

Wisdom for Living in a Fallen World Pt.3

James 3:13-18

James 3:13–18 (NKJV)

¹³ Who *is* wise and understanding among you? Let him show by good conduct *that* his works *are done* in the meekness of wisdom. ¹⁴ But if you have bitter envy and self-seeking in your hearts, do not boast and lie against the truth. ¹⁵ This wisdom does not descend from above, but *is* earthly, sensual, demonic. ¹⁶ For where envy and self-seeking *exist*, confusion and every evil thing *are* there. 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. ¹⁸ Now the fruit of righteousness is sown in peace by those who make peace.

Introduction:

I think we would all agree that it is easy to be a sinner, I mean, after all it comes natural to us. We don't even have to practice. All we need to do to be good at it, is be born. But holiness, living an obedient life, can be hard at times. Its not burdensome to the Christian, but it can be very difficult at times. We are in a constant fight with the

world, the flesh and the devil. And if you are going to have any success in this fight it will require practical wisdom. Not the wisdom of the world and not the common theme of how to be happier and more successful in your job and marriage and family relations.

We have more access to information than we have ever had and we have more experts that have opinions about anything than we've ever had, yet we have more lives destroyed and families torn apart, and totally out of control sinful lifestyles on a scale unprecedented in the last few decades. What is worse is that in many areas of sin, there is very little difference between the world and the church. The distinguishing marks of a holy person are being gradually worn away by the constant barrage of waves from the ocean to secularism, humanism, darwinianism and atheism.

2 Timothy 3:1–17 (NKJV)

3 But know this, that in the last days perilous times will come: ² For men will be lovers of themselves, lovers of money, boasters, proud, blasphemers, disobedient to parents, unthankful, unholy, ³ unloving, unforgiving, slanderers, without self-

control, brutal, despisers of good, ⁴ traitors, headstrong, haughty, lovers of pleasure rather than lovers of God, ⁵ having a form of godliness but denying its power. And from such people turn away! ⁶ For of this sort are those who creep into households and make captives of gullible women loaded down with sins, led away by various lusts, ⁷ always learning and never able to come to the knowledge of the truth. ⁸ Now as **Jannes and Jambres** resisted Moses, so do these also resist the truth: men of corrupt minds, disapproved concerning the faith; ⁹ but they will progress no further, for their **folly** will be manifest to all, as theirs also was.

Although **Jannes and Jambres** are not mentioned in Exodus or anywhere else in the Old Testament, they may have been among the magicians in the pharaoh's court who duplicated many of the miracles the Lord performed through Moses. Because **Jannes** perhaps means "he who seduces" and **Jambres** "he who makes rebellion," those may have been symbolic names given to these men at a later time. Jewish tradition holds that they pretended to convert to Judaism in order to subvert Moses' divine

assignment to liberate Israel from Egypt, that they led in making and worshiping the golden calf while Moses was on Mt. Sinai receiving the Law from God, and that they were slaughtered by the Levites along with the other idolaters (see Ex. 32).

MacArthur, J. F., Jr. (1995). [2 Timothy](#) (p. 120). Moody Press.

9 their **folly** will be manifest to all, as theirs also was.

454. ἄνοια *ánoia*; gen. *anoías*, fem. noun from *ánous* (n.f.), mad, foolish, from the priv. *a* (1), without, and *noús* (3563), mind, understanding. Madness, folly, lack of understanding (Luke 6:11; 2 Tim. 3:9).

Syn.: *mōría* (3472), foolishness; *aphrosúnē* (877), senselessness; *manía* (3130), madness, mania; *paraphronía* (3913), mind aberration.

Ant.: *phrónēsis* (5428), prudence; *súnesis* (4907), understanding; *sophía* (4678), wisdom.

Zodhiates, S. (2000). In [The complete word study dictionary: New Testament](#) (electronic ed.). AMG Publishers.

..... ¹⁴ But you must continue in the things which you have learned and been assured of, knowing from whom you have learned *them*, ¹⁵ and that from

childhood you have known the Holy Scriptures, which are able to make you wise for salvation through faith which is in Christ Jesus.

¹⁶ All Scripture *is* given by inspiration of God, and *is* profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness, ¹⁷ that the man of God may be complete, thoroughly equipped for every good work.

There is only one wisdom that can fight against the mental, moral and spiritual assault that come from this fallen world. Only one wisdom that teaches that antithesis of ungodliness. Only one wisdom that be sufficient for life and godliness.

It is wisdom from above. Wisdom from God. In fact, it is important to note that this wisdom cannot be gained from human reasoning or the universities or schools of higher learning. It cannot be gained by listening to and learning from the great philosophers of the past or the present. This wisdom has it's sole source in God, His Word and the power of the Holy Spirit to apply it.

In Job 28, Job gives the picture of man in search of such wisdom.

Job 28:1–28 (LSB)

- 1 “Surely there is a mine for silver,
And a place where they refine for gold.
- 2 “Iron is taken from the dust,
And copper is smelted from rock.
- 3 “*Man* puts an end to darkness,
And to the farthest limit he searches out
The rock in thick darkness and shadow of
death.
- 4 “He sinks a shaft far from habitation,
Forgotten by the foot;
They hang and swing to and fro far from men.
- 5 “The earth, from it comes food,
And underneath it is overturned as fire.
- 6 “Its rocks are the source of sapphires,
And its dust *contains* gold.
- 7 “The path no bird of prey knows,
Nor has the falcon’s eye caught sight of it.
- 8 “The proud beasts have not trodden it,
Nor has the *fierce* lion passed over it.
- 9 “He sends his hand forth to the flint;
He overturns the mountains at the base.
- 10 “He breaks out channels through the rocks,
And his eye sees anything precious.
- 11 “He dams up the streams from flowing,
And what is hidden he brings out to the light.
- 12 “But where can wisdom be found?

- And where is the place of understanding?
13 “Man does not know its worth,
And it is not found in the land of the living.
14 “The deep says, ‘It is not in me’;
And the sea says, ‘It is not with me.’
15 “Pure gold cannot be given in place of it,
Nor can silver be weighed as its price.
16 “It cannot be valued in the gold of Ophir,
In precious onyx or sapphire.
17 “Gold or glass cannot meet its worth,
Nor can it be exchanged for articles of fine
gold.
18 “Coral and crystal are not to be mentioned;
And the acquisition of wisdom is above *that of*
pearls.
19 “The topaz of Ethiopia cannot meet its worth,
Nor can it be valued in pure gold.
20 “Where then does wisdom come from?
And where is the place of understanding?
21 “Thus it is hidden from the eyes of all living
And concealed from the birds of the sky.
22 “Abaddon and Death say,
‘With our ears we have heard a report of it.’
23 “God understands its way,
And He knows its place.
24 “For He looks to the ends of the earth

And sees everything under the heavens.
 25 “When He set weight to the wind
 And meted out the waters by measure,
 26 When He set a limit for the rain
 And a course for the thunderbolt,
 27 Then He saw it and recounted it;
 He established it and also searched it out.
 28 “So He said to man, ‘Behold, the fear of the
 Lord, that is wisdom;
 And to turn away from evil is understanding.’”

I. The Singularity of Wisdom

13 Who *is* **wise** and **understanding** among you?

wise

4680. σοφός **sophós**; fem. *sophé*, neut. *sophón*, adj. The meaning of *sophós* in the NT and its Hebr. equivalent, *chōkmah*, differs from the classical meaning in at least two ways. First of all, the biblical concept of wisdom is theocentric rather than anthropocentric. It denotes a fear of God and an understanding of His ways. Lastly, wisdom signifies the possession of a certain adeptness or practical

ability. It does not necessarily imply brilliance or scholastic training; rather, *sophós* indicates adroitness, the ability to apply with skill what one knows (especially religious truth). In some instances, however, particularly in the Pauline writings, the word is used of one who has acquired special information, secret doctrine (*mustérion* [3466]). Here the noetic aspect of the word is prominent in its meaning. Hence, the following meanings:

(I) Skillful, expert (1 Cor. 3:10; Sept.: 2 Chr. 2:7; Is. 3:3).

(II) Skilled in the affairs of life, discreet, judicious, practically wise (1 Cor. 6:5; Sept.: Deut. 1:13; 2 Sam. 13:3; Is. 19:11).

(III) Skilled in learning, learned, intelligent, enlightened, in respect to things human and divine.

Zodhiates, S. (2000). In [The complete word study dictionary: New Testament](#) (electronic ed.). AMG Publishers.

understanding

1990. ἐπιστήμων *epistēmōn*; gen. *epistēmonos*, masc.–fem., neut. *epistēmon*, adj. from *epístamai* (1987), to know thoroughly, understand. Endued with knowledge, understanding, expertise epistemology (James 3:13; Sept.: Deut. 1:13; 4:6), the equivalent to the Eng. “scientist.”

Syn.: *gnōstēs* (1109), one who knows, an expert.

Ant.: *idiōtēs* (2399), a person without professional knowledge, an unskilled, unlearned person;

13 Who *is* **wise** and **understanding** among you?

We would conclude, Christians, specifically those who are diligent to apply God's Word, because even as a christian, you can know the facts of God's Word and not necessarily apply them.

I. The Singularity of Wisdom

II. The Sense of Wisdom

¹³ Who *is* wise and understanding among you? Let him show by good conduct *that his works are done* in the meekness of wisdom. ¹⁴ But if you have bitter envy and self-seeking in your hearts, do not boast and lie against the truth.

The sense of wisdom, or the perception and evidence of wisdom is seen in the conduct,

just like the works show the faith, so wisdom is seen in its works.

v. 13....Let him show by good conduct *that* his works *are done* in the meekness of wisdom.

His question does not imply that none is wise but challenges to self-examination those who rashly assume that they are.

Hiebert, D. E. (1997). [James](#) (Revised Edition, p. 204). BMH Books.

v. 13....Let him show

James demands that the possession of wisdom, like faith (2:14–26), must be proved by conduct. The aorist imperative “**let him show**” (*deixatō*) calls for an effective demonstration. The proof must be given, not through victory by a clever argument, but “by his good life.

Hiebert, D. E. (1997). [James](#) (Revised Edition, p. 205). BMH Books.

good [conduct](#)

Hiebert, D. E. (1997). [James](#) (Revised Edition, p. 205). BMH Books.

391. ἀναστροφή *anastrophḗ*; gen. *anastrophḗs*, fem. noun from *anastréphō* (390), to turn up, to

move about. A turning about. In the NT, mode of life, conduct, behavior, deportment

v. 13....Let him show by good conduct

that **his works are done in the**

meeekness of wisdom.

The attractiveness of his life must be established “by deeds done in the humility that comes from wisdom.” His deeds, which are the acid test of his wisdom, must be wrought by his personal faith, providing external evidence of God’s transforming power within.

His deeds must be “done in the humility that comes from wisdom.” The emphasis is on “humility” (*prautēti*), more commonly translated “meekness” or “gentleness.” Such “meekness” is a characteristic of true wisdom and is the opposite of arrogant self-assertiveness (cf. 1:21*b*). It is that attitude of heart that produces gentleness and mildness in dealing with others—not weakness (Matt. 11:29) but power under control. The meek man does not feel a need to contend for the recognition of his rights or acceptance of his personal views. His life will be characterized by modesty and unobtrusiveness. “This Christian meekness,” Moo notes, “involves a healthy understanding of our own unworthiness before God and a corresponding humility and lack of pride in our dealings with our fellowmen.”

Understandably, such an attitude of meekness was not prized or appreciated in the non-Christian world.

Hiebert, D. E. (1997). [James](#) (Revised Edition, p. 205). BMH Books.

I. The Singularity of Wisdom

II. The Sense of Wisdom

III. The Source of Wisdom

There are two kinds of wisdom because there are two sources of wisdom

1. There is a wisdom that comes from below
2. There is a wisdom that comes from above.

The first in our list is stated in verse. **15** This wisdom does not descend from above, but *is* earthly, sensual, demonic....

so this wisdom would be defined as,
wisdom — how one's life is lived.

The principles, beliefs or philosophy
or lies that is applied to everyday life in
thought, action and attitude.

The second is stated in verse

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.

wisdom —-how one's life is lived

based on the principles, beliefs, theology and truths of Scripture as defined in the Bible.

1. *Its Motives*
2. *Its Marks*
3. *Its Manifestations*

1. Its Motives

13 Who *is* wise and understanding among you? Let him show by good conduct *that his works are done* in the meekness of wisdom. **14** But if you have bitter envy and self-seeking in your hearts, do not boast and lie against the truth.

11). Here he uses it metaphorically to describe the worst sort of **jealousy**, that which is harsh, sharp, cutting, and destructive, having no concern for the feelings or welfare of those who are its objects.

MacArthur, J. F., Jr. (1998). [James](#) (p. 171). Moody Press.

πικρός *pikrós*; fem. *pikrá*, neut. *pikrón*, masc. adj. Bitter. In the Sept., it was used as a neut. or fem. pl. to indicate the fruits of the wild vine or bitter gourd which are so excessively bitter and acrid as to be a kind of poison (see 2 Kgs. 4:39). In the NT, used of taste, meaning bitter, acrid, brackish (James 3:11). Metaphorically it means bitter, cruel, malignant (James 3:14, indicating bitter, harsh, cruel feelings).

Zodhiates, S. (2000). In [The complete word study dictionary: New Testament](#) (electronic ed.). AMG Publishers.

2205. ζήλος *zélōs*; gen. *zélou*, masc. noun from *zéo* (2204), to be hot, fervent. Zeal, used in a good sense (John 2:17; Rom. 10:2; 2 Cor. 7:7, 11; 11:2; Col. 4:13; Sept.: Ps. 69:9; 119:139) and more often in an evil sense, meaning envy, jealousy, anger (Acts 5:17; 13:45; Rom. 13:13; 1 Cor. 3:3; Gal. 5:20; Phil. 3:6; Heb. 10:27, “fiery wrath” [a.t.]; James 3:14, 16; Sept.: Zeph. 1:18; 3:8). Unlike *phthónos* (5355), envy, when used in a good sense, *zélōs* signifies the honorable emulation with the consequent imitation of that which presents itself to the mind’s eye as excellent. According to Aristotle, *zélōs* grieves, not because another has the good, but that he himself does not have it and seeks to supply the deficiency in himself. However, *zélōs* may degenerate into a jealousy which makes war upon the good it sees in another, thus troubling that good and diminishing it. This is why we find *zélōs* joined together with *éris* (2054), contention (Rom. 13:13; 2 Cor. 12:20; Gal. 5:20

Zodhiates, S. (2000). In [The complete word study dictionary: New Testament](#) (electronic ed.). AMG Publishers.

ἐριθεία *eritheía*; gen. *eritheías*, fem. noun from *eritheúō* (n.f.), to work for hire, usually in the mid. voice, used in a bad sense of those who seek only their own. Contention, strife, rivalry. It represents a motive of self-interest, mercenary interest (Phil. 1:16; 2:3). It also meant canvassing for public office, scheming. (Rom. 2:8; 2 Cor. 12:20; Gal. 5:20; James 3:14, 16.)

Zodhiates, S. (2000). In [The complete word study dictionary: New Testament](#) (electronic ed.). AMG Publishers.

Understandably, the word became closely associated with those who sought high political office or other positions of influence and power. It was used of personal gratification and self-fulfillment at any cost, which are the ultimate goals of all fleshly endeavors. It has no room for others, much less genuine humility. It is that ultimate self-elevation rampant in the world today which is the antithesis of what the humble, selfless, giving, loving, and obedient child of God is called to be.

MacArthur, J. F., Jr. (1998). [James](#) (p. 171). Moody Press.

2. Its Marks

15 This wisdom does not descend from above, but *is* earthly, sensual, demonic.

1. Earthly— --

ἐπίγειος *epigeios*; gen. *epigeíou*, masc.–fem., neut. *epígeion*, adj. from *epí* (1909), upon, and *gḗ* (1093), the earth. Earthly, being upon the earth (Phil. 2:10; 3:19). Earthly, belonging to the earth or wrought in men upon the earth (John 3:12)

Zodhiates, S. (2000). In [The complete word study dictionary: New Testament](#) (electronic ed.). AMG Publishers.

But when used in the sense of thinking or behavior, “earthly” has a negative nuance, suggesting a narrow perspective that fails to consider God’s realm and will (cf. Phil. 3:19): “earthbound” is a good rendering

Moo, D. J. (2000). [The letter of James](#) (p. 173). Eerdmans; Apollos.

As “earthly” it springs out of and is limited to the frail and finite life of unregenerated humanity and associated with its turbulent affairs.

Hiebert, D. E. (1997). [James](#) (Revised Edition, p. 208). BMH Books.

2. Sensual, natural

ψυχικός *psuchikós*; fem. *psuchikḗ*, neut. *psuchikón*, adj. from *psuchḗ* (5590), soul, the part of the immaterial life held in common with the animals, as contrasted with spirit (*pneúma* [4151]), only in man, enabling him to communicate with God.

Natural, pertaining to the natural as distinguished from the spiritual or glorified nature of man. 1 Cor. 15:44 refers to a body *psuchikón*, a body governed by the soul or natural and fallen instinct of man, and a body *pneumatikón* (4152), spiritual, governed by the divine quality in man, the spirit. Rendered as “natural” in 1 Cor. 2:14; 15:44, 46 and sensual in James 3:15; Jude 1:19. The term *psuchikós* is not a word of honor even as *sarkikós* (4559), carnal, is not.

Zodhiates, S. (2000). In [The complete word study dictionary: New Testament](#) (electronic ed.). AMG Publishers.

3. Demonic.

δαιμονιώδης *daimoniōdēs*; gen. *daimoniōdous*, masc.–fem., neut. *daimoniōdes*, adj. from *daimónion* (1140), devil. Demon–like. in NT demonic, devilish (James 3:15; Sept.: Ps. 91:6, *daimonίου*). See *daimonízomai* (1139), to be possessed by a demon; *daimónion* (1140), demon; *daímōn* (1142), demon, devil.

Syn.: *ponēros* (4190), evil, wicked.

Zodhiates, S. (2000). In [The complete word study dictionary: New Testament](#) (electronic ed.). AMG Publishers.

This latter word (Gk. *daimoniōdēs*, lit. “pertaining to demons”) occurs only here in the Bible. It may mean

that the wisdom is demonic either in nature or, more probably, in origin

Moo, D. J. (2000). [The letter of James](#) (p. 173). Eerdmans; Apollos.

1. *Its Motives*

2. *Its Marks*

3. *Its Manifestations*

16 For where envy and self-seeking *exist*, **confusion** and every evil thing *are* there.

confusion

181. ἀκαταστασία *akatastasia*; gen. *akatastasiás*, fem. noun from *akatástatos* (182), unstable.

Commotion, tumult (Luke 21:9; 1 Cor. 14:33; 2 Cor. 6:5, “uncertainty of residence” [a.t.], i.e., exile [kjuv, “tumults”]; 2 Cor. 12:20; James 3:16; Sept.: Prov. 26:28).

Syn.: *súgchusis* (4799), confusion; *thórubos* (2351), noise, tumult; *taraché* (5016), disturbance.

Ant.: *eirénē* (1515), peace, tranquility; *hēsuchia* (2271), quietness; *apokatástasis* (605), restoration; *táxis* (5010), order.

Zodhiates, S. (2000). In [The complete word study dictionary: New Testament](#) (electronic ed.). AMG Publishers.

evil thing

5337. **φαῦλος** *phaúlos*; fem. *phaúlē*, neut. *phaúlon*, adj. Vile, evil, wicked, foul, corrupt, good–for–nothing, depraved, worthless, mediocre, unimportant. In the NT, used of evil deeds (John 3:20; 5:29; James 3:16), statements (Titus 2:8). See Sept.: Prov. 22:8.

Syn.: *kakós* (2556), bad, *ponēros* (4190), malevolent.

Ant.: *kalós* (2570), good; *agathós* (18), good, benevolent.

Zodhiates, S. (2000). In [The complete word study dictionary: New Testament](#) (electronic ed.). AMG Publishers.

thing

πρᾶγμα *prágma*; gen. *prágmatos*, neut. noun from *prássō* (4238), to do, perform. A thing done or to be done.

(I) Past: thing done, deed, act, fact, matter (Luke 1:1; Heb. 6:18; 10:1; 11:1; James 3:16; Sept.: Judg. 6:29).

(II) Pres. or fut.: thing being done or to be done, matter, business, affair (Matt. 18:19; Acts 5:4; Rom. 16:2; 2 Cor. 7:11; 1 Thess. 4:6; Sept.: Eccl. 3:1). In a judicial sense it means to have a matter at law, a lawsuit (1 Cor. 6:1).

Deriv.: *pragmateúomai* (4231), to trade.

Syn.: *érgon* (2041), work; *ergasía* (2039), a work or business; *ousía* (3776), goods; *hupóstasis* (5287), concrete essence.

Zodhiates, S. (2000). In [The complete word study dictionary: New Testament](#) (electronic ed.). AMG Publishers.

Pragma (**thing**), from which we get the English *pragmatic*, is variously rendered “work,” “deed,” “event,” “occurrence,” “affair,” and such. The idea is that absolutely *nothing* of any ultimate good results from human wisdom

1. The Wisdom that is from below

2. The Wisdom that is from above is

1. Pure
2. Peaceable
3. Gentle
4. Willing to Yield
5. Full of Mercy
6. good fruits
7. without Partiality
8. without hypocrisy.

When I hear this list, immediately I think of 2 words. Practical Holiness, or Practical godliness, or living a sanctified life.

In other words, Biblical wisdom, is not great argumentation or a logical mind or even practical everyday choices, like the wisest way to build a house or map out a trip or choice of a career or the many other things that we often ascribe to being wise.

No, this wisdom is basically godly living gained by a deep and broad understanding and application of the Word of God. This is not gained primarily by a daily reading of the `Bible, although that is certainly part of it. But this is gain by a careful and diligent

study of the Scriptures fully intentional on applying what you learn to the daily details of life.

1. First Pure

4412. πρῶτον *prōton*; the neut. of *prōtos* (4413), first. Used as an adv.

(I) Particularly of place, order, time, usually without the art.

(A) Generally (Matt. 17:10, 11; Mark 7:27; Luke 9:59, 61; John 18:13; Acts 7:12, the first time; 15:14; 1 Cor. 11:18; 1 Pet. 4:17).

(B) Emphatically meaning first of all, before all (Matt. 23:26; Acts 13:46; Rom. 1:8; 1 Cor. 11:18).

(C) In division or distribution, as referring to a series or succession of circumstances and followed by other adv. of order or time expressed or implied.

Zodhiates, S. (2000). In [The complete word study dictionary: New Testament](#) (electronic ed.). AMG Publishers.

53. ἁγνός *hagnós*; fem. *hagnḗ*, neut. *hagnón*, adj. Freedom from defilements or impurities. In a more restricted sense, not only chaste but also virginal. Akin to *hágios* (40), holy.

(I) Innocent, pure, blameless (2 Cor. 7:11; Phil. 4:8; 1 Tim. 5:22).

(II) Modest, chaste (2 Cor. 11:2; Titus 2:5; 1 Pet. 3:2).

(III) Pure, perfect, holy. Of God (1 John 3:3); of His wisdom (James 3:17; Sept.: Ps. 12:1; 19:11).

Deriv.: *hagneía* (47), purity, cleanliness; *hagnízō* (48), to make clean, purify; *hagnótēs* (54), cleanness, pureness; *hagnōs* (55), purely, sincerely

Zodhiates, S. (2000). In [The complete word study dictionary: New Testament](#) (electronic ed.). AMG Publishers.

Hagnos (**pure**) carries the idea of being free of contamination or defilement and was used by the ancient Greeks of a cleansing ceremony whereby a worshiper was made pure and worthy enough to approach the gods. On the temple of Aesculapius in Epidaurus is the following inscription: “He who would enter the divine temple must be pure [*hagnos*].” Even the pagans realized that deity should only be approached with a pure heart. The writer of Hebrews reminds us that, without such purity or “sanctification ... no one will see the Lord” (Heb. 12:14). This refers to spiritual integrity and moral sincerity.

Hagnos comes from the same root as *hagios*, which is usually translated “holy.” It is not a stretch, therefore, to say that **pure** wisdom is holy wisdom.

Coming **from above**, that is, from God, it could not be otherwise. The sixth Beatitude is, “Blessed are the pure in heart, for they shall see God” (Matt. 5:8). David sought purity of heart, praying, “Purify me with hyssop, and I shall be clean; wash me, and I shall be whiter than snow.... Create in me a clean heart, O God, and renew a steadfast spirit within me” (Ps. 51:7, 10). John assures us that “everyone who has this hope fixed on Him [Jesus Christ] purifies himself, just as He is pure” (1 John 3:3). Even when a true believer falls into sin, he can say with Paul,

MacArthur, J. F., Jr. (1998). [James](#) (pp. 177–178). Moody Press.

This heavenly wisdom “is first of all pure,” making prominent the intrinsic quality of this heavenly wisdom. In its very nature it is “pure,” clean and undefiled, free from all vices, such as jealousy and party factions. It involves the thought “of shrinking from contamination, of a delicate sensibility to pollution of any kind.” Adamson notes that this term, “infrequent in both LXX and NT, which here describes not only freedom from ceremonial or corporal defilement but sincere moral and spiritual integrity,” is “associated especially with Christ, as in 1 John 3:3

Hiebert, D. E. (1997). [James](#) (Revised Edition, p. 210). BMH Books.

2. Peaceable

1516. εἰρηνικός *eirēnikós*; fem. *eirēniké*, neut. *eirēnikón*, adj. from *eirēnē* (1515), peace. Pertaining to peace, peaceable or peaceful (Heb. 12:11, healthful, wholesome; James 3:17, peaceful, disposed to peace; Sept.: Deut. 2:26; Ps. 37:37; 120:7). The reference is to *eirēnē* (1515), peace, as the blessing of salvation.

Syn.: *hēsúchios* (2272), quiet, peaceful; *homóphrōn* (3675), harmonious, of one mind; *isópsuchos* (2473), of one soul, agreeable, like-minded; *éremos* (2263), tranquil.

Ant.: *asúmphōnos* (800), disharmonious; *philóneikos* (5380), quarrelsome, contentious.

Zodhiates, S. (2000). In [The complete word study dictionary: New Testament](#) (electronic ed.). AMG Publishers.

The connecting adverb of time *epeita* (**then**) is the basis for taking “pure” to be a motive for godly wisdom, rather than a characteristic, of which James proceeds to give a list of some seven.

First, this wisdom is **peaceable**. Again, James reflects the Beatitudes, this time the seventh: “Blessed are the peacemakers, for they shall be

called sons of God” (Matt. 5:9). The truly wise don’t perpetrate conflict by their selfishness, but produce peace by their humility (cf. Phil. 2:1–4).

MacArthur, J. F., Jr. (1998). [James](#) (p. 178). Moody Press.

“Then peace-loving” names the first of the external qualities flowing from the inner purity of this wisdom. This heavenly wisdom is “ready for peace,” desiring and fostering peace by restraining discord and pacifying the turbulent elements around it. It promotes “right relationships between man and man, and between man and God.”¹¹⁹ But it does not pursue peace at the expense of purity. It will not compromise with sin to maintain peace. But even when fighting against sin, it hungers for peace, yearning to heal all divisions by its wise counsel.

Hiebert, D. E. (1997). [James](#) (Revised Edition, p. 210). BMH Books.

3. Gentle

1933. ἐπιεικῆς *epieikḗs*; gen. *epieikóús*, masc.—fem., neut. *epieikés*, adj. from *epí* (1909), upon, on, an intens., and *eikós* (n.f.), fair, equitable. Fitting, appropriate, suitable, proper, to be lenient, yielding,

unassertive (1 Tim. 3:3; Titus 3:2; James 3:17; 1 Pet. 2:18; Sept.: Ps. 86:5). Used in the neut. as a noun *tó epieikēs*, your tolerance, clemency (Phil. 4:5).

Deriv.: *epieíkeia* (1932), clemency or gentleness.

Syn.: *hēpios* (2261), gentle, mild; *práos* (4235), meek.

Ant.: *austēros* (840), austere; *bíaios* (972), violent.

Zodhiates, S. (2000). In [The complete word study dictionary: New Testament](#) (electronic ed.). AMG Publishers.

Second, godly wisdom is **gentle**. *Epieikēs* (**gentle**) has no satisfactory equivalent in English, but it carries the ideas of equitable, seemly, fitting, fair, moderate, forbearing, courteous, and considerate. A **gentle** person is humbly patient, submits to dishonor and abuse, mistreatment, and persecution, knowing that “blessed are the gentle, for they shall inherit the earth,” and “blessed are those who have been persecuted for the sake of righteousness, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven. Blessed are you when people insult you and persecute you, and falsely say all kinds of evil against you because of Me. Rejoice and be glad, for your reward in heaven is great; for in the same way they persecuted the prophets who were before you” (Matt. 5:5, 10–12). Those who are

genuinely **gentle** know that “the Lord’s bond-servant must not be quarrelsome, but be kind to all, able to teach, patient when wronged” (2 Tim. 2:24), humbly and “with gentleness correcting those who are in opposition, if perhaps God may grant them repentance leading to the knowledge of the truth” (2 Tim. 2:25)

MacArthur, J. F., Jr. (1998). [James](#) (pp. 178–179). Moody Press.

“Considerate” (*epiekēs*) is an adjective not easily translated into English. Barclay calls it “the most untranslatable” term in this list. Besides the commonly used “gentle,” our English versions employ a variety of terms: “considerate” (NEB; NIV; Goodspeed), “forbearing” (Moffatt), “courteous” (MLB; Weymouth), “reasonable” (Rotherham; Schonfield), and “kindly” (JB). It conveys the thought of respect for the feelings of others, being willing to waive all rigor and severity in one’s dealings with others. Burdick notes that in the Septuagint this adjective “is used mostly of God’s disposition as King. He is gentle and kind, although in reality He has every reason to be stern and punitive

toward men in their sin. God’s people are also to be marked by this godlike quality”

Hiebert, D. E. (1997). [James](#) (Revised Edition, p. 211). BMH Books.

4. Willing to Yield

2138. εὐπειθής *eupeithḗs*; gen. *eupeithoús*, masc.–fem., neut. *eupeithés*, adj. from *eú* (2095), denoting easiness, and *peíthō* (3982), to persuade. Easily persuaded, compliant (James 3:17).

Ant.: *átaktos* (813), insubordinate, unruly; *apeithḗs* (545), disobedient

Zodhiates, S. (2000). In [The complete word study dictionary: New Testament](#) (electronic ed.). AMG Publishers.

Third, godly wisdom is **reasonable**, willing to yield without rancor or disputing. It is teachable, compliant, and not stubborn. It was used of a man who willingly submitted to military discipline, accepting and complying with whatever was demanded of him and of a person who faithfully observes legal and moral standards. This quality reflects the first Beatitude, “Blessed are the poor in spirit, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven” (Matt. 5:3).

MacArthur, J. F., Jr. (1998). [James](#) (p. 179). Moody Press.

“Submissive” (*eupeithēs*), found only here in the New Testament, etymologically suggests the meaning “easily persuaded, with the implication of being open to reason or willing to listen.” It has a conciliatory attitude and is ready to cooperate when a better way is shown; it is the opposite of being stubborn and unyielding. As Moo notes, this wisdom is “‘easily persuaded’—not in the sense of a weak, credulous gullibility, but in the sense of a willing deference to others when unalterable theological or moral principles are not involved.”

Hiebert, D. E. (1997). [James](#) (Revised Edition, p. 211). BMH Books.

5. Full of Mercy

3324. μεστός *mestós*; fem. *mesté*, neut. *mestón*, adj. Full, filled, stuffed. Used generally in reference to that of or with which a person or thing is full (John 19:29; 21:11; Sept.: Nah. 1:10). Metaphorically (Matt. 23:28, “full of hypocrisy”; Rom. 1:29; 15:14; James 3:8, 17; 2 Pet. 2:14).

Zodhiates, S. (2000). In [The complete word study dictionary: New Testament](#) (electronic ed.). AMG Publishers.

1656. ἔλεος *éleos*. Mercy, compassion.

(I) *Ho éleos*, gen. *éleou*, masc. noun.

(A) Mercy, compassion, active pity (Matt. 23:23; Titus 3:5; Heb. 4:16; Sept.: Is. 60:10).

(B) With the sense of goodness in general, especially piety (Matt. 9:13; 12:7 quoted from Hosea 6:6 where *éleos* is parallel to *epígnōsis Theoú* [1922, 2316], knowledge of God), special and immediate regard to the misery which is the consequence of sin.

Zodhiates, S. (2000). In [The complete word study dictionary: New Testament](#) (electronic ed.). AMG Publishers.

Fourth, godly wisdom is **full of mercy**, again very clearly corresponding to a Beatitude: “Blessed are the merciful, for they shall receive mercy” (Matt. 5:7). The believer who is **full of mercy** evidences his saving faith and transformed life not only by forgiving those who have wronged him but by reaching out to help them in whatever ways are needed. Like the Good Samaritan (Luke 10:30–37), he has concern and compassion for anyone he encounters who is suffering or who needs any kind of support or assistance. He has special concern for fellow believers, for his brothers and sisters in Christ. John implores us,

We know love by this, that He laid down His life for us; and we ought to lay down our lives for the

brethren. But whoever has the world's goods, and sees his brother in need and closes his heart against him, how does the love of God abide in him? Little children, let us not love with word or with tongue, but in deed and truth.... Beloved, let us love one another, for love is from God; and everyone who loves is born of God and knows God. The one who does not love does not know God, for God is love.... Beloved, if God so loved us, we also ought to love one another. (1 John 3:16–18; 4:7–8, 11)

MacArthur, J. F., Jr. (1998). [James](#) (p. 179). Moody Press.

“Mercy” is more than a feeling of pity; it is an attitude of compassion toward those in distress that leads to practical help. Mercy prefers to deal with the needy in terms of what is needed rather than what is deserved. It is one of the attributes of God Himself (Pss. 86:5; 100:5; 103:8; Eph. 2:4), for He prefers mercy to judgment (James 2:13). God desires and approves the practice of mercy in human relations (Isa. 58:6; Hos. 6:6; Mic. 6:8; Matt. 23:23; Luke 10:37). The adjective “full” underlines that this heavenly wisdom is characterized by an abundant measure of mercy.

Hiebert, D. E. (1997). [James](#) (Revised Edition, p. 211). BMH Books.

6. good fruits

18. ἀγαθός *agathós*; fem. *agathḗ*, neut. *agathón*, adj. Good and benevolent, profitable, useful.

(I) Good, excellent, distinguished, best, of persons (Matt. 19:16, 17; Mark 10:17, 18; Luke 18:18, 19; Sept.: 1 Sam. 9:2); of things (Luke 10:42; John 1:46; 2 Thess 2:16; Sept.: Ezra 8:27).

(II) Good, i.e., of good character, disposition, quality.

Such a life also will be full of “good fruit” (*karpōn agathōn*). Zodhiates notes that “the very word ‘fruits’ used here by James indicates the desirability and expectancy of results through our words and works of mercy.” The adjective “good” indicates the beneficial nature of these results, whereas the plural noun indicates the variety of the fruit produced. The many acts of practical mercy mature in a rich harvest of variegated fruit.

Hiebert, D. E. (1997). [James](#) (Revised Edition, p. 211). BMH Books.

Zodhiates, S. (2000). In [The complete word study dictionary: New Testament](#) (electronic ed.). AMG Publishers.

Fifth, godly wisdom is **full of ... good fruits**, which refers to every sort of **good** work or deed. He demonstrates his genuine faith by his authentic good

works (James 2:14–20). A believer is known for doing **good** and for exemplifying the fruit of the Spirit (Gal. 5:22–23). In all of this, he reflects his “hunger and thirst for righteousness” (Matt. 5:6).

MacArthur, J. F., Jr. (1998). [James](#) (p. 179). Moody Press.

7. without Partiality

87. ἀδιάκριτος *adiákritos*; gen. *adiakrítou*, masc.–fem., neut. *adiákriton*, adj. from *a* (1), without, and *diakrínō* (1252), to separate, distinguish, judge. Indistinguishable, making no partial distinctions, free from partial regards, impartial (James 3:17).

Syn.: *díkaios* (1342), just.

Ant.: *kritikós* (2924), discerning; *prosōpoléptēs* (4381), one exhibiting partiality

Zodhiates, S. (2000). In [The complete word study dictionary: New Testament](#) (electronic ed.). AMG Publishers.

Sixth, godly wisdom is **unwavering**. *Adiakritos* (**unwavering**) is used only here in the New Testament and literally means not to be parted or divided, hence without uncertainty, indecision, inconsistency, vacillation, or doubtfulness. The word was therefore sometimes used to indicate impartiality, treating everyone equally without favoritism, an important

spiritual quality that James has already emphasized (2:1–9).

MacArthur, J. F., Jr. (1998). [James](#) (pp. 179–180). Moody Press.

“Impartial” (*adiakritos*) translates an adjective whose meaning is somewhat uncertain. It occurs only here in the New Testament. It is formed from the common verb *diakrinō*, basically meaning “to divide,” with the letter *alpha* prefixed, giving it a negative quality. If used with the passive sense, the adjective means “undivided” to denote that it is without division or discord, hence unwavering, without vacillation. James used the positive form of the verb in this sense in 1:6. Then the meaning is that this wisdom acts consistently; it does not take one position in one circumstance and another in a different one. It is the direct opposite of the duplicity of an uncontrolled tongue as described in verses 9–12. This seems the intended meaning in the rendering “without variance.” (ASV)

Hiebert, D. E. (1997). [James](#) (Revised Edition, pp. 211–212). BMH Books.

Clearly this wisdom is “undivided in mind” and as such does not cause division or disunity.

Hiebert, D. E. (1997). [James](#) (Revised Edition, p. 212). BMH Books.

8. without hypocrisy.

505. ἀνυπόκριτος *anupókritos*; gen. *anupokrítou*, masc.–fem., neut. *anupókriton*, adj. from the priv. *a* (1), without, and *hupokrínomai* (5271), to pretend, simulate. Originally it meant inexperienced in the art of acting. In the NT, it came to mean one without hypocrisy or pretense, unfeigned, genuine, real, true, sincere (Rom. 12:9; 2 Cor. 6:6; 1 Tim. 1:5; 2 Tim. 1:5; 1 Pet. 1:22; James 3:17).

Syn.: *ádołos* (97), pure, sincere; *gnésios* (1103), genuine; *eilikrinés* (1506), pure, sincere; *hagnós* (53), pure, chaste.

Ant.: *hupokrités* (5273), a hypocrite; *pseudés* (5571), false, and their syn

Zodhiates, S. (2000). In [The complete word study dictionary: New Testament](#) (electronic ed.). AMG Publishers.

Seventh and finally, godly wisdom is **without hypocrisy**. **Hypocrisy** is one of the sins Jesus condemned most, four times just in the Sermon on the Mount (Matt. 6:2, 5, 16; 7:5). He repeatedly excoriated the scribes, Pharisees, and other Jewish leaders for their gross hypocrisy and insincerity. He warned His disciples, “Beware of the leaven of the Pharisees, which is hypocrisy” (Luke 12:1). When a group of Pharisees conspired to trick Him into

criticizing paying taxes to Caesar, “Jesus perceived their malice, and said, ‘Why are you testing Me, you hypocrites?’ ” (Matt. 22:18). A short while later He told a similar group, “Woe to you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! For you are like whitewashed tombs which on the outside appear beautiful, but inside they are full of dead men’s bones and all uncleanness. So you, too, outwardly appear righteous to men, but inwardly you are full of hypocrisy and lawlessness” (Matt. 23:27–28). He ended the parable of the wise and evil servants with these sobering words: “The master of that [evil] slave will come on a day when he does not expect him and at an hour which he does not know, and will cut him in pieces and assign him a place with the hypocrites; in that place there will be weeping and gnashing of teeth” (Matt. 24:50–51). Peter classifies hypocrisy with malice, deceit, envy, and slander (see 1 Pet. 2:1).

All of these are the virtues of divine wisdom taught in the Scriptures and produced in believers by the Holy Spirit (Gal. 5:22–23).

MacArthur, J. F., Jr. (1998). [James](#) (p. 180). Moody Press.

“Sincere” (*anupokritos*), literally “unhypocritical,” denotes that this wisdom is free from all pretense; it does not need to work under a mask since it has

nothing to hide. Where the stand taken is always straightforward, there is no risk of pretense.

Positively stated, the meaning is that this wisdom is “sincere,” wholly genuine.

Hiebert, D. E. (1997). [James](#) (Revised Edition, p. 212). BMH Books.

18 Now the fruit of righteousness is sown in peace by those who make peace.

This sentence is difficult to translate from the Greek, which literally reads something like, “And the fruit of righteousness is sown in peace by those who make peace.” In the *New American Standard Bible* the words **seed whose** have been added, since it is not **fruit** itself that is sown but rather the seed of the fruit. **Seed** represents godly wisdom, **whose fruit is righteousness**.

It is possible that James had in mind the idea of fruit being harvested and then, in part, becoming seed, which is resown in peace, as it were, and produces still more fruit, and so on, in the familiar cycle of growing and reaping.

In any case, the basic idea is clear: There is an inexorable causal relationship between godly wisdom, genuine **righteousness**, and **peace**. Godly

wisdom produces a continuing cycle of righteousness, which is planted and harvested in a peaceful, harmonious relationship between God and His faithful people and between those people themselves. As Isaiah declared, “The work of righteousness will be peace, and the service of righteousness, quietness and confidence forever” (Isa. 32:17).

As James continually emphasizes, the person who professes to be a Christian must prove it by his works, his daily living. If he is a true believer, he will possess his Lord’s own wisdom, and that wisdom will manifest itself in righteous, selfless, and peaceful living. He has the revelation of God’s wisdom in Scripture and the teacher and interpreter of God’s wisdom in the indwelling Holy Spirit. Paul therefore prayed for the church at Ephesus, “that the God of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of glory, may give to you a spirit of wisdom and of revelation in the knowledge of Him” (Eph. 1:17). He later admonished them, “Therefore be careful how you walk, not as unwise men but as wise” (5:15). “He who supplies seed to the sower and bread for food,” the apostle elsewhere assures us, “will supply and multiply your seed for sowing and increase the harvest of your righteousness” (2 Cor. 9:10), the

righteousness “which comes through Jesus Christ, to the glory and praise of God” (Phil. 1:11).

MacArthur, J. F., Jr. (1998). [James](#) (pp. 180–181). Moody Press.