

JAMES 3

A STUDY THROUGH THE EPISTLE OF JAMES

Too Smart For Our Own Good

James 3:13-16

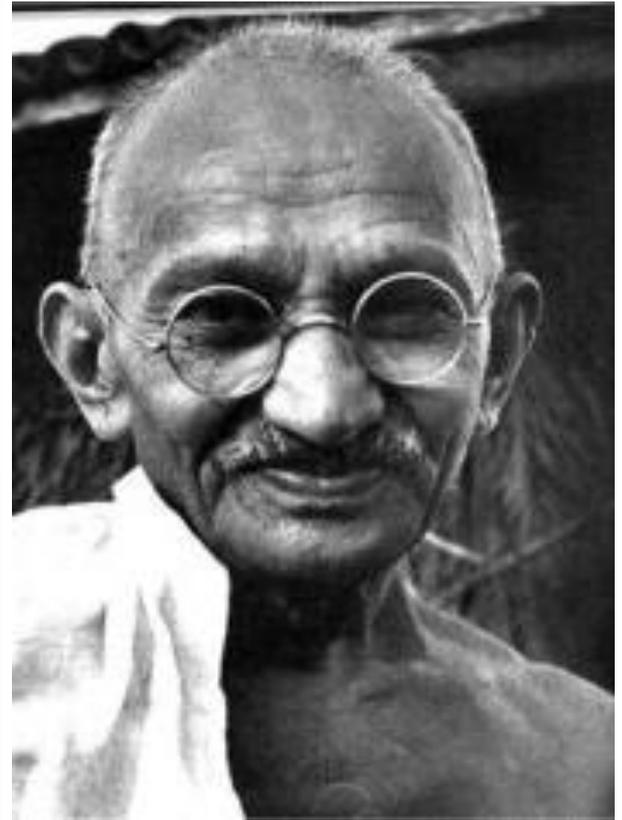
Before We Begin, Let Me Say:

There is
NOTHING
Wrong with
Knowledge.



**There Are
Many Who
Think
Themselves
To Be
“Wise.”**





But...

Wisdom is NOT Enough.



James 3:13-16

13 Who among you is wise and understanding? Let him show by his good behavior his deeds in the gentleness of wisdom. **14** But if you have bitter jealousy and selfish ambition in your heart, do not be arrogant and so lie against the truth. **15** This wisdom is not that which comes down from above, but is earthly, natural, demonic. **16** For where jealousy and selfish ambition exist, there is disorder and every evil thing.

What Wisdom Is & What Wisdom Isn't

I. Gentle Wisdom (v. 13)

II. Arrogant Wisdom (v. 14)

III. Earthly Wisdom (v. 15)

IV. Evil Wisdom (v. 16)



James 3:13

13 Who among you is wise and understanding? Let him show by his good behavior his deeds in the gentleness of wisdom.

Paul Often Exhorts The Same

- **Romans 16:19** – “...therefore I am rejoicing over you, but I want you to be **wise** in what is good and innocent in what is evil.”
- **1 Corinthians 3:18** – “Let no man deceive himself. If any man among you thinks that he is **wise** in this age, he must become foolish, so that he may become **wise**.”
- **Ephesians 5:15** – “Therefore be careful how you walk, not as unwise men but as **wise**”

“Understanding” + Wisdom in the OT

- Deuteronomy 1:13 – “Choose **wise and discerning** and experienced men from your tribes, and I will appoint them as your heads.”
- Deuteronomy 4:6 – “So keep and do them, for that is **your wisdom and your understanding** in the sight of the peoples who will hear all these statutes...”
- Daniel 5:11 – “There is a man in your kingdom in whom is a spirit of the holy gods...illumination, **insight and wisdom** like the wisdom of the gods were found in him...”

But Wait...

**James Is NOT speaking of
worldly wisdom.**

**And James is not a Greek or a
Roman.**

He's a Jewish Christian.

Knowing yourself
is the beginning
of all wisdom.

- Aristotle

The fear of the LORD
is the beginning of
wisdom, and
knowledge of the
Holy One is
understanding.

- Proverbs 9:10 -



According to James

How Do We
Know If
Someone Is
Wise?

We Will See “gentleness”

- The Greek word *prauteti* (“gentleness”) occurs in non-biblical literature to describe a horse that someone had broken and had trained to submit to a bridle.
- It pictures strength under control, specifically the Holy Spirit’s control.
- The evidence of this attitude is a deliberate placing of oneself under divine authority.

KNOWLEDGE IS PROUD THAT
HE HAS LEARNED SO MUCH;
WISDOM IS HUMBLE THAT
HE KNOWS NO MORE.

*WILLIAM COWPER, "THE TASK" (1785),
BOOK VI, "WINTER WALK AT NOON"*

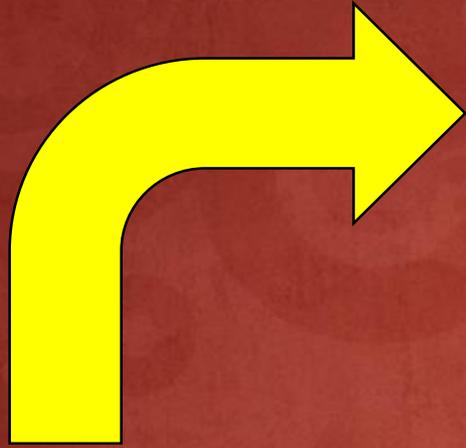
Once Again, James May Say:

“What use is it, my
brethren, if someone says
he has *wisdom* but he
has no
understanding?”

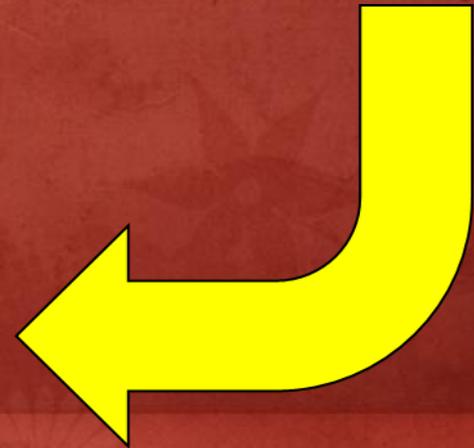
Look Back at James 1:21-22

21 Therefore, putting aside all filthiness and all that remains of wickedness, in humility receive the word implanted, which is able to save your souls. **22** But prove yourselves doers of the word, and not merely hearers who delude themselves.

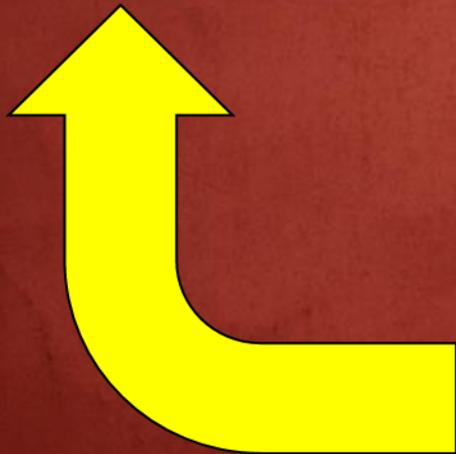
WISDOM



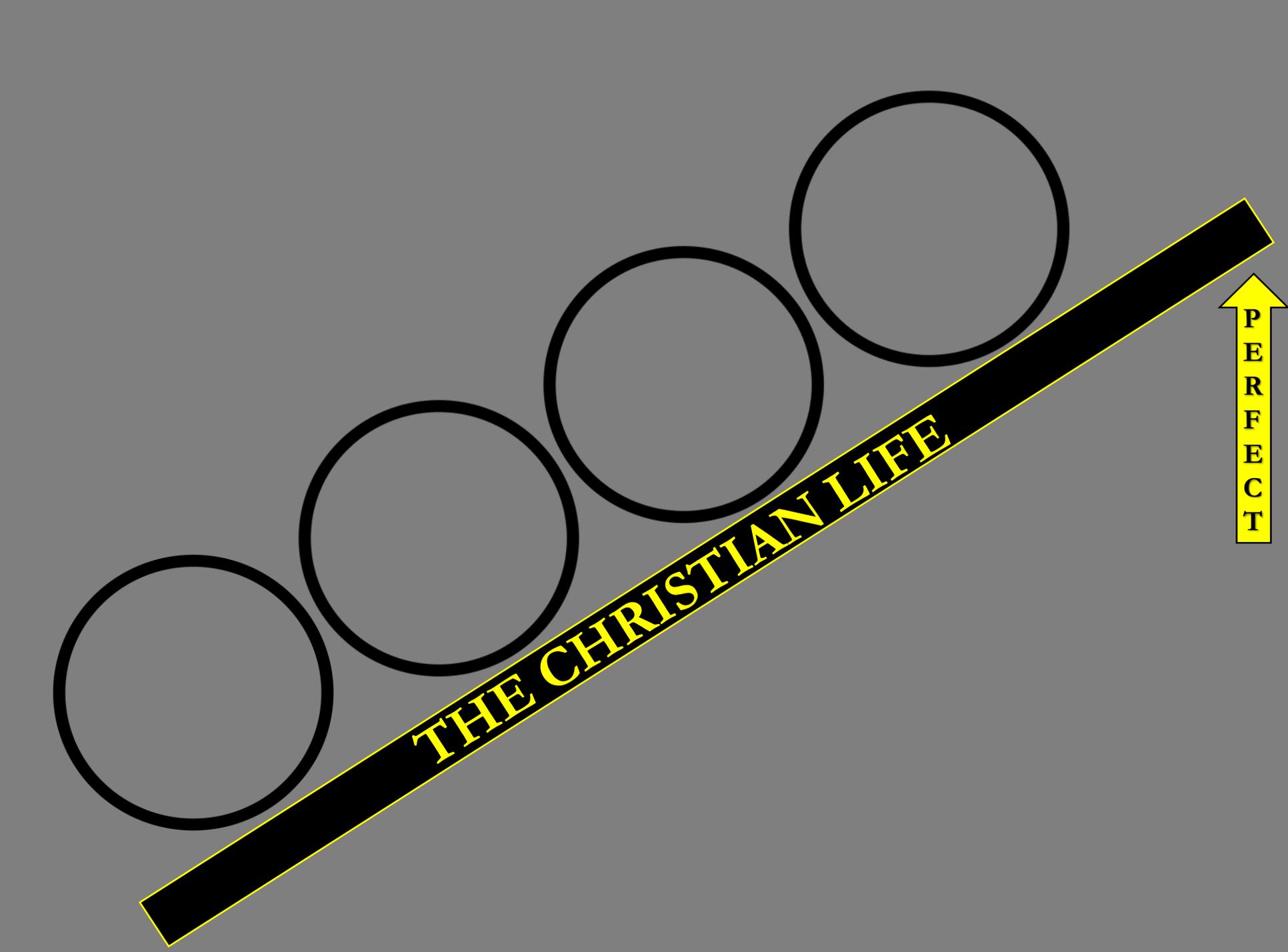
UNDERSTANDING



GOOD WORKS

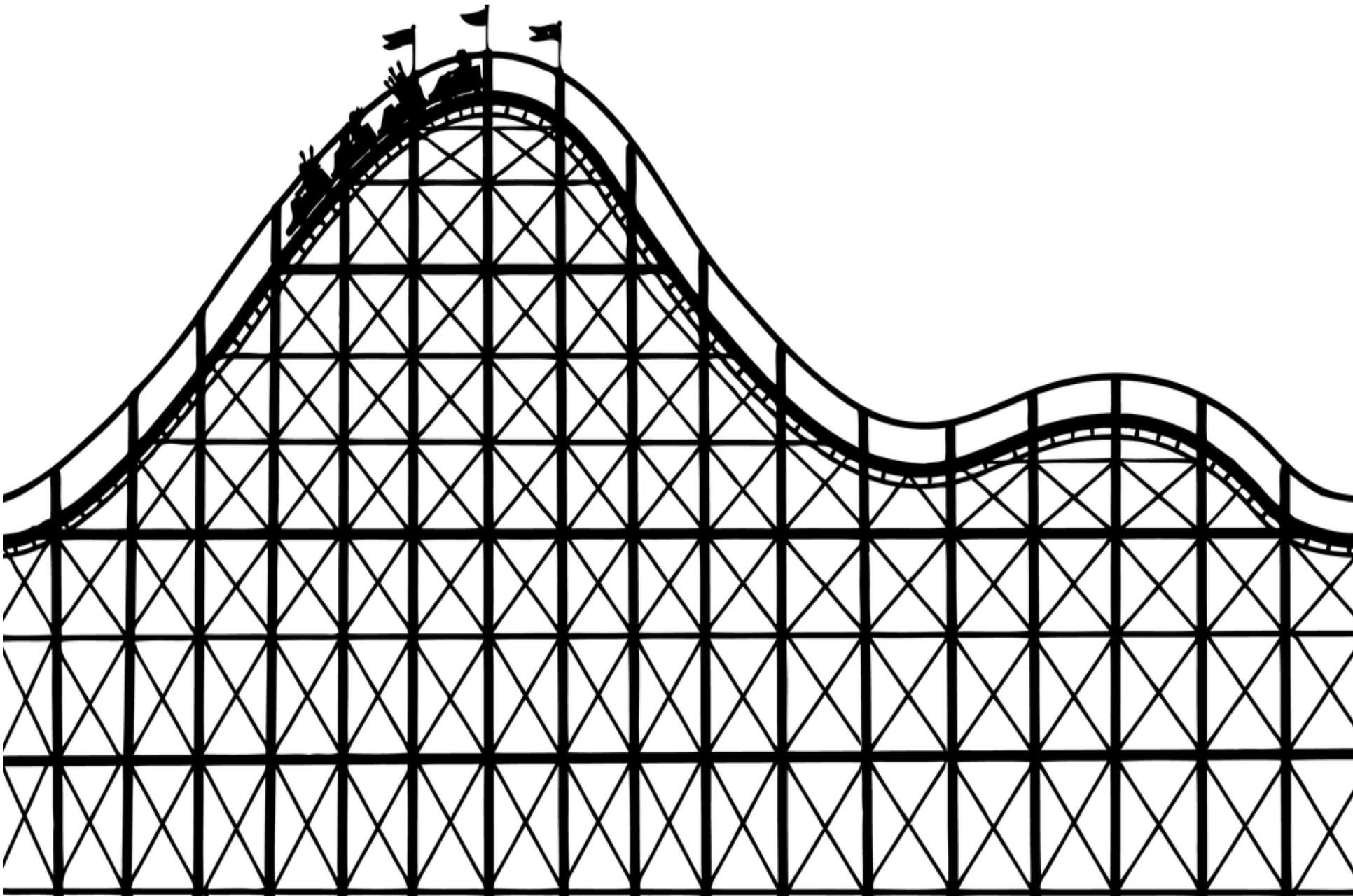


HUMILITY



THE CHRISTIAN LIFE

**P
E
R
F
E
C
T**



Godly Wisdom

Engenders a cycle of increasing virtue that continues throughout the lifetime of the believer according the sanctifying work of the Word of God which continues to bring us to maturity in Christ.

CONJUNCTION JUNCTION

A cartoon scientist with a tall, striped blue hat, glasses, a red scarf, and blue overalls. He is holding a small yellow and red flask in his right hand and a white card with a star on it in his left hand. A speech bubble is coming from his mouth.

WHAT'S YOUR
FUNCTION?

SCHOOL
HOUSE
ROCK!

James 3:14

14 But if you have bitter jealousy and selfish ambition in your heart, do not be arrogant and so lie against the truth.

There is Nothing

More Damaging to the
Witness of Christ than
Christianity Draped in
“bitter jealousy” and
“selfish ambition.”

“Wisdom” But No Understanding

Instead, the unchanged heart is a seedbed for “bitter jealousy” and “selfish ambition.”

Last week, I believe James had Genesis 3 in mind, and once again, I think there is an allusion here to the fall of man.

Genesis 3:1-5

1 Now the serpent was more crafty than any beast of the field which the Lord God had made. And he said to the woman, “Indeed, has God said, ‘You shall not eat from any tree of the garden?’” **2** The woman said to the serpent, “From the fruit of the trees of the garden we may eat; **3** but from the fruit of the tree which is in the middle of the garden, God has said, ‘You shall not eat from it or touch it, or you will die.’” **4** The serpent said to the woman, “You surely will not die! **5** For God knows that in the day you eat from it your eyes will be opened, and you will be like God, knowing good and evil.”

If Your Heart

Is possessed with jealousy and
ambition...

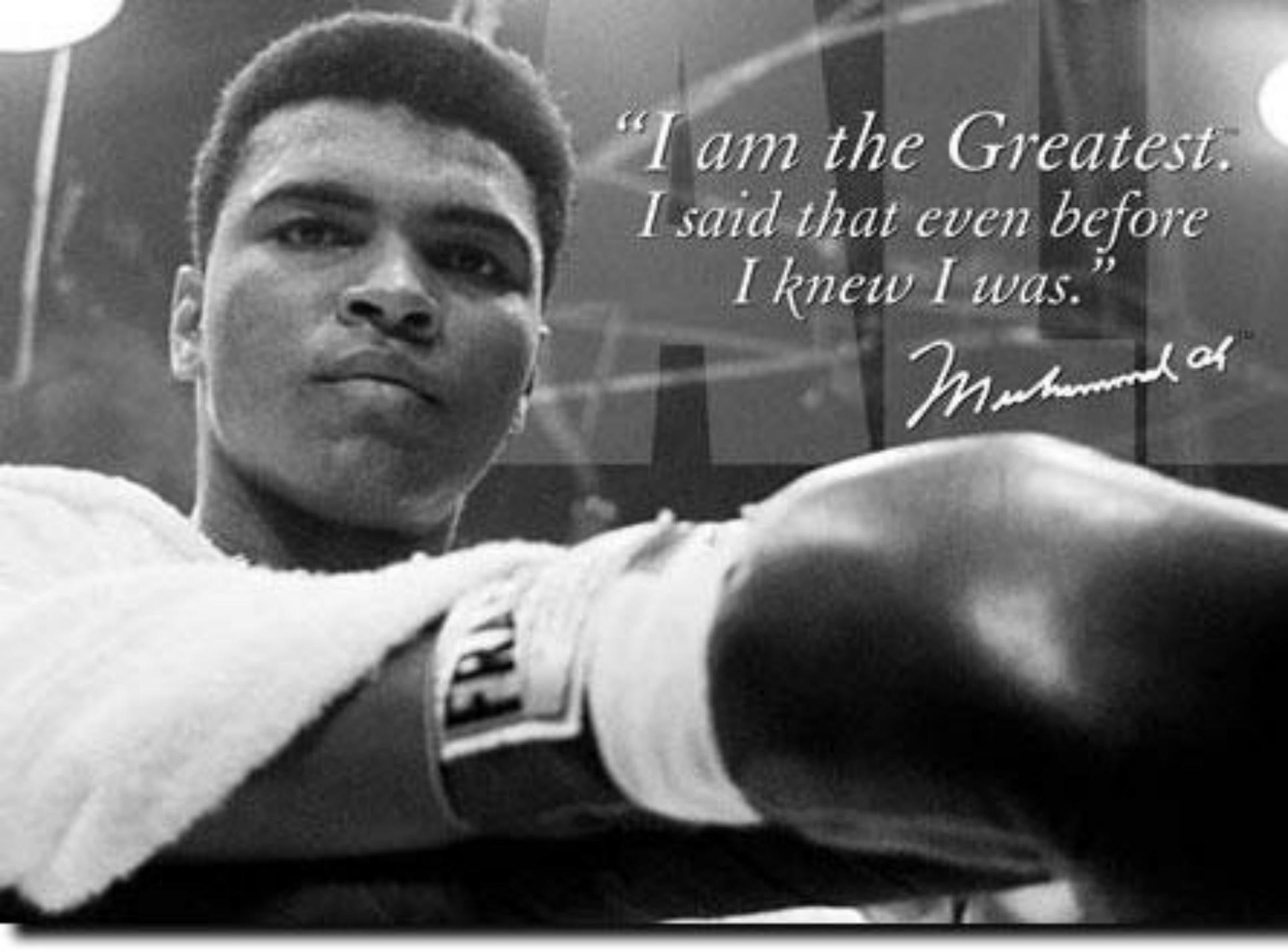
Your will and emotion will be
characterized by envy, rivalry, and
covetousness.

This sinful pursuit destroys
relationships in the church, just as it
did with God in the garden.

James Gets Down to Business

“do not be arrogant and so lie
against the truth.”

James has no time for
pretentious and counterfeit
Christianity.



*"I am the Greatest.
I said that even before
I knew I was."*

Muhammad Ali

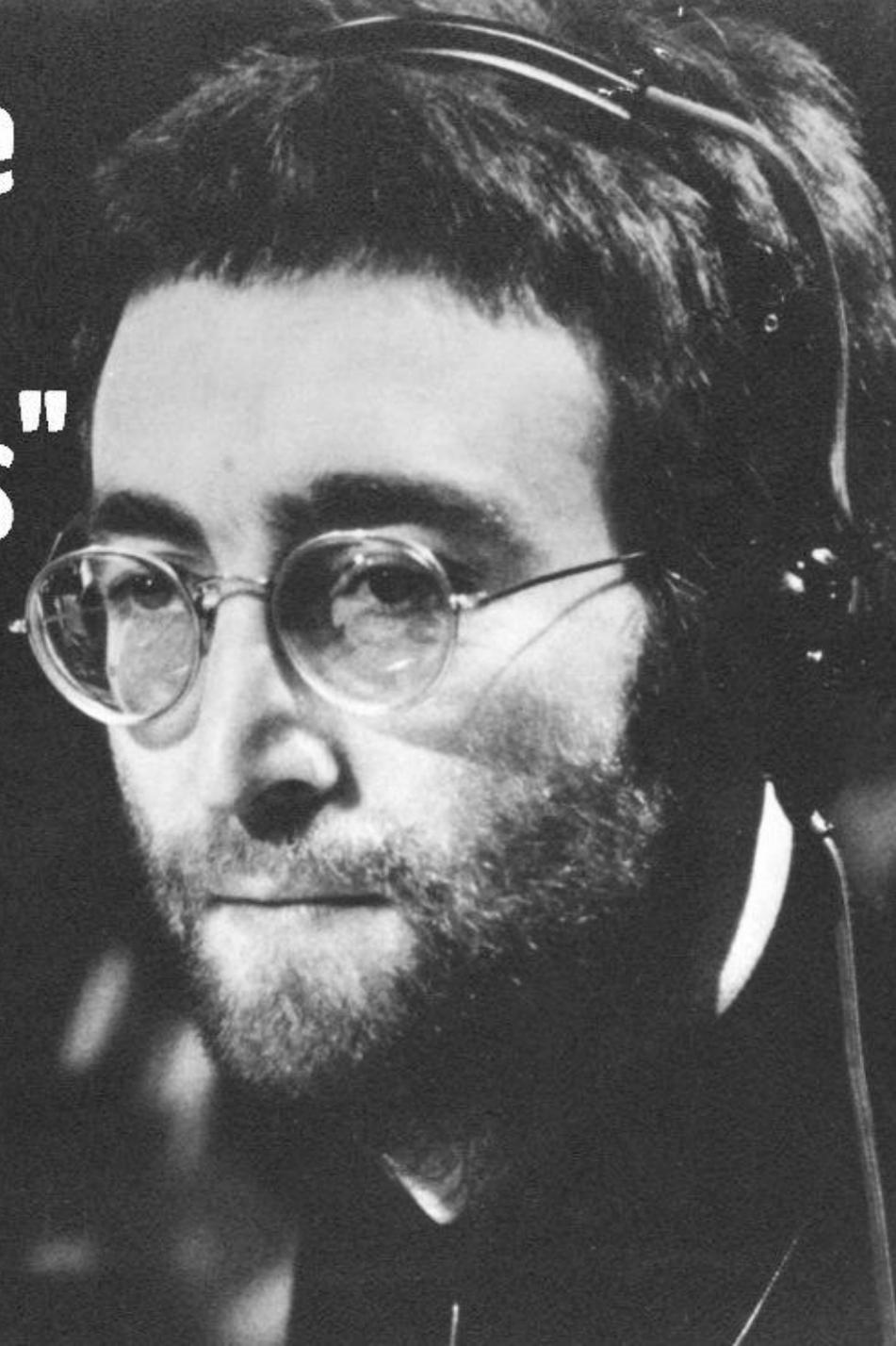
'I won't be King
of Manchester.
I will be God of
Manchester'



The Antithesis of Grace

- Jealousy and ambition are manifestations of arrogance, and they result in promoting self rather than the truth.
- Lying against the truth means teaching untrue things, things that oppose the truth, and those who boast of wisdom are not following God because humility does not mark their lives.

**"We're more
popular
than Jesus"**



Hebrews 2:1-4

1 For this reason we must pay much closer attention to what we have heard, so that we do not drift away from it. **2** For if the word spoken through angels proved unalterable, and every transgression and disobedience received a just penalty, **3** how will we escape if we neglect so great a salvation? After it was at the first spoken through the Lord, it was confirmed to us by those who heard, **4** God also testifying with them, both by signs and wonders and by various miracles and by gifts of the Holy Spirit according to His own will.

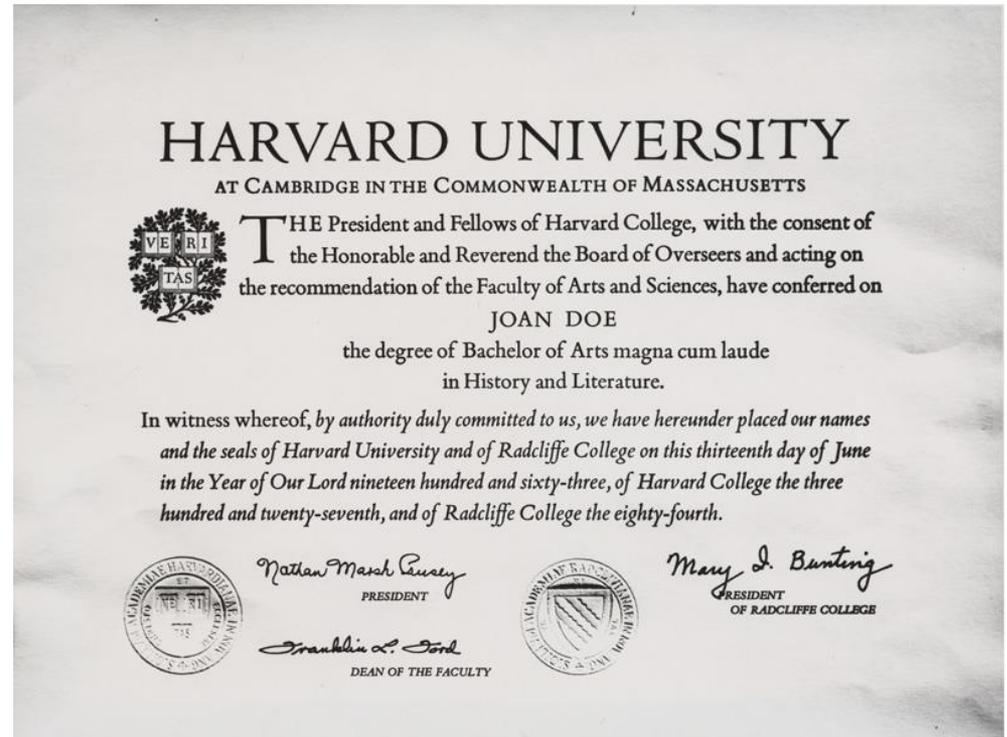
James 3:15

15 This wisdom is not that which comes down from above, but is earthly, natural, demonic.



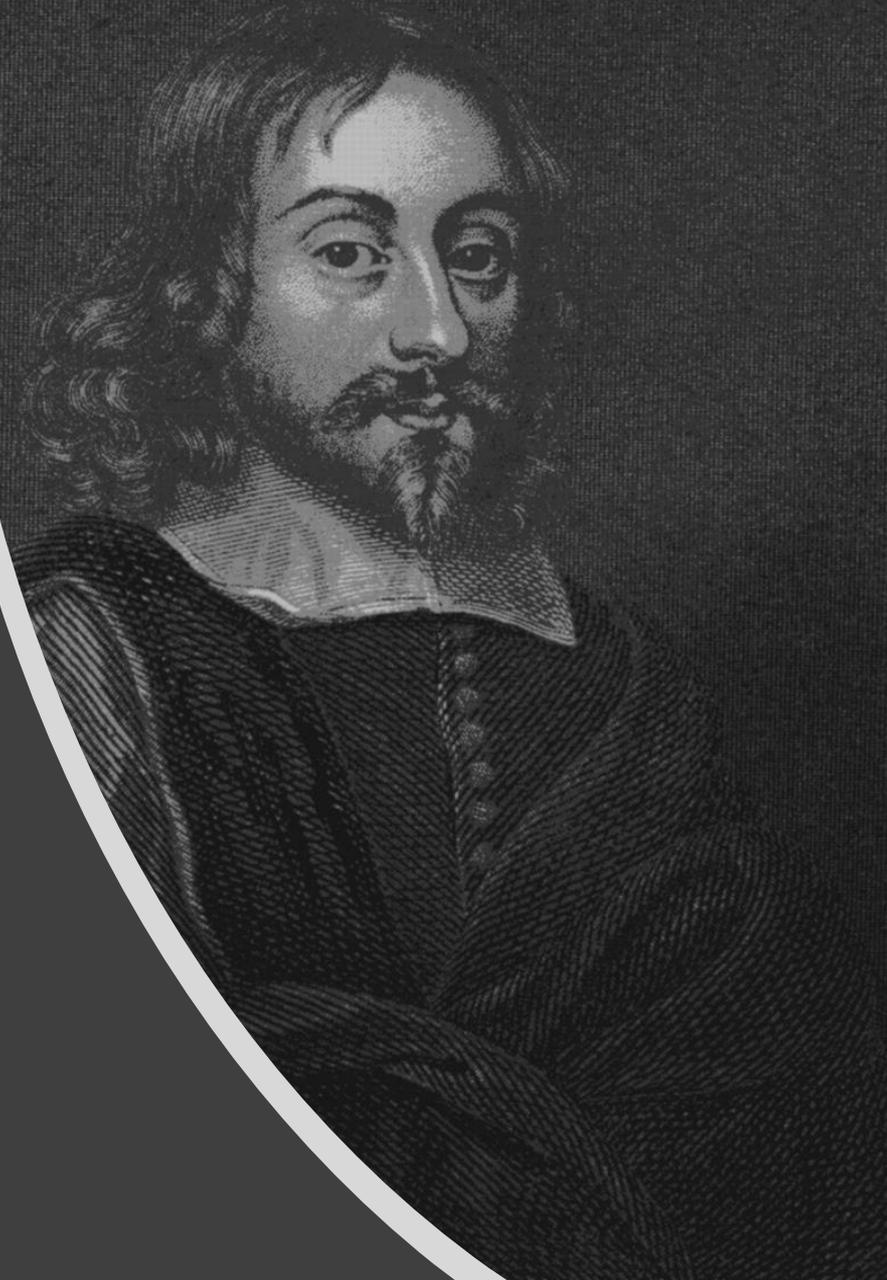
Consider Your Source

“Wisdom is
not
measured by
degrees but
by deeds. It
is not a
matter of
acquiring
truth in
lectures but
of applying
truth to life.”



“Scholars are men of peace, they bear no arms, but their tongues are sharper than Actius’ razor; their pens carry farther, and give a louder report than thunder: I had rather stand the shock of a basilisco, than the fury of a merciless pen.”

- Sir Thomas Browne



1. “Earthly” Wisdom

- The world calls this “philosophy” or “reason.”
- Since this knowledge comes from below, it measures success in worldly terms, and its aims are worldly aims.
- It is derived from the “first Adam” whom Paul says was “from the earth” (1 Cor. 15:47).
- It is tied to the fallen and unstable whims of the earth and of man, and it cannot satisfy.

2. “Natural” Wisdom

- ESV: “Unspiritual”
- KJV: “Sensual”

In other words, this wisdom is humanistic and self-centered, little more than animal instinct; it does not find joy in the truth of God.

Proverbs 28:26

“He who trusts in
his own heart is a
fool...”



DWW

3. “Demonic” Religion

Is James being a little over the top?

Demonic? Really?

When the course of one’s life is so directed away from God, even when God is in one’s superficial religious profession, the effects are demonic.

The Fact Is:

**Human Interests Often Serve
Satanic Interests.**

**Therefore, the superficial faith
that compromises gospel truths
stands in opposition to God.**



Remember James 2:19?

**“You believe that
God is one. You do
well; the demons also
believe, and
shudder.”**

As Soon As Believers

- Act out of wrath...
- They no longer serve God but oppose Him.
- Fail to control their tongue...
- They no longer serve God but oppose Him.
- Covet what they do not possess...
- They no longer serve God but oppose Him.

This is Serious Business.

James 3:16

16 For where jealousy
and selfish ambition
exist, there is disorder
and every evil thing.

Where “Earthly” Wisdom Prevails

- James warns that the inevitable harvest will be “disorder and every evil thing.”
- And this is why, as the church, we must be dependent upon wisdom from above.

But James...

Will earthly wisdom really lead us into
every evil thing?

- Proverbs 1:32 –

“For the waywardness of the naive will
kill them, And the complacency of
fools will destroy them.”

This is “disorder” and “evil”

Because instead of bringing people together, it drives them apart.

Instead of producing peace, it results in conflict.

It is the quintessential anti-gospel mindset.



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"faith cometh by hearing"

