

1 THINK AGAIN

- Who is wise and understanding among [us]?

James 3:13

2 Sermon Text

- Who is wise and understanding among you? Let him show it by his good life, by deeds done in the humility that comes from wisdom. But if you harbor bitter envy and selfish ambition in your hearts, do not boast about it or deny the truth. Such “wisdom” does not come down from heaven but is earthly, unspiritual, of the devil. For where you have envy and selfish ambition, there you find disorder and every evil practice. (James 3:13–16 NIV)

3 Sermon text

- But the wisdom that comes from heaven is first of all pure; then peace-loving, considerate, submissive, full of mercy and good fruit, impartial and sincere. Peacemakers who sow in peace raise a harvest of righteousness. (James 3:17–18 NIV)

4 LimitLess

- Have you heard the theory about how we use only 10 percent of our brains at any given time?
- The 2011 movie Limitless takes that idea and runs with it, spinning a story about a writer who takes a secret experimental drug that allows him to use 100 percent of his mind.
- This causes him, until the drug wears off, to be the perfect version of himself, incredibly creative and attentive.

5 LimitLess

- Everything he’s ever read or seen is instantly organized in his mind and available for him to use in whatever way he needs.
- While he’s taking the pills, he’s such a radiant and appealing person that people are immediately drawn to him.
- And with his entire mind focused like a laser, he’s able to grasp the details of complex business situations and outguess the stock market, a skill he uses to great financial success.

6 Movie Trailer

7 The Myth

- If nothing else, the movie presents one vision of what any of us might be able to do and how dazzling we’d be, if only we could use 100 percent of our brains.
- But here’s the problem:
 - Turns out, we’re already using most of our brains!
 - The old assertion that we are using only 10 to 20 percent is a myth.
 - Researchers have found that any mentally complex activity uses many areas of the brain, and over a day, just about every part of our brain gets a workout.

- Other evidence that the entire brain is operating most of the time is the devastating impact even a small amount of brain damage has on a person.

8 Smart that Isn't Smart

- Our text says, however, that even if we're brain-smart, we might still be dumb -- we might still do really stupid things.
- In our reading, James talks of wisdom that is from above and wisdom that is earthbound, and to whom does he make those remarks?
- Christian believers!

9 Smart that Isn't Smart

- In verse 16, James speaks of "disorder," which commentator Thorsten Moritz says "is a reference to the schizophrenic situation in which Christians who are double-minded find themselves.
- They claim possession of wisdom from above on the one hand, while on the other hand they display the fruits of wisdom from below."
- According to Dr. Moritz, Earthbound, human smart isn't always very smart.

10 Smart that Isn't Smart

- James, who was very concerned about how Christians behaved with one another in the faith community, saw that the community was fit and vigorous only when it was linked to divine wisdom.
- James's distinction between the two kinds of smart is especially clear in The Message, Eugene Peterson's paraphrase of the Bible . . .

11 The Message

- Do you want to be counted wise, to build a reputation for wisdom? Here's what you do: Live well, live wisely, live humbly. It's the way you live, not the way you talk, that counts. Mean-spirited ambition isn't wisdom. Boasting that you are wise isn't wisdom. Twisting the truth to make yourselves sound wise isn't wisdom. It's the furthest thing from wisdom -- it's animal cunning, devilish conniving. Whenever you're trying to look better than others or get the better of others, things fall apart and everyone ends up at the others' throats. (James 3:13-16)

12 The Message

- Real wisdom, God's wisdom, begins with a holy life and is characterized by getting along with others. It is gentle and reasonable, overflowing with mercy and blessings, not hot one day and cold the next, not two-faced. You can develop a healthy, robust community that lives right with God, and enjoy its results only if you do the hard work of getting along with each other, treating each other with dignity and honor. (James 3:17-18)

13 Smart that Isn't Smart

- When it's put that plainly, we might want to say that this so-called earthbound smarts is not smarts at all, and James acknowledges that when he says,
 - “It's the furthest thing from wisdom -- it's animal cunning, devilish conniving.”
 - Nevertheless, James is meeting people where they are, where even some Christian view things or approve of things from an earthly standpoint—viewing people as prey to take advantage of instead of objects worthy of respect.

14 Steve Jobs

- Who cannot -- on some level -- admire Steve Jobs.
- His biographer, Walter Isaacson, compares him to Thomas Alva Edison (1847–1931), the "Wizard of Menlo Park," the prolific inventor of a little more than a hundred years ago.
- Like Edison, Jobs changed the world we live in.
- We can't go through a single hour anymore without being affected in some way by a products Jobs created.

15 Steve Jobs

- Yet as smart as he was, he was a beast of a human being to work with or work for.
- Isaacson cites colleagues, friends, family and acquaintances, and the adjectives that came rolling off the tongue included autocratic, controlling, temperamental, cold, absent, obsessive, distant, passionate, rebellious, and so on.
- He shouted, he yelled, he bad-mouthed people, he misled.
- He was a jerk. "Velvety diplomacy was ... not a part of his repertoire," writes Isaacson.

16 Think different

- After losing a power struggle with the board of directors in 1985, Jobs left Apple.
- However, when he returned to Apple in 1996, Jobs was a different person.
- It was like he had matured a lot and was no longer so egotistical and arrogant.
- And it was during this time he oversaw the development of the iMac, iTunes, iPod, iPhone, and iPad.
- When Jobs died October 5, 2011 the whole world deeply mourned.
- Not for what he took away, but for what he gave them.

17 Think different

- When Steve Jobs came back to Apple in 1996, his chief phrase “Think Different”
- You know, it might be time for some of us who profess the faith to start thinking differently too.

- We can be smart but act dumb because we are using the wrong wisdom.
- Bible commentator, Luke Timothy Johnson says James,
 - “is addressing members of the Christian community who gather in the name of Jesus and profess the faith of the glorious Lord Jesus Christ, but whose attitudes and actions are not yet fully in friendship with God.”
- In other words, we must recognize that conversion (making Jesus our Lord) is only the start.
- We must also learn to apply the wisdom that comes from above as well or we’ll be very much frustrated and disappointed.

18 True Testimony

- One day a hopeless drunk (Frank) wandered into a downtown mission for a free meal. This time after the meal he stayed for the Gospel Service and responded to the “altar call.”
- That night there was a “big turnaround” in Frank’s life.
- He went on to recover fully and becomes a productive member of society and never drinks again.
- However, Frank’s conversion was only a start.
- While he felt that his sins had been forgiven, in many ways, he was the same self-centered, profane, bigoted, uncaring person he’d been—except now he was attending church, praying, and listening to God.

19 True Testimony

- One by one, God revealed things to Frank that he needed to give up or rethink or do differently or take on if he was to continue following Jesus.
- Little by little, he began to make those adjustments -- more conversions, if you will.
- He never said he had “arrived,” but he had a sense of where -- and toward whom -- he was headed.
- The appropriation of wisdom that is from above is a lifelong learning event, and that should not discourage us, but energize us.
- C.S. Lewis, puts it this way using a house -- a lifelong building project.

20 The House

- Imagine yourself as a living house. God comes in to rebuild that house.
 - At first, perhaps, you can understand what he is doing. He is getting the drains right and stopping the leaks in the roof and so on.

- But then he starts knocking the house about in a way that hurts and does not seem to make sense.
- What on Earth is he up to?
 - The explanation is that he is building quite a different house from the one you thought of -- throwing out a new wing here, putting on an extra floor there, running up towers, making courtyards.
 - You thought you were going to be made into a decent little cottage; but he is building a palace.
 - Why? Because he intends to come and live in it himself.

21 Where's our Thinking

- If the current brain research is correct, we're already using 100% of our brain power.
- But that doesn't make us smart or keep us from being double-minded.
- Being smart is using our brains to live out true wisdom, which comes from God above.
- So who is wise and understanding among us?
 - It is he or she who uses his intelligence to apply the "wisdom that is from above," to make peace with others around himself or herself, to show gentleness, to be merciful and to avoid playing favorites.
 - He who is successful at this will indeed reap a harvest of righteousness.

22 Wisdom Contrast

23 Think Different