

The topic of wisdom logically follows the topic of our speech (3:1-12). Teachers (3:1) should be wise and understanding. Wisdom is revealed in our speech. E.g., boasting and denying the truth show that one does not have godly wisdom (3:14).

God has much to say about being wise. Wisdom has very little to do with being intelligent or with the amount of facts which a person knows. Godly wisdom is morally based and therefore distinctly different than the world's wisdom. The fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom (Proverbs 9:10; cf. Proverbs 1:7; Psalm 14:1; 53:1). It is important that we heed God's wisdom now (cf. Proverbs 1:24-31). James highlights four truths about the wise and about wisdom in this passage.

**I. *The truly wise will live good lives in all meekness (3:13).***

**1. *The "wise and understanding" were the teachers and skilled experts.***

The Jews used the word "wise" in a technical sense for the teacher or Rabbi. The word "understanding" refers to someone who has been trained or was skilled. If someone claims to be such a wise person, an expert, who has something to say to others, then James has a word for them.

**2. *True wisdom is proven by good conduct.***

It is not position or training that demonstrates true wisdom and understanding. It is not sufficient to claim to have something to say. The one who is truly wise and understanding will show it in his life.

From true wisdom will come deeds done in meekness. "Meekness" pictures power under control. The wise deal with people gently.

The manner in which the wise live will be good. It will make the Word of God appear attractive to those who see the wise.

**II. *Worldly wisdom reveals itself in selfishness and results in evil (3:14-16).***

**1. *The worldly wise are characterized by a selfish zeal to advance themselves.*** Cf. Philippians 1:15. Some people speak and even teach to reach their own goals and not for the good of others or for the sake of Jesus Christ. There are those who are zealous to get ahead and to be recognized. Their words are not sweet words of healing but bitter.

**2. *The worldly wise can be blind to their own self-centeredness.*** Boasting is a logical extension of selfish ambition. The proud are glad to tell others of their ability or successes. But they seldom see their own problem.

**3. *The worldly wise are earth-focused, not Spirit-driven, but demonically inspired.***

a. "Earthly" means seeing things only in terms of this world. It implies having the wrong priorities. In contrast see Colossians 3:2, 16; Matthew 6:33.

b. The "non-spiritual" or "natural" man is the person who is not led by the Spirit of God. Cf. 1 Corinthians 2:14-15. The natural person does not accept or understand things that must be spiritually discerned.

c. If teaching is not from God, it is from the kingdom of darkness. Hence James causes worldly wisdom "demonic."

**4. *The worldly wise will produce unrest and evil.*** Arguments and bad conduct can disrupt the peace. When individuals strive to put themselves forward, they are not thinking about the welfare of others. It results in upsetting people. Wrong thinking also leads to wrong living, that is, to "every evil practice" or all sorts of evil.

**III. *Wisdom from God distinguishes itself from worldly wisdom by its moral quality (3:17).***

1. It is pure, that is, without any evidence of being sinful.

2. It is peace-loving, that is striving to foster peace.

3. It is gentle, that is, considerate of the feelings and weaknesses of others.

4. It is open to reason. The wise person will listen and be persuaded by the truth.

5. It is full of mercy and good fruits, that is, it has the well-being of others in mind and attempts to help.

6. It is impartial, treating every person fairly.

7. It is sincere or without hypocrisy. There are no hidden plans or intents. The wise act openly and truthfully with people.

**IV. *Heavenly wisdom yields right relationships with God and people (3:18).***

A farmer thinks of seed in terms of what it will produce. He plants wheat seed expecting a crop of wheat. The Christian should sow that which produces righteousness. Righteousness implies right relationships. There must be a right relationship to God. Cf. Matthew 5:9. There should be right relationships between people. As much as possible we should live at peace with everyone (Romans 12:18).

Right relationships with God and people are sown in peace and are sown by those who make peace. A peace-maker attempts to bring about peace between people.

To act with heavenly wisdom is sowing with a harvest in mind. We may not see an immediate response. A harvest always comes later. But the harvest we want is righteousness. We are not seeking our own advancement. We are not seeking increased attention to ourselves.

We seek to please God. We seek a harvest of righteousness. Worldly wisdom leads away from God. Heavenly wisdom leads towards a harvest of righteousness.