

Fleshed Out: A Journey Through the New Testament Letter of James

“Principles for a Life Marked by Wisdom”

Discuss

Every day, we make decisions that lead us in a direction. Hopefully many of these decisions are wise and lead us in the right direction. But what is wisdom? James outlines wisdom for us in his book.

We know that wisdom is not about our intellect. It is not just acquired information. Wisdom has to do with a life that is lived in light of spiritual truth. It's a lifestyle that's lived out daily. It's not just knowing what to do, it's actually doing it.

“Who is wise and understanding among you? Let them show it by their good life, by deeds done in the humility that comes from wisdom.” ([James 3:13 NIV](#))

- In what areas of life have you made wise decisions? How did you gain wisdom in these areas?
- When you think of a “wise person,” does someone come to mind? What are some of the qualities of a person with wisdom?
- Humility and wisdom go hand in hand. To acquire wisdom we must first be humble enough to be teachable. Do you see yourself as a lifelong learner or someone who is already wise?

James knows that what keeps us from becoming wise is selfish ambition and envy. Selfish ambition is the art of promoting ourselves, seeking attention and pursuing vain glory. Envy makes us want what others have so blindly that we begin to hate the person who has what we want. This keeps us from becoming wise and makes us take actions that are anything but wise.

“But if you harbor bitter envy and selfish ambition in your hearts, do not boast about it or deny the truth. Such ‘wisdom’ does not come down from heaven but is earthly, unspiritual, demonic. For where you have envy and selfish ambition, there you find disorder and every evil practice!” ([James 3:14-16 NIV](#))

- What is the difference between ambition that is healthy and selfish ambition?
- Why is envy so destructive to us and our relationships? Do you think that we can change the habit of envy by practicing gratitude and encouraging those whom we may be envious of?
- James uses such strong language when talking about bitter envy and selfish ambition. Do you recognise either of these two traits in yourself? If so, what steps can you take to start ridding yourself of these and begin to make wise decisions?

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James has told us what keeps us from becoming wise. He then explores what a wisely lived life looks like:

- ❖ **Pure: No ulterior motives**
- ❖ **Peace-loving: Non-divisive**
- ❖ **Considerate: Gentle and patient**
- ❖ **Submissive: Not power hungry**
- ❖ **Full of mercy: Caring for others who are struggling**
- ❖ **Full of good fruit: Good acts and deeds**
- ❖ **Impartial: Not showing favoritism**
- ❖ **Sincere: Without hypocrisy**

“But the wisdom that comes from heaven is first of all pure; then peace-loving, considerate, submissive, full of mercy and good fruit, impartial and sincere.” ([James 3:17 NIV](#))

- Are there any of these traits that you currently embody? If so, think of some examples. Did these traits come naturally to you or have you worked to possess them?
- Are any of these traits particularly difficult for you? What makes them difficult for you?
- Why do you want to become wiser? Do you think becoming wiser will naturally lead to you serving others more?

Next Steps

Lack of wisdom can lead to regret. But if we are constantly thinking about what the wise choice is, we can avoid regret and enjoy a life full of peace. Start asking yourself, “Is this the wise thing to do?” for every decision you make. Begin to think about how each decision you make will affect others and what you want the outcome to be as a result of each decision.

August 18: [Team Life Online](#)

August 21: [Habitat for Humanity Serve Day](#)

August 22: [Game Time](#)

Daily: [Training Camp](#)

Continued Reading

Read: [Philippians 2:3-4](#)

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Prayer

God,

I know that all wisdom comes from You. I also know that you will give me wisdom if I ask for it. So God, please give me wisdom and discernment so I may live a life that honors You. Take away my pride, arrogance and self-absorption and help me see your wisdom as my lifestyle. Amen.