

# James Chapter 3:13-18 – Wisdom from Above

James 3:13-18

## V. Wisdom from Above – 3:13-18

### Introduction

“James turns from his pragmatic advice (James 1:19–3:2) to offer guidance on what Christian wisdom looks like in action.” – Faithlife Study Bible

James 3:13-18 – <sup>13</sup>Who among you is wise and understanding? Let him show by his good behavior his deeds in the gentleness of wisdom. <sup>14</sup>But if you have bitter jealousy and selfish ambition in your heart, do not be arrogant and so lie against the truth. <sup>15</sup>This wisdom is not that which comes down from above, but is earthly, natural, demonic. <sup>16</sup>For where jealousy and selfish ambition exist, there is disorder and every evil thing. <sup>17</sup>But the wisdom from above is first pure, then peaceable, gentle, reasonable, full of mercy and good fruits, unwavering, without hypocrisy. <sup>18</sup>And the seed whose fruit is righteousness is sown in peace by those who make peace.

<3:13> Τίς σοφός καὶ ἐπιστήμων ἐν ὑμῖν; δεῖξάτω ἐκ τῆς καλῆς ἀναστροφῆς τὰ ἔργα αὐτοῦ ἐν πραύτητι σοφίας. <3:14> εἰ δὲ ζῆλον πικρὸν ἔχετε καὶ ἐριθείαν ἐν τῇ καρδίᾳ ὑμῶν, μὴ κατακαυχᾶσθε καὶ ψευδεσθε κατὰ τῆς ἀληθείας. <3:15> οὐκ ἔστιν αὕτη ἡ σοφία ἀνωθεν κατερχομένη ἀλλὰ ἐπίγειος, ψυχικὴ, δαιμονιώδης. <3:16> ὅπου γὰρ ζῆλος καὶ ἐριθεία, ἐκεῖ ἀκαταστασία καὶ πᾶν φαῦλον πρᾶγμα. <3:17> ἡ δὲ ἀνωθεν σοφία πρῶτον μὲν ἀγνή ἐστίν, ἔπειτα εἰρηνικὴ, ἐπεικῆς εὐπειθῆς, μεστή ἐλέους καὶ καρπῶν ἀγαθῶν, ἀδιάκριτος, ἀνυπόκριτος. <3:18> καρπὸς δὲ δικαιοσύνης ἐν εἰρήνῃ σπείρεται τοῖς ποιοῦσιν εἰρήνην.

As in the earlier section, it is pretty obvious how James could still have the teacher in mind as he writes to his audience.

### Two Kinds of Wisdom

#### Verse 13

Τίς σοφός καὶ ἐπιστήμων ἐν ὑμῖν; δεῖξάτω ἐκ τῆς καλῆς ἀναστροφῆς τὰ ἔργα αὐτοῦ ἐν πραύτητι σοφίας. | Who among you is wise and understanding? Let him show by his good behavior his deeds in the gentleness of wisdom | [NASB95 NT R1](#)

Definition of wisdom (vs. natural inclinations): “Seeing and responding to life’s situations from God’s frame of reference.”

Wise –

σοφός sophos Who among you is **wise** and understanding? Let him show by his good behavior his deeds in the gentleness of wisdom.

[σοφός](#) sophos **wise**

[adjective](#), [nominative](#), [singular](#), [masculine](#)

Sense: wise (characteristic) – having or prompted by accumulated knowledge or discernment.

[BDAG](#) clever, skillful, experienced; wise

[LXGRCANLEX](#) clever, wise; wise; skilled

“In the New Testament σοφός is used—1. In the original classical sense, *skilled in handicraft* (1 Cor. 3:10). 2. *Accomplished in letters, learned* (Rom. 1:14, 22; 1 Cor. 1:19, 26; 3:18). So of the Jewish theologians and doctors (Matt. 11:25), and of Christian teachers (Matt. 23:34). 3. In a practical sense, of the practice of the law of piety and honesty; so Eph. 5:15, where it is joined with *walking circumspectly*, and 1 Cor. 6:5, where it is represented as the quality adapted to adjust differences in the church. 4. In the higher, philosophical sense, of devising the best counsels and employing the best means to carry them out. So of God, Rom. 16:27; 1 Tim. 1:17; Jude 25; 1 Cor. 1:25. In this passage the word appears to be used in the sense of 3: *practical wisdom in pious living.*” – Vincent

“People demonstrate wisdom if their deeds reflect God’s commands.” – Faithlife Study Bible

**Understanding, endowed with knowledge (KJV) –**

ἐπιστήμων epistēmōn Who among you is **wise and understanding?** Let him show by his good behavior his deeds in the gentleness of wisdom.

[ἐπιστήμων](#) epistēmōn **understanding; learned**

[adjective](#), [nominative](#), [singular](#), [masculine](#)

Sense: skillful – having or showing knowledge and skill and aptitude.

[BDAG](#) expert, learned, understanding

[LXGRCANLEX](#) expert, learned; learned

“Ἐπιστήμων occurs only here in the New Testament. In classical Greek it is often used like σοφός, in the sense of *skilled, versed*; and by the philosophers in the higher sense of *scientifically versed*, in which sense it is opposed by Plato to δοξαστής, a mere *conjecturer*. In this passage σοφός would seem to be the broader, more general, and perhaps more dignified term of the two, as denoting the *habit* or *quality*, while ἐπιστήμων indicates the special development and intelligent application of the quality to particular things. The Rev., *wise* and *understanding*, gives the distinction, on the whole, as nearly as is necessary.” – Vincent

These two words together could mean: **One who possesses true knowledge of things both human and divine, and is able to apply that knowledge to the practical details of life.** – Vaughan

“The question indicates that *all* ought to be wise, yet that *all* are by no means wise as they ought to be.” – Lenski

**Let him show (Imperative (19.5.7)) –**

Imperative number 24!!!

**δειξάτω** deixatō Who among you is wise and understanding? **Let him show** by his good behavior his deeds in the gentleness of wisdom.

**δείκνυμι** deiknymi **show; make known**

**verb, aorist, active, imperative, third person, singular**

Sense: to show (present) – to present or indicate to the view of others.

**BDAG** point out, show, make known; explain, prove

**LXGRCANLEX** point out; explain; to show; to make known; to explain

“James does not assess these people’s claim to wisdom in theological terms – **how much doctrine do they know, how many Greek verbs can they parse** – but in practical terms: *Let him show it by his good life, by deeds done in the humility that comes from wisdom.*” – Moo

**Like up in 2:18 – Show me your wisdom by your deeds!** And specifically, by deeds done in wisdom’s meekness. – Lenski

**Good –**

**καλῆς** kalēs Who among you is wise and understanding? Let him show by his **good** behavior his deeds in the gentleness of wisdom.

**καλός** kalos **good**

**adjective, genitive, singular, feminine**

Sense: good (moral) – of moral excellence.

**BDAG** beautiful, handsome, fine; good, useful.

**LXGRCANLEX** beautiful; good; good; advantageous; beautiful

Beautiful or noble

**Behavior, conduct (ESV), life (NIV, NRSV), conversation (KJV) –**

**ἀναστροφῆς** anastrophēs Who among you is wise and understanding? Let him show by his good **behavior** his deeds in the gentleness of wisdom.

**ἀναστροφή** anastrophē **conduct; way of life**

**noun, genitive, singular, feminine**

Sense: moral conduct – a person’s conduct; especially its moral character, whether virtuous or debauched.

**BDAG** way of life, conduct, behavior

**LXGRCANLEX** conduct, behavior; way of life; behavior

## Deeds, works (ESV, KJV, NRSV) –

Same as earlier.

**ἔργα** erga Who among you is wise and understanding? Let him show by his good behavior **his deeds** in the gentleness of wisdom.

[ἔργον](#) ergon **work; deed**

[noun](#), [accusative](#), [plural](#), [neuter](#)

Sense: duty – work that a person is obliged to perform for moral or legal reasons.

[BDAG](#) deed, action; work, occupation, task; product, undertaking, work; thing, matter

[LXGRCANLEX](#) a work; work; deed; effect

“It is our acts of obedience to God, performed consistently day after day, that make up the ‘good conduct’ of the wise person.” – Moo

## Gentleness (NASB, NRSV), meekness (ESV, KJV), humility (NIV) –

**πραΰτης** prautēti Who among you is wise and understanding? Let him show by his good behavior his deeds in **the gentleness** of wisdom.

[πραΰτης](#) prautēs **humility; gentleness**

[noun](#), [dative](#), [singular](#), [feminine](#)

Sense: gentleness – acting in a manner that is gentle, mild, and even-tempered.

[BDAG](#) gentleness, humility, courtesy, considerateness, meekness

[LXGRCANLEX](#) gentleness, humility; gentleness; humility

“Meekness is the natural accompaniment of wisdom. Hence, where there is no meekness there is no wisdom.” – Vaughan

It was then as it is today: “In the non-biblical literature of the ancient world it was rather superficially treated and not greatly valued. The NT, however, deepened and enriched the concept and made meekness one of the noblest of Christian graces.” – Vaughan

## Strength under control.

It is the opposite of what is depicted in the following verse:

### Verse 14

εἰ δὲ ζῆλον πικρὸν ἔχετε καὶ ἐριθείαν But if you have bitter jealousy and ἐν τῇ καρδίᾳ ὑμῶν, μὴ κατακαυχᾶσθε selfish ambition in your heart, do not καὶ ψεύδεσθε κατὰ τῆς ἀληθείας. | be arrogant and so lie against the [NASB95 NT RI](#) truth | [NASB95](#)

These following qualities are the opposite of meekness!

## Jealousy (NASB, ESV), envy (NIV, NRSV, KJV) –

**ζῆλον** zēlon But if you have bitter **jealousy** and selfish ambition in your heart, do not be arrogant and so lie against the truth.

[ζῆλος](#) zēlos **jealousy; ardor; zeal**

[noun](#), [accusative](#), [singular](#), [masculine](#)

Sense: jealousy – a greedy or prideful longing for something that belongs to another; even something intangible, such as a skill.

[BDAG](#) zeal, ardor; jealousy, envy

[LXGRCANLEX](#) zeal; jealousy; zeal; jealousy

The prideful spirit of competition for favor and honor

## Bitter –

**πικρὸν** pikron But if you have **bitter** jealousy and selfish ambition in your heart, do not be arrogant and so lie against the truth.

[πικρός](#) pikros **bitter**

[adjective](#), [accusative](#), [singular](#), [masculine](#)

Sense: bitter (hostility) – proceeding from or exhibiting great hostility or animosity.

[BDAG](#) bitter; bitter, embittered, harsh

[LXGRCANLEX](#) bitter

Personal animosity, resentful

**You have, you harbor (NIV) –**

**ἔχετε** echete But if **you have** bitter jealousy and selfish ambition in your heart, do not be arrogant and so lie against the truth.

[ἔχω](#) echō **have**

[verb](#), [present](#), [active](#), [indicative](#), [second person](#), [plural](#)

Sense: to have (feature) – to contain or have some aspect or feature.

[BDAG](#) have, own; have, have as; have, hold (to), grip; have on, wear; can, be able; consider, look upon, view; have; to have; include in itself, bring about, cause; it is, the situation is; be (in a certain way); hold fast, be next to, be next

[LXGRCANLEX](#) have; hold; to have; it is; to be in a certain way; to look upon; to be; to be next to; to hold fast; to hold on to; to sieze; to consider; to hold a view; to wear; can; to set; to take; to be able to; to include in itself; to cause; to experience

**Selfish ambition (NASB, ESV, NIV, NRSV), strife (KJV) –**

**ἐριθείαν** eritheian But if you have bitter jealousy and **selfish ambition** in your heart, do not be arrogant and so lie against the truth.

[ἐριθεία](#) eritheia **selfish ambition**

[noun](#), [accusative](#), [singular](#), [feminine](#)

Sense: selfish ambition – a strong drive for personal success without moral inhibitions.

[BDAG](#) strife, contentiousness; selfishness, selfish ambition

[LXGRCANLEX](#) strife; selfishness; selfish ambition

Party spirit, bitter partisanship – versus what is good for the whole body.

“Then it entered politics and came to mean that selfish ambition which was out for self and for nothing else and was ready to use any means to gain its ends.” – Barclay

**Do ... be arrogant, boast (ESV, NIV, NRSV), glory (KJV) (Imperative (20.5.7)) –**

Imperative number 25!!!

**κατακαυχᾶσθε** katakauchasthe But if you have bitter jealousy and selfish ambition in your heart, **do not be arrogant** and so lie against the truth.

[κατακαυχάομαι](#) katakauchaomai **exult over; boast (against)**

[verb](#), [present](#), [either middle or passive](#), [imperative](#), [second person](#), [plural](#)

Sense: to boast over – **to boast of one's achievements over and against someone or something else.**

[BDAG](#) boast against, exult over; triumph over

[LXGRCANLEX](#) boast against; to boast against; to triumph over

**Lie (NASB, KJV), deny (NIV), false (ESV, NRSV) (Imperative (21.5.7)) –**

**Imperative number 26!!!**

**ψεύδεσθε** pseudesthe But if you have bitter jealousy and selfish ambition in your heart, do not be arrogant and so **lie** against the truth.

[ψεύδομαι](#) pseudomai **lie; tell lies**

[verb](#), [present](#), [middle](#), [imperative](#), [second person](#), [plural](#)

Sense: to lie (deceive) – to tell an untruth; pretend with intent to deceive.

[BDAG](#) lie; tell lies to, impose

[LXGRCANLEX](#) to lie

## Truth –

**ἀληθείας** alētheias But if you have bitter jealousy and selfish ambition in your heart, do not be arrogant and so lie against the **truth**.

ἀλήθεια alētheia **truth**

noun, genitive, singular, feminine

Sense: truth (quality) – conformity to reality or actuality; often with the implication of dependability.

BDAG truthfulness, dependability, uprightness; truth; reality

LXGRCANLEX truth

The truth of the Gospel that you claim to proclaim.

## Verse 15

οὐκ ἔστιν αὕτη ἡ σοφία ἄνωθεν This wisdom is not that which comes  
κατερχομένη, ἀλλὰ ἐπίγειος, ψυχική, down from above, but is earthly,  
δαμονιώδης | NASB95 NT RI natural, demonic | NASB95

## From above, from heaven (NIV) –

**ἄνωθεν** anōthen This wisdom is not that which comes down **from above**, but is earthly, natural, demonic.

ἄνωθεν anōthen **top; again; from above**

adverb, place

Sense: from above – at or originating from a location above oneself (whether literally or metaphorically).

BDAG from above; from the beginning; for a long time; again, anew

LXGRCANLEX from above; again; from the beginning; for a long time

This is the same word as in 1:17 where all perfect gifts come from: **God's realm**.

And don't forget that James has already said that God is willing to give wisdom to His children (1:5).

True wisdom is a gift of God:

Proverbs 2:6 – **For the LORD gives wisdom**; From His mouth *come* knowledge and understanding.

## That which comes down, descends (KJV) –

**κατερχομένη** katerchomenē This wisdom is not **that which comes down** from above, but is earthly, natural, demonic.

κατέρχομαι katerchomai **arrive; come down**

verb, present, either middle or passive, participle, singular, nominative, feminine

Sense: to descend – to move downward and lower (whether to a physical or abstract location or some other location culturally determined to be downward).

BDAG come down; arrive, put in

LXGRCANLEX come down; arrive; to come down

Lenski calls this wisdom described below “sham wisdom.”

## Earthly –

James lists these three characteristics of earthly wisdom, the same as those three basic enemies of the believer: **the world, the flesh, and the devil**.

**ἐπίγειος** epigeios This wisdom is not that which comes down from above, but is **earthly**, natural, demonic.

ἐπίγειος epigeios **earthly; on earth**

adjective, nominative, singular, feminine

Sense: earthly – of or belonging to or characteristic of this earth as distinguished from heaven.

BDAG earthly; worldly things

LXGRCANLEX earthly; worldly things; earthly; on earth

“A narrow perspective that fails to consider God’s realm and will.” – Moo

“The Greek adjective *psychikos* refers to what is, by nature, human—things not inspired by the Holy Spirit.” – Faithlife Study Bible

“Its standards and sources are earthly. It measures success in worldly terms, and its aims are worldly aims.” – Barclay

**Natural, unspiritual (ESV, NIV, NRSV), **sensual** (KJV) –**

**ψυχική** psychikē This wisdom is not that which comes down from above, but is earthly, **natural**, demonic.

ψυχικός psychikos **natural; unspiritual**

adjective, nominative, singular, feminine

Sense: finitely natural – characterized by the created, finite, and fallen world; perhaps also of the nature that humanity shares with animals.

BDAG natural, unspiritual, worldly

LXGRCANLEX natural, unspiritual; natural

The opposite of spiritual. “The part of man ‘where human feeling and human reason reign supreme.’” – Knowling

**Unspiritual**

“**Animal instinct**; it is the kind of wisdom which makes an animal snap and snarl with no other thought than that of prey or personal survival.” – Barclay

**Demonic, devilish (KJV) –**

**δαμονιώδης** daimoniōdēs This wisdom is not that which comes down from above, but is earthly, natural, **demonic**.

δαμονιώδης daimoniōdēs **demonic**

adjective, nominative, singular, feminine

Sense: demonic – characteristic of spirits in rebellion to God.

BDAG infernal, demonic

LXGRCANLEX infernal, demonic; demonic

Godly wisdom comes from above. Worldly wisdom comes from below.

“False wisdom is characterized by ‘the world’, ‘the flesh’, and ‘the devil.’ In each of these ways, it is the direct antithesis of ‘the wisdom that comes from above’ – heavenly in nature, spiritual in essence, and divine in origin.” – Moo

**Verse 16**

This verse is the counterpart to verse 18. It shows the results of earthly wisdom.

ὅπου γὰρ ζήλος καὶ ἐριθεία, ἐκεῖ ἀκαταστασία καὶ πᾶν φαῦλον πρᾶγμα.   <a href="#">NASB95 NT RI</a>	For where jealousy and selfish ambition exist, there is disorder and every evil thing   <a href="#">NASB95</a>
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**Disorder, confusion (KJV) –**

**ἀκαταστασία** akatastasia For where jealousy and selfish ambition exist, there is **disorder** and every evil thing.

ἀκαταστασία akatastasia **disorder; insurrection**

noun, nominative, singular, feminine

Sense: upheaval – a state of violent group disturbance and disorder; especially as in politics or social conditions generally.

BDAG disturbance, tumult; disorder, unruliness

LXGRCANLEX disturbance; disorder; disorder; insurrection; disturbance

This word is another form of the words used to describe the double-minded man and the double-speaking tongue, “unstable” and “restless.”

1 Corinthians 14:33 – <sup>33</sup>for God is not a *God* of confusion but of peace, as in all the churches of the saints.

## Evil, vile (ESV), wickedness (NRSV) –

**φαῦλον** phaulon For where jealousy and selfish ambition exist, there is disorder and every **evil** thing.

[φᾱῦλος](#) phaulos **bad; evil; worthless; base**

[adjective, nominative, singular, neuter](#)

Sense: base (immoral) – not adhering to ethical or moral principles.

[BDAG](#) base; ordinary

[LXGRCANLEX](#) base; ordinary; worthless; evil

This is deliberately vague.

“The most notable thing about it is that it produces disorder. That is to say, **instead of bringing people together, it drives them apart. Instead of producing peace, it brings out strife.**” – Barclay

## Verse 17

“James quite clearly continues to operate with the biblical understanding of wisdom as **a basic, God-given orientation that has profound practical effects on the way a person lives.**” – Moo

ἡ δὲ ἄνωθεν σοφία πρῶτον μὲν ἀγνή	But the wisdom from above is first
ἐστίν, ἔπειτα εἰρηνική, ἐπιεικής,	pure, then peaceable, gentle,
εὐπειθής, μεστή ἐλέους καὶ καρπῶν	reasonable, full of mercy and good
ἀγαθῶν, ἀδιάκριτος, ἀνυπόκριτος·	fruits, unwavering, without hypocrisy
<a href="#">NASB95 NT RI</a>	<a href="#">NASB95</a>

With respect to the similarities between this list and Paul’s fruit of the Spirit (Gal. 5:22-23), “equivalence in effect between wisdom in James and the Spirit in Paul does not mean equivalence in the two entities themselves.” – Moo

## First –

**πρῶτον** prōton But the wisdom from above is **first** pure, then peaceable, gentle, reasonable, full of mercy and good fruits, unwavering, without hypocrisy.

[πρῶτος](#) prōtos **first**

[adverb](#)

Sense: firstly – before anything else.

[BDAG](#) first; first, earliest, earlier; first, in the first place, before, earlier, to begin with; outer, anterior; first, foremost, most important, most prominent; in the first place, above all, especially

[LXGRCANLEX](#) first; most prominent; former

“The idea is not first *numerically*, but first *essentially*.” – Vincent

(...) –

**μὲν** men

[μὲν](#) men **on the one hand; be sure**

[adverb, correlative](#)

[BDAG](#)

[LXGRCANLEX](#) and; indeed; on the one hand; latter; to be sure; —; some; [-]; indeed; and

[CDWGTHTB](#)

**Pure –**

The first quality is between the person and God.

ἀγνή hagnē But the wisdom from above is first **pure**, then peaceable, gentle, reasonable, full of mercy and good fruits, unwavering, without hypocrisy.

ἀγνός hagnos **pure; innocent**

[adjective](#), [nominative](#), [singular](#), [feminine](#)

Sense: pure (faultless) – having no faults.

[BDAG](#) pure, holy

[LXGRCANLEX](#) pure, holy; pure

Innocence and moral blamelessness

“The true wisdom is so cleansed of all ulterior motives and of self that it has become pure enough to see God.” – Barclay

**Then –**

“The seven qualities that follow in the list are specific dimensions of this overall purity.” – Moo

*Purity or sanctity* is put first because it has respect both to God and to ourselves; the six that follow regard our fellow men. Our first concern is to have in ourselves sanctity; our second, to be at peace with men.

The first three and last two characteristics are alliteration, and even rhyme and metric similarity in the last two.

ἔπειτα epeita But the wisdom from above is first pure, **then** peaceable, gentle, reasonable, full of mercy and good fruits, unwavering, without hypocrisy.

ἔπειτα epeita **then**

[adverb](#)

Sense: then – subsequently or soon afterward.

[BDAG](#) then, thereupon.; then

[LXGRCANLEX](#) then; later

**Peaceable, peace-loving (NIV) –**

The remaining six qualities are mainly between the person and others.

“The virtues James lists are predominantly nonselfish and nonaggressive; those who practice these virtues show greater concern for others than for themselves.” – Faithlife Study Bible

εἰρηνική eirēnikē But the wisdom from above is first pure, then **peaceable**, gentle, reasonable, full of mercy and good fruits, unwavering, without hypocrisy.

εἰρηνικός eirēnikos **peaceful**

[adjective](#), [nominative](#), [singular](#), [feminine](#)

Sense: peaceful (whole) – characterized by or promoting a state of wholeness, well-being, and happiness.

[BDAG](#) peaceable, peaceful

[LXGRCANLEX](#) peaceful

“The true wisdom produces right relationships. There is a kind of clever and arrogant wisdom which separates people from one another, and which makes them look with superior contempt on others. ... But the true wisdom at all times brings people closer to one another and to God.” – Barclay

“It never starts quarrels, strife, dissension, and turbulence.” – Lenski

Does that describe you? \_\_\_\_\_

Do you know someone who often does start quarrels, strife, dissension, and turbulence? \_\_\_\_\_

Proverbs 30:33 – <sup>33</sup>For the churning of milk produces butter, And pressing the nose brings forth blood; So the churning of anger produces strife.

Here is another example of this: Do you know anyone who just can't seem to leave a matter alone? \_\_\_\_\_

Maybe an issue that causes constant and immediate disagreement? \_\_\_\_\_

Godly wisdom is to leave it alone!



### Gentle, considerate (NIV) –

“Of all Greek words in the New Testament, this is one of the most untranslatable.” – Barclay

ἐπιεικής epieikēs But the wisdom from above is first pure, then peaceable, **gentle**, reasonable, full of mercy and good fruits, unwavering, without hypocrisy.

[ἐπιεικής](#) epieikēs **gentle; kind; tolerant**

[adjective](#), [nominative](#), [singular](#), [feminine](#)

Sense: lenient – merciful or tolerant of slight deviations from moral or legal rectitude.

[BDAG](#) yielding, gentle, kind, courteous, tolerant

[LXGRCANLEX](#) yielding, gentle; gentleness; gentle

“Forbearing - making allowances for others; lenient towards neighbors, as to the duties they owe us.” – JFB

“Aristotle defined it as that ‘which is just beyond the written law’ and as ‘justice and better than justice’ and as that ‘which steps in to correct things when the law itself becomes unjust’. The person who is *epieikēs* is someone who knows when it is actually wrong to apply the strict letter of the law. Such a person knows how to forgive when strict justice dictates that there is a perfect right to condemn. Such a person knows how to make allowances, when not to stand upon individual rights, and how to soften justice with mercy, and always remembers that there are greater things in the world than rules and regulations. It is impossible to find an English word to translate this quality.” – Barclay

### Reasonable, submissive (NIV) –

εὐπειθής eupreithēs But the wisdom from above is first pure, then peaceable, gentle, **reasonable**, full of mercy and good fruits, unwavering, without hypocrisy.

[εὐπειθής](#) eupreithēs **obedient**

[adjective](#), [nominative](#), [singular](#), [feminine](#)

Sense: persuadable – willing and open to adopting another position, belief, or course of action (with sufficient reason or evidence).

[BDAG](#) compliant, obedient

[LXGRCANLEX](#) compliant, obedient; obedient

Willing to yield.

“Easy to persuade, not in the sense of being pliable and weak, but in the sense of not being stubborn and of being willing to listen to reason and to appeal. ... The true wisdom is not rigid but is willing to listen and skilled in knowing when wisely to yield.” – Barclay

“A willing deference to others when unalterable theological or moral principles are not involved.” – Moo

Difficult for an “S” personality type.

These first three characteristics are the opposite of the envious, selfish, and ambitious person in 15-16.

### Mercy –

ἐλέους eleous But the wisdom from above is first pure, then peaceable, gentle, reasonable, full **of mercy** and good fruits, unwavering, without hypocrisy.

[ἐλέος](#) eleos **mercy; compassion; pity**

[noun](#), [genitive](#), [singular](#), [neuter](#)

Sense: mercy – leniency and compassion shown toward offenders by a person or agency of authority; often penal-related.

[BDAG](#) mercy, compassion, pity, clemency

[LXGRCANLEX](#) mercy, compassion; mercy

James has already given us his definition of mercy in 2:8-13: “love for the neighbor that shows itself in action.” – Moo

**Fruits –**

This goes with mercy. Full of mercy and good fruits.

**καρπῶν** karpōn But the wisdom from above is first pure, then peaceable, gentle, reasonable, full of mercy and good **fruits**, unwavering, without hypocrisy.

[καρπός](#) karpos **fruit; produce; crop**

[noun, genitive, plural, masculine](#)

Sense: outcome ⇔ fruit – the consequence of some effort or action.

[BDAG](#) fruit; advantage, gain, profit

[LXGRCANLEX](#) fruit; advantage; fruit; advantage; result; harvest

“Christian mercy is mercy for all who are in trouble, even if they have brought that trouble on themselves. ... **Christian pity is not merely an emotion; it is action.** We can never say that we have truly pitied anyone until we have given our help.” – Barclay

**Unwavering, impartial (ESV, NIV, NRSV, KJV) –**

Remember James’ earlier admonition about partiality!!!

**ἀδιάκριτος** adiakritos But the wisdom from above is first pure, then peaceable, gentle, reasonable, full of mercy and good fruits, **unwavering**, without hypocrisy.

[ἀδιάκριτος](#) adiakritos **nonjudgmental; impartial**

[adjective, nominative, singular, feminine](#)

Sense: non-divisive – not tending to cause factions or divisions within a group.

[BDAG](#) nonjudgmental, not divisive, impartial; unwavering

[LXGRCANLEX](#) nonjudgmental; unwavering; nonjudgmental; impartial

“Christian wisdom is based on Christian certainties which come to us from God through Jesus Christ.” – Barclay

“Colloquial Greek suggests that the word here used means ‘**not too critical.**’” – NCHS

**Without hypocrisy (NASB, KJV, NRSV), sincere (ESV, NIV) –**

**ἀνυπόκριτος** anypokritos But the wisdom from above is first pure, then peaceable, gentle, reasonable, full of mercy and good fruits, unwavering, **without hypocrisy.**

[ἀνυπόκριτος](#) anypokritos **genuine; without hypocrisy**

[adjective, nominative, singular, feminine](#)

Sense: unhypocritical – not pretended; sincerely felt or expressed.

[BDAG](#) genuine, sincere

[LXGRCANLEX](#) genuine, sincere; without hypocrisy; genuine

Sincere, genuine, and unpretentious.

“It is honest; it never pretends to be what it is not; and it never acts a part to gain its own ends.” – Barclay

“The person characterized by wisdom from heaven will be **stable, trustworthy, transparent** – the kind of person consistently displaying the virtues of wisdom and on whom one can rely for advice and counsel.” – Moo

**Verse 18**

This verse is the counterpart to verse 16. It shows the results of true, godly wisdom.

Moo calls this the capstone of his portrait of the two contrasting “wisdoms.”

James’ key concern: “the peace that genuine wisdom can bring to the community.” – Moo

καρπὸς δὲ δικαιοσύνης ἐν εἰρήνῃ σπείρεται τοῖς ποιοῦσιν εἰρήνην. | And the seed whose fruit is righteousness is sown in peace by those who make peace | [NASB95](#) [NT RI](#)

James 3:18 – <sup>18</sup>And a harvest of righteousness is sown in peace for those who make peace. (NRSV)

This should be written on the wall at every church.

“This is a highly compressed sentence.” – Barclay

**Righteousness –**

**δικαιοσύνης** dikaiosynēs And the seed whose fruit is **righteousness** is sown in peace by those who make peace.

[δικαιοσύνη](#) dikaiosynē **righteousness**

[noun](#), [genitive](#), [singular](#), [feminine](#)

Sense: righteousness (character) – a life or lifestyle in conformity to justice, law, or morality as given by God.

[BDAG](#) justice, equitableness, fairness; righteousness.; uprightness, righteousness

[LXGRCANLEX](#) justice; righteousness; righteousness; uprightness

**Is sown –**

**σπείρεται** speiretai And the seed whose fruit is righteousness **is sown** in peace by those who make peace.

[σπείρω](#) speirō **sow (seed)**

[verb](#), [present](#), [passive](#), [indicative](#), [third person](#), [singular](#)

Sense: to be cultivated ⇔ be sown – to be or become cultivated, conceived of as sowing seeds for growth.

[BDAG](#) sow seed; scatter, disperse

[LXGRCANLEX](#) sow seed; scatter; to sow seed; to sow

**Make –**

**ποιοῦσιν** poiousin And the seed whose fruit is righteousness is sown in peace by those who **make** peace.

[ποιέω](#) poieō **make; do**

[verb](#), [present](#), [active](#), [participle](#), [plural](#), [dative](#), [masculine](#)

Sense: to cause (to happen) – to give rise to; cause to happen or occur.

[BDAG](#) make, manufacture, produce; do, cause, bring about, accomplish, prepare; do, keep, carry out, practice, commit; do someth. to/with; do, make; work, be active; make/do someth. for oneself; of oneself

[LXGRCANLEX](#) make; do; to make; to produce; to do; to make oneself out to be; to put; to act; to spend; to cause; to bring about; to appoint; to carry out; to accomplish; to perform; to work; to keep; to hold

True wisdom brings peace.

“We are all trying to reap the harvest which a good life brings. But the seeds which bring the rich harvest can never flourish in any atmosphere other than one of right relationships between individuals. And the only people who can sow these seeds and reap the reward are those whose life work it has been to produce such right relationships.

That is to say, **nothing good can ever grow in an atmosphere where people are at variance with one another.** A group where there is bitterness and strife is a barren soil in which the seeds of righteousness can never grow and out of which no reward can ever come. Those who disturb personal relationships and are responsible for strife and bitterness have cut themselves off from the reward which God gives to those who live a godly life.” – Barclay

## Summary –

Proverbs 3:13-18 – <sup>13</sup>How blessed is the man who finds wisdom And the man who gains understanding. <sup>14</sup>For her profit is better than the profit of silver And her gain better than fine gold. <sup>15</sup>She is more precious than jewels; And nothing you desire compares with her. <sup>16</sup>Long life is in her right hand; In her left hand are riches and honor. <sup>17</sup>Her ways are pleasant ways And all her paths are peace. <sup>18</sup>She is a tree of life to those who take hold of her, And happy are all who hold her fast.

We learned earlier in chapter 3 about how to tell if a man has control of himself based on whether he has control of his tongue. Here in this latter section of chapter 3, we learn if a person has wisdom also by looking for behavioral clues.

What are characteristics of a person who has true, godly wisdom? \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

Good deeds, humility, peace-making

## Conclusion

True wisdom produces deeds, just like true faith.

What kind of wisdom do you have and rely upon?