

# A STUDY OF JAMES <sup>(13)</sup>

Wisdom – Heavenly or Earthly?

**James 3:13-18**

# The Book of James

- Continuing our study of James, we have addressed numerous practical applications.
- In our last lesson, we addressed the tongue – the things we say (**James 3:1-12**). He began by warning that not many should become teachers. This led to warning about the power of the tongue. It can do both great harm or great good.  
Ultimately, we are called to control our tongues.
- Our text tonight, **James 3:13-18**, could be a continuation of instructions to teachers, though its principles certainly apply to all.

## Who is wise and understanding? **3:13**

- Is James continuing to appeal primarily to leaders?
- As this lesson addresses 2 types of wisdom, consider that godly leaders will use wisdom in their conversations and conduct.  
What they say is a reflection of their wisdom and often their hearts. Is it worldly or heavenly?
- When seeking spiritual advice, it is usually someone with proven godly wisdom that we ought to ask.
  - **1 Corinthians 6:5** – help with disputes, etc.
  - **1 Kings 12:6-8ff** – Jeroboam sought advice
- - **Hebrews 13:17, 1 Timothy 3:6** - elders

## Who is wise and understanding? **3:13**

- Is James continuing to appeal primarily to leaders?
- Having said this, certainly proper wisdom is something we all need!
  - As James asks this question it can apply to EVERYONE: "Are you one who applies good wisdom?"; "Why do you not have understanding?"
  - We need to examine ourselves in this!

## Who is wise and understanding? **3:13**

- Wisdom is a principal thing we must all pursue
- **Proverbs 3:13-18**, Happy is the man who finds wisdom...
- **Proverbs 4:5-9**, Get wisdom, get understanding...
- **Ecclesiastes 7:11-12**, Wisdom is good with an inheritance... Wisdom is a defense...
- **James 1:5**, If anyone lacks wisdom...
- **Colossians 3:16**, Let His word dwell in you with wisdom
- **Matthew 7:24-27**, the wise and foolish builders

## Who is wise and understanding? **3:13**

- Wisdom is a principal thing we must all pursue
- Consider contrasting wisdom in our text in light of the contrast with our conversations – **James 3:9-12**
- HOW we control our tongues involves wisdom – what to say and when to say it, etc. **cf. James 1:19-20.**
- Wisdom tells us to temper our words based upon our environment – **Proverbs 10:19** -*In the multitude of words sin is not lacking, But he who restrains his lips is wise.* (**Ecclesiastes 5:7** – there is also vanity)

## Who is wise and understanding? **3:13**

- Wisdom is a principal thing we must all pursue
- *Let him show by his good conduct that his works are done in the meekness of wisdom – **James 3:13***
- We manifest wisdom with our manner of life.
  - *Meekness* means to be mild or gentle (*gentleness* – LSB, NASB)
  - **Galatians 5:23** – gentleness, **6:1** – in going to an erring brother, **1 Peter 3:15** – defending our faith and hope

## The wisdom of this world - **3:14-16**

- Worldly wisdom does not come from above
- Worldly conversations and conduct do not originate in heaven with God.
- Describes as (**3:15**):
  - *earthly* – associated with physical existence  
**2 Corinthians 5:1** – our earthly house, this tent
  - *sensual* – appealing to our sensual desires  
(natural – LSB, NASB, unspiritual – ESV).  
**Cf. 1 John 2:15-16**
  - *demonic* – associated with Satan and his demons  
**cf. 1 John 3:8-10, John 8:44** – he who sins is of the devil.

## The wisdom of this world - **3:14-16**

- Qualities of worldly wisdom
- You have bitter envy (**3:14**):
  - *bitter* – hostility and resentfulness
  - Romans 3:14, Ephesians 4:31, Hebrews 12:14-17** – a root of bitterness defiles
  - *envy* – same word as zeal. Describes a strong, intense burning. Envy involves jealousy that seeks to act. **Galatians 5:20** – a work of the flesh (jealousies).

## The wisdom of this world - **3:14-16**

- Qualities of worldly wisdom
  - You are self-seeking in your heart (**3:14**):
    - *self-seeking* – selfishness.
    - *selfish ambition* – **Galatians 5:20, Philippians 2:3**
- The wisdom of this world thinks FIRST about himself.
- All sin involves a level of self-seeking as we act contrary to God's will.
- *In your heart* – this is not the occasional stumbling, but a manner of one's life.

## The wisdom of this world - **3:14-16**

- Qualities of worldly wisdom
- Do not boast and lie against the truth(**3:14**):
  - *boasting* – one who brags over his own achievements and downgrades that of others. **Cf. Romans 11:18** – *do not boast against the branches*
    - It is one thing engage in sinful conduct, but to brag about it... This is a troubling trait in our society.
- *Lie against the truth* – lying is a sin – **Ephesians 4:25, Revelation 21:8**. Often we lie to ourselves to justify our wisdom and behaviors– e.g., prejudice & favoritism
- **James 4:16** – boasting in arrogance

## The wisdom of this world - **3:14-16**

- The results of worldly wisdom
- Confusion and every evil thing are there (**3:16**):
  - *Confusion* – worldly wisdom does NOT unite! It drives wedges between people.
  - *disorder* (LSB, NASB, ESV)
  - 1 Corinthians 14:33**, *God is not the author of confusion.*
- *Every evil thing* – worldly wisdom promotes immorality, rudeness, selfishness, belittling others, hatred, destroying what belongs to others, favoritism, etc.

## The wisdom of this world - **3:14-16**

- The results of worldly wisdom
- Are such qualities really pleasant to be around?
- Do they make our environment (either spiritual or physical) better?
- Do they produce any good?
- The ONLY way good will come from such is if we CHANGE our disposition through genuine repentance (you learn from it).

## The wisdom from above - **3:17-18**

- This wisdom originates in heaven
- It originates with God **Colossians 3:1-2**
- This is God's word revealed to us – **Romans 1:16-17, 2 Timothy 3:16-17, etc.**

## The wisdom from above - **3:17-18**

- This wisdom originates in heaven
- *It is first pure*
- *First* – means a place of priority, before anything else.
- *Pure* – something unpolluted and faultless. Originally a word associated with the quality one needs to approach the gods. NT times – related to moral purity.  
**Philippians 4:8, 2 Corinthians 7:11.**  
Of women – **2 Corinthians 11:2, Titus 2:5, 1 Peter 3:2** – chaste.
- Purity of heart is where godly wisdom will begin.

## The wisdom from above - **3:17-18**

- This wisdom originates in heaven
- *Then peaceable...* – not confrontational (our default manner of life). The root word a peacemaker – **Matthew 5:9, Romans 12:18.**  
**Galatians 5:22** – a fruit of the Spirit; **Hebrews 12:14**
- *Gentle* – acting with kindness. (LSB – *considerate*)  
One who is merciful. **Philippians 4:5**

## The wisdom from above - **3:17-18**

- This wisdom originates in heaven
- *Willing to yield* – open to adaptation (without compromise). (LSB – *submissive*, NASB – *reasonable*)
  - pursuing healthy relationships we need to be willing to bend when we can. Open mindedness. We will NOT always get our way.
- *Full of mercy* – kindness and compassion, even when wronged. **James 2:13!**

## The wisdom from above - **3:17-18**

- This wisdom originates in heaven
- *Full of good fruits* – is our life characterized by doing good things? What are we producing?
  - Not only for God, but others as we have opportunity. **Galatians 6:10, James 2:20, Titus 2:14**

## The wisdom from above - **3:17-18**

- This wisdom originates in heaven
- *Without partiality* – we do our best to treat everyone and every situation with the same standard.  
We are to be free from prejudice –  
**James 2:1-13, Matthew 7:1-5, etc.**
- *Without hypocrisy* – we are not pretending!  
**2 Timothy 1:5** – speaks of Timothy's genuine faith  
**Romans 12:9** – our love is without hypocrisy  
**1 Peter 1:22** – sincere love of the brethren

## The wisdom from above - **3:17-18**

- This wisdom originates in heaven
- *Righteous fruit* – we are doing what God demands of us. **James 1:20**, *the wrath of man does not produce the righteousness of God.*  
**Philippians 1:11** – we are to be filled with the fruits of righteousness.
- We are *sowing in peace* - We need to be sowing (planting) seed that will produce this godly wisdom both in our lives and the lives of others.

## Concluding thoughts- **3:14-18**

- In this text, the wisdom of God and the world are contrasted.
- We KNOW what is right and what is wrong.  
We KNOW which is the best course of conduct!  
God's word is truth – **John 17:17**  
He gives us all things that pertain to life and godliness – **2 Peter 1:3**.
- Will we receive His implanted word with meekness (**James 1:21**)?
- The world around us desperately needs godly attitudes and wisdom.

What is your source of wisdom?