

## Home Group Leader's Notes

Week of May 1, 2022

James 3:13-18

### *Reflections on Gentle Words*

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#### **STUDY GOD'S WORD, THE BIBLE**

For the next few weeks, we will be looking at biblical themes befitting our times. For this week, we are going to focus on the fruit of wisdom from God.

Because our passage on wisdom is in the "book of James," it is helpful to read what he said earlier in the letter. Read James 1:5-8.

"<sup>5</sup> If any of you lacks wisdom, you should ask God, who gives generously to all without finding fault, and it will be given to you. <sup>6</sup> But when you ask, you must believe and not doubt, because the one who doubts is like a wave of the sea, blown and tossed by the wind. <sup>7</sup> That person should not expect to receive anything from the Lord. <sup>8</sup> Such a person is double-minded and unstable in all they do."

**Wisdom** is the practical application of God's truth to a specific situation; it is knowing what God wants you to do and then doing it.

**Wisdom in James:** The letter from James continues Jesus' teaching on **living out the character of God** (cf. the Sermon on the Mount). We are called to live in spiritual integrity as the children of God. We cannot do so without wisdom from God. The promise in this passage is if we ask God for wisdom, He gives generously to all who ask in faith and who plan to obey that wisdom. (cf. Matthew 7:7-11) The condition for God to grant wisdom is if we ask without doubt or plan to follow God's wisdom.

**In chapter three**, James continues the theme of **living in spiritual integrity through wisdom**. He instructs us in how to discriminate God's wisdom from earthly and unspiritual ways. Let's read our passage and focus on the fruit of God's wisdom.

**James 3:13-18:** <sup>13</sup> Who is wise and understanding among you? Let them show it by their good life, by deeds done in the humility that comes from wisdom. <sup>14</sup> But if you harbor bitter envy and selfish ambition in your hearts, do not boast about it or deny the truth. <sup>15</sup> Such "wisdom" does not come down from heaven but is earthly, unspiritual, demonic. <sup>16</sup> For where you have envy and selfish ambition, there you find disorder and every evil practice.

<sup>17</sup> But 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. <sup>18</sup> Peacemakers who sow in peace reap a harvest of righteousness.

**Consider these questions:**

What is the test of wisdom? **What shows, good life, deeds done. (Wisdom is the application of what God has revealed.)**

What evidences reveal that something is not God's wisdom? **Bitter envy, selfish ambition, boasting, denying the truth.**

What are the sources of these negative actions? How broad is the influence of those sources? **Earthly (the flesh), unspiritual (the world), demonic (the devil). This brings evil practices and disorder to the entire world. (Yep, we're seeing it today, right?)**

What are the evidences of the wisdom from above (heaven, God)? **Pure (without defilement), peace-loving, gentle (considerate, giving up power for the sake of others), submissive (yielding, willing to obey), merciful, bearing good fruit, impartial (single-minded in devotion to God, and sincere (without hypocrisy).**

List description of a person living in God's wisdom. **Peacemakers who bring peace (absence of contention) resulting in righteousness (words and actions that are like or please God).**

How are these connected with the character of God? **God's people, who have the Spirit of God within, should be speaking and acting out the character of God: mercy and peace-giving, righteous, gentle (like Jesus), sincere and pure.**

**DISCUSS TOGETHER**

How does this passage compare to what is happening in our world? **It is easy to see that our world is living out the character of Satan (demonic) and not our Holy God. However, it is easy to focus on the darkness rather than the light, to point out what is wrong instead of trusting God to bring His goodness into our needy world.**

In what ways is this passage a reflection of the character of God? From what we read in James, how can we live out His character? What holds us back? **As children of God, we should be seeking His wisdom (chapter one) and living out the character of God. We slip into the ways of the flesh, the world, and the devil when we follow the wisdom of the world. That is, we drift from who we are (children of God) when we set out desires on what the world promises instead of seeking and living out the wisdom of God.**

Which of these descriptions do you desire in your own life? Why? **Our impulse answer will be to say that we desire to live in the wisdom of God. But the truth is that we live in America which promises (and doesn't deliver) a security of happiness of idols rather than the living God. This passage is helpful to unveil the truth of whose wisdom we are following. Do I see envy, selfish ambition, or other signs of selfishness? Or do I see the wisdom from above (heaven, God)?**

## PRAYER

We're in a WEEK OF PRAYER. Our key verse is John 15:7: "If you abide/remain in me and my words remain in you, ask whatever you wish, and it will be done for you." Our prayer focus will include the following:

MONDAY: **Serving one another**, *"I have set you an example that you should do as I have done for you."* (John 13:15) READ John 13:1-17

TUESDAY: **Loving one another**, *"A new command I give you: Love one another. As I have loved you, so you must love one another. <sup>35</sup> By this everyone will know that you are my disciples, if you love one another."* (John 13:34–35) READ John 13:31-38

WEDNESDAY: **Continuing our Lord's Work**, *"Very truly I tell you, whoever believes in me will do the works I have been doing, and they will do even greater things than these, because I am going to the Father."* (John 14:12) READ John 14:8-14

THURSDAY: **Loving our Lord**, *"Whoever has my commands and keeps them is the one who loves me. The one who loves me will be loved by my Father, and I too will love them and show myself to them."* (John 14:21) READ John 14:15-24

FRIDAY: **Abiding in Jesus**, *"I am the vine; you are the branches. If you remain in me and I in you, you will bear much fruit; apart from me you can do nothing."* (John 15:5) READ John 15:1-17

SATURDAY: **Testifying to the world**, *"When the Advocate comes, whom I will send to you from the Father—the Spirit of truth who goes out from the Father—he will testify about me. <sup>27</sup> And you also must testify, for you have been with me from the beginning."* (John 15:26–27) READ John 15:18-16:11

SUNDAY: **Being One**, *"My prayer is not for them alone. I pray also for those who will believe in me through their message, <sup>21</sup> that all of them may be one, Father, just as you are in me and I am in you. May they also be in us so that the world may believe that you have sent me."* (John 17:20–21) READ John 17:20-26

We encourage prayer groups to do the following together:

- "If you abide in me..." Thank the Father for sending our Helper, the Holy Spirit, acknowledging his presence with you and in you.
- "... and my words abide in you..." Read the larger passage for each day out loud together listening to Jesus as he speaks to you.
- "ask whatever you wish..." Pray for the things that our Lord wants for us that are revealed in this passage.
- "...and it will be done for you." Thank the Father for his answers ahead of time and ask that he would be glorified through the fruit for which we are asking.