



**Wisdom from Above:  
More Than Common Sense**

*James 3:13-18*

# I. The Test of True Wisdom (James 3:13)

This is God's baseline for wisdom.

## I. The Test of True Wisdom (James 3:13)

*“Who among you is wise and understanding?”* is a ‘let’s set the record straight’ clarification for God’s people.

# I. **The Test of True Wisdom (James 3:13)**

We will know true wisdom by its number one hallmark, its primary identifying, recognizable feature.

That feature is...

## I. The Test of True Wisdom (James 3:13)

Meekness (prautes) = gentle, mild, humble

James marries it to the good behavior you see in godly-wise people. Heavenly wisdom—God's wisdom—produces a meek, gentle, tender approach to others and to life.

# I. The Test of True Wisdom (James 3:13)

Wise (sophos) = special, honed knowledge

Understanding (epistemon) = the skillful application of wisdom and knowledge.

Taken together, they reveal a person who acquires specific knowledge and knows how to skillfully apply it in life.

# I. The Test of True Wisdom (James 3:13)

Meekness is:

- an inner-man spiritual resolve/power
- shaped by biblical truth
- under the control of the Holy Spirit.

God's wisdom is:

- His truth working in your heart
- to shape you into a gracious person.



## II. Worldly Wisdom (James 3:14-16)

### Its Face (v14-15)

*Selfish ambition* “speaks of a self-seeking attitude bent on gaining advantage and prestige for oneself or one’s group.”  
(*Expositor’s Bible Commentary*)

*Bitter jealousy* is selfish zeal/passion for your agenda at any cost.

## II. Worldly Wisdom (James 3:14-16)

### Its Face (v14-15)

Selfish ambition and bitter jealousy are motives of your heart, grown, guarded, and guided by your pride.

They give power to the lie, work against the truth, and keep you deceived about the true nature of your character.

## II. Worldly Wisdom (James 3:14-16)

These three characteristics of man's wisdom contrast, conflict, and compete with God's gentle wisdom.

*(Source of the following: John MacArthur)*

## II. Worldly Wisdom (James 3:14-16)

Earthly = of the world

“...it is restricted to things that man can theorize, discover, and accomplish by himself. It has no place for God or the things of God. It has no place for spiritual truth or illumination. It is a closed system, a circumscribed box, as it were, of man’s own making and choosing under satanic prompting.”

## II. Worldly Wisdom (James 3:14-16)

Earthly = of the world

Earthly wisdom “pervades philosophy, education, politics, economics, sociology, psychology, and every other dimension and aspect of contemporary human life.”

## II. Worldly Wisdom (James 3:14-16)

Natural = of the flesh

“Those who rely on this wisdom are ‘worldly-minded, devoid of the Spirit’ (Jude 19). All of their feelings, desires, appetites, standards, and impulses are grounded in a humanistic view of the world and of man, who, understandably, becomes the measure of all things. Such wisdom not only feeds the flesh but also is foolish.”

## II. Worldly Wisdom (James 3:14-16)

Demonic = of the devil

“Although [false wisdom] is human, earthbound, and fleshly, its root source is Satan himself... The wisdom from below is nothing more than the foolishness of demons. Appealing to men’s natural fallenness and sinful inclination to arrogant self-interest, this wisdom deceives them into believing Satan’s lies rather than God’s truth. What they believe to be their own wisdom is really the devil’s.”

## II. Worldly Wisdom (James 3:14-16)

1. The source of all error/false wisdom is demonic.
2. False wisdom is applied without any reference to heart change.
3. Worldly wisdom's goal is self-centered; it has nothing to do with gentleness or with pleasing the Lord in all respects.  
(Col. 1:9-10)



## II. Worldly Wisdom (James 3:14-16)

### Its Fruit (v16)

And now James tells us what man's wisdom always produces in every context of life where it is dominant:

*"...disorder and every evil thing."*

God hasn't left us to live with the limitations of common sense.

Our Lord Jesus knows the thoughts and wisdom of God the Father, and Paul tells us that we have the mind of the Lord Jesus. We can know God's thoughts and apply God's wisdom to our lives as He opens our minds to understand His truth and wisdom in Scripture.

We will either live together in the gentleness of Jesus' wisdom, or we will live in the selfish ambition and bitter jealousy of pride.

GRACE CHURCH  
WILLIAMSBURG