

2009 Holiday Sermon Series
“Impacting Your Family During the Holidays”
Pastor Dale Campfield – Eastgate Community Church
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Intro:

Matt 28:19 “Go and make disciples of all nations...”

ECC Process of Discipleship: Making an IMPACT...To Love...To Grow...To Serve

We have 3 priorities – To love...which is expressed in our Sunday morning celebration and connection groups. To grow...which is expressed in our Path to Discipleship. To serve...which is expressed in our daily lives in the places we live, work and play; as well as through the local church. The vision of E.C.C. is to gather together weekly for corporate worship, loving God and each other; then to come together in small Connection Groups for discipleship and fellowship, and are regularly involved in reaching out to others with the love, acceptance, and forgiveness of Jesus Christ through community outreach. To Love...To Grow...To Serve!

Today, we will continue with the “2009 Holiday Sermon Series”. We’re moving into the holiday season, Thanksgiving, Christmas and New Years; therefore, the Holiday Sermon Series...

It’s during the holidays that we often times see family that we only see during the holidays – or possibly a wedding or a funeral. This message will work for whenever you see those family members that don’t yet know Christ, whether it’s during the holiday season or any other time. As well, it might be those family members that you just don’t get along with – how do you IMPACT them in a positive way?

AND..... how do we make this IMPACT with our family without “preaching” at them? That’s often the last thing they want to hear, is you preaching at them.

So what do we do? How do we IMPACT our families? How do we get along with those family members that we just “butt heads against”? That’s what this is about. We’re going to look at it in how we can be WISE in relating to them. The key is using WISDOM, being WISE. How can we relate WISELY with our family (or anybody else for that matter), making the greatest IMPACT possible?

Every day you encounter people who are difficult to live with. We need to learn how to deal with other people without conflict.

James 3:18 is the key verse.

"And those who are peacemakers will plant seeds of peace and reap a harvest of goodness."

What you sow you reap. In every relationship, every day, you are sowing seeds. Seeds of anger, seeds of trust, seeds of conflict or seeds of peace.

How do you plant seeds of peace in your relationships? How do you have peaceful relationships? How do you IMPACT your family? By being wise toward them. Not knowledgeable, but wise. Have you ever noticed how uncommon, common sense is? People do not relate to each other. Sometimes we do the exact opposite of what we need to do toward people. We act foolishly toward them and it causes all kinds of conflict.

In this passage, James defines real wisdom. He shows how it differs from our normal reactions. Then he details how it operates.

James 3:17

"Wisdom that comes from heaven is pure, peace loving, considerate, submissive, full of mercy and good fruit, impartial and sincere." He mentions six things in verse 17 and he says that's what wisdom is all about.

He says a couple things. First, wisdom is a lifestyle. It's a way you relate to people. It's a practical use of knowledge. It has more to do with your works than your words. It has to do with your lifestyle, not your lips. It's something that you do. It's your character and your relationships, not your intelligence and your education. Then he says that a lack of wisdom causes problems. Problems with people. When I'm unwise toward my wife it causes problems. When I'm unwise toward my kids it causes problems. When I'm unwise toward people I work with, it causes problems. When I'm unwise with my family, it causes problems.

How do you know if you're being wise in your relationships? We're going to take a wisdom test to see how wise you are in the way you relate to other people. The Bible says if I'm wise I will act six specific ways toward other people. That's how to relate wisely toward others.

HOW TO RELATE WISELY TO OTHERS

1. IF I'M WISE, I WON'T COMPROMISE MY INTEGRITY.

That's the bottom line.

James 3:17

"Wisdom that comes from heaven is pure..."

First of all wisdom that comes from heaven is pure. **That means uncorrupted, authentic.** He's talking here about integrity. If I'm wise I'm not going to lie to you, I'm not going to cheat you, I'm not going to trick you, I'm not going to take advantage of you. I'm not going to deliberately mislead you. Why is this listed first? All relationships are built on trust. If you lie to people all the time, nobody's going to trust you so you'll have no relationships.

Illus: Dr. Leonard Keeler was the guy who invented the lie detector. After interviewing 25,000 people on the lie detector machine, he came to this conclusion about the human race: People lie. As a result that's why we have bad relationships. If I'm wise I will not compromise my integrity.

Proverbs 10:9

"The man of integrity walks securely." He's not afraid of being found out.

2. IF I'M WISE, I WON'T ANTAGONIZE YOUR ANGER.

James 3:17

"Wisdom that comes from heaven is pure, peace loving..."

Wise people work at maintaining harmony. They are peace loving. **They're not always looking for a fight.** Some people love to be argumentative. It's their nature. They love to be argumentative. I heard about one guy who was so argumentative that he would only eat food that disagreed with him. Wisdom is peace loving.

Proverbs 20:3

"Any fool can start arguments. The wise thing is to stay out of them."

Anyone who has been married more than two years knows the hot buttons of your mate. You know what will make them angry and you are not given to avoiding those things. When you get in a good argument and you need to pull out the arsenal, you know what will make them blow up. You know what buttons to push and you're not above using them at any time. Cathi and I call that "hitting below the belt." The Bible says that's dumb! When you know what makes another person angry and you use it anyway that's dumb! If I'm wise, I'm peace loving and I will not antagonize your anger.

Couple of things I know always cause anger:

1. Comparing. "Why can't you be like ?" that makes people angry. "You're just like ... " or "My first husband did ..." 2 Corinthians 10:12 *"It is so unwise to compare."* Don't do it. It only causes anger.

2. Condemning. Condemning causes problems with other people. "It's all your fault!" "You should be ashamed!" Anytime you start a sentence with "you" you're condemning. "You ought... You must... You always... You never... You should... You shouldn't..." Lay on the guilt. A lot of marriages are buried by a lot of little digs. Always attacking.

3. Contradicting. How many of you like to be interrupted? You don't. It makes you angry.

Husband: "Bob and I went out fishing on the fourth."

Wife: "Honey, it was the third."

Husband: "On the third, Bob and I went..."

Wife: "Honey, it was Bill."

Husband: "Well, we went out fishing!"

Wife: "Honey, it was hunting!"

Who cares! Just let the poor guy tell the story. The guy who's listening to it doesn't care about the details anyway. He's just being polite and listening.

If you are wise, if you have any ounce of wisdom, you don't sweat the small stuff. William James said, "Wisdom is the art of knowing what to overlook."

Proverbs 14:29

"A wise man controls his temper. He knows that anger causes mistakes."

Anger gets us into trouble.

So if I'm wise, I will not compromise my integrity -- I level with you, and I won't antagonize your anger -- wisdom is peace loving.

3. IF I'M WISE, I WONT MINIMIZE YOUR FEELINGS.

James 3:17

"Wisdom that comes from heaven is pure, peace loving, considerate..."

Considerate means mindful of the feelings of others. One of the mistakes we make all the time is this logic that says, "If you feel a certain way and I don't feel that way, then your feelings are invalid." Because I don't feel that way. (And everybody knows that I'm the world's example of logic.)

Feelings are neither right nor wrong, they're simply feelings. Husbands, if your wife feels that way, accept it. It doesn't mean it's right or wrong. Wives, if your husband feels that way, accept it. Feelings are feelings. And being considerate means I don't minimize your feelings.

You're setting next to someone during the holidays, or maybe at work or whenever; You say, "It's hot in here." They say, "No, it's cold in here." You're both right. You just have different body temperatures. It's a feeling, how you perceive it. "I'm so depressed"... "You shouldn't be depressed, it's illogical for you to be depressed. Don't be!" That's real helpful! That's what I call not being considerate! The Bible says if I'm wise I don't minimize your feelings.

Proverbs 15:4

"Kind words bring life, but cruel words crush your spirit."

Our typical reaction to feelings, in the first place, is we belittle them. "It's no big deal... You shouldn't feel that way... If only you had an ounce of brain you wouldn't feel that way" That's not being considerate.

Or we play psychiatrist and psychologist and "The reason you feel that way is because..." Don't figure them out, just be sympathetic. It is so unwise and it destroys relationships when you are not considerate.

Have you ever heard of this game... It's called, "I had a tougher day than you had." The man comes home from his work and says, "You wouldn't believe what happened. The traffic jam, the air conditioning went out, the boss went on a tirade ..." The lady comes home from her work or she's at home with her kids and she says, "You wouldn't believe it: Junior stuffed the cat down the toilet and flushed it. It overflowed into the living room. I had to call out the carpet man. The phone rang and the beans burned." You're trying to outdo each other. If you're wise you just accept the fact that you're both tired. You don't have to outdo each other on that. Just accept it. It doesn't matter who had a worse day. If I'm wise, I don't minimize your feelings. You need to be considerate. You need to allow your mate to feel tired when they've had a tough day. You don't minimize it.

I Peter 3 says *"Husbands, be considerate of your wives."* (Like the guy with his new bride. She tells him, "My two specialties are meat balls and peach pie." He says, "And which one is this, darling?" He's being considerate!)

If I'm wise I will not minimize my integrity -- I won't lie to you, cheat, compromise. And I won't antagonize your anger, because wisdom is peace loving -- I know your hot buttons but I'm not going to use them even though I know what they are. And I'm not going to minimize your feelings -- even though it doesn't make sense to me, even though it's illogical, irrational and the stupidest thing I've ever heard, I'm still going to accept it. Because I'm wise.

4. IF I'M WISE, I WON'T CRITICIZE YOUR SUGGESTIONS.

James 3:17

"Wisdom that comes from heaven is pure, peace loving, considerate, submissive..."

James says in v. 17 that wisdom is first of all pure, peace loving, considerate and the fourth thing he says is submissive. Circle that word. It's the only time that word is used in the New Testament in the Greek. It doesn't mean submissive at all. It's a poor translation. It's not the word for submission in the Scripture. The word means "easy to be entreated." It means not stubborn, but reasonable. The Revised Standard Version says "It's open to reason." The Living Bible says, "It allows discussion". If I'm wise I will not criticize your suggestions.

Wise people can learn from anybody. They're not defensive. They're teachable. They're open. It's unwise people who are not teachable. That's why they're unwise. They're afraid to learn, afraid to listen to suggestions.

If I'm wise, I'm reasonable. Can your kids reason with you? Wives, can your husband reason with you? Husbands, can your wife reason with you? Are you a reasonable person. Are you open to discussion? Or are you a closed person?

Most of us are so sensitive to criticism and to suggestions, that we never learn anything. That's why we don't become wise. Wisdom is submissive.

Proverbs 12:15 (Living Bible)

"A fool thinks he needs no advise. A wise man listens to others."

What to do with criticism:

1. If it's true listen and learn from it.
2. If it's untrue, ignore it and forget it.
3. Realize that ultimately God is the only judge of your life.

You don't have to accept every criticism, but you ought to listen to it. And you ought to evaluate it. If I'm wise I won't criticize your suggestion. If you never change your mind, it just says that you're not growing.

One time President Lincoln was criticized for changing his mind from one day to the next. When you're a politician that's called flip flopping. They were criticizing him ruthlessly for changing his mind. He said, "I don't think much of the man who is not wiser today that he was yesterday." Give people the freedom to change their mind.

5. IF I'M WISE, I WON'T EMPHASIZE YOUR MISTAKES.

James 3:17

"Wisdom that comes from heaven is pure, peace loving, considerate, submissive, full of mercy and good fruit..."

Do you jump on every fault or blunder? Every time somebody stumbles in your house, do you say, "Smooth move, klutzo!" Or if they stumble over their words, do you start laughing at it? Do you get a real thrill out of watching people flub? Do you ever let that kind of stuff go or do you always bring up the past? Do you ever just gloss over a mistake or do you continually bring up the past as leverage?

Jesus says that's dumb! **If I'm wise, I won't emphasize your mistakes.** Wisdom is full of mercy.

Proverbs 17:9

"Love forgets mistakes, nagging about them parts the best of friends."

Real friends don't rub it in, they rub it out. They don't keep on harping on all of your mistakes. A wise person won't emphasize your mistakes. He's full of mercy.

What is mercy? Mercy is giving people what they need not what they deserve. That's the way God is toward you. God is a merciful God. God doesn't give you what you deserve. If God gave us what we deserve, none of us would be here today. None of us would even be alive. You don't get what you deserve from God. God gives you what you need not what you deserve, because He is a merciful God. God wants us to be that way to others. That's the wise way to act. Treat people with mercy. You don't emphasize their mistakes and their faults and their failures. When somebody stumbles, you don't judge them, you encourage them.

It says *"Wisdom is full of mercy and good fruit."* What does that mean? Good fruit means it's more than just talk, it's kind actions. It's not just attitude, it's actions. It's not just sympathy, you do kind things for people. The Bible says in James 2:12 *"Mercy triumphs over judgement."* You treat people with respect and with mercy.

6. IF I'M WISE, I WON'T DISGUISE MY WEAKNESSES.

James 3:17

"Wisdom that comes from heaven is pure, peace loving, considerate, submissive, full of mercy and good fruit, impartial and sincere."

I won't disguise my own weaknesses. In [relationships to others, I won't try to play the phony and fake it](#) and do these kinds of things. *"Wisdom is impartial and sincere."* The two words in Greek -- *adiakritos* and *anypokritos*, we get the word "hypocrite". These are the words for hypocrite.

What is a hypocrite? Hypocrite was a Greek theater term. An actor was often called a hypocrite. What he would do is play several different parts. He'd come out wearing one mask, holding it in front of his face and play the part. Then he'd go back behind the stage, put on another mask, come out and play another part. Go back, change the mask and come back. In a typical Greek tragedy or comedy, one actor would often play five or six parts. He was called the hypocrite. It simply means he wore a mask. He pretended. He faked it. He wasn't genuine and real.

The point here is that wise people don't try to fake it. They're not phonies. They're open, they're sincere, real, genuine, authentic -- warts and all, what you see is what you get! That kind of attitude. They're not trying to hide their big secret sin or fault, they let people know where they're growing and where they're struggling.

This one alone would improve relationships so much. Would you agree there is a lot of phoniness in relationships in our world? In the typical office, the politics going on in the typical office is incredible. People saying one thing to one person and another thing to another person. Shining each other on. I think the phoniest place in America is a singles bar.

Everybody has a plastic smile and checking each other out. Where else in America do you offer to buy something for a total stranger? "Can I buy you a drink?" Where else do you do that? The supermarket? You see a cute chick in the supermarket and walk up and ask her, "Can I buy you some corn flakes?" In Sears and see a gorgeous babe: "Care for a toaster?" Where else do you do that? It's so ridiculous and phony.

People appreciate honesty. When you're open and honest it makes other people open and honest. They level because you're not trying to be anything that you're not. You're just there!

Proverbs 28:13

"You will never succeed in life if you try to hide your sins."

Conclusion:

How do you rate on James' wisdom test?

How wise are you? How wise are you in the way you relate to your kids? How wise are you in the way you relate to your mate if you're married? to your friends at school? or the people you work with? Or the family you're about to be with during the holidays?

Do you compromise your integrity? Do you say one thing to one person and another thing to another? Don't. No man has a long enough memory to be a consistent liar. Eventually you're going to get caught.

How about antagonizing your anger? Even though you know the hot buttons of people around you, do you refrain from pushing them? Even when you'd love to get back? Even when you're at the weak point in the argument and you know you're losing? Even then you refuse to pull out the arsenal of offensive weapons. That's the wise thing to do.

Do you minimize feelings or are you considerate? Do you accept them as a fact that they are just feelings and it's OK that people feel differently. God made us all different. Wisdom is considerate.

Are you open to suggestions? Give yourself a one or a ten. I'm totally open to suggestions. I'm totally closed to suggestions. I listen and learn.

Do you emphasize others' mistakes? Do you love to rub it in? That says a lot about your own insecurity more than it does about the other person if you feel like you have to put others down to build yourself up. You need to get to know the Lord because that's where personal security comes from, not from feeling better than other people.

If I'm wise I won't disguise my own weaknesses. The Bible says it's dumb to pretend that you're perfect. Proverbs 28:13 *"You will never succeed in life if you try to hide your sins."* If you go from this service and say, I'm going to really try to be wise. I'm going to do the wise thing. I'm going to be open and honest with the people around me about my weaknesses. Get ready for a big surprise. When you reveal your weaknesses you're going to find out that they all ready know. God already knows your weaknesses. Everybody else already knows them. You're the only one trying to hide them.

Wisdom begins with knowing God.

Psalm 111:10

"Reverence for the Lord is the beginning of wisdom."

There's a difference between knowledge and wisdom. Knowledge you look around to get. Wisdom you look up to get. Knowledge is something you work for. Wisdom is a gift from God. Knowledge is something you reason out. Wisdom is revelation from God.

How do you get it?

James 1:5. The first thing you do if you want to be wise in your relationships to other people, *"If any of you lacks wisdom he should ask God who gives generously to all without finding fault and it will be given to him."*

You need to go home and pray, "God, help me to be wise when I see my family or friends during the holiday season. Help to be wise in the way I relate to my children. Not to act dumb or do things that are going to be counterproductive. God, help me to be wise in the way I work with the clients I have at work when I'm trying to sell them something. Help me to be wise in the way I act toward enemies, toward critics, toward that person at work who really bugs me and gets on my case. Help me to relate wisely." Ask God for wisdom.

The second thing you do is let Christ build that wisdom from within.

Colossians 2:3

"The secret is Christ himself; in him lie hidden all God's treasures of wisdom."

All the wisdom of the universe is concentrated in God in Christ. When you invite Christ into your life, He has all the wisdom you need. As you learn to let Him live through your life, you'll become wiser and wiser in the way you relate to others. Wisdom has nothing to do with your diploma, it has everything to do with your disposition. It tells me how wise you are.

You Watch... You Wait... You'll SEE!