



James 3:13-18

Assessing Wisdom

The beneficial qualities
in contrast to harmful
qualities

(Part I)

The fruit of considerate wisdom (3:13)

“Who is wise and understanding among you?”

- There are various types of people claiming to be wise and being lauded for wisdom in the churches James addresses.
- How can we know who God affirms as wise and understanding?
- What is known as wise and understanding from a worldly context is going to be much different from what is wise and understanding from a biblical context.
- What are the truths from this passage that will help us, as followers of Jesus, to affirm and desire what the Bible commends as beneficial wisdom and understanding in the church?

The fruit of considerate wisdom (3:13)

“By his good conduct let him show his works in meekness and wisdom.”

- The works James says verifies true faith, are works of observable reverent obedience of God and loving acts of mercy.
 - James 2:26
- Contextually, this is the description of “*good conduct*” – works of observable reverent obedience of God and loving acts of mercy.
- The atmosphere that surrounds these good works is one of *meekness and wisdom*.
- Some want to put their pious acts on display for all to see, claiming this is observable reverent obedience.
 - Matthew 23:5–7
 - True righteousness does not look for an affirming audience.
 - Obedience and mercy are undeniable because they are the warp and woof of truly Christ-centered lives.

The fruit of considerate wisdom (3:13)

- “*let him show his works in meekness and wisdom,*” - the worship mindset of their obedience and mercy shown to others
 - Proverbs 11:2
- Meekness and humility are the result of knowing that “*good conduct*” is the fruit of God’s sanctifying grace.
- It is not a performance to earn the favor of God and the praise of man.
- Humility before God will be made known as humility toward others.
 - Romans 15:1–2

The fruit of arrogant self-centeredness (3:14-15)

“But if you have bitter jealousy and selfish ambition in your hearts, do not boast and be false to the truth.”

- *“bitter jealousy”* - to be intensely resentful toward some
- *“selfish ambition”* - in a rivalry with one or more that produces feelings of strife
- *“boasting”* - to verbally degrade or to look down on another
- *“false to the truth”* - the truth behind wisdom is to be accompanied by humility and for that not to happen is to lie about truth and wisdom
 - This type of lie about the truth is seen in the story of the Pharisee and the tax collector.
 - Luke 18:9–14
 - There is no humility from the Pharisee as he proclaims his truth and righteousness.

The fruit of arrogant self- centeredness (3:14-15)

“This is not the wisdom that comes down from above,”

- Those who are double-minded are unstable in all their ways (Cf. James 1:8).
- True wisdom is a gift that comes from God.
 - Proverbs 2:6
- Wisdom comes from God to those who will humbly ask for it.
 - James 1:5–8
- Wisdom and understanding, producing arrogant self-centeredness, is not from God.

“but is earthly, unspiritual, demonic.”

- The World – “*earthly*”
- The Flesh – “*unspiritual*”
- The Devil – “*demonic*”

Questions to Consider

- As you assess your wisdom and the wisdom of others, what are the beneficial qualities and what are the harmful qualities?
- How are you seeing humble obedience and others-oriented acts of mercy?
- Is there a governing sense of humility and dependence in the wisdom being shared?
- Is the wisdom being examined flowing from a relationship with Christ or flowing from a connection with the world?



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