

James Lesson 6 Article

3:17 — *But the wisdom that is from above is first pure, then peaceable, gentle, willing to yield, full of mercy and good fruits, without partiality and without hypocrisy.*

God's wisdom leads to harmony and peace, while human wisdom leads to arrogance and dissension. What kind of wisdom do you tend to rely on? You can answer that question by evaluating your relationships.¹

One of the key themes in the Book of James is wisdom, or practical living directed by the Word of God (see 1:5). It is tragic when Christians lack practical wisdom to direct their affairs, both personally and in the church. Far too many people have the idea that to be “spiritual” means to be impractical—and nothing is farther from the truth! When the Holy Spirit guides us, He uses our minds, and He expects us to get the facts and weigh issues in the light of the Word of God. James indicates that there are two sources of wisdom and that the believer needs to be discerning. The tongue of the believer can be filled with true wisdom from above or the false wisdom from below.²

- A. The context concerning teachers continues from 3:1–12. Several warnings are given: (1) stricter judgment is a reality (cf. 3:1); (2) there is danger in human speech (cf. 3:2); (3) life must reflect teachings (cf. 3:13); (4) proper attitude is a must (cf. 3:15); and (5) there is a demonic counterfeit (cf. 3:15). This seems to confirm the presence of unqualified teachers in the early church who claimed to be spiritual and have special revelations from God. However, we need to be reminded that although the context may speak especially to teachers, it addresses all Christians. All Christians can ask for wisdom (cf. 1:5). All Christians must walk and talk in wisdom.
- B. This section gives the test for “teachers”: (1) wisdom from God; (2) affirmed by lifestyle; (3) dependent on proper attitude. I would add, from 1 John 4:1–6, proper content about the person and work of Christ.
- C. Remember that James is similar in genre to OT Wisdom Literature. In the Old Testament “wisdom” had both a religious orientation and a practical application to daily life.
- D. Paul uses “the fruit of the Spirit,” Gal. 5:22–23, to describe the appropriate Christian life, but James used the Old Testament category of wisdom (cf. Prov. 1–3; 8:22ff; Eccl. 1:1). Wisdom involves more than content or orthodoxy. It is inseparably linked to lifestyle and proper motivation (cf. Matt. 11:19).³

¹ Stanley, C. F. (2005). *The Charles F. Stanley life principles Bible: New King James Version* (Jas 3:17–4:2). Nashville, TN: Nelson Bibles.

² Wiersbe, W. W. (1992). *Wiersbe's expository outlines on the New Testament* (pp. 728–729). Wheaton, IL: Victor Books.

³ Utley, R. J. D. (2000). *Jesus' Half-Brothers Speak: James and Jude* (Vol. Volume 11, p. 46). Marshall, TX: Bible Lessons International.