

A SERIES OF DEVOTIONS BASED UPON THE LETTER OF JAMES

COUNTERFEIT WISDOM

James 3:14-16 “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.”

I am sure you have heard of counterfeit money. It is a false representation of the real thing. Those who counterfeit spare no effort to create their own printed money that looks exactly like the real thing. The best counterfeit bills require experts to determine their lack of authenticity.

You may not think of wisdom being counterfeit. However, when information, teachings, philosophies, etc. are presented as truth, when in fact they are false, inaccurate, deceiving they are counterfeit. Counterfeit wisdom always leads people in wrong directions and to improper conclusions, harmful decisions and/or sinful behaviors.

James presents in 3:14-16 two examples of counterfeit wisdom. They are jealousy and selfish ambition. Jealousy, envy, selfishness causes you to speak untruthful words when you are unhappy with others. You attempt to minimize or even ridicule, demean or belittle them when you are envious or jealous about their successes.

James states, “For where jealousy and selfish ambition exist, there will be disorder and every vile practice.” (3:16) These are sinful behaviors. Instead, God calls you to “love your neighbor as you love yourself.” (Mark 12:31) Jesus taught there is no commandment greater than this. 1 Corinthians 13 describes what this love is like, “Love is patient, love is kind. It does not envy, it does not boast, it is not proud. It does not dishonor others, it is not self-seeking, it is not easily angered, it keeps no record of wrongs. Love does not delight in evil but rejoices with the truth. It always protects, always trusts, always hopes, always perseveres. Love never fails.” (1 Corinthians 13:4-8)

Prayer: Lord, send Your Holy Spirit into my heart to cause me to celebrate with my neighbor the blessings You bestow upon them giving thanks to you for the goodness and kindness you shower upon them. In Jesus' name. Amen.

Lord of all nations, grant me grace To love all people, ev'ry race;
And in each person may I see My kindred, loved, redeemed by Thee.

Break down the wall that would divide Thy children, Lord, on ev'ry side
My neighbor's good let me pursue; Let Christian love bind warm and true.

Forgive me, Lord, where I have erred By loveless act and thoughtless word.
Make me to see the wrong I do Will grieve my wounded Lord anew.

Give me Thy courage, Lord, to speak Whenever strong oppress the weak.
Should I myself the victim be, Help me forgive, rememb'ring thee.

With Thine own love may I be filled And by Thy Holy Spirit willed,
That all I touch, where'er I be, May be divinely touched by Thee.
(LSB 844)