



#whenlifehappens

James 3:13-18

The Good Life

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SERMON NOTES: JAMES 3:13-18

QUESTION: WHO IS WISE?

James 3:13, ¹³*Who is wise and understanding among you? cf. Proverbs 3:13-18*

THE PREFERRED ANSWER

James 3:13, ¹³Let him show it by his good life, by deeds done in the humility that comes from wisdom.

- **EVIDENCE THAT AFFIRMS**
- **GOOD FRUIT**
- **GODLY SOURCE**

A DREADFUL ALTERNATIVE

*James 3: 14, ¹⁴But if you harbor bitter envy and selfish ambition in your hearts, do not boast about it or deny the truth. - **EVIDENCE THAT CONDEMNS***

*James 3: 15 ¹⁵Such “wisdom” does not come down from heaven but is earthly, unspiritual, of the devil. - **UNGODLY SOURCE***

*James 3:16, ¹⁶For where you have envy and selfish ambition, there you find disorder and every evil practice. - **BAD FRUIT** (cf. James 1:13-15)*

A GODLY WISDOM EXPLAINED

James 3:17-18, ¹⁷But 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. ¹⁸Peacemakers who sow in peace raise a harvest of righteousness.

- “Purity” reflects God’s **CHARACTER**.
- “peace-loving” is linked to the very **CHARACTER** of God.

- “**considerate**” is usually associated with **JUSTICE**, particularly the avoidance of the abuse of power.
- “**submissive**,” meaning one who recognizes the truth of God when it is heard and **WILLINGLY** submits to it.
- **Mercy**” and “**good fruit**” go together, for mercy has a practical orientation that by definition manifests itself in “good fruit.” Mercy is not pity, for pity can be simply the emotion of concern that passes as quickly as the shadow of a cloud. Mercy is compassion that drives one to action.
- The final pair of virtues, “**impartial**” and “**sincere**” also go together. For “impartial” describes a person who is the opposite of double-minded. “Sincere” means without hypocrisy. It is the person who knows the heart of God and therefore the priorities of God.

Insight #1: A fruitful way to respond to life’s trials is to embrace God’s process; lean into the trial; maintain an eternal perspective; acknowledge the true root of our struggle; trust God’s character and provision. (James 1:1-18)

Insight #2: In the midst of trials we need to exercise restraint: be quick to listen, slow to speak, slow to anger. Listening involves accepting the truth of God’s word and acting on it. (James 1:19-27)

Insight #3: Confronting the challenge of favoritism, James challenges his readers to exhibit the faith taught and modeled by Jesus: a faith informed by the truth of God’s word, guided by the grace of God, and that loves our neighbor as ourselves. (James 2:1-13)

Insight #4: The faith God accepts is a faith expressed in deeds; a faith that is more than adherence to a creed; a faith validated by obedience to God’s will. (James 2:14-26)

Insight #5: An errant tongue can only accomplish much harm. The influence of God in our life will help us to use our tongues for good. (James 3:1-12)

Insight #6: The wise person’s life reflects the wisdom that comes from heaven. The harvest of peace “shalom” will come from living the Good Life. (James 3:13-18)

CONNECT GROUP DISCUSSION GUIDE: JAMES 3:13-18

OPENING

Share with the group someone in public life that you consider to be wise. In your opinion, what is it that makes this person wise? What are some of the ways their wisdom is evident? How does this person affect their environment?

GOING DEEPER

James asserts that if a person claims to be wise it will be reflected *“by his good life, by deeds done in the humility that comes from wisdom”*. For James “wisdom from above” is not the wisdom of how to “get ahead” in life or how to achieve worldly success, nor is it how to uncover divine secrets; God’s wisdom is meant to transform our character.

How do you react to “wisdom” being defined in this manner? How is this definition different from the common conception of wisdom in today’s culture?

The “wisdom from heaven” reflects God’s priorities. As we base our decisions on God’s priorities, the impact can profoundly affect our lives.

Suggest some practical ways we can take to live out God’s wisdom in our daily lives. How will this affect the way you steward your time? Your talents? Your treasure?

Leaders Notes: The Book of Proverbs has much to say on the subject of wisdom. If your group has time, you may wish to respond to the following questions:

- *Read Proverbs 1:1-7. Why is the “fear of the LORD” the “beginning of all knowledge” (verse 7)?*
- *Read Proverbs 2. How does wisdom “save us”? From what or from whom does it save us?*

CHALLENGE

The argument of James in 3:13-18 is as follows: (1) Where there is divisiveness, there is no wisdom; (2) wisdom is peaceable; (3) therefore, the peacemakers are the ones who possess wisdom; and (4) the ones who create tumult and discord do not possess wisdom, however much they protest to the opposite.¹

What are some steps you can take to improve your role as a peacemaker?

¹ Nystrom, David P. “Bridging Contexts” In *NIV Application Commentary, New Testament: James*. By David P. Nystrom, 210. Grand Rapids: Zondervan, © 1997