

A Theological Reflection on How the ‘Wisdom of God’ Translates into a Fulfilled Christian Life (James 1:1-8)

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Abstract

There is a unique opportunity for the ‘justified’ person, like James the Just and the diaspora (Ja 1:1), to access the wisdom of God to help achieve God’s purposes for life. This is because the God of the Bible has chosen to fellowship with His Creation and not remain a distant and distinct ‘other’. One question that needs to be clarified among several is how ‘wisdom’ is an attribute of God or more than that?

God is all-wise, “the only wise God” (Rm 16:27), within Himself, and yet chooses to share that wisdom with those who will so believe as to “ask God for wisdom” (Ja 1:5). Certain results are generously guaranteed to achieve God’s desired τελειον for our lives. It is not a carte blanche’ request and receive’ anything you wish (Ja 1:5; 4:3) indulgent approach. James reflects closely but not exactly on the words of Jesus (Ja 1:6; Jn 14:14). This follows in the tradition of applying knowledge gained from an authoritative figure.

The wisdom gained from God is far more than the knowledge of God. Wisdom includes the application of life in view with a specific overall purpose. Jesus Himself is God’s wisdom revealed (1 Cor 1:30). He brings the wisdom of God from possible abstraction to life itself on earth amidst all the challenges. His life revealed the wisdom of God in terms of how He found meaning in suffering and depended entirely on the Father. This wisdom of God, which we often lack (Ja 1:5), is available from God for those who are single-mindedly determined to live meaningful lives in any and every circumstance (Ja 1:6-8).

1. Introduction

In approaching the subject of the ‘attributes of God’ there is some discussion in the discipline of biblical and systematic theology. Taking it a step further in isolating the one attribute under discussion within this article – namely the ‘wisdom of God’ – there is an even further interesting comment. Erickson (2013:234) does not list wisdom under his heading of the “Attributes of Greatness” nor does he list it under the “Attributes

of Goodness” (2013:255). Rather he seems to see ‘wisdom’ as more encompassing: “A further factor, in the light of this knowledge, is God’s wisdom. By this is meant that God acts in the light of all the facts and of correct values. Knowing all things, God knows what is good” (2013:246).

On the other hand, Grudem and many others list the ‘wisdom of God’ as one of the biblical attributes. In his list of God’s Attributes (1994:185), he places ‘wisdom’ under the heading of “Mental Attributes” following “Knowledge” and preceding “Truthfulness.” He describes God’s wisdom similarly to Erickson, “God’s wisdom means that God always chooses the best goals and the means to those goals” (1994:193). Grudem mentions something pertinent to this article, namely: “God’s wisdom is, of course, in part communicable to us. We can ask God confidently for wisdom when we need it, for he promises in his Word, ‘If any of you lacks wisdom, let him ask God, who gives to all men generously and without reproaching, and it will be given to him’ James1:5” (1994:194).

This research plans to be a theological reflection on how the ‘wisdom of God’ translates meaningfully into the life of a Believer. Vondey (2012:136) summarises the issue in the following words: “The Hebrew understanding of wisdom intimately linked behaviour with the fear of the Lord (Prv 9:10).” My primary text is James 1:1-8 (This will be later linked to 3:13-4:10) which is found in one of the New Testament books of wisdom – which is part of the wider wisdom literature of the Bible. The God of wisdom has chosen to engage with us wisely and further to enable us to enjoy His wisdom. I’ve chosen to begin with James, someone who experienced this for himself and was willing to share it with others.

2. James experienced ‘the wisdom of God’ in a new way together with the *διασπορα* (Ja 1:1)

Though there is some debate regarding the identity of James, the author of the letter bearing his name, there is enough evidence to accept that this person is James the brother of Jesus. James was a Jewish Judaizer and did not initially ‘believe’ in Jesus as the messianic Saviour, “For even his own brothers did not believe in him” (Jn 7:5 NIV 2011). In Mathew 13:55, James heads the list of brothers. What is very significant is that after His resurrection, Jesus chose to reveal Himself to James: “Then he appeared to James, then to all the apostles, and last of all he appeared to me also, as to one abnormally born” (1 Cor 15:7-8). This encounter with the resurrected Christ seems to have been the defining moment in James’s

life of faith and leadership in the Church at Jerusalem.

Holtz says of James, “He quickly attained to a prominent position in the community (Gl 1:19; 2:9; Ac 12:17; 15:13) and ultimately became the leader in Jerusalem (Gl 2:12; Ac 21:18) (2003:6). The apostle Paul called him a “pillar” (Gl 2:9) and found it necessary to visit James after his conversion and call to ministry towards the Gentiles (Gl 1:19). I am well aware of a more recent trend within biblical scholarship that would question this identity of James, the claimed author of the letter. One example is Strecker, who says: “Although the author calls himself James (Ja 1:1), several factors argue against this claim” (2003:6). I am not convinced that the main point here to dispute James’s authenticity, being the quality of Greek used, is a valid one. This assumes that James could not have grown in his knowledge of Greek over time. Everybody grows in their language and writing ability over time.

Then there is another school of thought, which sees James’s letter as pseudo-epigraphical and authored by someone else in the second century. Nienhuis sometimes argues convincingly and bases this view on a late recognition and mention of the letter. “Though the authenticity of the letter of James was generally taken for granted by many church leaders after Augustine, we have seen that several noteworthy patristic figures recorded for posterity their doubts about the document” (2007:99). The key to the argument is that the first evidence of a patristic actually mentioning the letter is in the writings of Origen (185-254 CE). This is not to say that the letter didn’t exist before this – but it is that the first known mention of the letter of ‘James’ is by Origen. For example, there are instances like that of the fish. The Coelacanth fish was regarded by researchers as extinct and used as an example of evolutionary speculation. There was no mention of them for millennia. Then, on the 21st December 1938, a fishing trawler caught a Coelacanth in its fishing nets off the East London coast. Since then further research was conducted, and Coelacanths were found in the very deep waters of Madagascar. History books have had to be revised, and the theory of evolution has been challenged regarding this unusual fish.

The letter of James has struggled to hold its place within the Canon of Scripture together with some of the General Epistles to have the same early ‘apostolic’ credibility as the other normally accepted canonical books of the New Testament. Questions were again asked during the

Scripture debates during the Reformation. However, the letter of James has stood the test of time, and most – especially in the circle of Evangelical scholarship accept that the ‘original autograph’ would have come from the pen or dictation of James, the first leading pastor in Jerusalem. The letter proves ‘inspired’ to its hearers when it is read and preached. Its context of writing fits an early date, and its message fits the theological scenario of the New Testament.

“James, a servant of God, and of the Lord Jesus Christ: To the twelve tribes scattered among the nations. Greetings” (Ja 1:1). James – the author, claims to be a believer in the “Lord Jesus Christ”, one of the most expansive titles given throughout the New Testament. He also provides evidence in the letter to be in a position of authority to write to the *διασπορα* of messianic Jewish believers. Ac 8:1 gives evidence of the commencement of this dispersion: “And Saul approved of their killing them. On that day, a great persecution broke out against the church in Jerusalem, and all except the apostles were scattered throughout Judea and Samaria.”

Strecker rightly says: “The purpose of the Epistle of James is to give authoritative ethical instruction to the new Israel of the dispersion and to summon believers to a concrete realisation of the Christian life” (2003:6). Jewish people were accustomed to the wisdom literature of the Bible and the wisdom teaching of their rabbis. As Christians, they needed to step up to their new context – how to live now that they had believed in Jesus and planned to follow Him. Matthew 28:20 gives something of the idea: “Teach them to obey everything I have commanded you. And surely I am with you always, to the end of the age.” This points to the difference between the Knowledge of God and the Wisdom of God. Wisdom in the present dispensation is knowledge applied in the newly found Jesus tradition. This wisdom enables Christians to live productive, meaningful lives within any context.

3. The wisdom of God translated from eternity to time

While Jesus embodies the wisdom of God in the Word becoming flesh (Jn 1:14), God’s wisdom had formerly been communicated from eternity to time within the Old Testament biblical wisdom literature. Proverbs 1:1-3 says, by way of example: “The proverbs of Solomon, son of David, king of Israel: for gaining wisdom and instruction; for understanding words of insight; for receiving instruction in prudent behaviour, doing what is right and just and fair; for giving prudence to those who are simple, knowledge

and discretion to the young – .” The entire book of Proverbs fulfilled this role and continues to do so with even greater effect if supplemented with the wisdom of Jesus Christ.

In turn, a key difference found in the New Testament is the Holy Spirit’s role in the believer’s life, whereby He empowers the application of knowledge and wisdom in the recipient, thereby enabling supernatural living through faith. Ultimately, the wisdom of God is revealed through Christ and the spread of His Gospel.

3.1 God is wisdom (Ja 1:1; Rm 16:27)

The letter of James is part of the wisdom literature of the New Testament (Bauckham, 2003:1483). I want to set the wider New Testament scenario by using two quotations from the Apostle Paul, where wisdom is more comprehensive in scope. “Oh, the depth of the riches of the wisdom and knowledge of God! How unsearchable his judgements, and his paths beyond tracing out!” (Rm 11:33). Reumann eloquently explains: “Three divine attributes are lifted up: riches (9:23; 10:12; 11:12), wisdom (hidden but at work in Christ, see on 10:5-10), and knowledge (*cf.* 8:29; 11:2)” (2003:1304). Then Paul ends his Roman letter by singling out ‘wisdom’, “to the only wise God be glory forever through Jesus Christ! Amen” (Rm 16:27). God is wisdom. God has no equal in this respect. In referring to the entire doxology of verses 25-27 and ending with verse 27, Reumann very aptly says that this is a “doxology (“glory to,” v.27) about God, not a benediction from Christ” (2003:1312).

When James 1:1 says: “James, a servant of God and the Lord Jesus Christ, to the twelve tribes scattered among the nations”, he is planning to represent the wisdom of God – through the paradigm revealed in Jesus Christ – and that which superseded his former tradition of Judaizer wisdom. As a believer and leader of the Jerusalem Church, James saw fit to communicate this wisdom of God’s knowledge applied to life – to all those who were scattered into very challenging, unfamiliar living conditions. Grudem describes how James probably thought: “God is infinitely wise and we are not, and it pleases him when we have faith to trust his wisdom even when we do not understand what he is doing” (1994:194-195).

From a technical perspective, Bauckham (2003:1484) explains how James communicates this wisdom of God in this circular letter. Commenting on the wisdom tradition, he says: “Their most striking formal characteristic is

the short aphorism (of which there are various types: proverbial maxims, similitudes, admonitions, and others)". On the one hand, Bauckham helps in the reading of the letter of James. "In order to read James correctly, it is important to recognise the dominant role of aphorisms." On the other hand, it is equally important to note that the letter is not just a collection of aphorisms. There is a purpose and a structure.

James does not use a typical letter style, using an argument to persuade the reader from one point to another. The important point to note in reading James is that his method is to "invite the reader to pause and ponder" (Bauckham, 2003:1484). See how verse 2 approaches the very difficult subject of suffering: "Consider it pure joy, my brothers and sisters, whenever you face trials of many kinds." This is another option for possible feelings of pain, betrayal and disappointment. Is there another way of looking at things? Yes, there is.

James crafts the wisdom teaching of Jesus (e.g. Sermon on the mount) – not by directly quoting Jesus (Dunn, 2003:183) – but by alluding to Jesus's teaching. James has, "made the wisdom of Jesus his own and re-expresses it in new formulations of his own" (Bauckham, 2003:1484). So, the letter remains both Jewish in character and Christian in application. The Jewish Christian diaspora needed help quickly living within a primarily international Gentile context (Matt 28:19-20). We will now proceed to explore a sampling of this in James 1:2-8. The first example is 'wisdom amidst trials (vss. 2-4) followed by the 'process of acquiring God's wisdom' (vss. 5-8).

3.2 Wisdom amidst trials (Ja 1:2-4)

This is the first aphorism which is very significant; it sets the tone for the entire book. The subject of this first aphorism is the correct handling of trials and how this can point you in the right direction and help you achieve your destination. The readers are all believers in general – which can also translate to anyone at any time – both then and any time in the future. Bauckham confirms this when he says: "Sooner or later any Christian community will encounter adversities of some kind, and James's advice applies to any such circumstance" (2003:1484). Hebrews 10:33-34 could be the same audience James has in mind: "Sometimes you were publicly exposed to insult and persecution; at other times you stood side by side with those who were so treated. You suffered along with those in prison, and joyfully accepted the confiscation of your property, because you knew

that you yourselves had better and lasting possessions.” Significantly, the word *χαρὰς* (joyful) is used here much like it is used in James 1:2.

The goal of this first aphorism; as is the goal of the entire letter – is *τελειον* (1:4; 1:17; 1:25; 2:8; 2:22; 3:2). This word includes one’s future (eschatology), wholeness (sanctification), integrity (ethics) and obedience (discipleship – see 1:8; 1:22-25; 2:8-12; 4:8). Ladd so wisely says: “Christians are subject both to temptations to sin of many sorts and to the pressure of trials (1:2) that may cause them to wander from the faith (5:19); yet they look forward to the Parousia of Christ when they will inherit the Kingdom of God (2:5) and enter into eternal life (1:12)” (1997:638). Uttley (2014:2) clarifies: “James often looks towards the culmination of the Christian hope (*cf.* Ja 1:8-9; 12; 5:7-8).”

So, the key elements of being a Christian are clearly linked together, namely joy (and not necessarily happiness), faith (trust in God and not just positive thinking), endurance (which trusts the words of wisdom), and a fruitful God honouring future. Vondey (2012:138) gives some technical insight into the text here: “The progressive texture of a text is formed by the sequences, or progressions, of words and phrases.” Hebrews 11:39-40 confirms these sentiments: “These were all commended for their faith, yet none of them received what had been promised. God had planned something better for us so that only together with us would they actually be made perfect.” The Greek word here is *τελειωθωσιν*. No Christian is excluded from the challenges of life and faith, though the intensity may differ at times for some. In the same way, no Christian will be excluded or excused from the final day of the Lord when faith becomes sight (1 Jn 3:2).

3.3 The process of acquiring God’s wisdom (Ja 1:5-8)

These verses form the second aphorism – which is a natural consequence of the first. It answers the question of how one can be in the position of “not lacking anything.” Uttley (2014:2) explains: “There is a word play between James 1:4c and 5a.” James answers this question by reflecting on the teaching of Jesus found in Luke 11:9 and Matthew 7:7 (Dunn, 2003:182). The words of James 1:5 are again open-ended, inviting “anyone” who is willing to admit their lack of wisdom. Though this opens the door to all, it is the repentant Believer who more easily admits to this need. “You should ask God, who gives generously to all without finding fault, and it will be given to you.”

Luke 11:9 says: “So I say to you: Ask and it shall be given to you; seek and you will find; knock and the door will be opened to you.” Matthew 7:8 explains: “For everyone who asks receives; the one who seeks finds; and to the one who knocks, the door will be opened.” Grudem (1994:194) says that it’s a matter of asking and obeying.

There is already a comprehensive database of biblical wisdom in the book of Proverbs alone (see Pr 1:1-7). After that, there are several books of Scripture listed under Wisdom literature as well as many chapters and verses that give wisdom to the reader: “These things happened to them as examples and were written down as warnings for us, on whom the culmination of the ages has come” (1 Cor 10:11). Bauckham (2003:1484) goes further to tell of the even wider extent of wisdom literature that people could readily draw on: “Represented especially by Proverbs, Sirach, the wisdom texts from Qumran (1Q26, 4Q184-185, 298, 415-18, 420-21, 423, 424, 525), and Pseud-Phocylides.”

But its *more than* dutiful legalistic obedience to instructions that James and the Jewish Believers were so accustomed to. James is talking about the information of wisdom, further inspired by the Holy Spirit, leading to godly implementation. Single-minded implementation comes from a faith in God that is unwavering. For example, when the Church gave guidelines after the day of Pentecost for the qualities desired to be in the new group of people who would assist the Hellenistic widows to receive their equal portion in the daily distribution equally, Acts 6:3 says that they should be people, “known to be full of the Spirit and wisdom (of God).”

James is pointing the diaspora towards their *τελειος*, “single-minded” and “stable” in all that they do. “Furthermore, James contrasted what God gives with what believers receive (or in this instance, what those who doubt will not receive). James urged his listeners not only to ask God in faith for that wisdom, but also not to doubt that they will receive wisdom from God” (Vondey, 2012;139). This leads this research article to a summation.

4. Summation and application (Ja 3:13-4:10)

Vondey (2012:138) summarises the message of James 1:1-8 in the following way: “The recipients of James’s letter should have joy in spite of trials. The trials are tests of faith, which eventually produce patience, producing a perfect or complete character.” The wisdom of God exists within God; it can be seen in the actions of God, and it can be read about in the Word

of God. Yet it is the pleasure of God to share His wisdom with us so that we can share in its goals and truthfulness. In this summation section, my plan is to follow from these initial verses to explore the parallel passage of James 3:13-4:10. McCartney helps us here: “James here in the second part of James 3 gives expression to the same thing that Paul addresses in 1 Cor 1-3: God’s wisdom(in James’s terms, ‘wisdom from above’) can look like foolishness to the world, but God’s ‘foolishness’ turns out to be mightier than human wisdom (in James’s terms, “earthly wisdom”))” (2009:197).

4.1. Contrasting God’s wisdom with the world (Jas 3:13-18)

James 3:17 gives a seven-fold (perfection) summation of God’s wisdom as opposed to that commonly found in the world: “But wisdom the wisdom that comes from heaven is first of all pure; then peace-loving, considerate, submissive, full of mercy and good fruit, impartial and sincere.” Moo explains: “James has described what the wisdom from above is not (v.15); now he tells us what it is, with a series of seven adjectives. Or, more properly, he tells us what effects divine wisdom should produce – for almost all of these adjectives describe what wisdom does rather than what it is” (1985:135).

James 3:14 outlines the contrast: “But if you harbour bitter envy and selfish ambition in your hearts, do not boast about it or deny the truth.” This development in James’s thinking seems to be more pointed to those among the diaspora who should have known better – the teachers! (see also Ja 3:1-2). “Who is wise and understanding among you? Let them show it by their good life, by deeds done in the humility that comes from wisdom” (3:13). James 3:16 seems to continue pointing in this direction: “For where you have envy and selfish ambition, there you will find disorder and evil practice.” Moo says: “‘Confusion’, ‘disorder’ and ‘tumults’ will inevitably break out in the church where Christians, especially leaders, are more interested in pursuing their own ambitions or partisan causes than the edification of the body as a whole” (1985:134).

James had seen this first-hand at the Jerusalem Council (Acts 15) where ‘Judaizer’ Christian leaders were pitted against Peter, Paul and Barnabas who had personally witnessed the amazing fruit of conversions, signs and wonders among the Gentiles. James became the final presiding officer to bring the Council to some measure of biblical missional order: “The whole assembly became silent as they listened to Barnabas and Paul telling about the signs and wonders God had done among the Gentiles

through them. When they finished, James spoke up. 'Brothers', he said, 'Listen to me.'" (Ac 15:12-13).

James had set the pace of peace and openness to God's missional plan and purpose at the Jerusalem Council: "The words of the prophets are in agreement with this, as it is written" (Ac 15:15). He now expects leaders and teachers within the diaspora to do the same. "Not many of you should become teachers, my fellow believers, because you know that those who teach will be judged more strictly" (Ja 3:1). The diaspora in general needed teachers who were like the Lord Jesus Christ in that they practised what they preached. John 1:14 explains: "The Word became flesh and made his dwelling among us. We have seen his glory, the glory of the one and only Son, who came from the Father, full of grace and truth." James expected more than knowledge of the Gospel and the conclusions reached at the Jerusalem Council. He expected teachers with transformed lives to exemplify the Gospel way within foreign territories.

Vondey ends this section with the following helpful conclusion: "The narrative in 3:13-4:10 shows a progression from example of godly wisdom (3:13) to examples of examples of earthly wisdom (3:14-16) and back to godly wisdom (3:17-18), then on to the outcomes of earthly wisdom (4:1-6) and finally the outcomes of godly wisdom (4:7-10)" (2012:146). This first section or aphorism, as Bauckham better calls it, ends with verse 18, "Peacemakers who sow in peace reap the harvest of righteousness." This is the outcome James expects of all Christians anywhere in the world, especially among the diaspora Christians he was addressing, and more especially he expected this of leading teachers.

As a South African pastor, Buys puts a practical spin on all that has been said above: "In peace with God, we pass up opportunities to justify ourselves, to act in pride or fear and aggression is no longer our first response. We trust God to take care of us. Then, as far as it depends on us, we live in peace with others" (2015:116). With this wisdom, Christian pastors could be modelling this to the entire Church within our country – intending to earn a voice within the entire community.

4.2. A call to intentional obedience (Jas 4:1-10)

There is some thinking that this section could be a continuation of James 3:13-18, as McCartney (2009:205) comments. Yes, it is true that verse 1 does not begin with the expected vocative, *adeophio*. However, "...here

we may note that like other segments in James (2:14; 3:13), 4:1-10 begins with a rhetorical question and ends with summarising proverbial material, this time is a series of wisdom imperatives (4:7-10).” This micro shift is nevertheless significant because it calls those in teaching roles and, by implication, everyone else towards intentional obedience.

Chapter 4:1-2 outlines the problem more acutely, and in doing so takes us back to James 1:5 (see also Mt 7:7), where we are counselled to “ask God, who gives generously to all without finding fault, and it will be given to him.” Verse 3, like chapter 3:13-18 reveals misguided intentions. Moo suggests correctly: “Why is this desire ‘to have’ frustrated? Because of a failure to pray properly. You do not have, because you do not ask. Oh yes, you ask, James admits, but your asking is done wrongly, with selfish motives – and it is for this reason that you do not receive” (1985:142). James contrasts “pleasures” with the purposes and plans of God. Jesus clarifies in John 14:13-14 on this point: “And I will do whatever you ask in my name, so that the Father may be glorified in the Son. You may ask for anything in my name, and I will do it.” Two guidelines are given. First, our prayer requests must glorify the Father in the Son. Second, to ask in the name of Jesus is to ask what Jesus would ask.

In verse 4, James allows his biological and theological ancestry to burst forth: “You adulterous people...” Moo confirms this: “This dependence on the Old Testament is clearly seen in James’s opening address of his readers” (1985:143). Jeremiah said, “As a faithless wife leaves her husband, so have you been faithless to me, O house of Israel, says the LORD” (Ja 3:20) This theme repeats itself repeatedly throughout the Old Testament, with acute focus on the imagery found in the prophet Hosea (e.g. 2:5; 2:7; 2:16; 2:20).

In verse 4, James now puts “the world” in conflict with our destinies (*telos*) and in contrast to our God-ordained lifestyles. 1 John 2:15-17 as a General Epistle could help here: “Do not love the world or anything in the world. If anyone loves the world, the love of the Father is not in them. For everything in the world – the lust of the flesh, the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life – comes not from the Father but from the world. The world and its desires pass away, but whoever does the will of God lives forever.” Interestingly, James 4:4 uses *φιλία* (friendship) in terms of relating to the *κόσμος*, whereas John uses *αγαπᾶω* (sacrificial commitment). Linking 1 John 2:17 to James’s overall message is important: “The world and its

desires pass away, but whoever does the will of God lives forever.”

James 4:5 reinforces three key elements into an equation of God’s commitment and desire for our relationship with Him: 1. God is jealously (in the best sense of the word) committed to us. 2. God has breathed the breath of life into us as human beings. 3. God has given us His Holy Spirit to confirm His presence. Moo confirms something of the special nature of this verse as well as the difficulty in understanding it: “It is not clear whether James thinks of the spirit which he has made to dwell in us as the Holy Spirit given to believers (*cf.* NASB) or as God’s creative spirit by which he has invigorated mankind (Gn 2:7). In either case, the phrase reminds us that God has a claim on us by virtue of his work in our lives” (1985:146).

The final intentional call to obedience is given in verse 6. “But he gives us more grace” – in order that we humble ourselves before Him. This is an action demanded of all of us, especially the teachers and leaders of the diaspora. “Submit yourselves, then, to God. Resist the devil, and he will flee from you” (v. 7). Followed by verse 10: “Humble yourselves before the Lord, and he will lift you up.” There is a time and a place to be promoted in life, but this needs to be in the plan and will of God.

5. Conclusion

James 4:11-12 is like an epilogue to the subject of the wisdom of God within the believer’s life. McCartney explains: “The brief subsequent paragraph (4:11-12) begins with a prohibition (like 3:1 and 2:1) and ends with a proverb also, though James has added a rhetorical question as an application to the end of the closing proverb in 4:12” (2009:205). James returns to his personal and pastoral demeanour with which he commenced the letter: “Brothers and sisters, do not slander one another. Anyone who speaks against a brother or sister or judges them speaks against the law and judges it. When you judge the law, you are not keeping it, but sitting in judgment on it” (4:11).

1. Changed lives are the key to a healthy Church and an effective mission strategy.
2. Changed attitudes is the key to relationships.
3. Changed values – from legalism to love – are the key to contentious issues.

4. Changed minds and hearts towards the relevance and authority of the Word of God is the key to staying the course (teleios).
5. Changed leaders must lead by practical example and not condescending theorising.

James 4:12 wraps up the entire matter in a single statement: “There is only one Law-giver and Judge, the one who is able to save and destroy. But you – who are you to judge your neighbour” (4:12). It seems that within the Church verbal restraint had been lost (3:1-12). Uncontrolled denunciation was taking place (4:11-12). A worldly spirit had crept in (3:15; 4:1; 4:4). “This flirtation with the world must be seen to be incompatible with God’s desire to have his people’s whole-hearted allegiance (4:4-5)” (Moo, 1985:153). Paul sums it up in Colossians 2:20, “Since you died with Christ to the elemental forces of this world, why, as though as though you still belonged to the world, do you submit to its rules.” Further explanation is found in Colossians 2:23, “Such regulations indeed have an appearance of wisdom, with their self-imposed worship, their false humility and their harsh treatment of the body, but they lack any value in restraining sensual indulgence.”

“In Him are hidden all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge.”
Colossians 2:3

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The author declares that there is no financial gain or personal relationship(s) that inappropriately influenced him in the writing of this article.

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