

**Theme: Wisdom From Above**

James 3:13–18  
<sup>13</sup>Who is wise and understanding among you? Let him show by good conduct that his works are done in the meekness of wisdom. <sup>14</sup>But if you have bitter envy and self-seeking in your hearts, do not boast and lie against the truth. <sup>15</sup>This wisdom does not descend from above, but is earthly, sensual, demonic. <sup>16</sup>For where envy and self-seeking exist, confusion and every evil thing are there. <sup>17</sup>But the wisdom that is from above is first pure, then peaceable, gentle, willing to yield, full of mercy and good fruits, without partiality and without hypocrisy. <sup>18</sup>Now the fruit of righteousness is sown in peace by those who make peace.

**Consider**

**3:13.** How does James say the “wise and understanding” person will demonstrate wisdom? How does this command continue the themes presented in 1:22–23 and 3:1?

The word “meekness” appears throughout the New Testament. See these cross references below and take note of how we should understand this word:

James 1:21	
1 Corinthians 4:21	
2 Corinthians 10:1	
Galatians 6:1	
2 Timothy 2:25	
1 Peter 3:15–16	

**3:14.** What sinful behaviors and attitudes are contrasted with the “meekness of wisdom”? How could these behaviors show themselves in the life of a teacher (see 3:1).

**3:15–16.** How can you identify earthly wisdom (wisdom that “does not descend from above”)?

What three terms are used to describe the sources of earthly wisdom? Define these terms in your own words.

According to 3:15, where does this earthly wisdom lead? Contrast this with the results of heavenly wisdom (“wisdom from above”) as described in 3:18. How do these results motivate you to pursue God’s wisdom over the world’s wisdom?

**3.17.** How does James describe “wisdom from above”? Rephrase his definition in your own words: \_\_\_\_\_

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What does the Bible say is the foundation for true wisdom (Proverbs 9:10)?

How does the description in 3:17 help us understand that wisdom is about action and behavior and not head-knowledge?

Compare the wisdom from above with the “fruit of the Spirit” from Galatians 5:22–23.

Wisdom from Above	Fruit of the Spirit

**3:18.** What is the “fruit of righteousness” that James is referring to?

Where does peace come from?

**Ask Yourself**

Am I able to easily distinguish between earthly wisdom and heavenly wisdom? Can I think of some worldly ideas I once believed that I no longer believe?

When am I most tempted to have “bitter envy” and “self-seeking” in my heart?

What are some ways I should guard against accepting worldly, fleshly wisdom? How can I prevent myself from being seduced into this wrong kind of thinking?

Of the fruits of the Spirit or the qualities of wisdom of above, which are most lacking in my personal interactions with those around me? What areas seem the easiest to follow?

Are my relationships characterized by peace-faking (ignoring problems), peace-breaking

(causing problems), or peace-making (solving problems)?<sup>16</sup>

Discuss: How can I have a relationship of peace with someone who does not know Christ? How do verses like Romans 12:18 help me with this issue?

## Cross References

James 1:21

Therefore lay aside all filthiness and overflow of wickedness, and receive with meekness the implanted word, which is able to save your souls.

1 Corinthians 4:21

What do you want? Shall I come to you with a rod, or in love and a spirit of gentleness?

2 Corinthians 10:1

Now I, Paul, myself am pleading with you by the meekness and gentleness of Christ—who in presence *am* lowly among you, but being absent *am* bold toward you.

Galatians 6:1

Brethren, if a man is overtaken in any trespass, you who *are* spiritual restore such a one in a spirit of gentleness, considering yourself lest you also be tempted.

2 Timothy 2:25

In humility correcting those who are in opposition, if God perhaps will grant them repentance, so that they may know the truth.

1 Peter 3:15–16

<sup>15</sup> But sanctify the Lord God in your hearts, and always *be* ready to *give* a defense to everyone who asks you a reason for the hope that is in you, with meekness and fear; <sup>16</sup> having a good conscience, that when they defame you as evildoers, those who revile your good conduct in Christ may be ashamed.

Romans 12:9

Let love be without hypocrisy. Abhor what is evil. Cling to what is good.

Proverbs 9:10

The fear of the LORD *is* the beginning of wisdom, And the knowledge of the Holy One *is* understanding.

Galatians 5:22–23

<sup>22</sup> But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, longsuffering, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, <sup>23</sup> gentleness, self-control. Against such there is no law.

Isaiah 26:3–4

<sup>3</sup> You will keep *him* in perfect peace, *Whose* mind *is* stayed *on* *You*, Because he trusts in *You*.

<sup>4</sup> Trust in the LORD forever, For in YAH, the LORD, *is* everlasting strength.

Romans 12:18

If it is possible, as much as depends on you, live peaceably with all men.

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<sup>16</sup> These categories are courtesy of Ken Sande's book, *The Peacemaker* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 2004), 22–28.