

WISE LIVING IN A FOOLISH WORLD

James 3:13-18

"Committing a great truth to memory is admirable; committing it to life is wisdom." (William Ward)

Just when you think James is a man who only talks about external actions, he comes along and writes this section about the inner workings of the heart. Obviously he believes that a wise life is lived from the inside – out. So if you've ever wondered what wisdom looks like, you're in the right place!

What Does It Say?



Who is wise and understanding among you? Let him show it by his good life, by deeds done in the humility that comes from wisdom.

¹⁴ But if you harbor bitter envy and selfish ambition in your hearts, do not boast about it or deny the truth.

"If you realize you aren't as wise today as you thought you were yesterday, you're wiser today."

What Does It Mean?

"Wise men talk because they have something to say; fools talk because they have to say something."

Plato

"Never mistake knowledge for wisdom. One helps you make a living; the other helps you make a life."

Sandra Carey

TWO WAYS TO SERVE (13-14)

What are the characteristics of the first kind of wisdom?

What are the 2 traits of the second kind of "wisdom"? (Can you find where they reoccur?)

What do these 2 traits do in the life of a person? (Can you share from personal experience?)

What seems to be the essential difference between the two ways of living portrayed in this first section?

15 Such "wisdom" does not come down from heaven, but is earthly, unspiritual, of the devil.

16 For where you have envy and selfish ambition, there you find disorder and every evil practice.

17 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.

18 Peacemakers who sow in peace raise a harvest of righteousness.

"Heavenly wisdom, living in the Spirit and agape love are variations on the same theme."

Douglas Webster

DOOR #1 (verses 15-16)

See if you can dig into the meanings of **"earthly"** and **"unspiritual"** by using some of your Bible reference books.

Look into the accounts of Satan's arrogant downfall in **Isaiah 14:12-15** and **Ezekiel 28:12-19**. How does it apply to this passage in James?

How does this type of wisdom manifest itself in these areas...?

marriage

work

politics

DOOR #2 (verses 17-18)

Read the list of the fruit of Spirit and works of flesh in **Galatians 5**. Then read Paul's description of love in **1 Corinthians 13**. How do they compare with James' portrait of wisdom here?

Buddhism has an "8-fold path" that supposedly leads to enlightenment and wisdom. Is there an essential difference between the Buddhist concept of wisdom and James' "7-fold path"? (see **Proverbs 1:7**)

*You know, Lord, how I
serve You with
great emotional fervor
In the limelight.
You know how eagerly I
speak for You
At a women's club.
You know how I
effervesce when I
promote
A fellowship group.
You know my genuine
enthusiasm
At a Bible study.
But how would I react, I
wonder, If you pointed to
a basin of water
And asked me to wash
the calloused feet of a
bent and wrinkled
old woman
Day after day, month
after month, In a room
where nobody saw
And nobody knew.*

Ruth Harms Calkins

Do some **extra study** on these words to get a good grip on the meaning of each. Use a concordance or Bible wordbook.

1 pure

Greek "*hagnos*" = pure enough to approach the gods.

2 peaceable

Greek "*eirenikos*" = right relationships

3 gentle

Greek "*epieikes*" = the most untranslatable of all Greek words, "The man who knows when it is actually wrong to apply the strict letter of the law. He knows how to forgive when strict justice gives him a perfect right to condemn." Used in classical Greek to describe tame animals, a gentle breeze, soothing medicine

4 reasonable

Greek "*eupeithes*" = "easy to persuade, not rigid but is willing to listen and skilled in knowing when wisely to yield."

How did David exhibit this trait in **1 Samuel 25**?

*I am like James and John, Lord.
Lord I size up other people in terms
of what they can do for me,
how far they can further my program,
feed my ego, satisfy my needs, give
me strategic advantage.
I exploit people, ostensibly for Your
sake, but really for my own sake.
Lord, I turn to you, to get the inside
track, and obtain special favors,
Your direction for my schemes,
your power for my projects, You
sanction for my ambitions,
Your blank check for whatever I want.
I am like James and John.
Change me, Lord.
Make me a man who asks of You
and of others,
What can I do for you?*

Robert A. Raines

5 full of mercy and good fruits

The Greek word "*eleos*" means "mercy for the man who is in trouble, even if the trouble is his own fault"

6 unwavering

Greek "*anupokritos*" = does not deal in deception.

7 without hypocrisy

Greek word for hypocrisy meant "wearing a mask".

VERSE 18. _____

Read **Acts 15** and see how James himself became a peacemaker at the Jerusalem Council. Have you ever had an opportunity to be a peacemaker? Is there a situation right now in which God could use you as one?