

**Wisdom from Above***James 3:13-18*

We were working through James before COVID-19 hit. Eight weeks ago we decided to hit pause on that study while we addressed some issues related to the challenges brought on by this pandemic. Today we are back to James! We pick up at 3:13-18 where James is talking about wisdom. Understanding what true wisdom looks like is important for a number of reasons among which are: avoiding self-deception; knowing how to identify wise people when we are seeking out guidance; and, to avoid the relational chaos that comes when wisdom is absent. Simply put, it is important to have clarity on what wisdom looks like. May this study help towards that end!

**Opening Question:** Who is someone from your past whom you considered wise? Why?

**Read James 3:13-18**

1. What does James say about how you tell who is wise and understanding?
2. Jesus encouraged people to come learn from Him because He was “gentle and lowly in heart” (Matt. 11:29). Paul declared his authority as an apostle and teacher after pleading “the meekness and gentleness of Christ” (2 Cor. 10:1). Why do you think humility or meekness is such an essential sign of wisdom (v. 13)?
3. James says the fruit of earthly, natural, demonic wisdom is jealousy and selfish ambition. What do these things cause (v. 16)?

Steve said:

If I asked you, “Do you have any bitter jealousy, selfish ambition, and arrogance in your heart?” I would guess that almost all of us would say, “Of course not!” But we (myself included) are often blind to our own sins. And we so easily justify sins that other people can spot a mile away. I have to believe that James is flagging a real issue for followers of Christ, not a hypothetical issue that is irrelevant to us today. . . Here’s the point: If you really want to know (and not everyone does) whether you have bitter jealousy and selfish ambition in your heart, evaluate the core relationships in your life and see if there is disorder and evil. Evaluate your relationships in your family, in the church, in the workplace, etc. Not all conflict is the result of our own arrogance, but **many times it is**. Many times when you notice chaos and evil in relationships, you can trace it back to bitter jealousy and selfish ambition and arrogance.

4. What do you see in your core relationships (marriage, church, friends, work, etc.)? What do those relationships reveal?

5. What does wisdom from above look like (v. 17)? How does this contrast with earthy wisdom?

Steve said:

Turning from arrogance and cultivating the humility of Christ will make your life more interesting and fulfilling. Embodying the gospel isn't easy, but it's satisfying, it's fascinating, it's fruitful.

6. What would be the fruit of these traits on your core relationships if you lived with wisdom from above?

7. How would you restate verse 18 in your own words?

Steve said:

If you are wise and understanding, you are a peacemaker (not a troublemaker). Being a peacemaker doesn't merely mean you get along with other people. The OT word behind the NT term peace is *shalom* (wholeness). If you "make peace" you help other people experience wholeness personally and in relationships; your words and actions are so substantive that you influence others to get right with God and with other people. Like a farmer sows seed in the ground, you sow seeds of peace/*shalom*/wholeness wherever you go. The crop or harvest is righteousness (i.e. right living) . . . Connect the dots with me. Wise people are peacemakers. Peacemakers say and do things that righteousness. Another way to say it is, Wise people make disciples. Wise people follow Christ and teach others to follow Christ. From the vantage point of eternity, that's what really matters.

8. When you back up and get the big picture, what is really at stake in whether or not we are wise people?

### Practicing the Rhythms of Rooted

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**Daily Devotion:** Read and meditate upon next week's passage (James 4:1-6). As well consider these passages on wisdom (Prov. 1:7; 2:2-6; 8:10-11; 9:10; 19:8; Psalm 51:6; Col. 1:9)



**Prayer:** Pray daily this week, asking God to give you wisdom (James 1:5)