



Small Group Guide

September 13, 2026

Overview

This sermon establishes Jesus Christ as the foundation for all understanding -- of Scripture, of our circumstances, and of one another. The speaker challenges us to examine the posture of our hearts and minds so that our understanding leads not merely to knowing the right thing to do, but to knowing and loving Jesus and loving one another well.

Key Takeaways

- Jesus is not a barrier between us and the Father -- he is the exact image of the Father. To see Jesus is to see God.
- We follow Jesus, not simply the Bible. Scripture is a lighthouse that points us to a person.
- Understanding and discernment are connected: we understand first, and then we apply that understanding through discernment.
- The goal of discernment is not to prove we are right. It is to know and love Jesus and to know and love one another.

- James 3:17 gives us a practical checklist for wisdom that comes from above: pure, peaceable, gentle, open to reason, full of mercy and good fruits, impartial, and sincere.

The Five Postures for Understanding

Use these as a reference during discussion:

1. Submission to the revelation and conviction of the Holy Spirit
 2. Humility -- a willingness to be wrong and to be corrected
 3. Honesty -- acknowledging what we do not know and holding our conclusions loosely
 4. Reason -- applying sound judgment and remaining open to dialogue
 5. Grace -- allowing God to do the convicting and transformative work in others and in ourselves
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Discussion Questions

Opening

1. The speaker opened by sharing how his experience with absent or angry father figures distorted his understanding of God the Father. Have you ever noticed a life experience shaping the way you read Scripture or understood God? What was that like to recognize?
2. When you hear the phrase "God looks like Jesus," what is your immediate reaction? Does that feel settled and familiar, or does some part of you still wrestle with it?

Going Deeper

3. The speaker draws a distinction between following the Bible and following Jesus, using the image of a lighthouse. He says sailors do not follow the lighthouse or even the light -- they follow the person who established it. How does that image change the way you think about your relationship with Scripture?
4. The speaker says, "We seek understanding and discernment so that we can know and love Jesus and so that we can know and love one another." How does that reframe the way you have typically thought about discernment? What shifts when love becomes the goal rather than being correct?

5. Of the five postures discussed -- submission, humility, honesty, reason, and grace -- which one comes most naturally to you? Which one is most difficult, and why?
6. The speaker warns that dogma -- clinging too tightly to what we believe we know -- can cause us to treat those who disagree as opponents. Have you ever experienced that, either in yourself or from someone else? What was the cost of it?
7. James 3:17 describes wisdom from above as pure, peaceable, gentle, open to reason, full of mercy and good fruits, impartial, and sincere. Looking at that list honestly, which quality feels most absent from the way you typically engage with people you disagree with?

Reflection

8. The speaker says that if people are not willing to ask you questions or challenge your thinking, something may be suppressing reasonable dialogue. Do the people closest to you feel free to question or challenge your ideas? What does that tell you about your posture?
9. He also says our understanding of Scripture or a situation should bring freedom and rest, not greater burden and obligation. Think of a belief or interpretation you currently hold. Does it produce rest or weariness in you? What might that indicate?
10. The speaker notes that the Holy Spirit's entire ministry within us is to guide us toward Jesus -- and that as Jesus is revealed, we are gently disrupted to grow more like him. Where do you sense that gentle disruption happening in your life right now?

Practical Applications

This Week, Try One of the Following:

- **Posture Check:** Before reading Scripture this week, pause and ask yourself which of the five postures feels weakest in you right now. Pray specifically about that one before you begin reading.
- **Bias Inventory:** Identify one belief you hold strongly -- about God, about a person in your life, or about a situation you are navigating. Ask honestly:

what experience or previous teaching shaped that belief? Is it consistent with the character of Jesus as revealed in the Gospels?

- **James 3:17 as a Mirror:** After a significant conversation or decision this week, run it through the qualities listed in James 3:17. Was your response pure, peaceable, gentle, open to reason, full of mercy, impartial, and sincere? Write down what you notice without judgment, and bring it to God.
 - **Lighthouse Exercise:** Read a familiar passage of Scripture and ask one question throughout: Where is Jesus in this? Not just as a future reference point, but as the one through whom and for whom everything described exists.
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Closing Prayer Focus

Ask someone in the group to close in prayer using these themes:

- A request for wisdom that comes from above, as described in James 3:17
- Gratitude that the Holy Spirit is already at work guiding each person toward truth
- A surrender of the places where personal bias, experience, or pride may be distorting understanding
- A renewed desire to pursue discernment not for the sake of being right, but for the sake of love