
Into Thy Word Bible Study in James

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James 3: 13-18 “Wisdom, the worlds or God’s?”

General idea: My grandfather who was a carpenter always told me you measure twice and cut once. The theory was to make sure your measurements were correct as you can always recalculate, but once the wood is cut wrong, it is wasted. James is speaking on how we are measured before we cut into the world and other people’s lives. Is it with good intentions or conceited objectives? Does the Fruit from Galatians 5:19-21 or from 22-23? Fruit produces motives stemming from our spiritual maturity in Christ. If we are seeking His wisdom, we are being righteous and measuring twice, if we are seeking our own or the world’s ways, we are not even measuring; consequently, cutting wrong, thus wasting what the Lord gives and distorting His Truth.

Vs. 13: James is confronting the early Christians on what their motives were for the wisdom that they are proclaiming. Many were promoting violence while claiming to be righteous (James 1:5, 17; 3:1; 5:7-11). Then he makes the distinction between the world’s wisdom and the wisdom of God. He challenges the contemporary thinking that all wisdom was good and profitable from the Greek Philosophical thinkers, but there is a sharp contrast to what is good and profitable and what is error and leads to destruction. Motives are a crucial indicator to the type of wisdom from God. James nails it when the contrast is bitterness and envy versus being a peacemaker and seeking to please God; because, if we are really wise, we will live really wise. Are you pleasing God or yourself? Is your heart seeking reconciliation or alienation? As the previous passage indicates how we use our words is paramount on how God is impacting your life!

- *Wise*, here in this context it means to demonstrate your faith by godly living, real wisdom will produce goodness (1 Tim. 4:15-16).
- *Let him show*, this means know the real thing first and then you will know the counterfeit. Popularity is never a sign of real truth it just means that more people are deceived!
- *Meekness/ humility*, means applying wisdom with humbleness and gentleness and under control. Here it means an active attitude of deliberate acceptance, as humility and wisdom go together as does foolishness and arrogance. Wisdom equals humility and does not boast and brag. This word is used to mean “broken” or “harnessed” as in a wild untamed horse that is brought under control. The spirit and strength of the horse is still there, however, its focus and purpose has changed. The horse is now usable and available; the

same is with us when we are broken from our ways to His Way. We are called to be broken into the Lord!

- *Wisdom*, here is not about facts and figures, or knowledge and our intelligence level or education; rather, how we are to control the truth. That control is to be gentle and real. We are to look to God in what real wisdom is. We are to look to the future implications as the measure of how we dispense wisdom.

The best way to determine counterfeit money is to know the real one very well. James is addressing that real wisdom is essential for Christian living; this is one of his main themes. Wisdom also has a dangerous counterpart; it is easily counterfeited and misrepresented! The measurement will be whether the person is seeking God or seeking themselves. For the mature Christian they will seek God's and do all they can to learn His precepts and not rely on their instincts and feelings in place of wisdom. Then, they can model Christ and even teach with gentleness and respect being righteous as they claimed.

Vs. 14-16: Bitterness, envy, and selfish ambitions may be the adoring motivators for many people in the world; but for the Christian, these are to be abhorrent! These rotten characters are the root of bad wisdom; they seek power and prestige for themselves and forsake God and His Truth. They cause broken relationships and dysfunctional homes and churches (Prov. 11:18; Rom. 12:9; 1 Cor. 2:6-15).

- *Envy / jealousy*, refers to covetousness (Duet. 5:21). James is attacking the zeal of the Zealots who were disillusioned in thinking they were following "Phinehas" the grandson of Aaron who was passionately following God when, in fact, they were deluded and acted contrary to Phinehas and God. (Nub. 25:11-13; Psalm 106:30-31) Envy is misplaced zeal and is mourning for what we do not have and conniving to get it, then boasting about it. This poisons the Spirit's work in us, as it leads to the creation of vice and bitterness as well as suspicion and distrust. Thus, real truth will be denied, falsehoods fabricated and promoted, and our passions will go astray.
- *Self-seeking*, creates strife and brings disharmony and prejudices to others. It gains the person nothing of real or eternal value only pushes the person down further.
- *Boast*, means to show off with deceptive means. It is used to describe elections won by deceiving and manipulations. It is like an elected official winning an election dishonestly and then bragging about it.
- *Lie*, is stating that a particular wisdom is from God when it is not. This is done to manipulate and scheme to get our way over His Way. This is evil!

- *This wisdom* here refers to earthly wisdom, the humanistic approach to life that we are great in of ourselves. This is very limited, as it is unspiritual and only has our imperfect insights and perspective. This ignores God and what is His best for feeble ideas and egocentric gains while creating unhealthy relationships and dysfunction.
- *Above/ Heaven*, was a saying to mean “coming from God.” It is the contrast and opposite of *earthly* wisdom (Matt. 16:22-23).
- *Sensual*, our wisdom is deceptive as it reflects Satan and evil; it is foolishness and opposes God’s call and precepts to us.
- *Demonic*, refers that demons have an extraordinary body of knowledge by being very old and having former access to God. They have far more wisdom than any human could ever conceive; however, by not yielding to God, their wisdom has no benefit, it is only used to stir up their ungodly values, discourage, manipulate and destroy.
- *Every evil thing*, this is the destructive power of the rotten works of the flesh James lists. These ideas produce evil such as adultery, thieving, slander, conflict, harm to others and murder that leads to chaos and the destruction in the Church and world.

Understanding His grace will help empower us to be honest with wisdom, seek His precepts and not that which is false. The grace we receive if it has taken root within us will display humbleness; as we are exalted in Christ, we have no need to have inflated egos. Our significance is in Him, thus we are upgraded in Him beyond any human hopes or dreams (Deut 4:6; 1 Kings 3:9; Psalm 119:97-98; Matthew 6:33; Romans 12:3; 1 Timothy 1:18-20).

Vs. 17-18: The goal of wisdom is to yield to Christ, so to uplift Him and point to His precepts, so we can live a Christ filled and directed life that is uplifting and contagious to others. The opposite is a heart full of rotten fruit, a Pandora’s Box that when opened will distribute its sin onto others. Our wisdom is arid and devoid of what is real authentic truth that is a benefit and is edifying. It is seeking waste water and not His Living water. Only Christ can bring us real wisdom, we must seek it by asking Him for it. Recognizing real truth and what is counterfeit is essential for our maturity (Psalm 37; Prov. 1:7; 3:5; Eph. 5:5-20).

- *Wisdom that is from above*, this is God’s wisdom that He gives us that is eternal and from the One who is all knowing, all loving, and all caring (Col. 2:2-4). It creates healthy relationships and a contagious faith because it has respect, honesty and pure intentions. It uplifts Christ and edifies and empowers those who seek it (see study, James 1: 5-8).

- *Pure*, means when we are exercising God's wisdom we are bringing purity, it is not to be mixed with anything else, especially the world's wisdom. It is applying His fruit into other's lives as well as our own. We won't be defiled in the rotten ways of evil people, prejudices, favoritism or our own evil which is defilement. Rather, our motives will be morally based and be good.
- *Peaceable*, means to not quarrel, give in to anger, be jealous or have an arrogant attitude.
- *Gentle*, means to be fair, thoughtful and tolerant towards others. That is to know justice and dispense justice with Godly intentions without selfish motivations.
- *Yield*, means to listen and obey and to be open to reason, so we can make allowances for other's feelings, weaknesses and strengths by learning, exercising care and grace as we have been given. We are not to be critical while modeling the real Truth. We are to be aware of our own weakness and strengths. *Yield* is the opposite of being stubborn.
- *Mercy*, here means to be charitable and not to be stingy with compassion. It is to get rid of cynicism and condescending attitudes, so we can be more Christ like. To be effectively used by God, we have to know He calls us not only to be fruit inspectors but more so to produce Fruit (Rom. 7:4-6; Col. 1:10; 2 Peter 1:5-10; 3:14-16)!
- *Without partiality* means to be fair and not be deceiving, scheming or hypocritical, so we know when and where to draw the line of exercising grace and rebuking arrogance and the world's wisdom. We are to have our mindset fixed on Christ.
- *Fruit of righteousness*, this is the illustration of a seed of wisdom produces bountiful righteousness, because it is growing in the Lord being nourished from God's wisdom. James point to the Zealots is that violence and peace cannot coexist in one another (Prov. 11:18; Isa. 32:17).

Arrogance and condescending attitudes and actions are heinous acts that are diametrically opposed to all that Christ taught and modeled. To be a Christian who is condescending is an oxymoron, with the emphases on the moron. It is stupid and a slap in the face of our Lord who saves and loves us! At the same time, real wisdom will not be compromised, as integrity and compassion do go together.

God calls us to be wise stewards of not only material things but of what is even more important, wisdom. Wisdom for the Christian desiring to live for Christ and not in the world is to be living a life patterned off our Lord. Jesus Christ both fully God and fully man was also wise beyond our comprehension, yet He

tempered His wisdom and dispensed it ever so gently on others. He showed the Truth while exercising love and care. If we live a passion directed life, this is good, but is the passion under check and control or have the reins become unbridled and on the ground dragging. If so, love and gentleness is not coming from you while the horse of your will is in full spirit and wild. We are called to be under control and not wild in our thinking, temperament, actions and our words. At the same time, we are to be passionate and this is essential on how we dispense wisdom (Matt. 7:15-23; Col. 3:10).

This all translates in how we are to others for Christ. We are to be exercising purity, righteousness with gentleness and respect while being responsible and unwavering with His precepts, so no hypocrisy can come from us. This creates an atmosphere of peace where His wisdom is sought and exercised. When we are learning and proclaiming God's wisdom, we will live this life with passion and conviction. We will see life as a wondrous adventure staying in His presence and precepts. So, ask for His wisdom and then live it for His glory! Seize the fantastic opportunities He has for you!

The Essential Inductive Questions (for more Inductive questions see [Inductive Bible Study](#)):

1. What does this passage say?
2. What does this passage mean?
3. What is God telling me? How am I encouraged and strengthened?
4. Is there a sin in my life for which confession and repentance is needed?
5. How can I be changed so I can learn and grow?
6. What is in the way of these precepts affecting me? What is in the way of my listening to God?
7. How does this apply to me? What will I do about it?
8. What can I model and teach? What does God want me to share with someone?

Additional Questions:

1. Have you ever measured something wrong and wasted your wood or material? How did you feel? How is this like living the Christian life?
2. What is jealousy? Have you struggled with jealousy? How so? What causes it? How can you know when your emotions get out of control with envy?

3. What is arrogance? Have you struggled with arrogance? How so? What causes it? How can you know when your emotions get out of control with being condescending?
4. How would you describe the distinction between the world's wisdom and the wisdom of God?
5. How would you describe a peacemaker? How have you seen this work? Have you been one? How can you be one?
6. Read 1 Peter 5:1-4: How do Peter's principles compare to James? How would they improve your relationships? Improve your church? How can you live them out?
7. How do integrity and compassion go together? How would you contrast humility and wisdom to foolishness and arrogance? Why is it, that to be a Christian who is condescending is an oxymoron?
8. How can you go from being just a fruit inspector to a fruit giver?
9. When we are learning and proclaiming God's wisdom, we will live this life with passion and conviction tempered with truth. How so? Why do some Christians refuse to do this?
10. How would you honestly assess what your motives are for the wisdom that you are proclaiming?
11. God calls us to be wise stewards of not only material things but of what is even more important, wisdom. What would your life and church look like with this precept in action?
12. What can you do to gain a better understanding of His grace, so you can be empowered to be honest with wisdom and seek His precepts and not that which is false?

For more information: *The Character of Wisdom*

<http://70030.netministry.com/apps/articles/default.asp?articleid=35202&columnid=3803>

The fear of the LORD is the beginning of knowledge, but fools despise wisdom and discipline. Proverbs 1:7

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