

# True Wisdom

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James 3:13-18  
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James 3:13–18

Wisdom from Above

[13] 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. (ESV)

**Main Point: Heavenly wisdom leads to righteous peace, while earthly “wisdom” leads to disorder and evil**

## I. True Wisdom vs False “Wisdom” (verses 13-16)

- Marks of True Wisdom: good works and humility
- Marks of False Wisdom: bitter jealousy and selfish ambition

“You said in your heart, ‘I will ascend to heaven; above the stars of God. I will set my throne on high; I will sit on the mount of assembly in the far reaches of the north, I will ascend above the heights of the clouds; I will make myself like the Most High.’” -- Isaiah 14:12-14

## II. The Fruit of True Wisdom (verses 17-18)

“Take my yoke upon you, and learn from me, for I am gentle and lowly in heart, and you will find rest for your souls.” -- Matthew 11:29

Let no corrupting talk come out of your mouths, but only such as is good for building up, as fits the occasion, that it may give grace to those who hear. And do not grieve the Holy Spirit of God, by whom you were sealed for the day of redemption. Let all bitterness and wrath and anger and clamor and slander be put away from you, along with all malice. Be kind to one another, tenderhearted, forgiving one another, as God in Christ forgave you. -- Ephesians 4:29-32

“But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, self control; against such things there is no law.” -- Galatians 5:22

## Questions for Discussion/Application

- Re-read the text, James 3:13-18. What initial insights and observations do you have from reading this passage? How does this text sober you or encourage you?
- In verses 14 and 15, what James warns against "bitter jealousy" and "selfish ambition." What is "bitter jealousy" ? What is "selfish ambition"? What are some subtle ways these sins might at times surface in our own hearts and lives?
- What are the characteristics of "the wisdom from above" James speaks of in verse 17?
- Among the virtues listed in verses 17, which one stands out to you as one you are particularly eager to cultivate in your own life?
- What good fruits might be evident in the lives of those who seek to (A) put to death bitter jealousy and selfish ambition and (B) live in keeping with the wisdom that is from above?
- What consequences might come to those who fail to walk in keeping with the wisdom that is from above?
- How can yielding to sinful ambition damage the church's witness to the world around us? How can walking in the wisdom that is from above promote her witness?
- Consider taking time to pray, asking God that by His Spirit He would help us to be motivated by grace to put to death sinful ambition and walk in keeping with the wisdom that is from above.