donor, and this year celebrated his 5th birthday.

A.J.'s story is one of a mother's faith and works, which inspired an entire community to action, to ensure her son lived and did not die at the hands of the law.

LIFE APPLICATION

"Immigration, Environment, Prisons, Oh My!"

In the book *What's the Least I Can Believe and Still Be a Christian?*, the author talks about the power of the church and how we are God's hands on earth. Yes, God is the one who makes all things happen, but God has empowered us to do the work to *make* it happen. We have just as much a responsibility to social salvation as we do to personal salvation, yet the church seems to have forgotten that God cares about every aspect of us and our lives. From healthcare, to housing costs, to food access, God cares.

Going through each scenario below,

list ways in which the church can do more than pray and have faith, and take action.

Pray for...

Policies, Politicians, Laws

Poverty, Unemployment, Low Wages

Unjust Court Systems, Police Brutality, Prison

Hunger, Healthcare, Sickness, Environment

Immigration, Race Relations

Natural Disasters (Fire, Storms, etc.)

Teenage Pregnancy, Separated Families

Sexual Abuse, Human Trafficking, Assault

Foster Care, Adoption, Social Services

What Can We Do...

QUESTIONS

1. After reading through today's lessons, what are other ways we can put our faith into action?
2. Is it okay for our "faith works" to merge with God and humanity to achieve the desires of our hearts? Why?
3. Is organ, blood, and platelet donation a responsibility of those who are able-bodied believers? Why or why not?

CLOSING DEVOTION

As you review today's lesson, pray that God reveals to you the ways you can put your faith into action not just for personal benefit, but to help and provide for others. Remember, "Just as the body without the spirit is dead, so faith without works is also dead." James 2:26

HOME DAILY BIBLE READINGS

August 10 – August 16

Monday	Genesis 22:9-19 (Abraham Blessed for Fearing God)
Tuesday	Joshua 2:1-7 (Spies Saved by Rahab's Quick Actions)
Wednesday	Matthew 18:23-35 (Forgive Others Like God Forgave You)
Thursday	Titus 3:1-2, 8-11 (Devoted to Good Works, Avoiding Distractions)
Friday	Deuteronomy 6:4-9 (Works Guided by Loyalty to God)
Saturday	James 2:8-13 (Receive God's Mercy by Showing Mercy)
Sunday	James 2:14-26 (Faith and Works Must Go Together)

TAMING THE TONGUE

Lesson Scripture: James 3:1-12

Focus Scripture: James 3:1-12

Key Verse: The tongue is a small member, yet it boasts of great exploits. James 3:5 (NRSV)

JAMES 3:1-12 (NRSV)

1 Not many of you should become teachers, my brothers and sisters, for you know that we who teach will be judged with greater strictness.

2 For all of us make many mistakes. Anyone who makes no mistakes in speaking is perfect, able to keep the whole body in check with a bridle.

3 If we put bits into the mouths of horses to make them obey us, we guide their whole bodies.

4 Or look at ships: though they are so large that it takes strong winds to drive them, yet they are guided by a very small rudder wherever the will of the pilot directs.

5 So also the tongue is a small member, yet it boasts of great exploits. How great a forest is set ablaze by a small fire!

6 And the tongue is a fire. The tongue is placed among our members as a world of iniquity; it stains the whole body, sets on fire the cycle of nature, and is itself set on fire by hell.

7 For every species of beast and bird, of reptile and sea creature, can be tamed and has been tamed by the human species,

8 but no one can tame the tongue—a restless evil, full of deadly poison.

9 With it we bless the Lord and Father, and with it we curse those who are made in the likeness of God.

10 From the same mouth come blessing and cursing. My brothers and sisters, this ought not to be so.

11 Does a spring pour forth from the same opening both fresh and brackish water?

JAMES 3:1-12 (KJV)

1 My brethren, be not many masters, knowing that we shall receive the greater condemnation.

2 For in many things we offend all. If any man offend not in word, the same is a perfect man, and able also to bridle the whole body.

3 Behold, we put bits in the horses' mouths, that they may obey us; and we turn about their whole body.

4 Behold also the ships, which though they be so great, and are driven of fierce winds, yet are they turned about with a very small helm, whithersoever the governor listeth.

5 Even so the tongue is a little member, and boasteth great things. Behold, how great a matter a little fire kindleth!

6 And the tongue is a fire, a world of iniquity: so is the tongue among our members, that it defileth the whole body, and setteth on fire the course of nature; and it is set on fire of hell.

7 For every kind of beasts, and of birds, and of serpents, and of things in the sea, is tamed, and hath been tamed of mankind:

8 But the tongue can no man tame; it is an unruly evil, full of deadly poison.

9 Therewith bless we God, even the Father; and therewith curse we men, which are made after the similitude of God.

10 Out of the same mouth proceedeth blessing and cursing. My brethren, these things ought not so to be.

11 Doth a fountain send forth at the same place sweet water and bitter?

12 Can the fig tree, my brethren, bear olive

12 Can a fig tree, my brothers and sisters, yield olives, or a grapevine figs? No more can salt water yield fresh.

berries? either a vine, figs? so can no fountain both yield salt water and fresh.

KEY TERMS

- **Judgment** – Conclusion of right from wrong.
- **Iniquity** – Opposite of justice, divine disapproval.
- **Evil** – Inner or outer malice flowing from a morally-rotten character.
- **Bridle** – a line, rope, or device that is used to restrain
- **Stain** – Defile, pollute.
- **Bless** – Speech or actions which confer benefit.
- **Exploits** – Deeds, achievements, activities.
- **Tame** – Restrain.
- **Curse** – To utter or invoke evil against something or someone.
- **Brackish** – Bitter, pungent.
- **Restless** – Unstable, unsettled.

The author of James begins by encouraging us to rejoice in the face of trials, for it is in our trials that we are made whole.

INTRODUCTION

Certified behavioral consultant Deborah Pegues released a book entitled, *30 Days to Taming Your Tongue: What You SAY (and DON'T SAY) Will Improve Your Relationships*. In it, Pegues

identifies thirty negative uses of the tongue, and the detrimental effects they have on us and our relationships. She challenges her readers to embark on a 30-day journey of verbal abstinence, which she calls a tongue fast. Acknowledging that no one can truly tame the tongue, Pegues offers practical ways one

can be a better steward over one of the smallest but most harmful parts of our body, the tongue.

TELLING THE BIBLE STORY

The author of James begins by encouraging us to rejoice in the face of trials, for it is in our trials that we are made whole. He goes on to instruct us to not

only hear the Word but to do as it says. It is in our actions that we not only bless others, but we ourselves will be blessed. In chapter 2, we are commanded to show our faith through our actions, for it is our action that justifies our faith. In chapter 3, James continues the commands, this time focusing on the tongue. The tongue is a small part of the body that is very impactful. It has the power to heal, bring life, and offer peace. But, it also has the power to destroy.

SANKOFA

During the times of enslavement, it was important for those brought from Africa to bridle their tongue. Taming the tongue was literally a matter of life and death. Saying the wrong thing at the wrong time could result in more work, lashes across the back, or worse, death. Slaves learned very quickly the power of their words and used them in ways to get messages to one another. Lyrics in many songs had significant meaning. Code words were established to allow for communication in plain sight of the master or overseer. And, the politeness


of “yes, ma’am” and “no, sir,” quiet tones, and mellow voices, kept them from ever suspecting a thing. Slaves used their tongues to set themselves free, and they taught their children to do the same.

CASE STUDY

Technology is one of the greatest gifts given to humans. It allows us to complete tasks at a faster rate and communicate

with people from around the world. Technology grants us exposure to other cultures and allows us to share ours. Technology offers a space for us to gather and store information, and also share our latest insights, wisdom, and ideas. Technology is not always used for good. In more recent years, technology has

been a means for people to say hurtful and degrading things about other people. It is a mask for some who hide behind a screen in order to spew vitriol about certain places and cultures. Without accountability and any disciplinary action, people can say whatever they want, whether true or not, and the results are



Slaves used
their tongues to set
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same.

often damaging. Like the tongue, when used properly, technology can bring forth many blessings and help improve our lives and those around us. But, one wrong word can do just the opposite.

What are some of the damaging effects of technology?

LIFE APPLICATION

“Sticks and stones may break my bones, but whoever said words don’t hurt”... lied!

Words do things that sticks and stones cannot do. Words leave an everlasting pain that is difficult to get rid of. And, in light of technology, words do not fade away. They are introduced into the World Wide Web where any number of people can like, copy, share, retweet, or repost as many times as they want, and to whomever they choose.

Using Deborah Pegues’ list of the 30 destructive ways we use the tongue, identify the **top 5** you need to work on most.

30 NEGATIVE USES OF THE TONGUE

The Lying Tongue

The Meddling Tongue

The Self-Absorbed Tongue

The Flattering Tongue

The Betraying Tongue

The Cursing Tongue

The Manipulating Tongue

The Belittling Tongue

The Complaining Tongue

The Hasty Tongue

The Cynical Tongue

The Retaliating Tongue

The Divisive Tongue

The Know-It-All Tongue

The Accusing Tongue

The Argumentative Tongue

The Harsh Tongue

The Discouraging Tongue

The Boasting Tongue

The Tactless Tongue

The Doubting Tongue

The Self-Deprecating Tongue

The Intimidating Tongue

The Loquacious Tongue

Like the tongue, when used properly, technology can bring forth many blessings and help improve our lives and those around us. But, one wrong word can do just the opposite.

The Slandering Tongue

QUESTIONS:

1. Given what James says about the tongue, is it ever okay to offend people with our words? Why or why not?
2. Given what James says about the destructive power of the tongues (thus, of words), why would a parent teach a child, "Sticks and stones may break my bones, but words will never hurt me"?
3. Describe ways (other than singing and praising) that the tongue can be used to glorify God.

CLOSING DEVOTIONS

Complete the *Daily Tongue Evaluation Checklist*. This will help you identify the

areas where your tongue needs work. There is no perfect evaluation, and the exercise may take more than thirty days. Persistence and consistency is the key.

Daily Prayer: Lord, forgive me for the ways in which I used my tongue to tear others down. As I go throughout this day, help me to bring my tongue into submission. I need more of your power to help with my (identify area, e.g. lying, meddling, etc.) tongue. Grant me the strength and courage to do better tomorrow. In Jesus' name. AMEN.

http://media.focusonthefamily.com/fotf/pdf/fof_daily_broadcast/2018/web-extras/daily-tongue-evaluation-checklist.pdf

HOME DAILY BIBLE READINGS

August 17 – August 23

Monday	Proverbs 5:7-14 (Unwise Not to Listen to Teachers)
Tuesday	Isaiah 50:4-11 (Testimony of a Wise Teacher)
Wednesday	Colossians 3:1-11 (Slander and Abusive Language Not Allowed)
Thursday	Psalms 119:169-176 (Use Tongue to Speak God's Praise)
Friday	Acts 2:1-12 (Believers Anointed with Fire and Tongues)
Saturday	1 Corinthians 12:27-31 (Tongues and Teachers Are God's Gifts)
Sunday	James 3:1-12 (Speech Is for Healing and Refreshment)

TWO KINDS OF WISDOM

Lesson Scripture: James 3:13-18; 5:7-12

Focus Scripture: James 3:13-18; 5:7-12

Key Verse: The wisdom from above is first pure, then peaceable, gentle, willing to yield, full of mercy and good fruits, without a trace of partiality or hypocrisy. James 3:17 (NRSV)

JAMES 3:13-18; 5:7-12 (NRSV) James 3:13-18

13 Who is wise and understanding among you? Show by your good life that your works are done with gentleness born of wisdom.

14 But if you have bitter envy and selfish ambition in your hearts, do not be boastful and false to the truth.

15 Such wisdom does not come down from above, but is earthly, unspiritual, devilish.

16 For where there is envy and selfish ambition, there will also be disorder and wickedness of every kind.

17 But the wisdom from above is first pure, then peaceable, gentle, willing to yield, full of mercy and good fruits, without a trace of partiality or hypocrisy.

18 And a harvest of righteousness is sown in peace for those who make peace.

5:7-12

7 Be patient, therefore, beloved, until the coming of the Lord. The farmer waits for the precious crop from the earth, being patient with it until it receives the early and the late rains.

8 You also must be patient. Strengthen your hearts, for the coming of the Lord is near.

9 Beloved, do not grumble against one another, so that you may not be judged. See, the Judge is standing at the doors!

10 As an example of suffering and patience, beloved, take the prophets who spoke in the name of the Lord.

11 Indeed we call blessed those who showed endurance. You have heard of the endurance of

JAMES 3:13-18; 5:7-12 (KJV) James 3:13-18

13 Who is a wise man and endued with knowledge among you? let him shew out of a good conversation his works with meekness of wisdom.

14 But if ye have bitter envying and strife in your hearts, glory not, and lie not against the truth.

15 This wisdom descendeth not from above, but is earthly, sensual, devilish.

16 For where envying and strife is, there is confusion and every evil work.

17 But the wisdom that is from above is first pure, then peaceable, gentle, and easy to be intreated, full of mercy and good fruits, without partiality, and without hypocrisy.

18 And the fruit of righteousness is sown in peace of them that make peace.

5:7-12

7 Be patient therefore, brethren, unto the coming of the Lord. Behold, the husbandman waiteth for the precious fruit of the earth, and hath long patience for it, until he receive the early and latter rain.

8 Be ye also patient; stablish your hearts: for the coming of the Lord draweth nigh.

9 Grudge not one against another, brethren, lest ye be condemned: behold, the judge standeth before the door.

10 Take, my brethren, the prophets, who have spoken in the name of the Lord, for an example of suffering affliction, and of patience.

11 Behold, we count them happy which endure. Ye have heard of the patience of Job,

Job, and you have seen the purpose of the Lord, how the Lord is compassionate and merciful.

12 Above all, my beloved, do not swear, either by heaven or by earth or by any other oath, but let your "Yes" be yes and your "No" be no, so that you may not fall under condemnation.

and have seen the end of the Lord; that the Lord is very pitiful, and of tender mercy.

12 But above all things, my brethren, swear not, neither by heaven, neither by the earth, neither by any other oath: but let your yea be yea; and your nay, nay; lest ye fall into condemnation.

KEY TERMS

- **Understanding** – Thoroughly knowledgeable.
- **Disorder** – Out of control.
- **Peaceable** – Wholeness from discerning the Lord's will and obeying it.
- **Selfish Ambition** – Self-seeking.
- **Pure** – Uncontaminated, not mixed with guilt or anything condemnable.
- **Grumble** – To groan because of pressure of being exerted forward.

It is a problem, though, when we begin to rely more on the advice of those around us than of God...

or difficult situations or decisions. When dealing with family issues, one might turn to a mutual family member or someone outside the family for help. The same can be said for friendships. Furthermore, one may even seek out professional help when problems mount and seem too much to handle.

Whom we turn to depends greatly on our relationship with the person(s). Because of the strength and length of the relationships, we know whom to turn to and in what circumstances. The more we trust them, the more we share with

and depend on them for advice, which is usually not a problem. It is a problem, though, when we begin to rely more on the advice of those around us than of God, and their advice leads to disorder and chaos. In this lesson, we will look at the two kinds of wisdom and learn how to

INTRODUCTION

"Who is wise and understanding among you?"

It is easy to turn to friends and family for advice when we are facing conflict

decipher between spiritual wisdom and earthly wisdom.

TELLING THE BIBLE STORY

“Two Kinds of Wisdom”

At the time of this letter in James 3, the people are dealing with really contentious times. There are teachers among them who are giving instructions, and there are other leaders doing the same. Some of what is being said is beneficial while the remainder is causing more harm. Because the tongue is such a powerful weapon, conflicts are arising, and the people do not know how to respond.

In addition to advising people to watch what they say and how, James provides distinguishing markers to help them identify the source of the wisdom they are receiving. If there is chaos and sin, then one can conclude that the advice was not from God. If there is peace, gentleness, evidence of the *Fruit of the Spirit* and mercy, then the wisdom received is from God. They are to seek after and model their own words after those from God.

In addition, like Job, they are to remain patient during these times of contention. These people are to prepare their hearts and position themselves to extend compassion and mercy to their neighbors. It is through these actions that their righteousness will shine.

SANKOFA

To learn how those before us handled two kinds of wisdom, we only have to look at our immediate past and see the countless times where warring ideas caused discourse among us. Dr. King and Malcolm X are two such representations. W.E.B. DuBois and Booker T. Washington offer yet another example, as do Rev. Dr. James H. Cone and his brother, Rev. Dr.

Cecil Cone.

Countless times throughout history, we see persons on opposite sides of opinion. Their path to seeing the fruition of their ideas was often contentious. For us, our intent is mostly the same: to have discourse and voice our ideas, with a path to action. History is laden with persons who demonstrated extraordinary wisdom

“These people
are to prepare their
hearts and position
themselves to extend
compassion and mercy
to their neighbors.”

and courage, whose deeds are now emulated and names universally known.

Is it possible to be on the opposite side but still want the same results? Do differing messages affect the end goal? Can God reside and speak into and through both sides?

CASE STUDY

The media is flooded with a variety of shows offering advice, wisdom, and guidance. Personalities and spiritual leaders offer listeners and viewers tips on living their best life, strategies in identifying their passions, and insight into dealing with difficult situations. People consider them as wise, all knowing, and seek them out for help. These “gurus” become the go-to persons for when life is going down a rocky path, or hits rock bottom. For some, these personalities are like their savior, messengers sent from God to bring healing, restoration, and reconciliation to others. So much so that they buy the books, pay for and participate in their online courses, travel across the country to register for conferences, and attend meet-and-greets. Nevertheless, as much as these gurus help, their work and words put them under fire as well. There are those who doubt them. They believe these persons only put out that which draws people in

for their own selfish gain. People critique their movements and denounce their teachings. They do not believe that their insights or messages come from God and do more to lead people astray than to actually help. Their biggest argument? People will search everywhere for wisdom but will not seek the Bible.

How can we tell if the wisdom we hear and read in sources other the Bible is from God or from the world?

LIFE APPLICATION

“What’s the Difference?”

Using the previous passages, identify ways you can tell spiritual wisdom from earthly wisdom. Cite the book, chapter, and verse.

Spiritual Wisdom...

Earthly Wisdom...

wisdom?

CLOSING DEVOTION

God, we have spent the last thirteen weeks learning about the value, the call, and the gifts of wisdom. Through Proverbs, Jesus' ministry, and the book of James, we learned how to implement wisdom, and what to expect when we seek your wisdom above all else. Now we ask that those things we have meditated on be acceptable in your sight, that we not forget what we have learned, but we continue to walk, act, think, feel, and believe in your wisdom. This is our prayer in Jesus' name. AMEN!

QUESTIONS

1. Explain the value of acting with wisdom from above and with patience in the midst of trials.
2. How will you embrace wisdom from God and seek to demonstrate it consistently and patiently?
3. What are some of the ways we can distinguish godly wisdom from earthly

These people are to
prepare their hearts and
position themselves
to extend compassion
and mercy to their
neighbors.

HOME DAILY BIBLE READINGS

August 24 – August 30

Monday	Matthew 24:3-14 (Wisdom About End Time Signs)
Tuesday	Jeremiah 38:1-6 (Wisdom for Speaking a Prophetic Message)
Wednesday	1 Thessalonians 3:6-13 (Wisdom in Knowing Hearts Without Blame)
Thursday	Matthew 5:33-37 (Wisdom in Speaking Clearly)
Friday	1 Peter 4:7-11 (Living Gracefully with One Another)
Saturday	James 5:13-20 (Wisdom in the Prayer of Faith)
Sunday	James 3:13-18; 5:7-12 (Acting Wisely with Patience and Love)

DECALOGUE

Superintendent—And God spake all these words, saying, I am the Lord thy God, who brought thee out of the land of Egypt, out of the house of bondage. Thou shalt have no other gods before me.

School—Lord, have mercy upon us, and incline our hearts to keep this law.

Superintendent—Thou shalt not make unto thyself any graven image, nor the likeness of anything that is in heaven above, or in the earth beneath, or in the water under the earth: thou shalt not bow down thyself to them, nor serve them: for I the Lord thy God am a jealous God, visiting the iniquity of the fathers upon the children unto the third and fourth generation of them that hate me; and showing mercy unto thousands of them that love me and keep my commandments.

School—Lord, have mercy upon us, and incline our hearts to keep this law.

Superintendent—Thou shalt not take the name of the Lord thy God in vain; for the Lord will not hold him guiltless that taketh his name in vain.

School—Lord, have mercy upon us, and incline our hearts to keep this law.

Superintendent—Remember the Sabbath Day, to keep it holy. Six days shalt thou labor and do all thy work, but the seventh day is the Sabbath of the Lord thy God: in it thou shalt not do any work, thou, nor thy son, nor thy daughter, thy manservant, nor thy maidservant, nor thy cattle, nor thy stranger that is within thy gates: for in six days the Lord hath made heaven and earth, the sea, and all that in them is, and rested on the seventh day: wherefore the Lord blessed the seventh day and hallowed it.

School—Lord, have mercy upon us, and incline our hearts to keep this law.

My soul be on thy guard;
Ten thousand foes arise:
And hosts of sins are pressing hard
To draw thee from the skies.

Superintendent—Honor thy father and thy mother: that thy days may be long upon the land which the Lord thy God giveth thee.

School—Lord, have mercy upon us, and incline our hearts to keep this law.

Superintendent—Thou shalt not kill.

School—Lord, have mercy upon us, and incline our hearts to keep this law.

Superintendent—Thou shalt not commit adultery.

School—Lord, have mercy upon us, and incline our hearts to keep this law.

Superintendent—Thou shalt not steal.

School—Lord, have mercy upon us, and incline our hearts to keep this law.

Superintendent—Thou shalt not bear false witness against thy neighbor.

School—Lord, have mercy upon us, and incline our hearts to keep this law.

Superintendent—Thou shalt not covet thy neighbor's house, thou shalt not covet thy neighbor's wife, nor his manservant, nor his maidservant, nor his ox, nor his ass, nor anything that is thy neighbor's.

School—Lord, have mercy upon us, and write these laws upon our hearts.

Nearer, my God, to thee,
Nearer to thee!
E'en though it be a cross
That raiseth me;
Still all my song shall be,
Nearer, my God, to thee!
Nearer to thee!

Superintendent—Hear what Christ, our Savior, saith: thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy mind. This is the first and great Commandment. And the second is like unto it. Thou shalt love thy neighbor as thyself. On these two Commandments hang all the law and the prophets.

All—Glory be to the Father, and to the Son, and to the Holy Ghost. As it was in the beginning, is now and ever shall be, world without end. Amen.