

April 25, 2021

“Wisdom from Above”

James 3:13-18

Isaiah Mackler

Outline:

1. The Nature of Wisdom (v.13a)
2. The Evidence of Wisdom (v.13b)
3. The Absence of Wisdom (vv.14-16)
4. The Presence of Wisdom (v.17)
5. The Fruit of Wisdom (v.18)
6. The Source of Wisdom

Potential Discussion Questions:

1. How does the world describe someone who is “good at life”? What are some characteristics of that person?
2. How does the Bible define wisdom? In what ways does the concept of being “good at life” overlap with the biblical idea of wisdom? In what ways is wisdom different?
3. It is good to be “wise and understanding.” But today, many would be slow to describe themselves as “wise and understanding” while at the same time expressing lots of opinions on spiritual, moral and social issues. Why is that?
4. Proverbs 1:7 says “The fear of the Lord is the beginning of knowledge; fools despise wisdom and instruction.” Why does wisdom and understanding begin with fearing the Lord? How can someone go from being foolish to wise?
5. How would you personally answer the question James poses, “Who is wise and understanding among you?” Are you wise and understanding, skilled at life, based on how James describes wisdom?
6. What is the evidence of wisdom in v.13b? What does the wise person look like? (Can you think of other passages that describe that kind of person?) In what ways would this person be approved of by the world? In what ways, would he not be?
7. How would you define this biblical concept of meekness? (Hint: It’s not just a quiet person or a timid personality.) Why does meekness have its origin in wisdom? (v.13b) What connection is there between good conduct (and works) and meekness?
8. In vv.14-16, James focuses on evidence that someone is lacking wisdom. What is that evidence? When have you struggled with this kind of sin? Did you feel wise at the time?
9. Have you ever seen “disorder and every vile practice” result from “jealousy and selfish ambition” (v.16)? Can you describe some of those results? What did you learn about the dangers of jealousy and selfish ambition from what you experienced?
10. What are warning signs that jealousy and selfish ambition are rising up in your heart? What should you do when they begin to surface?
11. As you read how wisdom presents itself in v.17, what is your emotional reaction to this list? Are there any characteristics of wisdom you aren’t clear about? Why does “pure” come first in the list?

12. Based on these characteristics in v.17, do you have wisdom? What are you praising God for in your life? What are you asking God to cultivate further? What theological truths would you meditate on to cultivate this kind of wisdom?
13. When have you seen righteousness flourish when people make peace (v.18)? How is the biblical idea of peace more than just an absence of conflict? Will wisdom always lead to righteousness? Why or why not?
14. James describes wisdom as "from above" (v.17a). In what ways are we dependent upon God for wisdom?
15. What should someone do who realizes they are lacking wisdom?