

- **\*Read James 1:1-6/Prayer\*** As James, the probable brother of Jesus, begins his letter to the church scattered around the region, firstly gives encouragement and admonition to the reader by stating that their trials were producing within them a stronger faith. They would come to possess a faith, he says, that was complete, mature, and lacking nothing. The inspired writer goes on to say that even if the reader was lacking in a quality that he/she could pray to God in faith and that God would give them their need generously so that they would be able to have the victory in this life.
- Now, the Holy Spirit could've moved James to list any quality in verse 5. "If he lacks \_\_\_\_\_ let him ask of God in faith" or "if he is lacking in anything, then let him ask of God in faith", but he specifically mentions that if a disciple lacks faith then he/she was to ask God to bless him/her with wisdom. I am convinced that God specifically mentions wisdom because it is a quality that is of the utmost necessity to a disciple as we try to navigate our way through this life.
- It makes much sense in my mind that James would specifically mention wisdom at the beginning of a book that is so very practical in nature. The whole letter is a constant stream of practical wisdom that will do nothing but help the disciple of Jesus Christ. This year, we are giving a special focus to the pursuit and growth of wisdom that is from above. We will begin this year's studies by first considering the need for wisdom this month, and then considering where it is that true wisdom comes from in February. So as we begin our studies, let's focus on our main Text for the year in **James 3:13-18** as we learn 3 reasons why we need the wisdom that is from above.

### **I. Wisdom helps us to avoid possessing an evil heart. (vv,14-16)**

- A. The person who possesses worldly wisdom focuses only on self and suffers needlessly.
1. For those who relies upon the wisdom of this world is a person who's care and concern will almost always be for self. Notice the poor characteristics that are associated with earthly wisdom in **v.14**.
  2. The results of having these types of qualities are not good. James tells us that the person who is jealous and selfish will have a life that is full of disorder and every evil thing. We must seek to use wisdom to avoid the evil heart and the trouble it brings. **(James 1:13-15)**
  3. Surely we can all think of someone, whether personally or famously, who lives a life that would fit into this kind of description because of they rely on their own earthly wisdom. They only care about themselves and their earthly successes. Their lives are full of constant strife because they always looking the next gain in their life. They are willing to do whatever is necessary to have their appetite satisfied even if that means they commit any evil deed imaginable. I think of individuals who lived lives like these in the Bible. Individuals such as King Saul, at times, Absalom, Ahab, and Jezebel are just a few who lived lives that were outright disasters at times when they did as their wisdom lead them to do. Their evil hearts led them through some extremely difficult times. **"The heart is more deceitful than all else and is desperately sick; who can understand it?" (Jer. 17:9)**
- B. This type of attitude and lifestyle can and will be avoided if we possess and live according to the wisdom that is from above.
1. Our Lord doesn't want us to live a life of disorder and evil, but he wants us to live a life and own a faith that is complete and mature. **(James 1:1-6)**
  2. Living according to the wisdom of God will help us to cultivate a heart that helps us to live good lives here on earth. We must remember that our hearts are molded by what we focus on and take into our minds.
  3. The first few chapters of Proverbs shows us that we have a choice as to which road and path we will take in this life. We can choose to heed the wisdom that is from above and live with a pure heart, or we can forsake heavenly wisdom, have our hearts corrupted and suffer for it. This idea is summed up for us well in **Proverbs 1:20-33**.
  4. We need wisdom because it will produce within us a clean heart, and we will avoid the downfalls of an evil heart. Our last two points will show us the benefits of possessing wisdom and a clean heart.

### **II. Wisdom helps us to make godly decisions. (v.13)**

- A. The fool who denies God's wisdom will find themselves constantly in difficulty because they consistently make poor decisions.

1. Wisdom is shown by our actions and the decisions that we make. Those who lack godly wisdom will be evident because their poor decisions come with negative consequences. Look again at **Proverbs 1:22-29**. What does the wise man repeatedly say will be the result of the person who fails to listen to the call of wisdom? They will face calamity when they were warned to avoid it. Dread, distress, and anguish will be their portion when they could've been avoided.
  2. This life is a constant series of choices, and we make those decisions based upon the knowledge and experience that we possess. We make these choices based upon the wisdom we possess. Those who failed to attain the wisdom of God are only playing with half a set of cards. They lack the true knowledge that can help them to make good decisions.
- B. The one who accepts the wisdom of God has the ability to make good and beneficial decisions.
1. Notice how it is James seems to recognize those who are wise. **(James 3:13)** Just about anyone can claim to be a wise person, but James that those who are truly wise will be seen and set apart by their good behavior and good deeds. Portraying good behavior and deeds isn't something that just happens, but they become a part of our character when we live according to heavenly wisdom.
  2. The Proverbs were written so that the reader might come to have the ability to make wise decisions. The opening of the book tells us very clearly that Solomon's purpose was to give wisdom to the person who wanted to live according to the instruction of the Lord. **(Prov. 1:1-6)**
  3. The person who is willing to humble himself to listen to the wisdom of God and His Word will be blessed in doing such a thing. We need wisdom from above so that our decisions will be ones in which we are benefitted and not harmed.

### **III. Wisdom helps us to produce godly fruit in our lives. (vv.17,18)**

- A. The foolish person's lack of wisdom leads them to make bad decisions which leads to a life of sadness and unrest.
1. Far too often individuals pick their head up and realize too late that their lives are a wreck and a mess and they have a hard time realizing why it is that they arrived in this place. They fail to recognize that it is their own foolishness and poor decision making that has led them to a place of ruin and failure.
  2. Poor decisions, more often than not, lead to poor results. Just as the person who foolishly cares for his crops will reap poorly, so will the individual who foolishly lives life reap the poor fruits of such. **(Galatians 6:7,8)**
- B. Contrasting to the foolish person, the person who leans upon God's wisdom and not their own, will make good decisions and the fruit will be evident in their lives. **"Trust in the Lord with all your heart And do not lean on your own understanding. In all your ways acknowledge Him, And He will make your paths straight."** **(Prov. 3:5,6)**
1. The qualities listed in **James 3:17,18** are the things that will help us make good decisions and bear good fruit in our lives. When we embrace the wisdom of God then we can be peaceable, gentle, reasonable, full of mercy, and able to live without hypocrisy.
  2. Now this doesn't mean that our lives will be without any sort of struggles. No where in the Bible do we see God promising or His followers living struggle free lives. However, it is a general truth that those who live according to wisdom from above do prosper in what they do. **(Psalm 1)**
  3. Those who live wisely will benefit from their righteous decisions in this life, and especially in the next. So many of the world's needless problems of anger, strife, hurt, and others will be avoided through our use of God's wisdom when it comes to making decisions on a day to day basis. Jeremiah was able to use wisdom to connect the dots and realized that the cure to man's troubles and heartache was a reliance upon God and His wisdom. **(Jeremiah 17:5-8)**
  4. We need wisdom from above in our lives so that we will be prosperous in our ways in everything that we do for the Lord.

The fool says that he has all the answers and that he is in need of nothing. He believes that he is the one who will control how he succeeds and prospers in this life. However, James clearly shows us that wisdom from God is the only way in which we will be blessed and successful in this life. May we be a people who are dedicated to God's wisdom and not our own. May we be a people who make wise decisions that produce good fruits within our lives. May God bless us this year as we realize our need for His wisdom and as we seek to obtain the powerful wisdom that is from above.