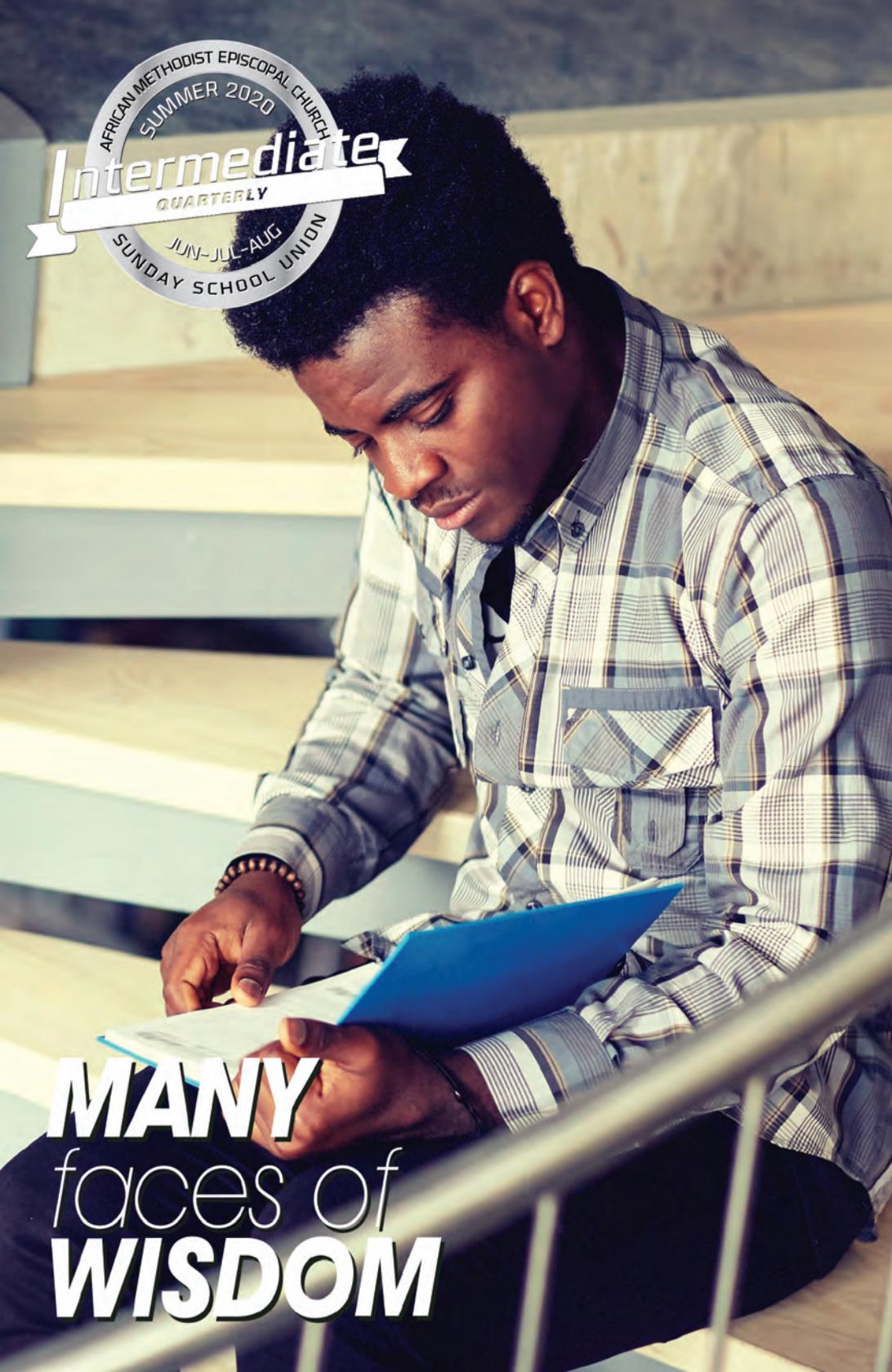


AFRICAN METHODIST EPISCOPAL CHURCH
SUMMER 2020
Intermediate
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SUNDAY SCHOOL UNION



MANY
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WISDOM

INTERMEDIATE SUNDAY SCHOOL QUARTERLY

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----- Ages 12-14 (Middle School) -----

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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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- Rev. Roderick Belin**, Publisher
Rev. Garland F. Pierce, Editor
Rev. Faith M. Waters, Lessons
A.L. Stanfield, Copy Editor
O. Dotson, Layout Design

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*

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."

VOCABULARY

- **Wisdom** – The ability to judge rightly.
- **Righteousness** – Behaving according to God’s Word.
- **Equity** – Acting fairly.
- **Shrewdness** – Cleverness (at judging people or situations).
- **Prudence** – Carefulness.
- **Entice** – To persuade.
- **Scoffers** – Those who ridicule others.
- **Complacency** – To be satisfied.

INTRODUCTION

Mr. Barnes was deeply concerned about the recent disappearance of three 15-year-old girls in a nearby community. But he had promised to let his daughters go to the school dance.

“Carla and Carmen, we expect you to be home by your curfew of 10:00 p.m. This means no matter what your friends decide to do after the school dance, you must come home.”

“Yes, daddy,” they said in unison. Carla and Carmen kissed their father on the cheek as they rushed out the door.

Carla and Carmen met with their friends at the dance. They enjoyed dancing and having fun. An hour before the danced ended, Carla and Carmen left with their friend to go to hang out at the local ice cream shop.

“Mario, what time is it?” Carmen was worried about missing their curfew.

“9:30,” Mario replied.

“Carla, we have to leave. We promised dad to be home by

curfew.” She stood up and grabbed her sister by the arm. Carla yanked her arm away from Carmen.

“I’m not ready to leave yet. I still have some of my ice cream sundae left.” Carla continued eating.

“Ok, I’m leaving. I hope you have a good story to tell dad about missing curfew. Bye.”

Who made the right choice? What do you think happened when Carla returned home after her curfew? In today’s lesson, we are going to discuss the importance of using wisdom when making life choices.

BIBLE STORY

Solomon was the third king of Israel and the son of King David. When God said God would give Solomon whatever Solomon wanted, he asked for wisdom (1 Kings 3:5-14). God honored Solomon’s request but also gave him great riches, power, and peace. Solomon wrote most of the proverbs in this book. Proverbs is a book of wise sayings to teach us how to live godly lives. Solomon wanted to teach us how to be understanding, just, and fair in all we do (vs. 1:1-4). He was directing his words to youth, but all people can learn from his wisdom. We need to apply godly wisdom to our daily lives. Wisdom is found in God’s Word.

Verse 7 states, “The fear of the Lord is the beginning of knowledge; fools despise wisdom and instruction.” The most important factor in gaining wisdom and having a successful life is a deep reverence for God. This means demonstrating a loving respect for God that includes submission to God’s authority, and the commands contained in scripture. Fools are those who hate knowledge and correction, are quick to start arguments, rage with anger, and trust in themselves rather than God.

God has placed people in our lives to guide us. When we refuse to listen to our parents or others who are offering warnings and wisdom about proper life decisions (8), we can

end up experiencing awful consequences. This is why in verse 10, Solomon warns not to let others entice us. Sin seems so attractive until we are faced with the consequences.

In verses 20 through 33, wisdom is personified (given human qualities). Wisdom becomes a prophetess and teacher. Wisdom is God speaking and revealing God’s self to us. Wisdom is in the streets, corners, and cities shouting for the “simple ones” to stop and listen to godly advice (vs. 20-22). The simple ones refuse to receive advice from God. They are prideful and arrogant. We each have a decision to make, listen to God or follow ourselves. The decision will impact the direction of our lives and future (vs. 32-33).

LIFE APPLICATION

Wise Versus Foolish

Think about three people who have given you wise advice. Write down the advice they gave you under the *Wise* heading. Now, think about the opposite behavior for each and write it down under the *Foolish* heading. Circle which ones you chose to follow.

WISE

VS

FOOLISH

The Bible is the guide for godly living. All the wisdom we need is contained in God’s Word. Many people in the Bible would be considered wise. Read the following scriptures and note why the person was considered wise. These scriptures can be models in our own pursuit of wisdom.

1. Exodus 31:1-5 _____

2. Deuteronomy 34:9 _____

3. 1 Samuel 25:3ff _____

4. Acts 6:1-10 _____

5. Luke 2:40, 52; 1 Corinthians 1:20-25

What scriptures do you often refer to when making life choices? Do you have a favorite scripture?

SUMMARY

Our parents have been given wisdom to know how to raise us. When we obey our parents, we are obeying God. God desires for believers to use wisdom. We can only gain wisdom through obeying God's Word. If we desire to have wisdom, we can ask God. The Holy Spirit is present with us to give us guidance. It is our choice to listen or rebel.

CLOSING DEVOTIONS

Prayer: Heavenly Father, we rejoice and thank you for giving us wisdom. Please help us to make right decisions and live according to your Word. Amen.

Closing Hymn: "Lord, I Want to Be a Christian" (#282 - *AME Church Hymnal*)

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*

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.

VOCABULARY

- **Wisdom** – The ability to judge rightly.
- **Righteousness** – Behaving according to God’s Word.
- **Equity** – Fairness toward others.
- **Treasure** – To accumulate and store something valuable.
- **Prudence** – Carefulness.
- **Attentive** – Listening or watching carefully.
- **Blameless** – Having done nothing bad or wrong.

INTRODUCTION

Mr. Barnes paced his living room floor because it was almost 11:00 p.m. His daughter Carla still had not returned home. Her twin sister, Carmen, arrived home by the curfew. Carmen tried to convince Carla to come with her, but Carla stayed at the ice cream shop with her friend Mario.

“Please stop pacing around the living room,” Mrs. Barnes said to her husband. “I’m worried, too. But I think it is better if we pray. God will take care of Carla.” Mr. Barnes sat on the sofa and they said a prayer for Carla’s safe return home.

Around 11:00 p.m., there was a knock on the door. Mr. Barnes jumped up to open it. “Hello. My name is Miss Brenda. I live about six blocks from here. Do you have a daughter named Carla?”

Mr. Barnes mumbled, “Yes.”

“She rang my video doorbell and I noticed someone was trying to drag her away. My husband ran out and chased the man. I let Carla into my house so she could calm down and give the police a report of what happened. The police caught the man. Carla is in my car.” Mrs. Barnes pointed to her green SUV parked on the street.

“Thank you so much.” Mrs. Barnes hugged Carla while Mr. Barnes went to the SUV and got Carla. He helped her into the house.

“I’m so sorry, mom and dad,” Carla began to sob. “I should have come home with Carmen. It’s my fault this happened. I promise to never disobey you again.”

How did Carla’s choice almost lead to tragedy? Why is it important to listen to those who give us instructions? In today’s lesson, we will discuss the value of wisdom.

BIBLE STORY

Proverbs 2 gives us the advantages of following wisdom. There is a choice we all have to make. Either we obey God’s commands and grow in wisdom, or follow the flesh and succumb to the enticements of the world. If we chose to follow the path of godly wisdom, it leads to blessings.

We have to hide God’s Word in our hearts and be obedient to it (vs. 2:1-2). And, if we need understanding and insight, we can ask God. “If anyone lacks wisdom, he should ask of God, who gives generously to all without finding fault, and it will be given to him” (James 1:5, NIV). We have to search for wisdom like we would for treasure (vs. 2:4-5). Both are precious and hard to find. But if we were told there was hidden silver or gold nearby, we would put in the work to find it. The Word of God holds hidden treasures that help us have reverence for God, knowledge, and understanding. If we dig into the Bible, we can find that treasure.

Wisdom comes directly from the mouth of God (v. 2:6). How does it come from God’s mouth? It comes from the scripture, which speak to us. The Holy Spirit helps us understand and gain knowledge from what is written in God’s Word. We have to then apply it to our lives. We have to be both hearers and doers of the Word.

What are the advantages of following wisdom? God is a shield to those who strive to live spiritually and morally upright (vs. 2:7-8). God protects us when we face troubles. God gives us victory. But we have to make the choice to follow the path of wisdom (vs. 2:8-9). It enables us to

“understand righteousness, justice, and equity,” as it applies to life situations. We become wiser and more knowledgeable. Those who know God and the wisdom God gives us in the Bible, will know what course of action to follow when facing decisions (vs. 2:9-11).



I can BEE WISE

by showing good judgment and making good decisions.

LIFE APPLICATION

Godly Wisdom Versus Worldly Wisdom

Read each item below and decide is it Godly or Worldly Wisdom. Put a “G” for Godly Wisdom or “W” for Worldly Wisdom.

- Curse when angry _____
- Have sex outside of marriage _____
- Pray before eating _____
- Help others _____
- Obey parents/guardian _____
- Take illegal drugs to feel good _____
- Use Bible only while in church _____
- Report crimes to the police _____

In Genesis 37–50, we read that Joseph was a wise man who loved God. But he suffered injustices because of ungodly

people. In spite of all Joseph endured, God blessed him. Your teacher will divide the class into two groups, to read Genesis 39. Write on the paper provided – how Joseph acted wisely; the injustices he suffered; and how God gave him favor. Your teacher will lead a discussion on your answers.

SUMMARY

Wisdom is valuable. We have to desire wisdom more than wealth and fame. Wisdom helps us in determining what path to take in life. We have to seek after knowledge to gain understanding. Believers can read the Bible and pray for wisdom. Our actions show we are wise. The wise are protected by God.

CLOSING DEVOTIONS

Prayer: Heavenly Father, we desire wisdom. Hear our prayers and answer as we read your Word. Amen.

Closing Hymn: “Guide My Feet” (#386 - *AME Church Hymnal*)

BUILDING GOD'S HOUSE

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

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.

VOCABULARY

- **Wisdom** – The ability to judge rightly.
- **Righteousness** – Behaving according to God’s Word.
- **Instructions** – Teachings.
- **Arrogance** – Pride, overconfidence.
- **Prudence** – Carefulness.
- **Perverted** – Deviating greatly from what is accepted as right or proper.
- **Prosperity** – Well-being, success.
- **Justice** – Doing that which is right and fair.

INTRODUCTION

Mrs. Barnes shouted from downstairs, “Scott, don’t forget you promised our neighbor to assemble his daughter’s bicycle this afternoon.”

“Okay, mom. Thanks for reminding me.” But Scott had already planned to work a couple extra hours at his job on Saturday afternoon. He went into Carla’s bedroom and sat on the floor.

“Carla, I totally forgot I was supposed to go and assemble Mr. Tim’s daughter’s bike. I have to go to work. I need the money. Can you do it?”

“How can I? I don’t know how to assemble a motorized bicycle. It is far too complicated for me to do. You’re the one who made the promise, not me.” Carla continued reading her magazine.

“Okay, I’ll do it myself! If I do it quickly enough, I can still go to work.” Scott jumped up quickly and left the house.

Scott completed assembling the bike for Mr. Tim’s physically challenged daughter in less than an hour. Mr. Tim was very

happy Scott was able to do the work. But afterwards, the bike's wheel came off. Fortunately, his daughter did not harm herself since she was wearing a helmet and harness. Mr. Tim called Mrs. Barnes and described to her what happened.

On Saturday evening when Scott returned home from work his mother told him Mr. Tim called. "I feel so bad about that, mom. I was in such a hurry to go to work I did not pay attention to the instruction manual. I thought I could do it on my own since I work on bicycles all the time. I was wrong. I'll go and apologize to Mr. Tim and repair the bicycle tomorrow. This time I'll read the instructions."

Why is it important to follow instructions? What are some of the consequences we can suffer from being prideful and arrogant? In today's lesson, we learn that adhering to instructions allows us to gain wisdom and act righteously.

BIBLE STORY

Wisdom is once again personified. But instead of being a "seducing woman" like in chapter 7, she is a woman who provides guidance and helps us to succeed. Wisdom is a gift from God ever since creation. All that wisdom speaks is right and just. If we gain wisdom, our behavior will be righteous and just.

Adhering to instructions helps us gain wisdom. Where are instructions for life found? The Bible holds all the instructions we need for life. Along with the help of the Holy Spirit, we can obtain God's knowledge and wisdom. Godly instruction and wisdom is more valuable than any worldly materials. Even silver and gold are not as valuable as wisdom. Nothing we want can compare to wisdom.

If we truly desire to have wisdom, knowledge, and instruction, a reverence and love for God are necessary. We have to turn away from all evil. How can we say we are seeking godly wisdom

but still act prideful, arrogant, and curse all the time? These behaviors do not demonstrate to others our reverence and love for God. Moreover, these behaviors can only lead to destruction. Wisdom, knowledge, and instruction lead to a fruitful life. Our lives will be marked by righteousness and fairness towards all. And God will absolutely bless us.

LIFE APPLICATION

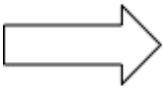
Job exemplified wisdom throughout his life. Read Job chapters 1 and 42. We are going to divide the class up into two groups. Group one will read Job 1. Note how Job demonstrated wisdom. Group two will read Job 42 and note how God blessed Job.

Using Google, research the current value of an ounce of gold and an ounce silver. Which one is more valuable? If you had to decide between an ounce of gold or silver, which would you choose? What would you be willing to do to receive it? What would you do if you had to deny or reject God, before you could get the gold or silver?





God requires us to use fair and just behavior when interacting with others. This shows our reverence and love for God. What does being fair and just mean to you? Write down one word in each arrow. Write the word **God** in the heart.



SUMMARY

We demonstrate wisdom by listening to and obeying God's good advice in scripture. This means valuing wisdom above all else, including the materialistic things of the world. We have to be fair and just in our dealings with others. All evil must come to an end. The choice is clear. If we choose wisdom, God blesses us.

CLOSING DEVOTIONS

Prayer: Creator, we love and reverence you. Your Word contains good advice. We need good advice for our lives. Help us to be fair and just in all we do. Amen.

Closing Hymn: "He Leadeth Me" (#395 - *AME Church Hymnal*)

WISDOM'S FEAST

LESSON SCRIPTURE: PROVERBS 9

FOCUS SCRIPTURE: PROVERBS 9:1-6, 8-10, 13-18

Key Verse: *The fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom, and the knowledge of the Holy One is insight. Proverbs 9:10*

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."

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

VOCABULARY

- **Wisdom** – Good judgment.
- **Hewn** – Cut or carved wood or stone.
- **Immaturity** – Lacking the wisdom usually associated with adults.
- **Insight** – A clear perception of something.
- **Scoffer** – One who ridicules others.
- **Rebuke** – To give criticism.
- **Sheol** – The grave or place of the dead.

INTRODUCTION

“**S**ince we are all here eating dinner together, let’s decide what we want to do this week,” Mrs. Barnes said. The Barnes family always spent time together one evening a week.

“I hate taking time out of my life to do stuff with my family!” Carmen rolled her eyes.

“Carmen, your friends are not as important as spending time with us.” Mr. Barnes shook his head in disgust.

“Okay, I have an idea.” Mrs. Barnes didn’t know how they would respond. “Mount Zion Church is having a missionary from Asia speak on Thursday night. The missionary will also have his family present to talk about their experiences living in various parts of the world.”

“I prefer going to eat pizza.” Carmen interjected.

“We will vote. All in favor of going to eat pizza, raise your hand.” Mr. Barnes noticed only Carmen and Carla raised their hands.

“All in favor of going to hear the missionary and his family speak, raise your hand.” Mr. Barnes and his wife as well as

Scott and Ken raised their hands.

“Okay. We are going to Mount Zion Church. Carmen and Carla, it will be a great learning experience for us all,” Mrs. Barnes stated.

How valuable is the wisdom the missionary will share? In today's lesson we are discussing the invitation to follow wise versus foolish paths.

BIBLE STORY

Within Proverbs 9, two invitations to a feast were sent out. The first invitation was sent out by wisdom, once again personified as a woman (vs. 1-12). The house built by wisdom lacks nothing. It is complete and perfect. Wisdom's house is described as having seven pillars- like a large house, big enough to hold many guests.

Wisdom was portrayed as a responsible woman of character. She has prepared food and drinks, then sets the table. The meal is healthy and provides life-sustaining nourishment. The call to come was from wisdom and her servants. Wisdom bids the simple to come eat at her feast, live, and walk in the right path. Those who are proud, arrogant, hateful, and evil will not accept correction. But those who are seeking wisdom, welcome, and love the opportunity to be corrected. This demonstrates they are beginning to get wiser.

Verse 10 says, “The fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom, and the knowledge of the Holy One is insight.” The wise have a loving reverence for God that includes submission to God and obedience to God's Word. We get the knowledge of God by getting to know God, and insight about what God is teaching us. The benefits of wisdom consist of a longer life, plus much more (vs. 11-12). The foolish will suffer the consequences of their actions.

The second invitation to a feast comes from the foolish

woman (vs.13-18). The foolish woman was loud, ignorant, and lacked good judgment. All she does is leisurely sit around doing nothing. The foolish woman sits at her door and calls out for the simple to come to her feast, just like wisdom. But the difference is, the foolish woman offers unhealthy food that was stolen. It seems so enticing. Sin often seems more exciting than living according to the wisdom contained in God's Word. Those who accept the invitation to feast with the foolish will end up in the place of the dead. We all have to make a choice which invitation we will accept.

LIFE APPLICATION

Draw pictures of foods that are healthy. Draw pictures of foods that are unhealthy. Discuss the effect healthy versus unhealthy (junk) foods have on our bodies. How do you think sin affects us?

HEALTHY FOODS:	UNHEALTHY FOODS:
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How do you choose friends? Wisdom helps us choose healthy relationships. Compare and contrast healthy versus unhealthy relationships. How can our relationships with others personally affect us?

Using your electronic devices, search for a video on building a home (www.youtube.com). After watching the video, discuss how building a home is similar to using wisdom as the foundation of our lives.



SUMMARY

Wisdom is life-giving. But those who act foolishly will be destroyed. It is urgent for us to make a choice. God desires us to have a relationship with God and obey God's commands. This is the path to wisdom. The path you choose determines your destiny.

CLOSING DEVOTIONS

Pray: Heavenly Father, we love and need you. Please forgive us for being foolish at times. We are committed to choosing the path that leads to life, which is through Jesus Christ. Amen.

Closing Hymn: "Come, Sinners, to the Gospel Feast" (#234 - *AME Church Hymnal*)

WISDOM'S VINDICATION

LESSON SCRIPTURE: MATTHEW 11:1-19

FOCUS SCRIPTURE: MATTHEW 11:1-19

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*

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

VOCABULARY

- **Wilderness** – A dry, barren, unfertile land.
- **Prophet** – God’s spokesperson, the divinely called person who announces the will of God to people.
- **Prophecy** – To be able to reveal the will of God about future events.
- **Glutton** – Someone who eats too much.
- **Vindicate** – To show that somebody or something is justified or correct.

INTRODUCTION

“Carla, Carmen, Ken, and Scott,” Mr. Barnes hollered outside, “please come in so your mother and I can talk with you.” The parents sat down at the kitchen table as their children came inside.

“We are going to have a party tomorrow evening after church. We will barbeque the meats and purchase the rest from that new store, Wegmans. Your cousin, Jeffery, is the head chef there and makes delicious side dishes. Pastor Washington and her husband already confirmed they are coming. Of course your aunts and uncles will be here. Do you want to invite anyone?”

“Mom, I think I will invite Darnell. I’ll text him an invitation.” Mrs. Barnes dreaded the thought of Carla’s new friend, Darnell, attending.

“Dad, is it okay if I go buy some candles to put on the tables to freshen up the room? People have body odors.” Scott looked over at Carla.

“I don’t understand why every time I invite Darnell over the family complains he smells strange. I’m not going to stop being his friend because he lives in the homeless shelter. None of you really understand what’s going on.” Carla jumped up from the

table so fast, her soda can tipped over on the table. Her brother Ken soaked up the soda off the table with napkins. Her father followed her into the living room.

“Carla, help me to understand Darnell’s situation.” Dad sat down on the floor next to Carla.

“Dad, I promised Darnell I wouldn’t tell anyone about him suffering with cancer. The treatments make him sick every day. Darnell goes in the bathroom to vomit and often doesn’t have a change of clothes. He is bullied at school. I’m trying to be a good friend. So I don’t let the way he smells bother me.”

“Carla, I am sorry we misunderstood what was happening. Darnell can visit anytime. Tomorrow remind me to ask your brothers to look in their closets to find clothes Darnell may like. We can offer them to him.”

Why was Darnell misunderstood by others? How can we overcome misunderstandings about people? In today’s lesson we discover John the Baptist’s and Jesus’ unusual behaviors were misunderstood, but later proved wise.

BIBLE STORY

Matthew was a Jewish tax collector who became one of Jesus’ disciples. His book emphasizes Jesus is the Messiah in fulfillment of Old Testament prophecies. Matthew wanted to clearly prove that Jesus is the Messiah, the Savior of the world. Matthew wrote especially to the Jews, who still did not believe that Jesus was the Messiah.

In Chapter 10, Jesus prepares to send out the twelve disciples. He gave them authority to cast out evil spirits and heal the sick. Jesus prepared and warned them about the persecution that was to come from being disciples of Christ. The disciples began to understand that the cost of becoming followers of Christ would be great.

Jesus, in chapter eleven, teaches about the rejection of the message about the kingdom. John the Baptist was the one sent to prepare the way for Jesus' coming (Matthew 3). He called for the people to, "Repent, for the kingdom of heaven has come near" (v. 3:2). John the Baptist had been put in prison by Herod because John spoke out against him marrying his own sister-in-law. It was a sin. But John's warning against it cost him his freedom. While sitting in prison, John began to doubt Jesus really was the Messiah. John sent a few of his disciples to ask Jesus whether or not Jesus truly was the Messiah. Jesus' response was to point John to Jesus' acts of healing, raising the dead, and preaching the gospel to the poor (vs. 11:4-5). The evidence demonstrated that Jesus was the Messiah.

After John's disciples left, Jesus spoke to the crowds. Jesus' speech to the crowd asserts John's importance and the anointing given to him by God. Jesus asked the people if they came to see something as insignificant as frail grass blowing in the wind (v. 11:7). He was about to make a very important point. "See, I am sending my messenger . . ." Verse 10 is a paraphrase of Malachi 3.1. John was to prepare the world for a royal visitation by the eternal king.

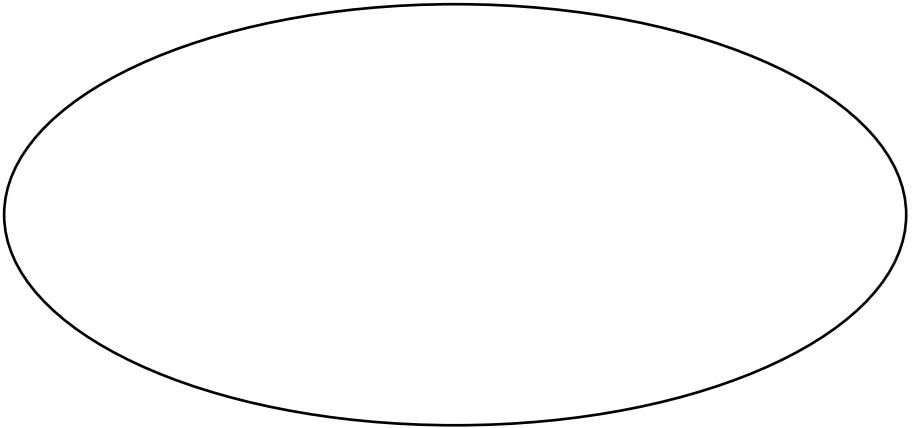
Many would be greater in the kingdom of heaven than John because they would see and know Christ and his sacrifice on the cross (v. 11:11). John simply announced the coming kingdom but his message was rejected. There also would be great violence against the kingdom from those who opposed it and sinners. Moreover, John took Elijah's prophetic role as he confronted sin and pointed people to God (vs. 11:13-14). The people misunderstood John's actions and called him a demon. They also misunderstood Jesus' actions and considered Jesus "a glutton, and a drunkard, a friend of tax collectors and sinners" (vs. 11:18-19). But God (wisdom) had sent both John and Jesus who were vindicated by their works.

LIFE APPLICATION

We all have been misunderstood and/or criticized at some point in our lives. Think about some of the words people use in criticizing others and write them down. Think about wise (encouraging) words we can use instead and write them down. The next time someone is being criticized, think about using wise (encouraging) words instead to help them.

CRITICISM:	WISE:

John the Baptist was called by God to prepare the way for the Messiah (Jesus Christ). John’s appearance and actions were misunderstood by many. Mark 1:6 says, “Now John was clothed with camel’s hair, with a leather belt around his waist, and he ate locusts and wild honey.” Draw a picture of John depicting what you think he looked like. If you were alive during that time and encountered John the Baptist, what would be your first impressions of him? After you got to know John, do you think your opinion would change?



People still misunderstand who Jesus is. What evidence can you share with others that would confirm Jesus is the Messiah? What changes have occurred in your life? Why is it okay to be unpopular when you are a follower of Jesus Christ?

SUMMARY

It is important to use wisdom when making choices. The wisest choice is to accept Jesus Christ. His sacrificial act of dying on the cross for our sins proves God chose Jesus to save the world. After we receive Jesus as our Lord and Savior, the Holy Spirit will guide us in making proper choices. We will be criticized by, and unpopular with, those in the world. But our deeds will show everyone we are wise Christians committed to following God. In the end, our reward will be eternal life in heaven.

CLOSING DEVOTIONS

Prayer: Gracious God, we love you. Thank you for sacrificing yourself on our behalf. We commit to following your Word and walking in wisdom no matter the criticism that comes from those in the world. Amen.

Closing Hymn: "Jesus, We Look to Thee" (#421 - *AME Church Hymnal*)

THE BOY JESUS

LESSON SCRIPTURE: ECCLESIASTES 3:1-15; LUKE 2:39-52

FOCUS SCRIPTURE: ECCLESIASTES 3:1-15; LUKE 2:39-52

Key Verse: After three days they found him in the temple, sitting among the teachers, listening to them and asking them questions. Luke 2:46

Ecclesiastes 3:1, 7b; Luke 2:39-52 (NRSV)

Ecclesiastes 3:1

11 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.

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

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

44Assuming 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.

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

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

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

48When 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 anxiety."

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

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

51Then he went down with them

and came to Nazareth, and was obedient to them. His mother treasured all these things in her heart.

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

VOCABULARY

- **Season** – Appointed/set apart period of time.
- **Favor** – Grace, kindness, pleasure.
- **Amazed** – Filled with wonder.
- **Astonished** – Very surprised.
- **Anxiety** – Feelings of worry.
- **Treasured** – To regard somebody or something as valuable.
- **Divine** – Related or connected to God.

INTRODUCTION

Pastor Washington of Saint John AME Church met with all the youth after the Sunday worship service. He said, “Last week we asked everyone to think about being involved in the Young People’s Division (YPD). We have not had a local YPD since the last YPD President, Morgan Stone, left for college two years ago. No one wanted the responsibility of coordinating the ministry. But it is important to have a YPD so The Missionary Society is going to reestablish the program.” Pastor Washington handed the microphone to Sister Cobb.

“Good afternoon. Just in case you don’t know me, I am the president of The Missionary Society. The YPD is supervised by The Women’s Missionary Society. We have to reorganize the YPD by first electing officers. We need a president, vice-president, secretary, treasurer, and chaplain. I handed out papers with the positions listed. If you are interested in a position, write your

name on the line next to the title. When you are finished, please give the paper back to me. We plan on having elections next week.” After Sister Cobb collected all the papers, she reviewed each one, then took one paper and showed it to the pastor.

“Carmen Barnes,” she called out, “can I speak with you for a moment?” Carmen slowly walked to the front of the church. Pastor Washington and Sister Cobb motioned for her to come over to the side so no one could hear their conversation.

“We noticed you submitted your name to be the President of the YPD. We have some concerns about your ability to hold such an important position. In the past, your parents could not even get you to attend Church School or Youth Bible Study.” Pastor Washington waited for a response from Carmen, who paused before speaking.

“I understand your hesitation in accepting me as a candidate for YPD president. But I have changed since that time. I try to attend Youth Bible Study at least once a month. And I am striving to get to church early enough for Church School on Sunday. My school grades have improved; and, I am making better choices in school. I think I deserve a chance to lead the YPD.”

“Sister Cobb and I both feel like this may not be the best time for you to hold the position. Maybe next year you can try again.” Carmen ran out and slammed the side exit door as she left the church.

What does Carmen’s reaction to the leadership’s decision demonstrate? How can Carmen prepare herself for future leadership positions in the church? In today’s lesson, we discover as a young boy, Jesus listened and learned from the teachers in the temple. Jesus’ questions proved his wisdom and understanding.

BIBLE STORY

Christians attend church on a regular basis. The church is a place where we worship God, fellowship with other believers, study God's Word, partake of Holy Communion, celebrate special occasions, baptize, conduct funerals, etc. The church is one of the focal points in the life of believers. In the same way, the temple was a central place in the religious life of the Jewish people during Jesus' lifetime.

As we learn in the Gospel of Luke, Mary, and Joseph were devout Jewish believers who observed all the laws of Moses (Luke 2:39-40). This means three times a year they traveled from their home in Nazareth to Jerusalem to observe Passover (Exodus 12:6ff), Pentecost (Leviticus 23:15-21), and Tabernacles (Exodus 23:14-16b). By the age of 12, Jesus was familiar with the temple.

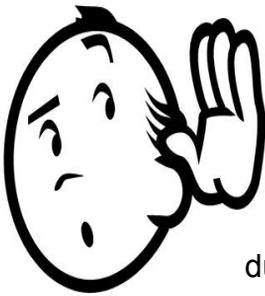
Our scripture takes us to the Passover celebration in Jerusalem. Jesus accompanied his parents to the celebration which was immediately followed by the seven-day festival of unleavened bread (Luke 2:41-42). After the celebration ended, Mary and Joseph started the journey back to Nazareth. They had no idea that Jesus was still in Jerusalem because it was such a large group of people traveling together. It was very easy to get separated from family. After traveling for a day, Mary and Joseph realized Jesus was not with their group of family and friends (vs. 2:44-45). They had to return to Jerusalem to search for Jesus. One can only imagine the panic they felt.

Only after three days of searching did Jesus' parents find him. Jesus was sitting in the Temple amongst the great rabbis listening and asking probing questions. They all seemed really amazed at Jesus' level of understanding and wisdom (vs. 2:46 – 47). Jesus was maturing spiritually. However, Mary and Joseph only saw their disobedient son who had caused them much heartache and anxiety (v. 2:48). Jesus' response in verse

49 reflects an enlightenment of being the Son of God. Despite Jesus' identity and position, he submitted to the authority of his earthly parents for another 18 years, and continued maturing. Mary and Joseph did not understand all that was going on in Jesus' life. However at the proper time, all would be revealed (Eccles. 3:1).

LIFE APPLICATION

Ecclasiastes 3:1 and 7b states, "For everything there is a season, and a time for every matter under heaven;" "...a time to keep silence, and a time to speak." When is



silence beneficial and proper? We have to learn how to be quiet and listen attentively to those who are sharing wisdom with us. We often lack the discipline of listening without interruptions. Wisdom is exercised through good, strong questions. Questions rather than answers were the preferred teaching tools during Jesus' time. Do you recall a time when you asked questions at home, school, or church but were ignored? How did you feel? Did you ever get your questions answered? How do you respond to wise advice?



You may have questions about the Bible, Christianity, or the African Methodist Episcopal Church. Write down three questions you have about any of them. Divide into two groups and share your questions. Someone in the group may have the wisdom to answer your questions. Write the unanswered questions on

the index cards provided and your teacher will try to respond to them.

1. _____

2. _____

3. _____

SUMMARY

For a twelve-year-old boy, Jesus was wise. He listened and asked questions in the temple. Jesus demonstrated wisdom by submitting to the authority of his parents and traveling back home from Jerusalem. We each may be called by God to do special work, but we still have to wait until the proper time to fulfill God's plans. In the meantime, attend school, engage in church activities that promote spiritual growth, and volunteer in your community.

CLOSING DEVOTIONS

Prayer: All-knowing God, thank you for this day. We have so many questions that only you can help us answer. Please give us answers and understanding so we can grow in wisdom. Amen.

Closing Hymn: "Give of Your Best to the Master" (#551 - *AME Church Hymnal*)

THE WISDOM OF JESUS

LESSON SCRIPTURE: MARK 6:1-6; 7:1-23

FOCUS SCRIPTURE: MARK 6:1-6

Key Verse: 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?" Mark 6:2

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.

VOCABULARY

- **Teach** – To impart knowledge.
- **Astounded** – Very surprised.
- **Deed** – An act or work.
- **Offense** – Something that causes displeasure, anger, or hurt.
- **Honor** – To have or show great respect to someone.
- **Unbelief** – Lack of faith, distrust.

INTRODUCTION

Carmen felt God called her to be a YPD leader in the church. She committed herself to being more faithful in learning about the Bible in church school, by attending Youth Bible Study, and praying. Carmen understood she needed to grow spiritually and become more humble. Carmen's life began to be transformed as she applied scripture to her life. But Carmen's friends did not understand why she was acting so different.

Maurice, her friend, came over to Carmen's house when he saw her sitting outside. "Carmen, where have you been? We miss hanging out with you." He sat on the step next to her.

"Hello Maurice. I'm good. I still hang out sometimes with Shirley and Bruce. But I just don't have a lot of free time lately." Carmen replied.

"It's summer. We don't have school so now is the time when we can go to the amusement park, pool, youth center, have barbeques. ...You know, do fun stuff."

"I do have fun sometimes. But I decided to focus on me this summer. I wanted to find out more about what God wants me to do with my life. I think God desires for me to be a leader in my church." Carmen stated.

“Carmen, we’re young. We have plenty of time to do that later. Now, we can just have fun.” Maurice laughed.

“That’s okay for you but not me. I am going to prepare to serve God now. So that when the opportunity comes, I will be ready.” Carmen stood up to go back inside her house.

“Carmen, you are wasting your summer. You are not going to be a church leader.” Maurice shook his head in disgust and went home.

How does it feel when those closest to us misunderstand and reject our beliefs and actions? In today’s lesson, we learn that Jesus’ wisdom and power was rejected by his hometown in Nazareth.

BIBLE STORY

The author of the Gospel of Mark, John Mark, was not one of Jesus’ twelve disciples. However, John Mark he traveled with the apostle Paul on his first missionary journey (Acts 13:13). In our lesson today, the author takes us to a small town called Nazareth (Google “Nazareth”). Nazareth was Jesus’ hometown. Jesus’ family resided there. Since it was such a small town, everybody knew each other.

Jesus and his disciples traveled to Nazareth after Jesus healed a demon possessed man, as well as a bleeding woman. Furthermore, Jesus had also restored a dead girl to life. Jesus went to the synagogue and taught on the sabbath (vs. 6:2-3). He was teaching with great wisdom. The people of Nazareth were very surprised. They were aware of Jesus’ humble beginnings. The people judged Jesus based on where Jesus lived, Jesus’ occupation and family background. They rejected the wisdom Jesus shared because of prejudice. Sometimes people will not accept us or our beliefs based on what they think about us.

When the people rejected Jesus, Jesus expressed that “a prophet is without honor” among his own people (v. 6:4).

Jesus acknowledged that the people closest to him would not understand the mission and vision that was created for Jesus. But this did not make Jesus' work any less important. We, too, cannot let rejection keep us from serving God.

Besides the few sick that were healed, the people's rejection and unbelief hindered Jesus from doing greater miracles (6:5). They did not believe in Jesus' message of being sent by God, and Jesus' power to heal. Sometimes no matter what we say or do some will never accept us. We have to move on to those who will eagerly listen to the message of salvation and believe in Jesus' power to heal and deliver.

LIFE APPLICATION

The definition of a bully is "an aggressive person who intimidates or mistreats another person." Reread today's scripture and identify the ways that Jesus was bullied by the people in his hometown of Nazareth. How did Jesus respond? How does God want us to respond to bullies? _____



We cannot judge people based on where they live, their family background, economic status, race, or gender. None of these dictate our paths in life. Think about Richard Allen, the founder

of the AME Church. Write all the information you know about his birth, life, and ministry. Richard Allen is proof that God can use anybody, no matter their status in life. Discuss contemporary people in the AME Church who had humble beginnings, but God used them to do extraordinary work.

SUMMARY

We can all recall times when we rejected God’s Word, just like the people of Nazareth. In some instances we may have mistreated those who tried to share God’s message with us. The wise accept the wisdom contained in the Bible, and receive Jesus Christ as their Savior. The great news is that if we repent, we are forgiven. We then can experience spiritual and personal growth as we are guided by the Holy Spirit. Our mission for God will be made clear so we can daily follow the path given, regardless of what others think.

CLOSING DEVOTIONS

Prayer: All wise Creator, thank you for this day. We are grateful for your extraordinary wisdom. We will accept and live by your words even when they are challenging. Amen.

Closing Hymn: “Standing on the Promises” (#424 - *AME Church Hymnal*)

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*

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 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.

VOCABULARY

- **Troubled** – To feel anxious or upset.
- **Believe** – To have faith or confidence in God.
- **Prepare** – To make ready, arrange.
- **Dwell** – Live.
- **Glorified** – Honored.

INTRODUCTION

Mr. and Mrs. Barnes asked to have a family meeting after dinner. They made sure all four of their children were present.

“Your mother and I want to have a meeting to discuss an important issue. We finally made the last mortgage payment on the house last week.” Mr. Barnes waved his hands in praise to God. “Thank God for blessing us to do it in less time than we imagined. We worked extremely hard and made sacrifices.”

“Dad, that is so wonderful,” Ken replied.

Scott raised his glass of juice to propose a toast to his parents. All his siblings raised their glasses. “Mom and dad, we thank God for providing a way to pay off the house completely.”

“Thank God for his goodness towards us. Your father and I have decided to leave the house for all of you after we die. We want to make sure if you desired to stay here the house would be paid in full.” Mrs. Barnes used a napkin to wipe tears from her eyes.

“All we have done was to prepare this home for you to enjoy without any stress about paying the mortgage. Your future is now a little bit more secure.” Mr. Barnes reached over and held his wife’s hand.

Why is preparing for the future important? In today’s lesson,

we will evaluate Jesus' promises to his followers about their futures after Jesus departs.

BIBLE STORY

The apostle John wrote this book to prove that Jesus is the Son of God, and that all who believe in Jesus will have eternal life. John was the son of Zebedee and Salome, and brother of James. The book was written after the destruction of Jerusalem in A.D. 70 and before John's exile to the island of Patmos.

Jesus' triumphant entry into Jerusalem was the beginning of the end of his ministry on earth (vs. 12:12-19). While in the upper room, Jesus predicted his betrayal and death. Moreover Jesus predicted Peter's denial (vs. 13:37-38). Jesus offered comfort to the disciples since they had just received disturbing news.

Jesus did not want the disciples to be troubled about Jesus' death (vs. 14:1-4). If we trust in God, we can also trust in Jesus and Jesus' actions. Jesus had to leave to go prepare a place for his followers in God's house. So when we die, we can go with Jesus to our new heavenly home. Our future is secure. Jesus told the disciples they knew the way to get to their eternal home. Do you know the way?

The disciples did not have a clear understanding. Jesus provided clarification that Jesus was the only way to the Father. "I am the way, and the truth, and the life. No one comes to the Father except through me" (v. 14:6). Many think there are other ways to heaven and Christianity is just one option. This passage from the Gospel of John states that we cannot go to the Father except through Jesus.

Jesus rebuked Philip for his desire to see the Father (v. 14:8). Jesus then questioned the disciples' faith and belief in Jesus as truth and expected them to focus their attention on God working inside Jesus. Jesus proclaimed that faithful believers will imitate Jesus in their actions and will do works that are even greater

than what Jesus does (v. 14:12). Jesus declared that anything done or asked in his name which brings glory to the Father will be successful. Our prayers must be part of God's divine plan.

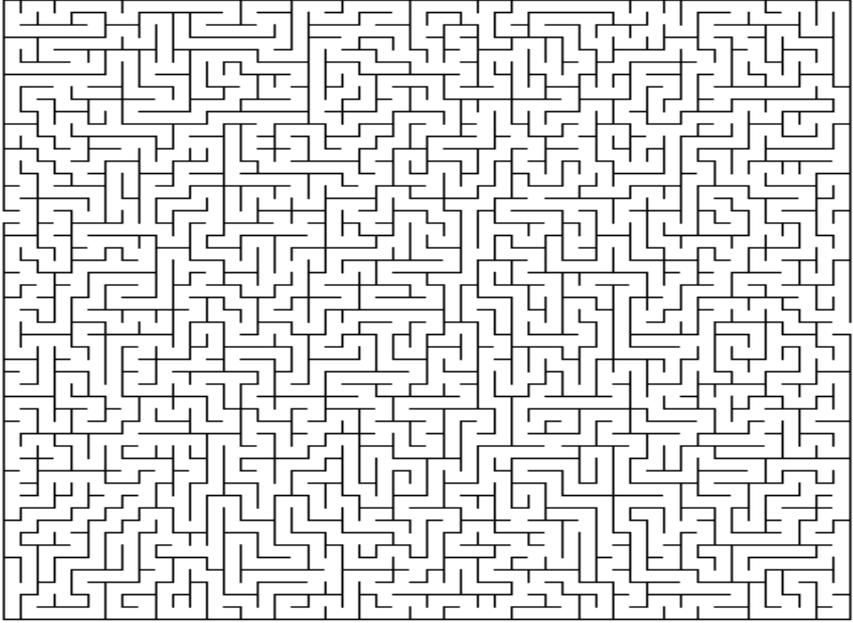
LIFE APPLICATION

How well do you know Jesus? It is important to know the truth about Jesus. Read the statements and determine if it is true (T) or false (F). Place a "T" or "F" beside each statement.

- 1. Jesus' hometown was Nazareth. _____
- 2. Jesus was conceived after Joseph and Mary married. _____
- 3. Mary and Joseph had other children besides Jesus. _____
- 4. Jesus is a good man but not the Son of God. _____
- 5. Jesus was baptized in the Nile River. _____
- 6. Jesus is the only person who has the power to forgive our sins. _____
- 7. Jesus died through crucifixion on the cross. _____
- 8. Jesus' body was stolen from the grave. _____
- 9. Jesus does not heal people. _____
- 10. Jesus has the power and authority to resurrect us from the dead. _____

Jesus is the Only Way to the Father

(On the following page start on left side of the maze to reach the destination on right)



SUMMARY

We have to know the truth about Jesus so we do not follow the wrong path. It can be difficult when we do not always understand everything about Jesus. We can pray and ask for wisdom. The answers will come as we seek to know the truth. The truth will strengthen our faith in God’s promises, and keep us until we are united with Christ in heaven. Heaven is a prepared place for faithful servants of God and followers of Jesus.

CLOSING DEVOTIONS

Prayer: Promise-keeping God, thank you for this day. We are comforted through your promises. We appreciate that you have prepared a place for us to spend eternity with you. Amen.

Closing Hymn: “Jesus Loves Me, This I Know” (#549 - *AME Church Hymnal*)

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

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.

VOCABULARY

- **Trial** – A painful experience that tests one’s ability to endure.
- **Joy** – Happiness, gladness, delight.
- **Endurance** – The ability to tolerate prolonged suffering or hardship.
- **Generous** – Willing to give money, help, or time freely.
- **Ungrudgingly** – Feeling or showing no reluctance or reservations.
- **Unstable** – Apt to change, uncertain.
- **Boast** – To praise or exalt oneself.

INTRODUCTION

Scott loved working his part-time job. It permitted him to have extra money to buy what he desired. Scott also promised to give money for gas to his mother every week.

“Scott,” his mother said, “I need the money you promised to give me for gas. Your Aunt Mary is waiting for me to pick her up.”

“Mom...I don’t have the money.” Scott kept his eyes focused on the kitchen floor to avoid looking at his mother.

“How am I supposed to take your Aunt Mary to the doctor? She has to have her kidney treatments three times a week. Please tell me what happened.” Mom stared intently at Scott.

“After work, Jeff and Mark texted me to meet them for dinner. Since last time they paid when we went out to eat, I paid this time. I didn’t realize how much the food cost. Then I stopped and brought a new video game that cost me \$50.00.”

“Scott, your father and I depend on you to help us out sometimes. You are getting older and need to use better wisdom concerning your money. And now since I do not have gas for my car, your Aunt Mary probably will have to wait until Monday

to get her kidney treatment. This is going to cause her undue physical pain. I hope you understand my disappointment.”

Why is wisdom needed when dealing with money? In today's lesson, we are discussing the need to ask God for wisdom through prayer to make proper decisions.

BIBLE STORY

James, the half-brother of Jesus, is the author of this book. He did not become a believer until after Jesus' death and resurrection. Jesus appeared to James as well as the others in the upper room (Acts 1:3-14). James later became the leader of the church in Jerusalem (Acts 12:17, 15:13, 19; Galatians 2:1-12). In his book, James wanted to teach right Christian behavior.

James explains the purpose of trials in verses 1 through 4. The Jews who had converted to Christianity were suffering persecution and isolation from unbelieving Jews. James addressed those suffering as “brothers.” It was a way to identify them as a part of God's family of believers. James wanted to offer comfort to his fellow believers who were suffering. So he told them to “consider it nothing but joy” (v. 1:2). These are experiences that test or prove- by trial, calamity, or affliction- the certainty of our faith in Christ, and are designed to strengthen it. Tests develop perseverance enabling us to mature in our faith (vs. 1:3-4).

As we are going through trials, we need godly wisdom. Those who need wisdom can ask God for it (v. 1:5). God is the source and provider of wisdom. We have to believe God will not withhold wisdom but give it to us liberally. Our faith in God must be unwavering. If we continually doubt, it is impossible to receive anything from God (vs. 1:6-8).

Wealth, power, and status mean nothing to God. They can quickly and easily be lost. Believers who are ignored because they do not have wealth or high status in society, God will

raise them up (v. 1:9). True wealth can be found in a faithful relationship with God. Trusting God can make even difficult times easier. The deeper our spiritual life, the wiser we become. When we endure tests and respond with wisdom, we shall be rewarded. The “crown of life” is the reward of those who love the Lord and prove it by trials – even to death (v. 1:12).

LIFE APPLICATION

We gain wisdom during trials because God gives us understanding of how to deal with trials. Using the acrostic below, write words that demonstrate we have wisdom during trials. Each word should be from the letters in TRIALS.

T _____
R _____
I _____
A _____
L _____
S _____

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. Write a prayer asking God for wisdom in specific areas of your life.

SUMMARY

As believers in Christ, we can pray for help in making wise choices. Even when difficult times come, we can respond with wisdom from God. Suffering is a test of our faith. We grow in our faith and endurance through it. God does not want us to be double-minded. Either we fully trust God's wisdom, or not at all. And count it all joy that we suffer for our faith.

CLOSING DEVOTIONS

Prayer: Our loving and trustworthy God, thank you for this day. We ask you for wisdom to deal with the tests and trials of life. We fully trust in you. Amen.

Closing Hymn: "I Love the Lord; He Heard My Cries" (#313 - *AME Church Hymnal*)

HEARING AND DOING THE WORD

LESSON SCRIPTURE: JAMES 1:19-27

FOCUS SCRIPTURE: JAMES 1:19-27

Key Verse: *But be doers of the word, and not merely hearers who deceive themselves. James 1:22*

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.

VOCABULARY

- **Righteousness** – Behaving according to God’s Word.
- **Sordidness** – To demonstrate the worst aspects of human nature such as immorality, selfishness, and greed.
- **Meekness** – Quietness, gentleness.
- **Deceive** – To convince yourself of something that is not true; lie.
- **Bridle** – To exercise control or restraint.
- **Undeiled** – Perfect, whole, unpolluted.

INTRODUCTION

Carla and Carmen always came home together after visiting the community pool. But one day Carla did return home until late. Her mother was waiting in the kitchen when she arrived home.

“Good evening, Carla. How was your day?” Her mother stared at her intensely.

“I had a good day.” Carla removed a can of soda out the refrigerator and sat down at the table.

“What time is it?” Her mother pointed at the kitchen clock.

“8:30 p.m.” Carla took a sip of her soda.

“You know our rule about visiting the pool. You and your sister must return home together. And then if you want to go out again, you must ask us first. Where did you go?”

“I decided to go visit Tonya. She just returned from her family vacation. I wanted to know about her trip to Ghana. I was only two blocks away. What difference does it make?” Carla rolled her eyes in disgust.

“We have rules and you must obey them! Since you disobeyed us, you are not going to the YPD party at church next week.” Mom got up from the table to wash the dishes.

“You’re not being fair!” Carla threw her can of soda on the floor. Her mother’s pants were sprayed with soda.

“Carla, clean the floor up! And you will be washing my clothes tonight, too.”

Carla kicked the soda can as she left to get the mop to clean the floor.

Do you feel Carla dealt properly with her anger? Why is it important to control our anger? In today’s lesson, we discover God can help us when our anger feels out of control or overwhelming.

BIBLE STORY

In our scripture today, James discusses the importance of listening as well as being a doer of the Word. If we are honest with ourselves, we do more talking than listening. There is so much to talk about in person and/or via social media. We want our opinions to be heard. Others ideas or thoughts are often drowned out by our voices. It can make others feel ignored and disrespected. James is saying to us, “Be quick to listen, slow to speak” (v. 1:19). We have to listen more and talk less.

James also addresses the issue of anger (vs. 1:19-20). The anger felt due to sinful acts or injustice is okay because others are being hurt. But when our feelings get hurt, we fail to win an argument, or we feel ignored. There is no need to grow angry. We have to free ourselves of bad attitudes and all types of wicked behaviors. If we humbly receive the message of salvation found in scripture that we have heard, our lives can be saved (v. 1:21).

“But be doers of the word, and not merely hearers who deceive themselves” (v. 1:22). If we come to church and study

the Bible, our lives should reflect what the Bible states. We have to obey God's Word completely. God's law points out sin in us and gives us the opportunity to ask God's forgiveness (v. 1:25). We are saved by God's grace. Salvation frees us from sin's control. We can be what God created us for.

Our religious acts, such as praying in public, or helping the needy, mean nothing unless we have control over our tongues (v. 1:26). If we are still using curse words, often angry without cause, call people bad names, etc., we are not honoring God. It makes our actions worthless. The religious acts acceptable by God are those in which we help the powerless, e.g. orphans, widows, and people in need (v. 1:27). We are not to expect anything in return. Moreover, our speech has to be loving and encouraging, and our lives must be free from the sins of the world.

LIFE APPLICATION

List three ways we can be doers of the word and not just hearers:

- 1.
- 2.
- 3.



Draw a picture or cartoon demonstrating how we can control our tongues in others' presence on following page.

SUMMARY

God desires for us to be hearers and doers of the Word. People read and talk about doing good, but find it difficult to help the needy in society. Our faith should compel us to seek out opportunities for acts of service that benefit others in need. Discuss with your class a community project that would benefit those in the most need in your community, church, or schools. Then ask the pastor and Missionary Society to assist with the planning.

CLOSING DEVOTIONS

Prayer: Heavenly Father, thank you for this day. We ask your help in controlling our tongues. Help us to talk less and listen more. Open opportunities for us to put the Word into action by assisting others, such as the homeless, hungry, disabled, elderly, imprisoned, and neglected. Amen.

Closing Hymn: "Take My Life, and Let It Be" (#292 - *AME Church Hymnal*)

FAITH WITHOUT WORKS IS DEAD

LESSON SCRIPTURE: JAMES 2:14-26

FOCUS SCRIPTURE: JAMES 2:14-26

Key Verses: *For just as the body without the spirit is dead, so faith without works is also dead. James 2:26*

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.

VOCABULARY

- **Righteousness** – Behaving according to God’s Word.
- **Faith** – To believe and trust in God.
- **Works** – Deeds or actions.
- **Dead** – Lacking any signs of life.
- **Shudder** – To shake violently.
- **Justified** – Made acceptable, right with God.

INTRODUCTION

“**M**om, is it okay if I go to the movies with Sherry after Youth Choir practice on Saturday afternoon?” Carla was anxious about her mother’s response since she had gotten into trouble for disobeying rules last month. She thought asking mom five days in advance would give her time to think about it.

“Carla, I guess that will be fine. Just do not go anywhere else afterwards.” Her mother replied.

“I promise.” Carla texted Sherry to let her know she could go with her.

During Saturday’s choir practice, the choir director, Kurt, made an announcement about Sherry’s absence. “Sherry’s family had to flee from their home Wednesday night after a large tree in their yard fell on their house during the rainstorm. They also had a lot of rain come through the roof. Their house and personal belongings were destroyed. If you want to help, Sherry needs clothes and shoes. Also, her parents could use help cleaning up their yard and removing wet items from the house.”

Everyone agreed to go and help Sherry’s family. But before Carla left to go, she returned home to get pants, shirts, and two pairs of shoes from her closet. Her mother noticed Carla placing the items in a duffle bag.

“Carla, what are you doing? You cannot stay over Sherry’s house tonight. You must come straight home after the movie!”

“Mom, you don’t understand what I’m doing! I’m trying to help someone in need,” Carla said as she placed a jacket in the bag before zipping it closed. “Sherry’s family lost their house and belongings after a tree fell on their house. I want to show Sherry I care by giving her some of my stuff. I have more than enough to share with her.”

“Carla, I’m sorry. I didn’t know. It is a wonderful, loving act for you to want to help Sherry. I’ll go with you and give her parents a monetary donation.”

Why is demonstrating our faith in God by what we do important? In today’s lesson, we explore James’ belief that the one who has faith, will demonstrate that faith by his or her works, as did Abraham and Rahab.

BIBLE STORY

In our scripture, James believed the principle that faith results in good works. If one has knowledge of the scriptures and agrees with it, but does not put into action what is believed, it is dead faith. Our faith in Christ should transform us from the inside out. That means a person’s thoughts and conduct must show faith. How can we say we have faith and love God but ignore the needs of others (vs. 2:15-16)? Faith is dead when separated from works. However, works of loving service verify our faith and commitment to Christ.

Faith is the only way to receive salvation; but, faith can never be detached from works. To offer God a faith separated from works is little better than the faith of demons who believe and shudder. Such faith produces no good works of repentance or value (vs. 2:19-20).

James presents two examples of living faith, Abraham and Rahab. Abraham was one of the greatest heroes of faith. James

says, “Abraham was justified by works when he offered his son Isaac on the altar” (vs. 2:21-24; Genesis 22:16- 18). The apostle Paul says he was “justified by faith apart from works” (Romans 4:1-5). James and Paul are not disagreeing but complementing one another. True faith always results in works, but the works do not justify us. “Abraham believed God, and it was reckoned to him as righteousness.”

Rahab was a prostitute who lived in Jericho, a city the Israelites conquered as they entered the Promised Land (Joshua 2). When the spies came to Jericho, Rahab hid them. Later Rahab sent the spies out of the city by a different route to save them. Rahab and her family were saved because Rahab, like she was told, hung a red chord outside her house as a signal to the Israelites that it was her home. Rahab demonstrated a living faith and was justified by her works (v. 2:25; Hebrews 11:31). As the body is lifeless when the spirit departs in death, so faith separated from works is dead (v. 2:26).

LIFE APPLICATION

There are many historical figures who demonstrated a living faith. Google the names mentioned below and write how they exhibited both faith and works. If you can think of persons in recent times, share their names as well.

1. Absalom Jones: _____

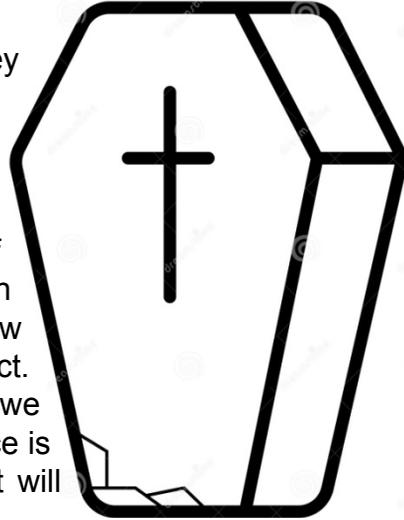
2. Jarena Lee: _____

3. Harriet Tubman: _____

The coffin represents death. Write inside the picture, “Faith without works is dead.” Discuss what “Faith without works is dead” means.

SUMMARY

There are people who trust that if they do good acts it means eternal life is guaranteed. Others suppose if they have faith and knowledge about the Word of God, their behavior does not matter. Both are mistaken in what God requires of believers. We become new creations when we are saved. We are to demonstrate how faith transforms our thoughts and conduct. Our lives should reflect that new life in all we say, think, and do. Faith and loving service is what God requires from believers. What will you do?



CLOSING DEVOTIONS

Prayer: Heavenly Father, thank you for this day. Please open opportunities for us to serve you. We desire to demonstrate our faith in action to the world. This can open occasions for us to share our beliefs and souls to be saved. Amen.

Closing Hymn: “A Charge to Keep I Have” (#242 - *AME Church Hymnal*)

TAMING THE TONGUE

LESSON SCRIPTURE: JAMES 3:1-12

FOCUS SCRIPTURE: JAMES 3:1-12

Key Verses: *From the same mouth come blessing and cursing. My brothers and sisters, this ought not to be so. James 3:10*

James 3:1-12 (NRSV)

9 “Pray then in this way:
Our Father 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?

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

VOCABULARY

- **Bridle** – A device used to control or restrain animals.
- **Bits** – A part of a bridle consisting of a metal mouthpiece held in a horse’s mouth to control the horse.
- **Iniquity** – Great injustice or extreme immorality.
- **Tame** – To subdue.
- **Cursing** – Uttering profanity or blasphemy.
- **Blessing** – Approval or good wishes.

INTRODUCTION

“**T**ony, our summer vacation time went really fast. I can’t believe we have to go back to school on Monday.” Carla sighed as she spoke with her friend on the phone.

“I know. It did go quickly. I wish there was some way for us to delay going back. It’s still warm outside and I don’t want to be stuck in a hot classroom,” Tony replied.

“Maybe they will delay opening because of the heat. Nobody wants to be sweating on their books, messing up the pages.” They both laughed.

“I got a better idea. Somebody should call in a threat to the school. They definitely will close the school at least until the person is caught.”

“Tony, that’s crazy! I’d rather go to school than prison. Look, I’ll see you tomorrow on the school bus. Do not be late! Bye!” Carla ended the phone call.

The following morning as Carla and her siblings were getting ready for school their father came upstairs. “You can stop getting ready for school. Somebody sent a message to the school district promising to hurt students. School is cancelled until the person who sent the threat is arrested.”

Carla stood with her mouth open in disbelief. “Dad, I think I know who did it. Tony was talking about it last night. I thought he was joking.”

“Calling in threats to a school is no joking matter. Tony will not be laughing after they arrest him. Okay, let’s go downstairs and call the police.” After notifying the police, they investigated and Tony was arrested.

How did a joke turn into a serious matter? How can our words hurt others? Why is it important to use our words carefully? In today’s lesson, James teaches us the importance of controlling our tongues.

Bible Story

James understood the power of the tongue. We have to control what we say. Our tongues can wield the power to do good or bad. James warns against rushing to become a teacher. Teaching was considered to be a highly valued profession in Jewish culture and many Jewish Christians desired to be teachers. Teachers exhibit great influence on the lives of others. The job of teaching comes with tremendous responsibility. James’ warned that those who teach will be judged more strictly (v. 3:1).

The tongue is the hardest to keep under control. James stresses we all say the wrong things at times (v. 3:2). We sometimes gossip, brag, manipulate others, complain, tell lies, etc. If someone does not do such things, they are spiritually strong and able to control their body like a horse is controlled by a bit. Moreover, James uses three illustrations to show how some small things can take control: 1) the horse’s bit; 2) the ship’s rudder; and 3) the spark of igniting fire (vs. 3:3-4).

Just like an uncontrolled fire, our tongue is powerful and can cause great destruction. No one can tame the tongue (v. 3:8). But this does not mean we cannot learn enough control

to reduce the damage the tongue can do. We can ask the Holy Spirit to give us the strength to monitor and control what we say. Our speech should not contradict who we confess to be as Christians.

How can we use our tongues to bless and praise God, and then curse people who are made in God's likeness (v. 3:9; Genesis 1:26; 1 John 4:20)? This should not be happening. James shows how inconsistent this is by illustrations from nature: 1) Fresh and salty water cannot come from the same spring; 2) A fig tree does not produce olives; 3) A grapevine does not produce figs; and 4) Saltwater does not produce fresh water (vs. 3:11-12). But the tongue is always doing what is contrary to nature.

LIFE APPLICATION

“**S**ticks and stones may break my bones, but words will never hurt me.” Do you agree or disagree with this statement? Why? Why not?



Our words have the power to encourage and destroy people. In the speech bubbles below, on the left, write words that can destroy and on the right, write words that encourage. Discuss the most recent conversation with someone (friend, family, enemy). What words did you use?

We all have the power to encourage others. In your spare

time, take a piece of construction paper and fold it in half. On the outside of the card draw a picture or cut out a picture from a magazine to paste on the cover. Write encouraging words on the inside. Give the card to someone who needs to be encouraged.

SUMMARY

Our tongues have great power. We have to make a decision to use our words wisely. That can be difficult, so we can ask the Holy Spirit for help. We have to think before we speak. When we wisely chose our words, God can use us to help others be encouraged, transformed, and healed.

CLOSING DEVOTIONS

Prayer: Heavenly Father, thank you for this day. Please give me wisdom to use my words to build up others. I ask you to forgive me for hurting people with my words. Today I promise to try to do better. Amen.

Closing Hymn: "Jesus Wants Me for a Sunbeam" (#556 - *AME Church Hymnal*)

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

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 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.

VOCABULARY

- **Gentleness** – Mildness, kindness.
- **Envy** – Jealousy.
- **Selfish** – Concerned with one’s own interests, needs, and wishes while ignoring those of others.
- **Hypocrisy** – To pretend to be what you are not.
- **Peace** – A state of security and tranquility.
- **Patient** – Capable of waiting without becoming upset.
- **Endurance** – Ability to bear prolonged hardship.
- **Compassionate** – Showing feelings of empathy for the suffering of others, often with a desire to help.
- **Condemnation** – Being without faith in Christ and judged guilty of committing sin.

INTRODUCTION

Carmen and Carla sat outside on their front steps because there was a nice summer breeze. Carla was braiding Carmen’s hair. They started singing a new song the youth choir learned during choir practice. Carmen and Carla felt very happy. Across the street, they noticed two girls who went to their school. Vera and Jasmine disliked them but they never understood why. Vera screamed from across the street, “Hey, ugly girls!” Jasmine yelled, “Carmen, your hair is a mess! Just cut it off so you will look like your ugly brother!” Before Carmen and Carla could say anything, Vera and Jasmine ran down the street.

“What is their problem? Just wait until you finish my hair, I’m going to go find them. And when I do, I’m going punch both of them in their face.” Carmen motioned with her fist how she was going to hit them.

“Carmen, they’re just jealous. You have to ignore people like

Vera and Jasmine. Remember dad was talking to us about how there will always be someone who is jealous and envious of us. If we go after them, it will not change the way they feel about us. We have to pray for them.”

“You pray, Carla. I’m not going to let them disrespect me again.”

Which person is acting wise, Carmen or Carla? How can jealousy lead to more problems and issues? In today’s lesson, we discover the importance of using heavenly wisdom when interacting with others so we can live peacefully.

BIBLE STORY

During last week’s lesson, we discussed the importance of controlling our tongues (vs. 3:1-12). James continues in this chapter by helping us to understand the difference between earthly wisdom and heavenly wisdom. We have to choose which wisdom will control our lives, earthly or heavenly.

If we are allowing earthly wisdom to control our lives, it produces bitter jealousy, selfish ambition, boasting, and disloyalty to the truth (vs. 3:14-16). Earthly wisdom leads us to disobey the Word of God and disregard the truth about the need for salvation through Jesus Christ. This wisdom is not from God or the Holy Spirit, but demonic and from Satan. It causes people to yield to the flesh without regard to the effects. Earthly wisdom produces nothing but confusion and excessive evil works.

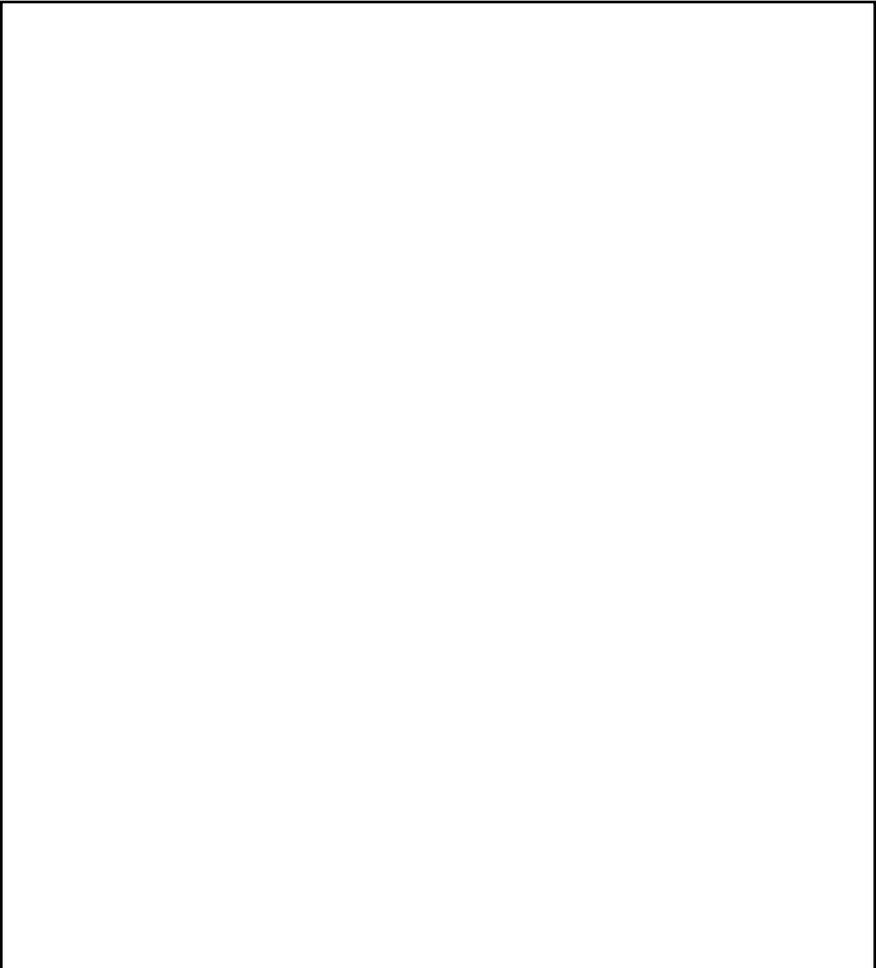
Heavenly (godly) wisdom is from above. It is pure, peaceable, gentle, willing to yield, full of mercy and good fruits (v. 3:17). Godly wisdom does not show prejudice or favoritism. Those who are peacemakers also receive a harvest of peace for themselves. Furthermore, those who have godly wisdom exhibit patience during suffering and trials.

When Jesus returns, Jesus will judge all wrongs, and right all inequalities (vs. 5:7-9). We can expect to be rewarded for our

patience and endurance. The prophets and Job are examples of endurance and patience (vs. 5:10-11). God desires for us to be honest, and avoid swearing or cursing. Our word is our oath and reveals we are trustworthy.

Life Application

James 3:17 mentions the good that comes from a life filled with heavenly (godly) wisdom. Draw seven different fruit and under each one write a characteristic that is produced from godly wisdom.



James mentions the farmer as an example of an occupation that requires patience and endurance. What occupations can you identify that require patience and endurance? In the Bible, Job had to have patience and endurance as he suffered. What lessons can we learn from Job when dealing with suffering and trials?

SUMMARY

We have to practice godly wisdom when enduring suffering and trials. It demonstrates to others that we have faith in God to help us. We should not turn back to earthly ways to resolve our issues. Those who are yielding to earthly wisdom will not receive the reward Jesus shall give to those who patiently wait and trust in Jesus. Jesus is the One who has the power to judge all persons in the end. His faithfulness is what sustains us until we see Jesus face-to-face.

CLOSING DEVOTIONS

Prayer: Good and gracious God, thank you for this day. We are praying for patience and endurance as we go through suffering. Guide us as we rely on your word as a comfort. We desire to be peacemakers for your kingdom on earth. Amen.

Closing Hymn: "My Hope Is Built" (#364 - *AME Church Hymnal*)

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