

James 3:13-18

Commentary: Knowing God's Ways and Walking In Them (James 3:13-18)

James spends much of chapter 3 exhorting his readers to get a handle on their tongues. He highlights just how powerful, dangerous and inconsistent the tongue can be and firmly instructs against the use of the tongue in such a manner (v10). James recognises the only effective way to control the mouth is to first control the mind. In the words of the Apostle Paul we must "bring every thought into captivity to the obedience of Christ" (2 Cor 10:5b). Godly wisdom is what's necessary to achieve this. God's wisdom leads us to our Creator and enables us to see life from an eternal perspective. When we desire godly wisdom and yield ourselves to it, the results are evident by our words and our actions. James lists 7 characteristics unique to godly wisdom and contrasts those characteristics to the inferior characteristics of worldly wisdom.

Instructions:

Carefully read through James 3:13-18 and then attempt to answer the questions which follow.

The Hebrew word for wisdom is "hokhma" and is broadly understood as an ability or a skill in doing a particular task (refer Exodus 31:3-4). In its use in the book of Proverbs, wisdom is best understood as "the skill of doing life", essentially, knowing God's ways and walking in those ways. Unlike the Greek concept of wisdom, which is more about applying knowledge correctly, godly wisdom is about what you do, not just how you think.

1) What does James say are the outward signs of godly wisdom (v13)?

The Greek word "prauteti" (meekness), that James uses in v 14, is often used in non-biblical literature to describe a horse that someone had broken and had trained to submit to a bridle. James uses it to describe strength under control, specifically the **Holy Spirit's control**.

2) What is essential in order to demonstrate godly wisdom?

3) What does James say are the outward signs of worldly wisdom (v14)?

The word "self-seeking" refers to those people in the church who were setting themselves over others and advancing their own agendas.

4) What does James say that these individuals should **not** do in the church (v14)?

James is clear that worldly wisdom expresses itself by bitter envy and self-seeking. In other words, such worldly wisdom is twisted and immoral.

5) What are the inward characteristics of worldly wisdom (v15)?

6) What are the results of worldly wisdom (v16)?

7) In contrast to worldly wisdom, what are the inward characteristics of godly wisdom (v17)?

8) Fill in the table below. You will need to do this after the message.

Characteristics of godly wisdom	Description of each
Pure	
Peaceable	
Gentle	
Willing to yield	
Full of mercy and good fruits	
Without partiality (favouritism)	
Without hypocrisy (sincere)	

James describes godly wisdom as “first pure”. This does not mean that purity is just first on the list; it means that it is first of importance.

9) Why do you think purity is so important?

The Greek phrase translated as “willing to yield” is a military term that means “to be willing to take instructions”

10) How does such an attitude contribute to peace (v17-18)

11) What are the results of godly wisdom (v18)?

12) How do we obtain godly wisdom? **Hint:** James 1:5, Proverbs 2:6, Joshua 1:8