



# THE CREATIVE POWER OF GOD'S WISDOM

## THE BOOK OF JAMES

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### ABSTRACT

The Book of James is creative in drawing in its audience to see the power of applying God's wisdom in their lives. By discussing perseverance under trial and faith, true wisdom from God becomes front in center in solving man's problems. A sacred texture analysis is conducted to detail how God focuses his audience on the power of His wisdom in James. The creativity of this approach helps spread Christianity throughout the Roman empire which is comprised of those primarily desiring wisdom from man. Today, the faith and belief of leaders and followers are strengthened through applying the power of God's wisdom in both the church and in the organizations they lead.

*Keywords: faith, perseverance, leadership, organizational leadership*

## INTRODUCTION

The Book of James does not mince words as it provides clear advice, commands, and insights. It speaks to the power of perseverance under trial, wisdom, and faith along with warnings concerning sin, boasting, and worldliness. James is unique in that it intellectually appealed to the "cynics and stoics" of the day and also provided clear direction to believers longing to find daily applications for their beliefs (DeSilva, 2004, p. 815). James appealed to the intellectuals and philosophers found throughout the Roman empire even though it was addressed "to the twelve tribes in the Dispersion" (James 1:1). The manuscript was intended to embolden action even while faced with trials and to warn against sins that would sideline the works of believers. Through sacred texture analysis, this paper focuses on wisdom and the power that it delivers when applied as God intended to creatively grow leaders, the church, and organizations.

## SACRED TEXTURE ANALYSIS

Sacred texture analysis is used to creatively and systematically connect "holy, divine nature" with people (Robbins, 1996, p. 120). It " includes aspects concerning deity, holy persons, spirit beings, divine history, human redemption, human commitment, religious community and ethics" (Robbins, p. 130). James clearly shows God as a deity "who gives generously" to those that choose to follow Him (James 1:5). However, it also warns those without enough faith and who choose to doubt God's generosity that they should expect to receive nothing (James 1:6-7). James also makes it clear that it is not in God's character to tempt anyone when he states that "God cannot be tempted with evil, and he himself tempts no one" (James 1: 13). God, by not being subject to temptation, separates himself from man who "through his own desire" can be tempted and fall into sin (James 1:14-15). Therefore, since God has the power to give and not fall into sin, He has the ability to teach and lead man on the path that he should go. God has the power to impart His wisdom onto His people who are the faithful ones amongst the dispersion.

James, as a letter, provided a substitute for the actual presence of a leader to communicate clear direction and encouragement to "remain steadfast under pressure and to stay the course" (Duvall and Hayes, 2012, p.267). James stands on its own and focuses people on God to meet

all of their needs. “If any of you lacks wisdom, let him ask God, who gives generously to all without reproach, and it will be given to him” (James 1:5). No longer must man rely on priests or teachers for knowledge or wisdom, but he can now go directly to God because of the direct connection that Jesus through His sacrifice made for man to the Father.

However, receiving and acting on the wisdom from God is only as good as the faith of the believer. James asks “who is wise and understanding among you?” (James 3:13). The clear answer is no one apart from God and God’s wisdom which is “first pure, then peaceable, gentle, open to reason, full of mercy and good fruits, impartial, and sincere” (James 3:17). This type of wisdom is whole and complete and can only come from God who is Himself whole and complete. As we apply God’s wisdom in our lives, we become more whole and complete. The book of James highlights the "wholeness" or "completeness" that develops when a person decides to "walk" completely in line with what they believe (DeSilva, 2004, p 814). It highlights either the strength or weakness of a person’s "convictions" and commitment to what they believe (DeSilva, p. 814). Wisdom, from above, visibly present and in action in a person’s life is a strong indicator of their faith and measure of their wholeness as a believer seeking after the only one who is complete, God.

## DISCOVERED USE OF INNOVATION AND CREATIVITY

James made a brilliant move, by focusing the answer to man’s lack of understanding, faith, and belief on gaining and applying wisdom from above. James attacked the notion that those who relied on faith and belief were not wise nor sought wisdom and understanding. Throughout James, wisdom from God is attainable for the faithful. This was a highly innovative idea and caught the attention of the Roman intellectual class of society at the time. Many Romans believed that the “fate of Rome had been sealed, in advance, among the gods” and as individuals so had their fate forever (Berthelot, 2011, p. 170). Therefore, to have James challenge this notion and focus on attaining God’s wisdom through faith as the key to wholeness was new and foreign to them. Robbins (2011) highlights the fact from the very beginning (Genesis 1-3) that the “wisdom tradition” begins with “the presumption that is possible to

understand the nature of God and God's world on the basis of what is visible" (p. 341). However, can man grasp the wisdom from God that is "invisible?" (Robbins, p. 341). James shows the faith of the believer is the basis for obtaining wisdom from God, both the visible and the invisible. Therefore, the truly wise can only be believers who live by faith, seek God, and desire His completeness. If that is true, then the inverse must also be true. The faithless and unbelievers will always lack complete wisdom and understanding since it is not from God. James has creatively proven that the intellectual elites of the day lack true wisdom and understanding. They will always be limited, and the believers will be the ones who have the highest capability of achieving true wisdom from God.

## APPLICATION TO LEADERS, THE CHURCH, AND ORGANIZATIONS TODAY

In a way, James challenges a person to not worry about learning new doctrine or ideas, but to apply what they already have fully and completely into changing who they are inside and out (DeSilva, 2004, p. 814). A believer has access to wisdom from God if they focus on Him and not themselves. God can use a man of faith on day one. Advancement in wisdom and change for the person will be increased as their faith allows. James 3:13 challenges people to practice "good conduct" and to "show his works in the meekness of wisdom." It does not have to be more complicated than that. However, many leaders spend a lifetime of diverse study to improve when all they really need to do is seek God and His wisdom.

Leaders are often judged by their actions and behaviors. The humility of a leader speaks loudly and will garner an audience because it is so different from the actions of many leaders. James cautions leaders to not boast about plans for tomorrow, but to trust in the "Lord's will" (James 4:13-17). The actions, attitude, and approach to work of a leader has a direct impact amongst their teams – either positive or negative (Kulmala et al., 2009, p. 385). Therefore, a leader who displays their faith as they seek wisdom models what their team members should be doing as well. Thus, the effective leader can creatively point people to God just by delivering results and giving God the credit.

Organizations led by a believer models that one's salvation or eternal life is not earned but is evidenced by their works (James 2:14-18). It is the wise leader that practices their faith through works. The church with a pastor willing to serve those under his care or the believing CEO jumping in and helping a team complete a tight deadline are both actions that show their faith by their works. The creativity that James showcases is in the simplicity of how simple and direct he is in communicating what it takes to lead well. Wisdom focused on God by a leader models to an entire church or organization where their focus should be and also where it should not be.

## CONCLUSION

James highlights the importance of preserving under trial, seeking Godly wisdom, and faith. He creatively draws in his audience by painting God as desiring to give all believers and those with faith wisdom. And not just any kind of wisdom, but His wisdom. This empowers those who practice the advice in James to be wise and action-filled leaders. Through their applied wisdom and their resulting works, faith-filled leaders will model for their churches and organizations what it means to truly believe. After reading James, it is clear that he creates a desire for us to seek wisdom from God, increase our faith, and to apply them both in our lives and organizations. There is power in applying God's wisdom.

## FOR MORE INFORMATION

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