

■ SCRIPTURE

Who is wise and understanding among you? By his good conduct let him show his works in the meekness of wisdom. **14** But if you have bitter jealousy and selfish ambition in your hearts, do not boast and be false to the truth. **15** This is not the wisdom that comes down from above, but is earthly, unspiritual, demonic. **16** For where jealousy and selfish

ambition exist, there will be disorder and every vile practice. **17** But the wisdom from above is first pure, then peaceable, gentle, open to reason, full of mercy and good fruits, impartial and sincere. **18** And a harvest of righteousness is sown in peace by those who make peace. *ESV*

■ DISCUSS

1. Verse 13 starts off with a question, so let's answer it. Who is the wisest person you know, or have known?
2. Why do you say that? How did they show their wisdom?
3. Were these wise people in your life also the smartest people you've known? Or is wisdom something different from intelligence?
4. What do verses 13-15 tell us about what wisdom is and isn't?
5. Verse 13 talks about a "good conduct"? How would you define that? What kind of "good conduct" does a wise person exhibit?
6. Why is meekness part of true wisdom?
7. Have you known people who thought they were wise but really weren't? Were they meek? Did they show humility?
8. In these passages, what is the relationship between wisdom and boasting?

9. In James 3:16–17 we see descriptions of the “fruits” of true wisdom and false wisdom. What’s the difference? How can we tell them apart?
10. What does it mean for wisdom to be “pure”?
11. How can wisdom be “open to reason”?
12. What do you think verse 18 means?
13. What can you do to promote peace that yields “a harvest of righteousness”?

■ LIVE IT OUT

The book of James emphasizes the active side of our faith, so let’s consider several ways we might put its teaching into practice.

Prayer: James 1:5 invites us to ask God for wisdom. As Francis Chan suggested in the video, “Say, ‘God, I’ve been pursuing success, I’ve been pursuing riches, I’ve been pursuing knowledge but I see in Scripture now wisdom is what you value and it should be what I value...Give me the wisdom I need to navigate through this life in a way that honors you.’”

Memorization: Learn the Beatitudes from Matthew 5:3–10. Or at least create some mnemonic way to remember the eight qualities that Jesus describes there.

Study: Do a computer (or concordance) word search through the Bible for “wisdom” and/or “wise.” Pick ten verses from different books (not all from Proverbs!) and study them.

Honor: Do something to honor a person whose wisdom you have been blessed by. If the person is still living, thank them by telling them what they have taught you. If they have passed, then thank God for them, and find some way to commemorate their effect on your life.

Evaluation: Do this with a kind, humble heart. Name the 5 to 8 opinion leaders in your life—people in church, school, work, the media, etc.—whose ideas you regularly pay attention to. Based on the teaching in James 3:13–18, do you feel these people are speaking God’s wisdom into your life? This is not an invitation to pride, criticism, or a divisive spirit on your part—just a way to check your regular input with the descriptions of heavenly wisdom we learned today.