

Shalom AZ Ministries

In Pursuit of Israel's Redemption



“Two Wisdoms, Two Harvests”

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Devotion and Discussion Questions

Key Texts (TLV): James/Jacob 3:13-18; 1:5-8, 17-18; 2:18; Gal. 5:19-23; Matt. 5:9

Every seed produces according to its kind. We would never plant thorns and expect figs, or sow weeds and expect a field of wheat. The harvest eventually reveals what was planted beneath the soil. In the same way, the fruit growing from our lives reveals the kind of wisdom that has taken root within us. Our words, reactions, relationships, and actions do not appear from nowhere. They grow from a source.

In James 3:13-18, Jacob places two kinds of wisdom before us. One wisdom comes from below and produces disorder and destructive practices. The other comes from above and produces righteousness and shalom. Both kinds of wisdom can influence the way we think, speak, and act, but they do not produce the same harvest. Jacob therefore calls us to examine not only whether we believe we are wise, but which wisdom our lives are actually demonstrating.

1. TRUE WISDOM IS REVEALED BY THE LIFE IT PRODUCES

Jacob begins with a question: *“Who among you is wise and understanding? By his good conduct let him show his deeds in the gentleness of wisdom”* (James 3:13). The word translated “show” means to demonstrate, prove, or make visible. It is the same kind of language Jacob used when he wrote, *“Show me your faith without works and I will show you faith by my works”* (James 2:18). Wisdom, like faith, cannot be reduced to what we claim, know, teach, or say. Genuine wisdom becomes visible through the kind of life it produces.

The wise person demonstrates wisdom through good conduct—a beautiful way of life—and through deeds done in gentleness, meekness, and humility. True wisdom is not arrogant, dominating, harsh, or self-exalting. A person may possess knowledge, experience, and expertise, **but wisdom is revealed in how that knowledge is lived out.** The first harvest Jacob describes is therefore the harvest of a life in which words and actions correspond, and in which what is visible on the outside is true to what God is forming on the inside.

2. WISDOM FROM BELOW PRODUCES A HARVEST OF DISORDER

Jacob then exposes another kind of wisdom: *“But if you have bitter jealousy and selfish ambition in your heart, do not boast and lie against the truth. This is not the wisdom that comes down from above, but is earthly, unspiritual, demonic”* (James 3:14-15). The word translated “jealousy” carries the idea of boiling. Jacob has just spoken about bitter water flowing from a spring, and now he points to bitterness, jealousy, contention, strife, and

selfish ambition boiling within the heart. Whatever continues to boil beneath the surface will eventually overflow through our words and actions.

This wisdom may present itself as strength, confidence, passion, or even spiritual conviction, but Jacob says it does not come from above. It is earthly, soulish, self-focused, and ultimately aligned with what is demonic rather than with the character of God. *“For where jealousy and selfish ambition exist, there is disorder and every evil practice”* (James 3:16). That is the harvest of wisdom from below: instability, division, confusion, and destructive behavior. When irritation, harshness, rivalry, or selfishness spills out of us, those reactions are warning lights revealing that something beneath the surface needs to be brought before the Lord.

3. WISDOM FROM ABOVE PRODUCES A HARVEST OF SHALOM

Jacob now describes the second wisdom and the harvest it produces: *“But the wisdom that is from above is first pure, then peaceable, gentle, open to reason, full of mercy and good fruits, impartial, not hypocritical”* (James 3:17). Wisdom from above is first pure—holy, undivided, and genuine. It is peaceable rather than contentious, gentle rather than harsh, and willing to yield rather than determined to have its own way. It is teachable, reasonable, trustworthy, and obedient. It is full of mercy, chesed, and beautiful fruit.

This wisdom produces wholeness in our disposition, our actions, and our enduring character. It shapes how we are oriented toward others, fills our lives with active compassion and good works, and makes us unwavering and unhypocritical. Jacob concludes, *“And the fruit of righteousness is sown in shalom by those who make shalom”* (James 3:18). Righteousness is not planted through bitterness, angry competition, or the need to triumph over others. It is sown in an atmosphere of shalom by people who actively practice shalom. Wisdom from above therefore produces a very different harvest: mercy, sincerity, righteousness, beautiful fruit, and peace.

CONCLUSION

Two kinds of wisdom are available to us, and each one produces a harvest according to its source. Wisdom from below grows out of bitterness, selfish ambition, rivalry, and the cravings of the flesh. Its fruit is disorder and every kind of destructive practice. Wisdom from above comes from the Father of lights, from whom every good and perfect gift descends. Its fruit is purity, gentleness, mercy, righteousness, and shalom.

None of us perfectly represents the likeness and character of Yeshua, but we are called to grow into His likeness in an ever-increasing measure. This is not about putting up a convincing religious appearance or play-acting as though we have already arrived. It is about allowing God to produce genuine wholeness within us. We do not merely want to appear wise; we want the wisdom from above to take root so deeply within us that the harvest of our lives increasingly looks like Yeshua.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS:

1. According to James 3:13, how does a person demonstrate genuine wisdom?
2. What characteristics distinguish wisdom from below from the wisdom that comes from above?
3. Why do bitter jealousy and selfish ambition eventually produce disorder and destructive practices?
4. When you become impatient, defensive, harsh, or contentious, what might those reactions reveal about the kind of wisdom influencing your heart?
5. What seed can you plant this week to produce a greater harvest of mercy, righteousness, or shalom in your home, workplace, congregation, or relationships?

CLOSING PRAYER:

Avinu Malkhenu, Our Father, Our King, You are the giver of every good and perfect gift, and true wisdom comes from You. Search our hearts and reveal every seed of bitterness, jealousy, selfish ambition, contention, and pride. Forgive us for the times we have claimed to walk in truth while our attitudes and actions have produced disorder rather than shalom.

Plant within us the wisdom that comes from above. Make us pure, peaceable, gentle, willing to yield, open to reason, full of mercy, and filled with beautiful fruit. Uproot everything within us that does not reflect the character of Yeshua. Let the harvest of our lives be righteousness sown in shalom, and make us people who actively practice and produce shalom wherever You have placed us.

B'Shem Yeshua, In the name of Yeshua, amen.