

Authentic Christianity  
**Wisdom**  
James 3:13-18

November 15, 2020 am

HDBC

**The Morgan sea gypsies** are a small tribe of 181 fishermen who spend much of the year on their boats fishing from India to Indonesia and back to Thailand. In December they live in shelters on the beaches of Thailand. In December 2004, in the hours before the killer Tsunami crashed ashore, the Morgan sea gypsies were living on those beaches. They were in harm's way and would have likely all perished—had they not listened to the wisdom of their elders. For generations, the elders of the tribe had passed along one piece of wisdom.

***If the water recedes fast it will reappear in the same quantity in which it disappeared.***

**And that is exactly** what happened. The sea drained quickly from the beach, leaving stranded fish flopping on the shore. It would have been easy for those who live off of the sea to run down where the water had been minutes ago and fill every basket available with fish. Some people did just that in other areas of South Thailand.

**Not the Morgan sea gypsies.** When the water receded from the beach, the tribal chief ordered every one of the 181 tribal members to run to a temple in the mountains of South Surin Island. When the waters crashed ashore, the 181 sea gypsies were safe on high ground

What made the difference? Wisdom they could trust!

**Wisdom** or one of its derivatives is found over 400 times in the Bible. The entire books of Proverbs and Ecclesiastes are considered books of **wisdom**. So, we are not surprised that James includes insight about **wisdom**.

So, let's look at James 3:13-18 **Read the text.** Note three things

**1. The Evidence of Wisdom (13)**

Probing question. Familiar method of James. ***Who among you is wise and understanding?*** Which one of you is a wise and well-instructed man?

***Understanding*** was the **technical term for a teacher. *An expert, one skilled in a field.***

**James may** be making a reference back to verse one of this chapter, those who want to be teachers. In this short passage James reveals that there are two kinds of wisdom. True & false; good & bad; world's wisdom and God's wisdom. They are radically different.

### **Two evidences of God's wisdom:**

#### **A. Good Works**

Talk is easy. James focuses on the outcomes. Our behavior is a reflection of the kind of wisdom we follow. If our actions are good that is a reflection that we are listening to good wisdom.

#### **B. Gentle Spirit**

Idea is one of control. Where there is a lack of control, there is a lack of true wisdom. Word does not refer to some spineless jellyfish. It referred to ***high-spirited horse brought under control***. The power, and spirit still there, but under control.

Gentleness is not a character quality tends to be found in a top five list of qualities that we want to cultivate. But it should be. One reason we don't spend more time praying for and cultivating a gentle spirit is that we fail to see its power for change. We think that we change things & people by overpowering them. Parents to kids, spouses to one another, bosses to employees all trying get results by bullying, overpowering, when a gentle spirit will often be much more effective.

**Gentleness** is strength under control. It is courage without violence.

Proverbs 25:15, *By forbearance a ruler may be persuaded, and a soft tongue breaks the bone.*

Proverbs 15:1, *A gentle answer turns away wrath.*

**You may** have the right answers and wonder why others don't listen. Maybe you lack a gentle spirit. **Anyone can claim wisdom.** Real test is lifestyle. Good behavior and gentle spirit. He then contrasts these two.

## 2. The Wrong Kind of Wisdom (14-16)

This kind of wisdom destroys unity and leads to rivalries.

### A. What it looks like (14)

#### 1) Bitter Jealousy

*Jealousy* - zeal (May be good or bad) Here it is bad.

*Bitter* - resentful attitude.

Describes a person who is determined to promote his own opinion to the exclusion of what others may think. Irreconcilable.

#### 2) Selfish Ambition

Pictures a person who promotes a cause in unethical ways and for selfish reasons. Leads to disputes & broken relationships.

#### 3) Arrogant Deception

In their arrogance these people deceive themselves and others.

Reject the truth and may end up even rejecting the gospel. There is a delusion that always comes with arrogance and pride. It is deadly!

### B. Where it comes from (15)

Three words describe the source & distinctive traits of this wisdom.

#### 1) Earthly

It belongs to this world and is marked by worldly principles. It suits earthly minds. No thought of eternity, judgment, heaven or hell.

#### 2) Natural

That which belongs to the natural world, in contrast to the supernatural world. Same word used to denote the man who is unsaved (1 Cor.2-3). It is a wisdom limited to the narrow confines of the unregenerate mind.

#### 3) Demonic

Demon-like, not God-like. In one sense it really belongs, not to heaven, not to earth, but to hell. One can certainly see the digression of description. It's source can ultimately be traced to the evil one.

### C. What it produces (16)

The effects of this earthly wisdom. The inevitable result will be confusion and every kind of vile deed. Disorder, disturbance, and unruliness.

Suggests the **idea of anarchy**. This kind of wisdom promotes a selfishness & independence that leads one away from following Christ.

### 3. The Right Kind of Wisdom (17-18)

James offers a list of eight characteristics of the kind of wisdom that comes from God. He pairs two together, so we have seven.

1) **Pure** - undefiled, free from self-interests. Not self-absorbed, self-focused.

2) **Peaceable** - Not competitive. The peaceable person does not have to win, does not have to be right. Does not have to be king of the hill

3) **Gentle** – Difficult word to translate into English. Considerate, courteous. It describes a person who though wronged and has the right to hold his ground and even push back, chooses instead to forego his rights.

4) **Reasonable** - Conciliatory, willing to yield, open to reason.

Willing to compromise. *To appease a politician, Lincoln ordered a transfer of certain military regiments. When the Sec of War, Edwin Stanton received the order he refused to carry it out, saying the President was a fool. When Lincoln found out he replied, *If Stanton said I'm a fool, then I must be for he is nearly always right. After talking with Stanton he realized the decision was a serious mistake and withdrew the order.**

5) **Full of Mercy Good Fruits** - More than willing to help. Seeing the needs of others and being willing to get involved.

6) **Unwavering** - Impartial, no favoritism, consistent, not shifty.

7) **Without Hypocrisy** - Straightforward. Sincere.

All these qualities were embodied in Christ.

### **This wisdom produces Righteousness (18)**

True wisdom results in a harvest of righteousness in the person's life which will influence and impact those around.

**We can** embrace the world's wisdom or God's wisdom. The choice is up to each one of us. The outcomes are radically different.

One comes from this world. It is natural, earthly and even demonic. It leads to selfishness, jealousy, factions, anarchy.

The other comes from God. Primary source is His Word. It leads to gentleness, harmony, purity and helpfulness.

**The wisdom you embrace** will determine the fruit of your life.

**Isn't it about time** you started planting seeds of Godly wisdom. The kind that will produce the beautiful fruit of righteousness in those around you.

Maybe it's time we prayed like Francis of Assisi:

Lord, make me an instrument of Your peace!  
Where there is hatred, let me sow love;  
Where there is injury, pardon;  
Where there is doubt, faith;  
Where there is despair, hope;  
Where there is darkness, light;  
Where there is sadness, joy.

O Divine Master, grant that I may not so much seek  
To be consoled, as to console;  
To be understood, as to understand;  
To be loved as to love.

For it is in giving that we receive;  
It is in pardoning that we are pardoned;  
It is in dying that we are born to eternal life.

An Authentic Believer operates in true wisdom.