

The Traits of Wisdom

Prepare Your Heart: “Our Father, make us deeply aware that in the Bible we hold before us is the infinitely precious communication from You—the very truth of life! We ask that You teach us Your beautiful ways of wisdom, that we may walk in paths marked by peace and righteousness.”

As noted throughout this series, James has been painting a portrait of a living faith—providing examples of what true faith looks like in everyday life. At the same time he offers his readers wise counsel on an array of practical issues—often making his point by contrasting the true with the false. In the previous passage James wrote at length about the problems that arise from an uncontrolled tongue (3:1-12). Now he turns to the deeper issue of wisdom and provides a series of guidelines that can assist us in the application of his previous warnings about our speech.

Observations:

Read James 3:13-18 several times to observe what James is saying about wisdom.

1. How do you think this passage might help us develop more gracious, godly speech patterns? (Briefly review lesson 8.)

Compare James 3:11-12 with James 3:13-18.

2. What same principle is expressed in the two sources of water and their fruits and the two sources of wisdom and their fruits?

As we begin this lesson we should also ponder what Scripture says is the basic starting point for obtaining true wisdom.

3. Reflect on Proverbs 9:10 and explain the truth of this verse in your own words.

James began his letter in 1:5-8 by urging believers to pray for wisdom. Now he offers wisdom as another test of living faith. **Reread** James 3:13.

4. a. What are the identifying marks of the “wise” and “understanding” person (3:13b)?
Also consult Proverbs 4:7 and Job 28:28.

Note: The Greek word for “wise” (*sophos*) means the practical and careful application of knowledge. The word for “understanding” (*epistemon*) appears only here in the New Testament and means to be equipped with specialized knowledge, like that of a skilled teacher.

- b. Look up the word “humble” in a dictionary. Why is true wisdom humble? (3:13b) NIV

In a way, wisdom is an orientation to life, a way of making decisions that comes from one of two sources. The kind of wisdom a person possesses will be revealed by the kind of life he lives. James now identifies the characteristics of each source of wisdom.

Human wisdom

5. **Reread** James 3:14-16. What are the underlying motives and traits associated with false wisdom (verse 14)?

6. Define:
 - a. bitter envy

 - b. selfish ambition

7. From verses 14 and 16 describe the impact of human wisdom on personal relationships.

Reread James 3:14-16 one more time. *Allow the truth of these words to penetrate your soul.* How will the reality of false wisdom influence the way you interact with family members, co-workers, friends and those at church?

8. Write your reflections below. What personal lessons is the Holy Spirit teaching you?

Now that James has exposed the poison of human wisdom he turns his attention again to the wisdom God gives.

Divine wisdom

In 3:17-18 James tells us that God's wisdom operates in a very different way. What is this wisdom like? **Reread** James 3:17-18.

9. a. What is the first and most essential quality of godly wisdom? What does it mean that God's wisdom is pure?

b. How does the quality of purity relate to the traits that follow in verse 17?

10. Wisdom is not only spoken in words but also demonstrated in works. Below give a brief personal example of how you can demonstrate each of the traits of true wisdom this week.

Peace loving

Considerate

Submissive

Full of mercy

Good fruit

Impartial

Sincere

11. When we are fortified with God’s wisdom what is the practical outcome (the beneficial cycle) that is produced by Godly wisdom (3:18)?

12. How does the truth of 3:18 inspire you to lay aside “human wisdom” and fully embrace the “wisdom” that only God can give?

13. In order to internalize these truths and apply them regularly, **memorize** James 3:17-18. Write out these verses on a card. Put it in a place where you will be reminded often of these truths. Then pray: “...*that the God of our Lord Jesus Christ, the glorious Father, may give you the Spirit of wisdom and revelation, so that you may know Him better.*” *Ephesians 1:17*

14. What does Proverbs 4:6-9 and 19:11 promise will accompany the development of true wisdom in your life?

In this passage James has not only put our wisdom to the test—he has provided valuable insights that we may see worldly wisdom for what it is. By contrasting the traits of human and Divine wisdom and their inevitable results, James has given us a vivid look into the world of our personal relationships.

15. Write a prayer of *response* to God after you reflect on the practical applications that He has been speaking to you about.

Finish by reading and meditating on Proverbs 2:1-11.