

Discovering the Treasures of the Word

James
Lesson #12, Chapter 3:13-18

Ask the Lord to help you gain His wisdom as you study this section of James. There are riches here to apply and learn!

1. James isn't introducing a new topic here in Chapter 3 verse 13, so let's take a look at how verse 13 is a continuation of James' discussion in Chapter 3, especially of verses 9-12. What do you see?
2. In verse 13 James continues his pattern of using rhetorical questions. What challenge does he raise by asking the question he does in verse 13 and then giving its subsequent instruction?
3. Eager Beaver: Speaking of questions: James loves them! Look through each chapter of James and note each time he asks a question. Be sure to list the verse reference. See if you can figure out what point he's trying to make each time he asks a question.
4. List at least 5 observations of verse 13.
5. What do the Scriptures teach us about being *wise and understanding*? See Exodus 31:3; Deuteronomy 4:5-6; Psalm 107:43; 111:10; Proverbs 1:5, 7; 23:23; Daniel 2:21; Matthew 7:24.
6. What do we learn about *living out* wisdom and understanding from the following Scriptures? See Matthew 11:19; Philippians 1:27; Colossians 1:9-12; 1 Peter 2:12; 3:1-2, 16.

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7. Define *gentleness* [Strong's #4240 (ESV, NKJV *meekness*; NIV *humility*)].

“This Christian meekness involves a healthy understanding of our own unworthiness before God and a corresponding humility and lack of pride in our dealings with our fellow-men.”¹ Douglas Moo

8. Why is *gentleness* such a valued component to wise living? See Matthew 11:29; Galatians 6:1; Ephesians 4:1-3; Colossians 3:12-13; 1 Timothy 6:11; James 1:21; 3:17.
9. What are some challenges you face in applying the *wisdom of gentleness in your behavior*? What encouragements have you gained from our lesson so far that will help you apply this precious characteristic?
10. In contrast to the lovely picture painted in verse 13 about living our lives in the gentleness of wisdom, what character qualities are presented in verse 14? Where do those qualities reside?
11. *If* those qualities were to *somehow* show up in our lives, what's the first thing we need to do according to verse 14? Why is that so important?
12. What do we know about our hearts if we see the characteristics from verse 14 coming out in our lives? See John 8:44-47; 1 Corinthians 3:1-3; Ephesians 4:25-32.
13. At this point James connects his comments to the theme of wisdom he began in verse 13. What does he have to say in verse 15 about the so-called “wisdom” illustrated in verse 14?

¹Douglas J. Moo, [*James: An Introduction and Commentary*](#), vol. 16, Tyndale New Testament Commentaries (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 1985), 136.

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14. What are the products of the world's wisdom (verse 16)? Why are those qualities antithetical to godly wisdom? See Isaiah 9:16 (in speaking about false teachers); 1 Corinthians 14:33; Galatians 5:19-21.
15. Say you were a young believer desiring to line up every area of your life in obedience to the Word of God, but you weren't sure how to do this, how could you start if you only used verses 14-16 as your basis for examining your heart, your words, your choices, your philosophies, your practical application? How would those verses give you wisdom about the true state of your life and what to do about it?

“We are creatures of a great master Designer, and His ordering of our lives is sure and certain, yet many people live without any visible order or peace or serenity. The way we live ought to manifest the truth of what we believe. A messy life speaks of a messy—an incoherent—faith.” Elisabeth Elliot²

16. Verse 17 contains a wonderful description of God's wisdom. James indicates that even the *listing order* of these qualities is significant for us. What is the very first element found in all godly wisdom? John reveals why this quality would show up in godly wisdom in 1 John 3:3. What do you learn?
17. Following on heels of purity, we learn that God's wisdom is *peaceable*. What do we learn about godly, *peaceable* wisdom from Proverbs 3:17; Hebrews 12:11; James 3:18?
- a. If you're eager for a little more study, read Psalm 34:11-14 and consider how the fear of the Lord leads you to peaceable wisdom.

² Elisabeth Elliot, *Let Me Be a Woman* (Wheaton, IL: Tyndale House Publishers, 1976), 34.

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“God’s wisdom leads to peace. It is a peace based on holiness, not on compromise. God never has “peace at any price.” The peace of the church is not more important than the purity of the church. If the church is pure, devoted to God, then there will be peace.”³
Warren Wiersbe

18. Don’t you just love that godly wisdom is *gentle*? Why would that be essential for every believer to understand and seek from the Lord? See Matthew 11:29; 2 Corinthians 10:1; Galatians 5:22-23.

19. Define our next quality of wisdom—*reasonable* [Strong’s #2138 (NIV *submissive*; NKJV *willing to yield*; ESV *open to reason*)]. What would that look like lived out in our lives? See 1 Samuel 25:17 and 2 Kings 5:13 for how *not* to act; then see Romans 12:10; Philippians 2:3; 1 Peter 5:5.

“The Lord is easy to be entreated; for he is slow unto wrath, but ready to show mercy. S. James saith that the wisdom which is from above is “gentle, peaceable, easy to be entreated.” If his grace in his children make them gentle and easy to be entreated, what shall we think of himself? Since he will have such pity in us poor creatures, that seventy times seven times in the day he will have us to forgive the offences of our brethren; Oh, what pity and compassion abound in himself! Thus we see our comfort is increased; that as his mercies are great, so are they tender; easily obtained, where they are earnestly craved.”⁴ William Cowper

20. Wisdom shows up in really tangible ways too—by being *full of mercy and good fruit*. Why are those qualities a perfect component in godly wisdom? See Luke 6:36; Titus 2:14.

³Warren W. Wiersbe, [*The Bible Exposition Commentary*](#), vol. 2 (Wheaton, IL: Victor Books, 1996), 364.

⁴William Cowper, quoted by C. H. Spurgeon, [*The Treasury of David: Psalms 111-119*](#), vol. 5 (London; Edinburgh; New York: Marshall Brothers, n.d.), 419–420.

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21. The last two qualities of godly wisdom listed here link arms in life application. They can be translated as *impartial* or *unwavering* and *sincere* or *without hypocrisy*. Why is it necessary to remind the people James is writing to that godly wisdom doesn't show partiality and is sincere in its efforts to love others?

22. What does the last verse in Chapter 3 remind us about the results of living out God's wisdom? How is that a fitting epitaph to the chapter? And how does it provide a bridge into James' opening comments in Chapter 4 verse 1?

23. This practical chapter closes with concrete instruction about what our lives should look like. And James leaves no doubt as to what that looks like. How were you encouraged or challenged by this study of James 3:13-18? What are some specific ways you can assess whether you are applying godly wisdom or worldly wisdom to how you live each day?

24. The Christian life isn't static. Just because we show wisdom and understanding at one point, doesn't mean it's guaranteed that we will show that same godly wisdom at another point. What checkpoints and guides have you gained from Chapter 3 that will help you apply wisdom each and every day of your life?

“True wisdom, like real faith, is a vital, practical quality that has as much (or more) to do with the way we live as with what we think or say.”⁵ Douglas Moo

⁵Douglas J. Moo, [*James: An Introduction and Commentary*](#), vol. 16, Tyndale New Testament Commentaries (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 1985), 136.