

### MAKING WISE DECISIONS

Carlos didn't go in the house when he came home from school instead, he went to the backyard where his teenage brother Jess was working on his car.

"Hi, kid!" said Jess. "How's it going?" "Terrible!" said Carlos. "Hey, what's the matter?" his big brother asked. "The kids at school don't like me," said Carlos. "They say I'm stupid."

"You're not stupid," said Jess. "Who said that?" "I don't know their names," said Carlos. "They're in the fourth or fifth grade. But they walk home the same way I do, and they pick on me."

"Do you know why they pick on you?" asked Jess. "Because they don't like me," said Carlos, "and they think I'm stupid." "They don't even know you," said Jess. "Your teacher, the other kids in your class, and your family know you're not stupid."

"They why do they pick on me?" asked Carlos. "Because you're littler than they are, and they want to think they're big shots."

Carlos was smaller than the other kids and so they called him stupid. While that is one way to determine how smart and wise a person is, there is a better way. The Bible reading from James says that the person is wise who is pure, peaceable, gentle, willing to yield, full of mercy and good fruits, without a trace of partiality or hypocrisy.

That is a surprising way to measure wisdom! How would you define wisdom? Would you use words like knowledgeable, enlightened, learned, well-educated, insightful, smart, intelligent? Those are words that come to me. But this reading from James says that wisdom is more a matter of the spirit than it is a matter of the intellect.

The Bible has much to say about wisdom. The Old Testament book of Proverbs declares that "The fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom. (Prov. 9:10) The New Testament book of First Corinthians says that true wisdom is found in the cross of Jesus Christ. (1 Cor. 1)

This is a radically different way of looking at life! And I believe this way of looking at life has great implications for us when it comes to making decisions. We all want to make wise decisions - right? Whether it is in simple, everyday matters, or whether in matters that shape the course of our lives, we want to make wise decisions.

When it comes to making wise decisions, our first impulse may be to gather information. We rush to the computer. We find out what others have said. We talk to people we trust. And those are all good things to do.

But there is something even better. This reading from James points the way. It urges us to do two things. First, take a look inside. What's driving you? What is motivating you? Is it envy? Selfish ambition? Coveting something you don't have? Or when you look within do you find a sense of peace, gentleness, a spirit of mercy, a desire to produce good fruits with your life?

A good example is the story about Jesus and the disciples which we heard today (Mark 9:30-37). They

were arguing with one another. Jesus challenged them to stop and look inside. They were seeking their own interests by wanting to be seen as the greatest and most important.

Check out what is going on inside of you. I heard an advertisement from a car dealer saying that when you bring your car in for an oil change, the mechanics will do a thorough check of the engine to make sure everything is running right. We need to do that kind of check up on ourselves.

Second, this Bible reading urges us to “Submit yourselves to God.” When it comes to making decisions, our goal should be to seek God’s will, not what we selfishly want. If we want to be wise, if we want to make good decisions, then turning to God is key.

I know this is difficult. The urge to look out for ourselves is so powerful that it is difficult to look to God, to seek God’s will, to submit ourselves to God. Keep in mind, though, what God has done for you in Jesus Christ. Christ’s death on the cross and resurrection from the grave has removed everything that separates you from God so that you can be sure that God is “for you” and not against you, that God is working for your best interest. Christ’s death on the cross and resurrection from the grave has connected you to God so that you can talk to God and listen to God and receive wisdom from God. Christ’s death on the cross and resurrection from the grave has given you a new future, a future with hope and promise.

Little Carlos didn’t like being called stupid and neither do we. This Word of God teaches that if you want to make good and wise decisions, check and see what is driving you. If it is your own selfish will, than make a change. Turn to God and seek God’s will. That opens the way for God’s wisdom. And God’s wisdom is always much wiser than anything we can come up with on our own.