

# James 3:13-18

## Wisdom

Topics: [Submissive](#), [Considerate](#), [Disorder](#), [Wisdom](#), [Humility](#), [Wise and understanding](#), [Wisdom](#)

"Not many of you should presume to be teachers," says James, because we all make mistakes and teachers' mistakes will be judged most strictly ([3:1-2](#)). Still, many of us do claim to have the wisdom and knowledge necessary to instruct our neighbors. Even those of us who wouldn't dream of preaching in public are often full of advice for our friends. James has some words for all of us professional and amateur teachers. Read [3:13-18](#).

***Wise and understanding*** ([3:13](#)). Recall the meaning of "[wisdom](#)" from [1:5](#). Wisdom is essentially practical, even when it is about spiritual things. The Greek word rendered "understanding" in NIV means to be equipped with "expert or professional knowledge." Together, to be wise and understanding means to know all the technical facts, all the spiritual implications, and all the practical applications that a teacher needs.

***Humility*** ([3:13](#)). See note on [humility](#) in lesson four.

1. How can we recognize (in ourselves and in others) the wisdom and understanding necessary for a teacher ([3:13](#))?
2. Jesus encouraged people to come learn from Him because He was "gentle and humble in heart" ([Matthew 11:29](#)). Paul asserted his authority as an apostle and teacher after invoking "the meekness and gentleness of Christ" ([2 Cor. 10:1](#)). Why do you think humility or meekness is such an essential sign of wisdom?
3. Explain in your own words what the following are:  
  
bitter envy ([3:14](#))  
  
selfish ambition ([3:14](#))
4. How do bitter envy and selfish ambition affect a person's ministry?

**Wisdom** (3:15-17). Wisdom is chiefly a matter of means, not ends. Thus, there is a kind of wisdom that leads a person to live in a way that heads toward eternal life, and a kind that leads him toward eternal death. Clever, successful people may indeed be wise in how to attain their goals, but James casts doubt on their goals.

5. Contrast the effects of the wisdom that is "earthly, unspiritual, of the devil" (3:15-16) with those of the wisdom that comes from God (3:17-18).

| earthly, unspiritual,<br>of the devil | heavenly, spiritual,<br>of God |
|---------------------------------------|--------------------------------|
|                                       |                                |

**Disorder** (3:16). This word suggests primarily mental confusion, but mental disarray inevitably brings outward disorder and *every evil practice*. It is the same word rendered "unstable" in 1:8. That is, earthly wisdom leads to that same inconsistent, wavering doubleness that James has been preaching against.

6. Why do you think envy and selfish ambition lead to disorder and evil practices? (*Optional: See Romans 1:18-32; Ephes. 4:17-19.*)

**Considerate** (3:17). "Gentle" in KJV and RSV. This is to be thoughtful, forbearing, not concerned with one's own rights. A gentle or considerate person "will rather take sides against himself, look from the other's point of view, remember his own duties and the other's rights." He "will yield like air in matters of personal feeling or interest," but "will stand like rock in respect of moral principle."

**Submissive** (3:17). "Easy to be intreated" in KJV; "open to reason" in RSV. Such a person does not necessarily give in to every demand made of him, but he is open to discussion, negotiation, and requests. He is not stubborn, short tempered, or autocratic.

7. In contrast to the maker of disorder (3:16) is the maker of peace (3:17-18). In light of 3:13-18, what do you think it means to be a peacemaker?

8. Sowing in peace produces a harvest of righteousness ([3:18](#)). Why do you suppose peacemaking and righteousness are connected like this?
  
9. All the good traits of [3:17-18](#) spring from acquiring heavenly wisdom and ridding ourselves of devilish wisdom. How can you cultivate heavenly wisdom and its fruits this week?
  - a. Are there any traits or habits you need to repent of? If so, write them down and confess them to God.
  
  - b. What else can you do to grow in heavenly wisdom? Be as specific about your plans as possible. (*Optional*: See your answers to [questions 8 and 9](#) of lesson seven. You might also consider [Job 28:28](#); [Psalm 119:9-16](#); [Proverbs 8:12](#); [Romans 8:5-8](#); [James 1:5-8](#).)
  
10. List any questions you have about [3:13-18](#).