

James

A STUDY ON THE BOOK OF JAMES

UPSTATE GROUP MEMBER GUIDE

WEEK 7 - *JAMES 3:13-18*

LEADER NOTES

Contrary to popular belief, everyone lives according to some sort of wisdom. Most people live according to evil wisdom that comes from the world, but Christ-followers are called to live according to the wisdom that comes from God. James wants to make clear that a life marked by godly wisdom is evidence of true faith. True wisdom is selfless and magnifies the message of the gospel. True wisdom fosters peace, righteousness, love, gentleness, and mercy. As a group, emphasize the simple truth that this sort of wisdom only comes from God, and we need only ask the Father for this type of wisdom (James 1:5).

Please continue to complete the Gospel Connection's and Conversations form. You can find the form [HERE](#).

You can find other sermons from our Teaching Pastor's [HERE](#).

SCRIPTURE

TAKE THIS TIME TO STUDY THE BIBLE TOGETHER. REMEMBER, THE GOAL IS NOT JUST TO CONVEY INFORMATION, BUT TO HELP PEOPLE IN YOUR GROUP LEARN TO READ THE BIBLE FOR THEMSELVES.

THE POINT

GODLY WISDOM IS EVIDENCE OF AUTHENTIC FAITH

James 3:13-18

Who is wise and understanding among you? By his good conduct let him show his works in the meekness of wisdom. 14 But if you have bitter jealousy and selfish ambition in your hearts, do not boast and be false to the truth. 15 This is not the wisdom that comes down from above, but is earthly, unspiritual, demonic. 16 For where jealousy and selfish ambition exist, there will be disorder and every vile practice. 17 But the wisdom from above is first pure, then peaceable, gentle, open to reason, full of mercy and good fruits, impartial and sincere. 18 And a harvest of righteousness is sown in peace by those who make peace.

The Holy Bible: English Standard Version (Wheaton, IL: Crossway Bibles, 2016), James 3:13-18.

STUDY NOTES

There are two types of "wisdom" as James points out in this section. One type finds its source in evil, while the other finds its source in God. James outlined in chapter one the need for wisdom throughout trials and temptations. The question is, then, how do we obtain that wisdom which we need?

You Need Wisdom

James makes clear in 1:5 that if anyone needs wisdom, they should ask God. God, waiting to respond to that request, lavishes wisdom on those who ask. The underlying part of 1:5 is the need for everyone to obtain this wisdom. With 1:5 as the backdrop, James emphasizes the need for wisdom again in this passage. Before James details the two types of wisdom, he outlines that our actions will reveal which type of wisdom we are receiving and acting upon. Those who have good conduct will find the source of their wisdom in God. earthly (false) wisdom.

Those who exhibit such traits as jealousy and selfish ambition will reveal themselves to be following earthly (false) wisdom.

False Wisdom

What is at the heart of false wisdom? Jealousy and selfish ambition. To put it another way, this wisdom is self-centered. This wisdom can easily be found in the world, our culture, and even our own hearts. James characterizes this wisdom as earthly, unspiritual, and evil. Why would he use such strong words about this wisdom? Because the result of living out this type of wisdom is disorder and vile sins. For a Christian to look to the world for his/her wisdom is to invite disorder, chaos, and ultimately destruction into their earthly lives. Whether it is earthly wisdom or heavenly wisdom, one of these will direct the actions of our lives. To choose worldly wisdom is to choose evil and chaos. The point is made in this section that such earthly wisdom is akin to the demonic side of the world. Such wisdom finds its hope in our own hearts and efforts, which Scripture in turn makes clear are evil and never enough. This wisdom is from hell.

True Wisdom

What is at the heart of true wisdom? Humility and peace. Whereas false wisdom finds its focus on the heart, true wisdom finds its focus on God and others. Notice the distinct difference between these two wisdoms: one eschews chaos, evil, and selfishness. The other puts forth peace, gentleness, order, mercy, and righteousness. Could these two wisdoms be any more distinct? This is the wisdom that James says to ask for in 1:5. This is the wisdom that leads to peace for the individual and those around the individual. This list of wisdom finds its source in the beatitudes (Matthew 5) as Jesus highlights these "attitudes" of wisdom as attitudes to be sought after.

Think about both types of wisdom and how they play out in our lives today. What is the natural end for situations where I choose myself over God and others? Disorder, disarray, and destruction. What is the natural end for situations where I choose God and others over myself? Peace and righteousness. We can see clearly how both of these play out in our lives, yet for many of us we still choose the former rather than the latter. Why? The former is easier, more "natural" for our sinful hearts, and brings instant gratification.

Yet, we know how worldly (false) wisdom always plays out. It always takes us to a place we don't want to be and a situation that is a mess. The other side of wisdom, the true wisdom, takes us to a place of security, peace, and rest. Why would we ever choose any other wisdom?

How do we "get" this wisdom? James 1:5-7. Let him who lacks true wisdom ask God for it, and he will give it freely.

For more resources, click [HERE](#).

QUESTIONS FOR DISCUSSION

- *How would you define the two types of wisdom in your own words?*
- *How do you see the characteristics of each wisdom playing out in our world today?*
- *Have you been tempted to follow "false" wisdom lately? How so?*
- *Why is false wisdom so alluring to us? Why do we choose it when we know where it will lead?*
- *What is needed to gain "true" wisdom?*
- *What is the main difference between true and false wisdom?*
- *How can this group (community) help you to seek true wisdom?*
- *What steps do you need to take this week to pursue this wisdom?*