

Who is Truly Wise?

Introduction

When I first began to study for this lesson the first question I had was, "**Why am I the one to be trying to define who is truly wise?**" There is **worldly wisdom** and **God's wisdom**. Christians use both of these every day. But do we use them correctly?

Much of the book of James is about **worldly vs. Godly wisdom**. **James** was Jesus' half-brother. **He was the lead pastor of the church in Jerusalem**. His book is one of the first writings to the church. His letter was also intended for those 12 tribes in the dispersion who did not reside in Judea but may have been converted on the Day of Pentecost and now back in their own country converting others.

James' writings agree with Paul that **we are saved through faith and not by works**. Like Paul, he also stresses that **genuine faith** will eventually **produce good works** as it did in so many of the patriarchs of the Old Testament.

Further, James teaches that **God grants divine wisdom** to those who ask for it in faith believing. **God's wisdom** guides through life's trials and is **essential** to prepare us for righteous living and ministry. **Worldly wisdom** serves to get us into our worst trials.

Lesson

To gain God's wisdom, we must walk by the Spirit and not the flesh.

*Who is a **wise** (Gr.: **Sophos**) man and **endued with knowledge** (Gr.: **Epistemon**) among you? let him shew out of a **good conversation** (Gr.: **anastrophe**) **his works with meekness of wisdom**.¹⁴ But if ye have **bitter envying and strife** in your hearts, glory not, and lie not against the truth.¹⁵ This wisdom descendeth not from above, but is **earthly, sensual, devilish**.¹⁶ For where envying and strife is, there is confusion and every evil work.¹⁷ But the **wisdom that is from above** is first **pure**, then **peaceable, gentle**, and easy to be intreated (compliant), **full of mercy and good fruits**, without **partiality** (unwavering), and **without hypocrisy** (without pretense).¹⁸ And the fruit of righteousness is sown in peace of them that make peace.*

James 3:13-18

But to gain **God's wisdom** we must **also** walk in the **spirit** and **not** in the **flesh**.

- **Wise** – (Gr.: *Sophos*) – Denotes **practical skill or acumen** (insight, penetration – not superficial, good judgment). This is the kind of wisdom that is **accomplished** or **acquired** and not something someone is simply blessed with at birth.
- **Endued** – (Gr. *Epistemon*) - To be taking in and truly **absorbing** knowledge and understanding. A knowledge that is **planted** or **inserted** within as a **knowing**. It is more than a simple understanding.

There are many truths of the Spirit and certain things of our own emotions that can stand up to the challenge, and still not able to be satisfactorily explained.

- Explain love. Explain how you know someone loves you.
- How do you know someone is genuine and not a phony?
- You have a “knowing?” Explain a “knowing.”

(13a.) *Who is a **wise** (Gr.: *Sophos*) man and **endued** (Gr. *Epistemon*) with knowledge among you?*

Who has accomplished, or learned through study and understanding of Scripture and actually received the infusion of God’s divine **wisdom** into their spirit in such a way that they have become **endued with knowledge** that goes far beyond superficial, or academic understanding and is able to make divine connections of truth in many parts of Scripture and apply God’s truth to their everyday life and their ministry to others?

Not that this person has attained, or arrived. As Paul wrote:

Not as though I had already attained, either were already perfect: but I follow after, if that I may apprehend that for which also I am apprehended of Christ Jesus.¹³ Brethren, I count not myself to have apprehended: but this one thing I do, forgetting those things which are behind, and reaching forth unto those things which are before,¹⁴ I press toward the mark for the prize of the highcalling of God in Christ Jesus.

Philippians 3:12-14

This is where I believe James is going with his teaching on works. While good works will not save a person, they will be the **eventual result** seen by others in one who has truly **received Godly wisdom** as a result of asking for it through the prayer of faith, have diligently studied the Scriptures in preparation and have been **endued** (furnished or gifted), or infused with **knowledge** (Gr. *epistemon*) through the Holy Spirit.

Knowledge – (Gr. *epistemon*) - To comprehend, to know, or understand

(13b) let him shew out of a good conversation (behavior) his works with meekness (humility) of wisdom.

Meekness – (*prautes*) – Mildness and humility

Wisdom – (*sophia*) – Wisdom (worldly or spiritual)

Good Conversation – (*anastrophe*) – **Behavior** – Let him show out of his good behavior his works. Let all that this person does be revealed through his (or her) good behavior – and show **meekness and humility** about their wisdom. After all, **it is not their wisdom anyway. It is God's wisdom working through them.**

I can't think of anything worse for the spirit of a person than to ask for wisdom and then afterward act as though it was their own and take all the credit.

James defines **worldly wisdom** in vs. 14-15 as:

1. Bitter envying
2. Self-ambition
3. Boasting
4. Denying the truth

May I add one more? Ignorance (and worse, **willful ignorance**). After all, it is present in all four of the above. Willful ignorance is nothing more than **defiance**.

1. This reminds me of the little boy happily singing "Joshua fit the battle of Geritol"
2. Tammy read the Scripture last week about Elijah speaking to Elisha in 2 Kings 2:6 saying, "And Elijah said unto him, "Tarry." We'll just call Elisha Tarry from now on.

This is how far off the mark **worldly wisdom** can take you. Sometimes it takes more foolishness in order to expose foolishness.

3. Here is a real example of how people's **worldly wisdom** and **willful ignorance** corrupts scripture. It is taken from Pastor's sermon last week on "The Hidden Man."

*Likewise, ye wives, be in **subjection** to your own husbands; that, if any obey not the word, they also may without the word be won by the **conversation (behavior)** of the wives; ² While they behold your **chaste (uncorrupted) conversation (behavior)** coupled with **fear (terror)**. ³ Whose adorning let it not be that outward adorning of plaiting the hair, and of wearing of gold, or of putting on of apparel; ⁴ But let it be the hidden man of the heart, in that which is not corruptible,*

even the ornament of a meek and quiet spirit, which is in the sight of God of great price.

1 Peter 3:1-4

In far too many Christian households today:

- The husband believes that **his wife is to be in subjection to him** in all things.
- The wife believes that **he is supposed to treat her with the respect she deserves**, but does not, and now, he is going to pay!
- Both are acting the **wrong** way toward each other and each are hoping for the **right** result according to their preconceived ideas (**worldly wisdom**).
- They finally agree to have a meeting with the local pastor each hoping that he will straighten the other one out once and for all.

This is where worldly wisdom can take a person even if they have used their Bible **in an attempt to validate their preconceived opinions**. The husband's and wife's wisdom in this example are both full of **bitter envying, self-ambition, boasting, denying the truth**, and let's not forget willful ignorance.

(14 - 16) *But if ye have **bitter envying** and **strife** in your hearts, glory not, and lie not against the truth.* ¹⁵ *This wisdom descendeth not from above, but is **earthly, sensual, devilish**.* ¹⁶ *For where envying and strife is, there is **confusion** and every **evil work**.*

This is not just a New Testament teaching. Solomon had something to say about this, as well.

*Trust in the LORD with all thine heart; and **lean not unto thine own understanding**.* ⁶ *In all thy ways acknowledge him, and he shall direct thy paths.*

Proverbs 3:5-6

Look at the results of **worldly wisdom**. Many Christians somehow think they are so smart they can get through this life with all of its obstacles using their own wisdom alone. Even many who do not say that **live** their lives as though they believe they can.

Many of the early Christians James was writing to were very new Jewish converts. They had much to learn – as we all do. They were still depending upon their own wisdom to live their lives because that is what they had become accustomed to do. **Many in the early church were not asking God for His wisdom**. So God tells

them that **as long as you are controlled by worldly wisdom, I will not** be giving you **My divine wisdom.**

Many were not receiving answers to their prayers because they were controlled by their **worldly wisdom** which is activated out of self-will and Satan and is the root of **bitter envying, self-ambition, boasting, denying the truth and willful ignorance.**

In the beginning of James' letter to the church he said this:

*If any of you lack wisdom, let him ask of God, that giveth to all men liberally, and upbraideth not; and **it shall be given him.** ⁶ But let him ask in faith, nothing wavering. For he that wavereth is like a wave of the sea driven with the wind and tossed.*

*⁷ For **let not that man think that he shall receive any thing of the Lord.** ⁸ A double minded man is unstable in all his ways.*

James 1:5-8

So, much of James is about **God's wisdom** as compared to **worldly wisdom.** This is the **fundamental, or foundational basis** for our Christian life and ministry. I have heard many people say something like, "we have made our plans and asked God to bless them and all our steps..." I have wanted sometimes to stand and shout "**Backwards!**"

We never reach the point where we are so "Christian" that we can simply rely on our **own worldly wisdom.** If you realize that fact at some point in your life, it will be because you have made a big mistake and you are in a real fix because of it. You can probably think far enough back to when you set off on a plan based upon your **own worldly wisdom** and not **God's wisdom.** Take my word for it...

Paul says much the same thing as James in **Galatians.**

Worldly wisdom:

*Now the works of the flesh are manifest, which are these; **Adultery, fornication, uncleanness, lasciviousness,** ²⁰ **Idolatry, witchcraft, hatred, variance, emulations, wrath, strife, seditions, heresies,** ²¹ **Envyings, murders, drunkenness, revellings, and such like: of the which I tell you before, as I have also told you in time past, that **they which do such things shall not inherit the kingdom of God*****

Godly wisdom:

²² But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, longsuffering, gentleness, goodness, faith, ²³ Meekness, temperance: against such there is no law. ²⁴ And they that are Christ's have crucified the flesh with the affections and lusts. ²⁵ If we live in the Spirit, let us also walk in the Spirit.

Galatians 5:19-25

James goes on to say the **wise** person is the one with **Godly wisdom** and is **humble**. On the other hand, the person with **worldly wisdom** is **proud**.

*Do ye think that the scripture saith in vain, The spirit that dwelleth in us lusteth to envy? ⁶ But he giveth more grace. Wherefore he saith, God resisteth the proud, but giveth grace unto the humble. ⁷ Submit yourselves therefore to God. Resist the devil, and he will flee from you. ⁸ Draw nigh to God, and he will draw nigh to you. Cleanse your hands, ye sinners; and **purify your hearts**, ye double minded. ⁹ Be afflicted, and mourn, and weep: let your laughter be turned to mourning, and your joy to heaviness. ¹⁰ **Humble yourselves in the sight of the Lord, and he shall lift you up.***

James 4:5-10

Conclusion

Avoid worldly wisdom:

Let us not be desirous of vain glory, provoking one another, envying one another.

Galatians 5:26

*But **continue** thou in the things which thou **hast learned** and hast been assured of, **knowing of whom thou hast learned them;** ¹⁵ And that from a child thou hast known the **holy scriptures**, which are able to make thee **wise unto salvation through faith which is in Christ Jesus.** ¹⁶ All scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is **profitable** for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness: ¹⁷ That the man of God may be perfect, thoroughly furnished unto all good works.*

2 Timothy 3:14-17

Paul was at the end of his life speaking his fatherly advice to Timothy, and by extension to the church. He is describing our source of Godly wisdom.

It is amazing how the writers of the New Testament speak the same truth. They may use different words, but they communicate the same truth. **God's wisdom**, and the avoidance of **worldly wisdom**. We know why they are speaking the same truth, too. **They receive the truth from the same Holy Spirit, God's wisdom**, yet it is still amazing to me to see the evidence of one voice of truth speaking to us from so many different men, different times and different generations. **God's wisdom**. The same truth.

Let those of us in the Father's Church and everyone in the Saints' Network speak only one thing with our lives, in our relationships, and in our ministry. **Godly wisdom**. Amen.