

James 3:13-18 ~ Two Kinds of Wisdom ~ Discussion Questions

1. How has James described wisdom previously? (James 1:5-8)
2. What is the difference between knowledge and wisdom?
3. What occupations or jobs require lots of knowledge or training? What kinds of occupations or jobs require wisdom or discernment?
4. What does James say is the evidence of wisdom in Verse 3:13?
5. How does James characterize 'earthly wisdom?' (Verse 3:14-16)
6. What kind of well-meaning advice might lead you to feeling jealous and envious?
7. What is the result of 'earthly wisdom?' Where does it lead? (Verse 3:16) Give an example of this.
8. How does James describe 'heavenly wisdom?' How does a wise person act? (Verse 3:17)
9. What does heavenly wisdom produce? (Verse 3:18)
10. What is the similarity that James shows between 'faith' and 'wisdom' (or understanding)? (Compare James 3:17 with Galatians 5:22)

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James 3:13-18 ~ Two Kinds of Wisdom ~ Questions for Small Groups

1. What life experiences increase our wisdom?
2. What kind of bitter envy or selfish ambition do you tend to hold in your heart? What things do you find really difficult to let go? Which of the following do you envy most? Somewhat? A little? Not at all?
 - A) People with more money than me
 - B) Smart people with more education
 - C) People with a more loving family
 - D) People with a nice place to live
 - E) Good health
 - F) Strength, athletic skill
 - G) Good voice, speech
 - H) Rewarding career
 - I) Musical talent
 - J) Something else _____

3. In your own words, what is “selfish ambition?” You’ll find a Biblical example of Absalom in 2 Samuel 15:1-12. There are many examples in the Bible: Saul, Adonijah, Joab, Shimei, Uzziah, Korah, and others. Look them up when you have some time.

4. What damage can bitter envy do to you? What about selfish ambition?

5. What can you do this week to seek God’s wisdom? Be very specific. Can you start doing it *right now*?

6. What can you do this week to plant peace in a relationship or situation which has been troubling you?

James 3:13-18 ~ Two Kinds of Wisdom

¹³ Who is wise and understanding among you? Let him show it by his good life, by deeds done in the humility that comes from wisdom. ¹⁴ But if you harbor bitter envy and selfish ambition in your hearts, do not boast about it or deny the truth.

¹⁵ Such “wisdom” does not come down from heaven but is earthly, unspiritual, of the devil. ¹⁶ For where you have envy and selfish ambition, there you find disorder and every evil practice.

¹⁷ But the wisdom that comes from heaven is first of all pure; then peace-loving, considerate, submissive, full of mercy and good fruit, impartial and sincere.

¹⁸ Peacemakers who sow in peace raise a harvest of righteousness. [NIV]

James 3:13-18 ~ Live Well, Live Wisely

¹³⁻¹⁶ Do you want to be counted wise, to build a reputation for wisdom? Here’s what you do: Live well, live wisely, live humbly. It’s the way you live, not the way you talk, that counts. Mean-spirited ambition isn’t wisdom. Boasting that you are wise isn’t wisdom. Twisting the truth to make yourselves sound wise isn’t wisdom. It’s the furthest thing from wisdom—it’s animal cunning, devilish conniving. Whenever you’re trying to look better than others or get the better of others, things fall apart and everyone ends up at the others’ throats.

¹⁷⁻¹⁸ Real wisdom, God’s wisdom, begins with a holy life and is characterized by getting along with others. It is gentle and reasonable, overflowing with mercy and blessings, not hot one day and cold the next, not two-faced. You can develop a healthy, robust community that lives right with God and enjoy its results only if you do the hard work of getting along with each other, treating each other with dignity and honor. [The Message]