

## Sunday Bible Study Lesson: James 3:13-18

June 21, 2020

In **2 Chronicles 1:7**, God appeared to Solomon in a vision and said to him, “Ask for whatever you want me to give you.” It’s hard to imagine what we might do if God offered to give us anything we asked for; however, Solomon responded, “Give me now wisdom and knowledge, that I may go out and come in before this people, for who can rule this great people of yours?” (**2 Chronicles 1:10**). Solomon knew that God had given him an overwhelming task, and he needed wisdom. A thousand years after Solomon asked God for wisdom, James wrote his letter. As a reminder from week one, what did he say about wisdom in **James 1:5**?

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In **James 3:13-18**, he paints a very descriptive contrasting picture of earthly and heavenly wisdom. In **verse 3**, with what question does he launch his discussion?

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In that same verse, how can a person demonstrate wisdom? \_\_\_\_\_

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James is saying that people’s lives reflect the source of their wisdom. In **verse 13**, let’s not confuse gentleness or meekness with weakness. Think of a high-spirited horse that has been trained for riding. He is still strong and powerful, but his strength has been brought under control. He can be guided by the bit in his mouth even as he carries a child. Thus, this meekness of wisdom James writes about is from above.

In **verses 14-16**, James discusses wisdom that does not come from above. In **verse 14**, what feelings or attitudes describe the wisdom that does not come from above? \_\_\_\_\_

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What do you think the end result of those attitudes would be?

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In **verse 15**, with what 3 terms does James describe wisdom that **does not** come from above?

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These words give us a picture of distance and alienation from God. “Earthly” wisdom is measured by worldly standards of success, material motives, and temporal priorities. The source of “natural” wisdom is our own thoughts, attitudes, interests, and pursuits—not those

which come from the Holy Spirit. Of course, “demonic” wisdom is the complete opposite of Godly wisdom.

You have already thought about what the end result of these attitudes would be. In **verse 16**, what does James say the end result of earthly wisdom will be?

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Ponder this fact for a moment: James is warning the Christians who are struggling with evil. He is warning the believers against demonic wisdom. **Read Galatians 5:19-21** to discover how Paul refers to demonic wisdom as “works of the flesh.”

After warning the believers against demonic wisdom, James returns to the person he talked about in **verse 13**—the wise person who has good behavior and does deeds in gentleness. James then describes the wisdom that is from above. Listed below is each characteristic of wisdom from above. Beside each characteristic, make some notes about it. For example, you could include what the characteristic means as well as what it looks like in a believer’s life.

The first one is done for you as an example, but feel free to branch out as you make your own notes.

1. Pure- James says that the wisdom from above is “**first** pure” which to me means above all, the wisdom from above must be pure. To me, pure means holy and acceptable to God. In a believer’s life, pure wisdom would be wisdom that comes from God. A believer with pure wisdom would have pure motives in thought and deed. He or she would not act or speak out of selfishness.
2. Peaceable-
3. Gentle-
4. Reasonable-
5. Merciful-

6. Bountiful (full of good fruits)-

7. Unwavering (without uncertainty/without hypocrisy)-

8. Sincere-

In **James 3:18**, what fruit does wisdom from above produce? \_\_\_\_\_

How is that seed sown? \_\_\_\_\_ By whom? \_\_\_\_\_

**Application:** Here is a chart summarizing the unwise versus the wise in **James 3:13-18**.

	<b>The Unwise</b>	<b>The Wise</b>
<b>Signs</b>	Bitter jealousy	Good Behavior
	Selfish ambition (3:14)	Gentle Deeds (3:13)
<b>Characteristics</b>	Arrogant	Pure
	Dishonest	Peaceable
	Worldly	Gentle
	Natural	Reasonable
	Demonic (3:13-15)	Merciful
		Bountiful
		Unwavering
<b>Results</b>		Sincere
	Chaos	Righteousness
	Every evil (3:16)	Peace (3:17)

**Application:** Looking at the chart, which signs describe your life? Which characteristics describe your words and actions? Where on the chart do your results fall?

Next, ask yourself the questions that follow with as much honesty as you can. Think of evidence for the way you rate yourself. Make this a time of self-examination.

**1. How often do you struggle with jealousy of others' possessions and successes?**

never                                      sometimes                                      often                                      always

**2. How often do your personal pursuits and priorities cause discord or chaos for others?**

never                                      sometimes                                      often                                      always

**3. How often do you pursue the things of the world rather than the things of God?**

never                                      sometimes                                      often                                      always

**4. How often is your life characterized by gentleness and humility?**

never                                      sometimes                                      often                                      always

**5. How often do people know you as a person of mercy, authenticity, and peace?**

never                                      sometimes                                      often                                      always

**6. How often do you build others up, rejoice in their successes, and place the needs and interests of others ahead of your own?**

never                                      sometimes                                      often                                      always

**7. How often do you leave harmony and joy in your wake?**

never                                      sometimes                                      often                                      always

**Finally**, if you are happy with your assessment, praise God for the inner working of his Holy Spirit in your life as He gives you His wisdom. If you have areas in which you fall short, ask God to transform you through the power of his Holy Spirit in order to give you Godly wisdom. Name the specific area(s) in which you need His help, and commit to surrender to His guidance, counsel, and wisdom in each area.