



A Better Way

by Rev. Scott Licht

“Who is wise and understanding among you? By his good conduct let him show his works in the meekness of wisdom. But if you have bitter jealousy and selfish ambition in your hearts, do not boast and be false to the truth. This is not the wisdom that comes down from above, but is earthly, unspiritual, demonic. For where jealousy and selfish ambition exist, there will be disorder and every vile practice. But the wisdom from above is first pure, then peaceable, gentle, open to reason, full of mercy and good fruits, impartial and sincere. And a harvest of righteousness is sown in peace by those who make peace.” (James 3:13-18 ESV)

You’ve all seen it. The misguided pro-life zealot who blew up the abortion clinic. The “anti-abortion extremist” who shot and killed the doctor who performs abortions. The members of the church blocking funeral processions for members of the armed forces who gave their lives in service to our country—because the military allows homosexual men and women to serve. The rancorous protests and vicious rhetoric when “physician-assisted suicide” is debated.

God, through James’s hand, has a message for those who let their emotions and their own reason take control. Love for God and your neighbor demands a better way of getting your point across. **“By his good conduct let him show his works in the meekness of wisdom”** (James 3:13b). That wisdom is described thus: **“But the wisdom from above is first pure, then peaceable, gentle, open to reason, full of mercy and good fruits, impartial and sincere.”** (James 3:17)

OK, but sex out of wedlock is wrong. Abortion is wrong. Physician-assisted suicide is wrong. I can’t condone those things, so what am I supposed to do?

When word gets out that an unmarried woman in your area is pregnant, what do you do? Do you call the person in town who knows all “the news” to find out about the father? Do you ignore her in the grocery store? Do you ascribe to her all of the demeaning names and adjectives that society uses? Or do you recognize the fact that she sinned, just as you have

MANY times? Her sin may be more visible and may have different consequences, but it's no more grievous than yours. That sin is just as forgiven as yours. Why not offer to help her in whatever way she might need? Drive her to a doctor appointment, throw a baby shower for her, offer to pick up groceries for her, LOVE her. She is carrying a child of God regardless of how that child was conceived.

A friend confides in you that he paid for his girlfriend to have an abortion 10 years ago—what do you do? Remind him that he was an accessory to the murder of his own child? Vow never to talk to him because you would never do “THAT”? Tell everyone else you know to avoid him? Or do you sit and listen, offering comfort and assurance of God's forgiveness for that sin? Offer him the number for the Word of Hope counseling service (888.217.8679; word-of-hope.org), find a local support group for post-abortive men, share Scripture with him regarding God's unconditional love, pray with him.

An 82-year-old gentleman whose wife died a year ago just found out that he has Alzheimer's disease. He's going to lose his driver's license. He'll have to move after the last time that he forgot to turn off the stove and nearly set his house on fire. Soon he may need help brushing his teeth, going to the bathroom, and getting dressed. He is sure that he is going to be such a burden on his children, and when they do come to see him, he probably won't even remember who they are or that they came to see him. Couldn't his doctor just give him a pill to end it all? If his regular doctor won't do it, couldn't he keep looking until he finds one who will? What do you do? Perhaps you could offer to pick him up and bring him to church each week. You could arrange for his friends to visit with him throughout the week. You could stop by to visit and sing some of his favorite hymns (or other songs) with him. You could be patient when he tells you the same thing five times within five minutes. You could just be there for him, reminding him you care and you will always care.

“By his good conduct let him show his works in the meekness of wisdom.”

Remember, “meekness” is NOT “weakness.” In the scenarios above, the “meek” actions were often more difficult and required more “strength” than following the ways of the world. Those things are certainly more difficult than doing nothing. But James also tells us that **“a harvest of righteousness is sown in peace by those who make peace”** (James 3:18). Notice that James doesn't say that our actions are the cause of our righteousness—that has been won for us by Christ. We are merely to sow in peace in order to benefit from that harvest of righteousness.

Prayer: Gracious Father, we give You thanks and praise for the gifts which You have given us. Help us to share those gifts with people who are dealing with life issues—even if it means stepping outside of our comfort zone. Let us always remember Your urging to sow in peace as we share Your love and forgiveness, reflecting the love and forgiveness that You extend to us. Amen.

Action: As this New Year begins and you make resolutions of things to do for yourself, consider ways in which you could spend one hour a week helping someone in need—at a crisis pregnancy center, a hospice house, a nursing home, etc.