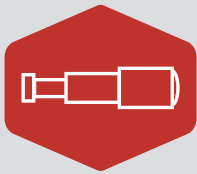




## Lesson 9: Worldly Wisdom

**Main Idea:** The Bible has a different idea of wisdom than most contemporary definitions. People think somebody who has wisdom must have studied philosophy or have a high IQ. But wisdom, from a biblical point of view, is applying your faith in everyday life. It is acting concretely in your world in the manner to which God calls you. To understand how you should be living and practicing a life of godly wisdom, James poses two questions. First, how do we get godly wisdom? Second, who is actually wise? In this lesson, you will discover that if you possess godly wisdom, you will manifest good conduct in your daily life.

**Scripture:** James 3:13-18



### The Author's Lens (Spyglass)

*What did the Scripture mean to the original author and audience? As you explore information on the author, content, culture, history, land, and language of the Bible, you will gain a better understanding of the intended message of God's Word.*

James deals with practical faith and wisdom throughout his letter. It might be helpful to exchange the word “wisdom” in James 3 with the word “lifestyle.” For it is a lifestyle to which believers have been called. What happens a few years into the Christian life, if the wonderful change that took place begins to unravel? What if, instead of continuing to change into the personality of Jesus Christ, you find yourself going back to your old personality? James is facing this problem as he writes this letter, because it has only been a few decades since the resurrection of Christ. He is finding that these first-century believers have the same kinds of struggles we have today. He corrects believers who

have forgotten about becoming more like Christ and have instead been climbing the social ladder of success, neglecting service to Christ and to the needy. And He is addressing believers who have used their tongue in inappropriate, vicious ways.

Verses 13 through 18 are the focal point of the book. James deals with the tension between righteous wisdom and worldly wisdom. He teaches that righteous wisdom is a gift that comes from God and is closely related with righteous living. One commentary has this to say, “In the ancient world, to be ‘wise.’ *Sophos*, could refer to being skilled or experienced (e.g., 1 Corinthians 3:10); but most often in biblical literature, the word communicates an understanding that results in right attitudes and right living, for God himself is wise (Romans 16:27; 1 Corinthians 1:25) and therefore is the source of divine wisdom.”<sup>1</sup> For James, true wisdom results in good deeds. As James defines earthly wisdom, he makes it clear that jealousy is involved, referring to passionate unhappiness over another person’s achievements or possessions. James is concerned that the Christian who leans towards worldly wisdom will have an immoral bent or a twisted nature. This leads to a disrupted, dysfunctional community that does not walk in God’s righteousness. James identifies two manifestations of earthly wisdom. First, there is confusion. He suggests that there will be instability and disorder rather than peace when earthly wisdom is present. Second, James teaches that every evil thing will be present when earthly wisdom rules. In contrast, true, godly wisdom manifests in healthy interpersonal skills and attitudes, which place a high value on peace.



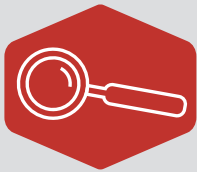
### **My Lens (Eyeglasses)**

*What does this Scripture say to you? Through completing the reading assignments below, you will better understand what God’s Word is saying to you.*

James addresses believers who are in warring camps. Sometimes, the warring camp is within a family, sometimes it is within a friendship, and sometimes it is within the body of Christ. In verses 13–18, James sets before readers two lifestyles—two wisdoms. In verses 14–16, he describes a lifestyle that is not from God. In verses 17–18, he contrasts that with a lifestyle that is from God. Both lifestyles are marked by certain characteristics. Both have a source that can be identified, and both produce specific results. James has a practical application to his teaching. He is concerned that godly wisdom is not just recognized but is lived out daily. Consider what he has to say:

<sup>1</sup> Guthrie, “James,” 13:249

- True wisdom is always meek, mild, and gentle (3:13).
- Earthly wisdom produces selfish ambition (3:14).
- Earthly wisdom’s source is demonic (3:15).
- Earthly wisdom produces instability (3:16).
- The source of heavenly wisdom is owed to God (3:17).
- Heavenly wisdom is pure, peace-loving, gentle, open to reason, full of mercy, full of good fruit, impartial, and sincere (3:17).
- Believers who walk in heavenly wisdom will display healing, wholeness, and peace within relationships (3:18).



### **The Holy Spirit Lens (Magnifying Glass)**

*How can the Scripture apply to your life? By listening to the Holy Spirit’s leading as you answer this series of questions, you can gain useful insights that will help you apply the truth of God’s Word to your daily life.*

#### **Application:**

- Write down your answer to the following questions here or in your journal:
  - » Who appears in this passage?
  - » Where is this passage taking place?
  - » When is this passage occurring?
  - » Why is this passage important?
  - » What is happening in this passage?

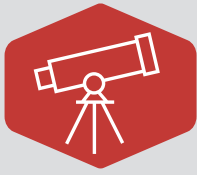
» How does this passage apply to my life?

» Circle and write down any reoccurring words in this passage.

- Take a few moments to list eight characteristics of earthly and godly wisdom. After you have finished, what thoughts do you have?

<b>Earthly Wisdom (James 3:13-16)</b>	<b>Godly Wisdom (James 3:17-18)</b>

- For the eight characteristics of godly wisdom, write out your understanding of what each one means.
- Describe a time when you followed after earthly wisdom. What were the results?



## Upward and Outward Focus (Telescope)

*How does the Scripture affect your relationship with God and others? You experience God's Word in action as you use it to direct your journey with Him and those around you. Answer the following questions and record the answers in your journal.*

- Take some time to listen to the Lord about the text you just studied. How did these verses help deepen your love for God?
  
- As a result of your deepened love for God, how can you practically demonstrate this love to others?



## Using My FireBible

*Read the study notes for the following verses in the FireBible and answer the accompanying questions.*

- James 3:14. Write out the meaning of selfish ambition in your own words.
  
- James 3:17. Describe what heavenly wisdom is in your own words.