

# Earthly Wisdom Versus Heavenly Wisdom

James 3:13-18

## Preface

This exploration is based on the sermon ([James 3:13-18 Heavenly Wisdom vs Earthly Wisdom](#)) presented at the Refinery on July 20<sup>th</sup>, 2024, by Pastor Caleb Nance. Using ChatGPT and asking a lot of directed questions in regard to James 3:13-18 I formulated the following from those queries. Much of this is based directly on the answers given in ChatGPT, though layout (including the overall formulation of how the sections are presented as a whole) and formatting were done manually after the fact and textual edits were made to try and merge and harmonize similar sections of answers as they relate to the study as a whole.

There was a plan from the beginning to connect various scriptures that seemed to run in a similar vein as that found in James 3:13-18, and these connections were not exhaustive. In addition, I wanted to tie in both the Old Testament and New Testament and eventually end with Jesus as well as believers ending with John 14:6 "I am the way, the truth, and the life". But even that wasn't really the final piece, because if we can't apply it to our walk then it is just a mental test of acuity rather than something that can truly transform our lives. Thus, I then queried and tied in Colossians 3:1-17 in Paul's rendition of the New Man.

## Wisdom

James Chapter 3 verses 13 through 18 presents us with a contrast between heavenly and earthly wisdom. The original Greek for wise in this passage is sophos (σοφός) and wisdom is Sophia (σοφία) and understanding their use within the passage is essential. Both words have rich meanings in the context of Greek language and biblical literature.

## Sophos (σοφός)

Sophos is the Greek adjective translated as "wise" or "skilled." It generally refers to someone possessing wisdom or expertise. In the context of James 3:13, "sophos" is used to describe a person who is wise and understanding.

### 1. Classical Greek Usage:

**General Meaning:** In classical Greek, "sophos" referred to wisdom in a broad sense, including practical skills and intellectual prowess. It could denote a person skilled in a particular craft or someone with philosophical insight.

**Philosophical Context:** Philosophers like Socrates and Plato often discussed the nature of "sophos," debating what constitutes true wisdom.

### 2. Biblical Greek Usage:

**Old Testament (Septuagint):** "Sophos" often translates Hebrew words like "chakam," which denote wisdom, especially in the books of Proverbs and Ecclesiastes. It implies not just knowledge but also the practical application of knowledge in godly living.

**New Testament:** In the New Testament, "sophos" retains this dual aspect of practical and spiritual wisdom. Jesus, in the Gospels, uses "sophos" to describe prudent and insightful people (e.g., Matthew 7:24, the wise man who builds his house on the rock).

### 3. Context in James 3:13:

**Wise and Understanding:** James begins with a rhetorical question: "Who is wise and understanding among you?" Here, "sophos" refers to someone who possesses not only knowledge but also the discernment to apply it in practical, godly ways.

**Behavioral Evidence:** James emphasizes that true wisdom ("sophos") is demonstrated through a good life and deeds done in the humility that comes from wisdom. It is not just intellectual but also moral and ethical.

## Sophia (σοφία)

Sophia is the Greek noun for "wisdom." It represents a broader and deeper concept than "sophos," encompassing the entirety of wisdom's characteristics and manifestations.

### 1. Classical Greek Usage:

**Philosophical Wisdom:** "Sophia" in classical Greek thought often referred to philosophical wisdom. It was considered the highest intellectual virtue, involving the pursuit of knowledge, understanding of life, and the cosmos.

**Practical Skills:** Beyond philosophy, "sophia" could also refer to practical skills and expertise in various arts and crafts.

### 2. Biblical Greek Usage:

**Old Testament (Septuagint):** "Sophia" translates the Hebrew word "chokmah," which carries a similar dual meaning of practical skill and deep understanding, particularly in a divine context. Proverbs frequently personifies wisdom (sophia) as a woman calling people to live rightly.

**New Testament:** In the New Testament, "sophia" often connotes wisdom that comes from God. It includes both intellectual understanding and the ethical application of that knowledge in life. It is associated with spiritual insight and moral integrity (e.g., 1 Corinthians 1:30, where Christ is described as our wisdom from God).

### 3. Context in James 3:13-18:

**Earthly vs. Heavenly Wisdom:** James contrasts "earthly, unspiritual, demonic" wisdom (3:15) with "the wisdom that comes from heaven" (3:17). The latter, "sophia," is characterized by purity, peace-loving, consideration, submissiveness, mercy, good fruit, impartiality, and sincerity.

**Behavioral Manifestation:** "Sophia" in this passage is not abstract or purely intellectual. It is profoundly practical, manifesting in ethical and moral behavior that promotes peace and righteousness.

In James 3:13-18, sophos (wise) and sophia (wisdom) are intricately connected. They reflect a holistic understanding of wisdom that integrates intellectual insight with practical, ethical living. James emphasizes that true wisdom from God results in a life characterized by humility, peace, mercy, and righteousness, starkly contrasting with the chaos and evil produced by earthly wisdom rooted in envy and selfish ambition. This wisdom aligns with the broader biblical narrative that true wisdom is a divine gift, leading to godly living and harmonious relationships.

## James 3:13-18 – English Standard Version

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

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

## Wisdom found in the Old Testament

Before digging into how James's heavenly wisdom is woven throughout the New Testament, let's look at Old Testament passages that align with James' teaching on the contrast between earthly and heavenly wisdom found in James 3:13-18. These passages emphasize the characteristics and outcomes of godly wisdom versus human or earthly wisdom.

### Hebrew Words for Wisdom

The Hebrew words for wisdom found in the Old Testament that relate to the wisdom described in James 3:13-18 are primarily "chokmah" (חִכְמָה) and "binah" (בִּינָה). These terms encompass a wide range of meanings, including skill, insight, understanding, and moral discernment, aligning closely with the characteristics of heavenly wisdom as described by James.

In addition, the Hebrew words for "wise" and "prudence" are closely related to the concepts of wisdom discussed above. The primary Hebrew word for "wise" is "chakam" (חָכַם), and for "prudence," it is "ormah" (עֲרֻמָּה) or "sekel" (שֶׁקֶל). These terms reflect the qualities of being wise and prudent, which align with the characteristics of heavenly wisdom described in James 3:13-18.

### 1. Chokmah (חִכְמָה)

**Meaning:** Chokmah is the most common Hebrew word for wisdom in the Old Testament. It refers to a broad range of wisdom, including practical skills, intellectual insight, and ethical and spiritual understanding.

*Examples in the Old Testament:*

**Proverbs 1:7 (ESV):** The fear of the LORD is the beginning of knowledge; fools despise wisdom (chokmah) and instruction.

**Proverbs 3:13-14 (ESV):** Blessed is the one who finds wisdom (chokmah), and the one who gets understanding, for the gain from her is better than gain from silver and her profit better than gold.

**Ecclesiastes 7:12 (ESV):** For the protection of wisdom (chokmah) is like the protection of money, and the advantage of knowledge is that wisdom (chokmah) preserves the life of him who has it.

### 2. Binah (בִּינָה)

**Meaning:** Binah refers to understanding or insight, often involving discernment and the ability to distinguish between right and wrong.

*Examples in the Old Testament:*

**Proverbs 2:3-5 (ESV):** yes, if you call out for insight and raise your voice for understanding(binah), if you seek it like silver and search for it as for hidden treasures, then you will understand the fear of the LORD and find the knowledge of God.

**Proverbs 8:1-2 (ESV):** Does not wisdom (chokmah) call? Does not understanding (binah) raise her voice? On the heights beside the way, at the crossroads she takes her stand;

**Isaiah 11:2 (ESV):** And the Spirit of the LORD shall rest upon him, the Spirit of wisdom (chokmah) and understanding(binah), the Spirit of counsel and might, the Spirit of knowledge and the fear of the LORD.

### 3. Chakam (חָכָם) Wise

**Meaning:** Chakam is the Hebrew word for "wise" and is often used to describe a person who possesses wisdom, understanding, and skill in various domains, including moral and ethical judgment.

*Examples in the Old Testament:*

**Proverbs 1:5-6 (ESV):** Let the wise (chakam) hear and increase in learning, and the one who understands obtain guidance, to understand a proverb and a saying, the words of the wise (chakam) and their riddles.

**Proverbs 9:9 (ESV):** Give instruction to a wise (chakam) man, and he will be still wiser; teach a righteous man, and he will increase in learning.

**Ecclesiastes 8:1 (ESV):** Who is like the wise (chakam)? And who knows the interpretation of a thing? A man's wisdom (chokmah) makes his face shine, and the hardness of his face is changed.

### 4. Ormah (עֲרָמָה) Prudence

**Meaning:** Ormah refers to prudence or shrewdness. It denotes a quality of being able to make judicious and discerning decisions, often with a focus on practical and ethical considerations.

*Examples in the Old Testament:*

**Proverbs 1:4 (ESV):** to give prudence (ormah) to the simple, knowledge and discretion to the youth—

**Proverbs 8:12 (ESV):** I, wisdom, dwell with prudence (ormah), and I find knowledge and discretion.

### 5. Sekel (שֵׂקֶל) Prudence/Insight

**Meaning:** Sekel refers to insight, understanding, or prudence. It emphasizes the intellectual and perceptive aspects of wisdom, including the ability to make sound judgments.

*Examples in the Old Testament:*

**1 Samuel 25:3 (ESV):** Now the name of the man was Nabal, and the name of his wife Abigail. The woman was discerning (sekel) and beautiful, but the man was harsh and badly behaved; he was a Calebite.

**Proverbs 13:15 (ESV):** Good sense (sekel) wins favor, but the way of the treacherous is their ruin.

**Proverbs 16:22 (ESV):** Good sense (sekel) is a fountain of life to him who has it, but the instruction of fools is folly.

## Relating Hebrew Wisdom to James 3:13-18

James 3:13-18 describes heavenly wisdom using attributes such as purity, peace-loving, consideration, submissiveness, mercy, good fruit, impartiality, and sincerity. These characteristics reflect the multifaceted nature of wisdom found in the Hebrew concepts of chokmah and binah:

### 1. Purity:

**Proverbs 2:9-11 (ESV):** Then you will understand righteousness and justice and equity, every good path; for wisdom (chokmah) will come into your heart, and knowledge will be pleasant to your soul; discretion will watch over you, understanding (binah) will guard you,

Wisdom includes moral purity and ethical behavior.

**Proverbs 15:26 (ESV):** The thoughts of the wicked are an abomination to the LORD, but gracious words are pure.

Wisdom (chakam) includes purity of thought and speech.

### 2. Peace-loving:

**Proverbs 3:17 (ESV):** Her ways are ways of pleasantness, and all her paths are peace.

Wisdom is associated with paths of peace and harmony.

### 3. Consideration:

**Proverbs 8:12 (ESV):** I, wisdom (chokmah), dwell with prudence, and I find knowledge and discretion.

Wisdom involves prudence and thoughtful consideration of others.

### 4. Submissiveness:

**Proverbs 15:33 (ESV):** The fear of the LORD is instruction in wisdom (chokmah), and humility comes before honor.

True wisdom includes humility and submission to God's will.

### 5. Full of Mercy and Good Fruit:

**Proverbs 3:27 (ESV):** Do not withhold good from those to whom it is due, when it is in your power to do it.

**Proverbs 11:30 (ESV):** The fruit of the righteous is a tree of life, and whoever captures souls is wise (chakam).

Wisdom includes acting mercifully and producing good deeds.

### 6. Impartial and Sincere:

**Proverbs 2:9 (ESV):** Then you will understand righteousness and justice and equity, every good path;

Wisdom involves fairness and sincerity in judgment and actions.

## Proverbs on Wisdom and Folly

### 1. Proverbs 1:7 (ESV)

“The fear of the LORD is the beginning of knowledge; fools despise wisdom (chokmah) and instruction.”

This verse sets the foundation for understanding that true wisdom begins with a reverent relationship with God, contrasting godly wisdom with the folly of despising instruction.

### 2. Proverbs 3:13-18 (ESV)

“Blessed is the one who finds wisdom (chokmah), and the one who gets understanding, for the gain from her is better than gain from silver and her profit better than gold. She is more precious than jewels, and nothing you desire can compare with her. Long life is in her right hand; in her left hand are riches and honor. Her ways are ways of pleasantness, and all her paths are peace. She is a tree of life to those who lay hold of her; those who hold her fast are called blessed.”

These verses highlight the value of heavenly wisdom, describing its profitable and life-giving nature, similar to how James describes wisdom from above.

### 3. Proverbs 8:12-13 (ESV)

“I, wisdom (chokmah), dwell with prudence (ormah), and I find knowledge and discretion. The fear of the LORD is hatred of evil. Pride and arrogance and the way of evil and perverted speech I hate.”

This passage personifies wisdom, associating it with prudence, knowledge, and discretion, and rejecting pride, arrogance, and evil—echoing James' distinction between heavenly and earthly wisdom.

## Psalms on the Fear of the Lord and Wisdom

### 1. Psalm 111:10 (ESV)

“The fear of the LORD is the beginning of wisdom (chokmah); all those who practice it have a good understanding (sekel). His praise endures forever!”

Like James, this verse links true wisdom to the fear of the Lord and obedience to His precepts.

## Examples of Earthly Wisdom Leading to Negative Outcomes

### 1. Genesis 11:4 (ESV)

Then they said, “Come, let us build ourselves a city and a tower with its top in the heavens, and let us make a name for ourselves, lest we be dispersed over the face of the whole earth.”

The Tower of Babel story illustrates human ambition and pride, which lead to confusion and scattering—outcomes of earthly wisdom as described by James.

### 2. Ecclesiastes 1:16-18 (ESV)

“I said in my heart, “I have acquired great wisdom (chokmah), surpassing all who were over Jerusalem before me, and my heart has had great experience of wisdom (chokmah) and knowledge.” And I applied my heart to know wisdom (chokmah) and to know madness and folly. I

perceived that this also is but a striving after wind. For in much wisdom is much vexation, and he who increases knowledge increases sorrow.“

Solomon reflects on the limitations and burdens of earthly wisdom and knowledge, which aligns with James' critique of wisdom that does not come from above.

## Contrasting Heavenly and Earthly Wisdom

### 1. Jeremiah 9:23-24 (NIV)

Thus says the LORD: “Let not the wise (chakam) man boast in his wisdom (chokmah), let not the mighty man boast in his might, let not the rich man boast in his riches, but let him who boasts boast in this, that he understands and knows me, that I am the LORD who practices steadfast love, justice, and righteousness in the earth. For in these things I delight, declares the LORD.”

This passage contrasts human boasting in wisdom, strength, and riches with the true wisdom of knowing and understanding God, reflecting the humility and righteousness of heavenly wisdom in James.

## In Summary of Old Testament Wisdom

The Old Testament provides a rich background that aligns with James' teaching on earthly versus heavenly wisdom. The Hebrew words *chokmah*, *binah*, *chakam*, *ormah*, and *sekel* encompass the broad, multifaceted nature of wisdom that includes practical skills, intellectual insight, moral discernment, and ethical behavior. These concepts align closely with the attributes of heavenly wisdom described by James in James 3:13-18.

We can also see the passages from Proverbs, Psalms, Genesis, Ecclesiastes, and Jeremiah underscore the value of godly wisdom rooted in the fear of the Lord and the dangers of earthly wisdom characterized by pride, selfish ambition, and folly. Together, they paint a consistent biblical picture of the nature and outcomes of true wisdom.

By understanding these Hebrew concepts, we can see how the wisdom described in the Old Testament is fulfilled and embodied in the teachings of the New Testament, particularly in the person and work of Jesus Christ, who is the ultimate embodiment of divine wisdom.

## Comparing Heavenly Wisdom to Fruit of the Spirit

James' contrast to earthly wisdom to heavenly wisdom echoes Paul's teachings found in Galatians 5:16-26 in regard to fleshly pursuits versus the Fruit of the Spirit.

### Galatians 5:16-26 – English Standard Version

But I say, walk by the Spirit, and you will not gratify the desires of the flesh. For the desires of the flesh are against the Spirit, and the desires of the Spirit are against the flesh, for these are opposed to each other, to keep you from doing the things you want to do. But if you are led by the Spirit, you are not under the law.

Now the works of the flesh are evident: sexual immorality, impurity, sensuality, idolatry, sorcery, enmity, strife, jealousy, fits of anger, rivalries, dissensions, divisions, envy, drunkenness, orgies, and things like these. I warn you, as I warned you before, that those who do such things will not inherit the kingdom of God.

But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, self-control; against such things there is no law. And those who belong to Christ Jesus have crucified the flesh with its passions and desires. If we live by the Spirit, let us also keep in step with the Spirit. Let us not become conceited, provoking one another, envying one another.

## How These Passages Align in their Teaching

Both James and Paul encourage a life guided by godly wisdom and the Holy Spirit. They warn against the destructive outcomes of envy, selfish ambition, and other acts of the flesh, while promoting the positive, transformative impact of heavenly wisdom and the fruit of the Spirit. These harmonious teachings together call believers to embody the character of Christ, leading to peace, righteousness, and a reflection of God's love in their lives.

### 1. Characteristics of Earthly Wisdom and Acts of the Flesh:

James 3:14-16 identifies earthly wisdom by traits such as bitter envy, selfish ambition, boasting, and denying the truth. This wisdom results in disorder and every evil practice.

Similarly, Galatians 5:19-21 outlines the acts of the flesh, including sexual immorality, impurity, debauchery, idolatry, witchcraft, hatred, discord, jealousy, fits of rage, selfish ambition, dissensions, factions, envy, drunkenness, and orgies. These acts are contrary to the Spirit and prevent one from inheriting the kingdom of God.

### 2. Characteristics of Heavenly Wisdom and the Fruit of the Spirit:

James 3:17-18 describes heavenly wisdom as pure, peace-loving, considerate, submissive, full of mercy and good fruit, impartial, and sincere. Such wisdom results in a harvest of righteousness and peace.

Galatians 5:22-23 complements this by listing the fruit of the Spirit as love, joy, peace, forbearance (patience), kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, and self-control. These qualities are the natural result of living by the Spirit and are not against any law.

### 3. The Conflict Between Flesh and Spirit:

Both passages address the conflict between living according to earthly, fleshly desires and living according to the Spirit.

James emphasizes that harboring negative traits like envy and selfish ambition leads to disorder.

Paul in Galatians highlights that the flesh and Spirit are in conflict, and walking by the Spirit prevents gratifying the desires of the flesh.

### 4. The Call to Live by the Spirit and Exhibit True Wisdom:

James calls for believers to demonstrate their wisdom through good deeds done in humility and by embodying the qualities of heavenly wisdom.

Paul urges believers to walk by the Spirit, produce the fruit of the Spirit, and avoid becoming conceited, provoking, and envying each other.



# Heavenly Wisdom Empowered by Love

Paul's description of godly love found in 1 Corinthians 13 lines up well to James's definition of heavenly wisdom. Love as described in verses 4 – 7 of 1 Corinthians match up to James's heavenly wisdom in verses 17 – 18.

## 1 Corinthians 13:1-13 –English Standard Version

If I speak in the tongues of men and of angels, but have not love, I am a noisy gong or a clanging cymbal. And if I have prophetic powers, and understand all mysteries and all knowledge, and if I have all faith, so as to remove mountains, but have not love, I am nothing. If I give away all I have, and if I deliver up my body to be burned, but have not love, I gain nothing.

Love is patient and kind; love does not envy or boast; it is not arrogant or rude. It does not insist on its own way; it is not irritable or resentful; it does not rejoice at wrongdoing, but rejoices with the truth. Love bears all things, believes all things, hopes all things, endures all things. Love never ends.

As for prophecies, they will pass away; as for tongues, they will cease; as for knowledge, it will pass away. For we know in part and we prophesy in part, but when the perfect comes, the partial will pass away. When I was a child, I spoke like a child, I thought like a child, I reasoned like a child. When I became a man, I gave up childish ways.

For now we see in a mirror dimly, but then face to face. Now I know in part; then I shall know fully, even as I have been fully known. So now faith, hope, and love abide, these three; but the greatest of these is love.

## How These Passages Align in their Teaching

1 Corinthians 13 and James 3:13-18 harmonize in their portrayal of heavenly wisdom as intrinsically linked to love and humility. Paul in 1 Corinthians highlights love as the greatest virtue, essential for meaningful spiritual life, while James describes heavenly wisdom as pure, peace-loving, considerate, and merciful. Both passages oppose the divisive and selfish nature of earthly wisdom, instead advocating for a life characterized by love, humility, and righteousness. Together, they provide a comprehensive understanding of how love and wisdom are interwoven in the life of a believer, leading to true spiritual maturity and a harvest of righteousness.

### 1. The Foundation of Love and Humility

1 Corinthians 13:1-3 emphasizes that without love, all spiritual gifts and acts of sacrifice are meaningless. Similarly, James 3:13 highlights that true wisdom is shown by a good life and deeds done in humility.

Both passages underscore that love and humility are foundational to genuine spiritual wisdom and maturity.

### 2. Characteristics of Love and Heavenly Wisdom

1 Corinthians 13:4-7 outlines the characteristics of love: patience, kindness, lack of envy, humility, selflessness, and truthfulness.

James 3:17 describes heavenly wisdom as pure, peace-loving, considerate, submissive, full of mercy, good fruit, impartial, and sincere.

The qualities of love listed in 1 Corinthians 13 closely align with the attributes of heavenly wisdom in James 3, suggesting that love is an essential component of true wisdom.

### 3. The Contrast with Earthly Wisdom

James 3:14-16 contrasts heavenly wisdom with earthly wisdom characterized by envy, selfish ambition, disorder, and evil practices.

1 Corinthians 13:4-5 mentions that love does not envy or boast and is not proud or self-seeking, thus opposing the traits of earthly wisdom.

Both passages call for a rejection of selfish and divisive attitudes, advocating instead for virtues that promote harmony and righteousness.

### 4. The Permanence and Superiority of Love

1 Corinthians 13:8-13 asserts that love never fails and is superior to other spiritual gifts, which are temporary. The chapter concludes with the enduring nature of faith, hope, and love, with love being the greatest.

James 3:18 indicates that peacemakers who sow in peace reap a harvest of righteousness, implying the lasting impact of living out heavenly wisdom.

The emphasis on the permanence and supremacy of love in 1 Corinthians 13 resonates with the idea that true wisdom leads to lasting peace and righteousness, as described in James 3.

## Earthly Wisdom versus the Foolishness of God

Paul gives us an example of God's wisdom versus man's wisdom in 1 Corinthians 1:18-25 as the "foolishness of God". How does Paul's understanding compare to James's description found in 3:13 – 18? Both passages do highlight a profound contrast between worldly and divine perspectives on wisdom and power.

### 1 Corinthians 1:18-25 –English Standard Version

For the word of the cross is folly to those who are perishing, but to us who are being saved it is the power of God. For it is written, "I will destroy the wisdom of the wise, and the discernment of the discerning I will thwart."

Where is the one who is wise? Where is the scribe? Where is the debater of this age? Has not God made foolish the wisdom of the world? For since, in the wisdom of God, the world did not know God through wisdom, it pleased God through the folly of what we preach to save those who believe.

For Jews demand signs and Greeks seek wisdom, but we preach Christ crucified, a stumbling block to Jews and folly to Gentiles, but to those who are called, both Jews and Greeks, Christ the power of God and the wisdom of God. For the foolishness of God is wiser than men, and the weakness of God is stronger than men.

### How These Passages Align in their Teaching

Both James and Paul highlight a stark contrast between human and divine wisdom. James emphasizes the qualities and outcomes of earthly versus heavenly wisdom, pointing to the peaceable, pure, and righteous nature of wisdom from above. Paul, in 1 Corinthians, describes how the message of the cross, which appears as foolishness to the world, is actually the ultimate wisdom

and power of God. This "foolishness" of God, represented by Christ crucified, overturns human expectations and reveals the inadequacy of human wisdom.

In essence, both passages underscore the paradox that true wisdom and power are found in what the world deems foolish or weak. They call believers to reject worldly standards of wisdom and embrace the countercultural, divine wisdom exemplified by Jesus Christ.

## 1. Source of Wisdom

**James 3:15:** Earthly wisdom is "earthly, unspiritual, demonic."

**1 Corinthians 1:20:** Worldly wisdom is shown to be futile in knowing God and is ultimately made foolish by God.

**James 3:17:** Heavenly wisdom comes from above, characterized by purity, peace, mercy, and sincerity.

**1 Corinthians 1:24:** Christ is the power and wisdom of God, transcending human understanding.

## 2. Characteristics of True Wisdom

**James 3:13-18:** Heavenly wisdom is pure, peace-loving, considerate, submissive, merciful, impartial, and sincere.

**1 Corinthians 1:18, 25:** The "foolishness of God" (the message of the cross) is wiser than human wisdom and embodies God's power and wisdom.

## 3. Outcomes and Implications

**James 3:16:** Earthly wisdom leads to disorder and every evil practice.

**1 Corinthians 1:19:** God will destroy the wisdom of the wise, frustrating human intelligence.

**James 3:18:** Heavenly wisdom results in a harvest of righteousness.

**1 Corinthians 1:21:** God's wisdom, deemed foolish by the world, leads to salvation for those who believe.

## 4. Reversal of Expectations

**James 3:14-16:** Earthly wisdom is often associated with envy, selfish ambition, and disorder.

**1 Corinthians 1:22-23:** The cross, central to God's wisdom, is a stumbling block to Jews and foolishness to Gentiles, who expect signs and worldly wisdom, respectively.

**James 3:17:** True wisdom is counterintuitive, focusing on humility and righteousness.

**1 Corinthians 1:25:** The perceived "foolishness" and "weakness" of God in the crucifixion are actually manifestations of His profound wisdom and strength.

# Heavenly Wisdom Characterized and Taught by Jesus

The teachings of James 3:13-18 closely reflect the characteristics and teachings of Jesus found in the Gospels. By analyzing the passage from James alongside specific aspects of Jesus' life and ministry, we can see how James' exhortations align with Jesus' example and instruction.

## Characteristics of Jesus and His Teachings in the Gospels

### 1. Humility and Good Deeds

**James 3:13:** "Let them show it by their good life, by deeds done in the humility that comes from wisdom."

**Example from Jesus:** Jesus emphasized humility and servant leadership. In John 13:14-16, He washes His disciples' feet, demonstrating humility and teaching them to serve one another.

*John 13:14-16 –English Standard Version*

"If I then, your Lord and Teacher, have washed your feet, you also ought to wash one another's feet. For I have given you an example, that you also should do just as I have done to you. Truly, truly, I say to you, a servant is not greater than his master, nor is a messenger greater than the one who sent him."

### 2. Denouncing Envy and Selfish Ambition

**James 3:14-16:** "But if you harbor bitter envy and selfish ambition in your hearts, do not boast about it or deny the truth... For where you have envy and selfish ambition, there you find disorder and every evil practice."

**Example from Jesus:** Jesus frequently warned against selfish ambition and the desire for personal greatness. In Mark 10:35-45 we are given the request by James and John to sit at his left and right hands when he comes into his kingdom. However, Jesus rebukes them and give them the real test of greatness in Mark 10:43 – 45.

*Mark 10:43-45 –English Standard Version*

But it shall not be so among you. But whoever would be great among you must be your servant, and whoever would be first among you must be slave of all. For even the Son of Man came not to be served but to serve, and to give his life as a ransom for many."

### 3. Purity and Peace and Peacemaking

**James 3:17a, 18:** "But the wisdom that comes from heaven is first of all pure; then peace-loving ... Peacemakers who sow in peace reap a harvest of righteousness."

**Example from Jesus:** Jesus taught about the importance of purity of heart and peacemaking. Two verses within the Beatitudes directly mention those pure of heart and the peacemakers (*See Wisdom within the Beatitudes below*). In addition, Jesus teaches how far we are supposed to go in seeking peace.

#### a. Love for Enemies (Matthew 5:43-48)

Jesus teaches that seeking peace involves loving and praying for one's enemies, breaking the cycle of hatred and revenge.

*Matthew 5:43-48 –English Standard Version*

“You have heard that it was said, ‘Love your neighbor’ and ‘hate your enemy.’ But I say to you, love your enemy and pray for those who persecute you, so that you may be like your Father in heaven, since he causes the sun to rise on the evil and the good, and sends rain on the righteous and the unrighteous. For if you love those who love you, what reward do you have? Even the tax collectors do the same, don't they? And if you only greet your brothers, what more do you do? Even the Gentiles do the same, don't they? So then, be perfect, as your heavenly Father is perfect.”

**b. Reconciliation (Matthew 5:23-24)**

Jesus emphasizes the priority of reconciliation over religious rituals, indicating that peacemaking and restoring relationships are crucial in God's eyes.

*Matthew 5:23-24 –English Standard Version*

“So if you are offering your gift at the altar and there remember that your brother has something against you, leave your gift there before the altar and go. First be reconciled to your brother, and then come and offer your gift.”

**c. Turning the Other Cheek (Matthew 5:38-42)**

Jesus teaches non-retaliation and going the extra mile to maintain peace, showing a radical approach to overcoming evil with good.

*Matthew 5:38-42 – English Standard Version*

“You have heard that it was said, ‘An eye for an eye and a tooth for a tooth.’ But I say to you, Do not resist the one who is evil. But if anyone slaps you on the right cheek, turn to him the other also. And if anyone would sue you and take your tunic, let him have your cloak as well. And if anyone forces you to go one mile, go with him two miles. Give to the one who begs from you, and do not refuse the one who would borrow from you.”

**d. Forgiveness (Matthew 18:21-22)**

Jesus emphasizes the limitless nature of forgiveness, which is essential for maintaining peace and unity among believers.

*Matthew 18:21-22 – English Standard Version*

Then Peter came up and said to him, “Lord, how often will my brother sin against me, and I forgive him? As many as seven times?” Jesus said to him, “I do not say to you seven times, but seventy-seven times.”

**e. Peace Be with You (John 14:27)**

Jesus offers His peace to His disciples, a peace that transcends worldly understanding and is rooted in a relationship with Him.

*John 14:27 – English Standard Version*

“Peace I leave with you; my peace I give to you. Not as the world gives do I give to you. Let not your hearts be troubled, neither let them be afraid.”

## 4. Consideration and Submissiveness

**James 3:17:** "...considerate, submissive..."

**Example from Jesus:** Jesus' teachings on submissiveness and consideration provide a comprehensive understanding of heavenly wisdom. Submissiveness involves humility, service, and aligning one's will with God's purposes. Consideration involves empathy, love, and active concern for others' well-being.

### *TEACHINGS ON SUBMISSIVENESS*

#### **a. Submission to God's Will (Matthew 26:39)**

In the Garden of Gethsemane, Jesus submits to the Father's will, even though it means facing suffering and death. This act of submission is a powerful example of aligning one's desires with God's will.

#### *Matthew 26:39 – English Standard Version*

And going a little farther he fell on his face and prayed, saying, "My Father, if it be possible, let this cup pass from me; nevertheless, not as I will, but as you will."

#### **b. Teachings on Humility and Service (Matthew 20:25-28)**

Jesus teaches that true greatness in the Kingdom of God is found in humility and service to others, embodying a spirit of submissiveness.

#### *Matthew 20:25-28 – English Standard Version*

But Jesus called them to him and said, "You know that the rulers of the Gentiles lord it over them, and their great ones exercise authority over them. It shall not be so among you. But whoever would be great among you must be your servant, and whoever would be first among you must be your slave, even as the Son of Man came not to be served but to serve, and to give his life as a ransom for many."

#### **c. Paying Taxes to Caesar (Matthew 22:17-21)**

Jesus teaches submission to governing authorities, acknowledging the legitimacy of their rule while also emphasizing ultimate allegiance to God.

#### *Matthew 22:17-21 – English Standard Version*

Tell us, then, what you think. Is it lawful to pay taxes to Caesar, or not?" But Jesus, aware of their malice, said, "Why put me to the test, you hypocrites? Show me the coin for the tax." And they brought him a denarius. And Jesus said to them, "Whose likeness and inscription is this?" They said, "Caesar's." Then he said to them, "Therefore render to Caesar the things that are Caesar's, and to God the things that are God's."

#### **d. Washing the Disciples' Feet (John 13:12-17)**

By washing His disciples' feet, Jesus exemplifies the ultimate act of humble service and submission, encouraging His followers to do likewise.

#### *John 13:12-17 – English Standard Version*

When he had washed their feet and put on his outer garments and resumed his place, he said to them, "Do you understand what I have done to you? You call me Teacher and Lord, and you are

right, for so I am. If I then, your Lord and Teacher, have washed your feet, you also ought to wash one another's feet.

"For I have given you an example, that you also should do just as I have done to you. Truly, truly, I say to you, a servant is not greater than his master, nor is a messenger greater than the one who sent him. If you know these things, blessed are you if you do them."

### **TEACHINGS ON CONSIDERATION**

#### **a. The Golden Rule (Matthew 7:12)**

Jesus teaches that we should treat others as we wish to be treated, which is a fundamental principle of consideration and empathy.

#### *Matthew 7:12 – English Standard Version*

"So whatever you wish that others would do to you, do also to them, for this is the Law and the Prophets."

#### **b. Love Your Neighbor (Matthew 22:39)**

Jesus commands His followers to love their neighbors, which requires consideration and care for others' needs and well-being.

#### *Matthew 22:39 – English Standard Version*

"And a second is like it: You shall love your neighbor as yourself."

#### **c. Parable of the Good Samaritan (Luke 10:25-37)**

In this parable, Jesus illustrates the importance of showing mercy and consideration for others, regardless of their background or social status.

#### *Luke 10:25-37 – English Standard Version*

And behold, a lawyer stood up to put him to the test, saying, "Teacher, what shall I do to inherit eternal life?" He said to him, "What is written in the Law? How do you read it?" And he answered, "You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your strength and with all your mind, and your neighbor as yourself." And he said to him, "You have answered correctly; do this, and you will live."

But he, desiring to justify himself, said to Jesus, "And who is my neighbor?" Jesus replied, "A man was going down from Jerusalem to Jericho, and he fell among robbers, who stripped him and beat him and departed, leaving him half dead. Now by chance a priest was going down that road, and when he saw him he passed by on the other side. So likewise a Levite, when he came to the place and saw him, passed by on the other side.

"But a Samaritan, as he journeyed, came to where he was, and when he saw him, he had compassion. He went to him and bound up his wounds, pouring on oil and wine. Then he set him on his own animal and brought him to an inn and took care of him. And the next day he took out two denarii and gave them to the innkeeper, saying, 'Take care of him, and whatever more you spend, I will repay you when I come back.'

Which of these three, do you think, proved to be a neighbor to the man who fell among the robbers?" He said, "The one who showed him mercy." And Jesus said to him, "You go, and do likewise."

#### **d. Forgiveness and Reconciliation (Matthew 18:21-22)**

Jesus teaches the importance of forgiving others generously, which requires a considerate and compassionate heart.

*Verses can be found in 3. Purity and Peace and Peacemaking d. above.*

#### **e. Healing on the Sabbath (Mark 3:1-6)**

Jesus challenges the legalistic interpretation of the Sabbath by healing a man with a shriveled hand, demonstrating that consideration for human needs and well-being is paramount.

*Mark 3:1-6 – English Standard Version*

Again he entered the synagogue, and a man was there with a withered hand. And they watched Jesus, to see whether he would heal him on the Sabbath, so that they might accuse him. And he said to the man with the withered hand, "Come here." And he said to them, "Is it lawful on the Sabbath to do good or to do harm, to save life or to kill?" But they were silent. And he looked around at them with anger, grieved at their hardness of heart, and said to the man, "Stretch out your hand." He stretched it out, and his hand was restored. The Pharisees went out and immediately held counsel with the Herodians against him, how to destroy him.

## 5. Mercy and Good Fruit

**James 3:17:** "...full of mercy and good fruit..."

**Example from Jesus:** Jesus' teachings on mercy and producing good fruit are integral to understanding and embodying heavenly wisdom. Mercy involves compassion, forgiveness, and a willingness to help others, while producing good fruit signifies living a life that reflects the values and virtues of the kingdom of God.

### TEACHINGS ON MERCY

#### **a. The Beatitudes (Matthew 5:7)**

Jesus teaches that those who show mercy will receive mercy, highlighting the importance of a merciful attitude in the kingdom of heaven. *See Wisdom within the Beatitudes below*

*Matthew 5:7 – English Standard Version*

"Blessed are the merciful, for they shall receive mercy."

#### **b. The Parable of the Unmerciful Servant (Matthew 18:23-35)**

In this parable, Jesus emphasizes the necessity of forgiving others as we have been forgiven by God. The parable illustrates the importance of mercy in our relationships.

*Matthew 18:23-35 – English Standard Version*

"Therefore the kingdom of heaven may be compared to a king who wished to settle accounts with his servants. When he began to settle, one was brought to him who owed him ten thousand talents. And since he could not pay, his master ordered him to be sold, with his wife and children and all that he had, and payment to be made. So the servant fell on his knees, imploring him, 'Have patience with me, and I will pay you everything.' And out of pity for him, the master of that servant released him and forgave him the debt.

"But when that same servant went out, he found one of his fellow servants who owed him a hundred denarii, and seizing him, he began to choke him, saying, 'Pay what you owe.' So his fellow servant



fell down and pleaded with him, 'Have patience with me, and I will pay you.' He refused and went and put him in prison until he should pay the debt.

"When his fellow servants saw what had taken place, they were greatly distressed, and they went and reported to their master all that had taken place. Then his master summoned him and said to him, 'You wicked servant! I forgave you all that debt because you pleaded with me. And should not you have had mercy on your fellow servant, as I had mercy on you?' And in anger his master delivered him to the jailers, until he should pay all his debt. So also my heavenly Father will do to every one of you, if you do not forgive your brother from your heart."

### **c. The Good Samaritan (Luke 10:25-37)**

The parable of the Good Samaritan highlights mercy as an essential aspect of loving one's neighbor, transcending ethnic and social boundaries.

*Verses can be found in 3. Purity and Peace and Peacemaking d. above.*

### **d. Jesus' Response to the Woman Caught in Adultery (John 8:1-11)**

Jesus shows mercy to the woman caught in adultery, refusing to condemn her and instead offering her a chance to repent and live a new life.

*John 8:3-11 – English Standard Version*

The scribes and the Pharisees brought a woman who had been caught in adultery, and placing her in the midst they said to him, "Teacher, this woman has been caught in the act of adultery. Now in the Law, Moses commanded us to stone such women. So what do you say?" This they said to test him, that they might have some charge to bring against him.

Jesus bent down and wrote with his finger on the ground. And as they continued to ask him, he stood up and said to them, "Let him who is without sin among you be the first to throw a stone at her." And once more he bent down and wrote on the ground. But when they heard it, they went away one by one, beginning with the older ones, and Jesus was left alone with the woman standing before him.

Jesus stood up and said to her, "Woman, where are they? Has no one condemned you?" She said, "No one, Lord." And Jesus said, "Neither do I condemn you; go, and from now on sin no more."

## **TEACHINGS ON GOOD FRUIT**

### **a. The Parable of the Sower (Matthew 13:3-23)**

Jesus teaches that those who truly receive and understand God's word will produce good fruit, signifying a fruitful and productive spiritual life.

*Matthew 13:3-23 – English Standard Version*

And he told them many things in parables, saying: "A sower went out to sow. And as he sowed, some seeds fell along the path, and the birds came and devoured them. Other seeds fell on rocky ground, where they did not have much soil, and immediately they sprang up, since they had no depth of soil, but when the sun rose they were scorched. And since they had no root, they withered away. Other seeds fell among thorns, and the thorns grew up and choked them. Other seeds fell on good soil and produced grain, some a hundredfold, some sixty, some thirty. He who has ears, let him hear."

Then the disciples came and said to him, “Why do you speak to them in parables?” And he answered them, “To you it has been given to know the secrets of the kingdom of heaven, but to them it has not been given. For to the one who has, more will be given, and he will have an abundance, but from the one who has not, even what he has will be taken away. This is why I speak to them in parables, because seeing they do not see, and hearing they do not hear, nor do they understand. Indeed, in their case the prophecy of Isaiah is fulfilled that says: “‘You will indeed hear but never understand, and you will indeed see but never perceive.’ For this people’s heart has grown dull, and with their ears they can barely hear, and their eyes they have closed, lest they should see with their eyes and hear with their ears and understand with their heart and turn, and I would heal them.’”

“But blessed are your eyes, for they see, and your ears, for they hear. For truly, I say to you, many prophets and righteous people longed to see what you see, and did not see it, and to hear what you hear, and did not hear it.

“Hear then the parable of the sower: When anyone hears the word of the kingdom and does not understand it, the evil one comes and snatches away what has been sown in his heart. This is what was sown along the path. As for what was sown on rocky ground, this is the one who hears the word and immediately receives it with joy, yet he has no root in himself, but endures for a while, and when tribulation or persecution arises on account of the word, immediately he falls away. As for what was sown among thorns, this is the one who hears the word, but the cares of the world and the deceitfulness of riches choke the word, and it proves unfruitful. As for what was sown on good soil, this is the one who hears the word and understands it. He indeed bears fruit and yields, in one case a hundredfold, in another sixty, and in another thirty.”

#### **b. The Parable of the Vine and the Branches (John 15:1-8)**

Jesus emphasizes the necessity of abiding in Him to produce good fruit, illustrating the vital connection between believers and Christ for a fruitful life.

##### *John 15:1-8 – English Standard Version*

“I am the true vine, and my Father is the vinedresser. Every branch in me that does not bear fruit he takes away, and every branch that does bear fruit he prunes, that it may bear more fruit. Already you are clean because of the word that I have spoken to you. Abide in me, and I in you. As the branch cannot bear fruit by itself, unless it abides in the vine, neither can you, unless you abide in me.

“I am the vine; you are the branches. Whoever abides in me and I in him, he it is that bears much fruit, for apart from me you can do nothing. If anyone does not abide in me he is thrown away like a branch and withers; and the branches are gathered, thrown into the fire, and burned. If you abide in me, and my words abide in you, ask whatever you wish, and it will be done for you. By this my Father is glorified, that you bear much fruit and so prove to be my disciples.”

#### **c. The Sermon on the Mount (Matthew 7:15-20)**

Jesus teaches that true disciples will be known by the good fruit they produce, emphasizing the importance of living a life that reflects genuine faith.

##### *Matthew 7:15-20 – English Standard Version*

“Beware of false prophets, who come to you in sheep’s clothing but inwardly are ravenous wolves. You will recognize them by their fruits. Are grapes gathered from thornbushes, or figs from thistles? So, every healthy tree bears good fruit, but the diseased tree bears bad fruit. A healthy tree cannot bear bad fruit, nor can a diseased tree bear good fruit. Every tree that does not bear good fruit is cut down and thrown into the fire. Thus you will recognize them by their fruits.”

## 6. Impartiality and Sincerity

**James 3:17:** "...impartial and sincere."

**Example from Jesus:** Jesus consistently showed impartiality and sincerity. In His interactions, He treated all people with respect and love, regardless of their social status or background.

### TEACHINGS ON IMPARTIALITY

#### a. The Good Samaritan (Luke 10:25-37)

In this parable, Jesus emphasizes impartial love and compassion, showing that true neighborliness transcends ethnic and social boundaries. The Samaritan's actions demonstrate that mercy should not be limited by prejudice.

*Verses can be found in 3. Purity and Peace and Peacemaking d. above.*

#### b. Jesus and the Woman at the Well (John 4:7-26)

Jesus breaks cultural and social barriers by speaking with a Samaritan woman, showing impartiality and a willingness to engage with all people regardless of their background.

*John 4:7-26 – English Standard Version*

A woman from Samaria came to draw water. Jesus said to her, "Give me a drink." (For his disciples had gone away into the city to buy food.) The Samaritan woman said to him, "How is it that you, a Jew, ask for a drink from me, a woman of Samaria?" (For Jews have no dealings with Samaritans.)

Jesus answered her, "If you knew the gift of God, and who it is that is saying to you, 'Give me a drink,' you would have asked him, and he would have given you living water." The woman said to him, "Sir, you have nothing to draw water with, and the well is deep. Where do you get that living water? Are you greater than our father Jacob? He gave us the well and drank from it himself, as did his sons and his livestock."

Jesus said to her, "Everyone who drinks of this water will be thirsty again, but whoever drinks of the water that I will give him will never be thirsty again. The water that I will give him will become in him a spring of water welling up to eternal life." The woman said to him, "Sir, give me this water, so that I will not be thirsty or have to come here to draw water." Jesus said to her, "Go, call your husband, and come here."

The woman answered him, "I have no husband." Jesus said to her, "You are right in saying, 'I have no husband'; for you have had five husbands, and the one you now have is not your husband. What you have said is true." The woman said to him, "Sir, I perceive that you are a prophet. Our fathers worshiped on this mountain, but you say that in Jerusalem is the place where people ought to worship." Jesus said to her, "Woman, believe me, the hour is coming when neither on this mountain nor in Jerusalem will you worship the Father. You worship what you do not know; we worship what we know, for salvation is from the Jews. But the hour is coming, and is now here, when the true worshipers will worship the Father in spirit and truth, for the Father is seeking such people to worship him. God is spirit, and those who worship him must worship in spirit and truth."

The woman said to him, "I know that Messiah is coming (he who is called Christ). When he comes, he will tell us all things." Jesus said to her, "I who speak to you am he."

#### c. Teaching on Judging Others (Matthew 7:1-5)

Jesus warns against hypocritical and partial judgment, teaching that we should be fair and just in our assessments of others, recognizing our own faults.

*Matthew 7:1-5 – English Standard Version*

“Judge not, that you be not judged. For with the judgment you pronounce you will be judged, and with the measure you use it will be measured to you. Why do you see the speck that is in your brother's eye, but do not notice the log that is in your own eye? Or how can you say to your brother, ‘Let me take the speck out of your eye,’ when there is the log in your own eye? You hypocrite, first take the log out of your own eye, and then you will see clearly to take the speck out of your brother's eye.”

**d. Healing of the Centurion's Servant (Matthew 8:5-13)**

Jesus heals the servant of a Roman centurion, showing that He recognizes and responds to faith regardless of the person's nationality or social status.

*Matthew 8:5-13 – English Standard Version*

When he had entered Capernaum, a centurion came forward to him, appealing to him, “Lord, my servant is lying paralyzed at home, suffering terribly.” And he said to him, “I will come and heal him.” But the centurion replied, “Lord, I am not worthy to have you come under my roof, but only say the word, and my servant will be healed. For I too am a man under authority, with soldiers under me. And I say to one, ‘Go,’ and he goes, and to another, ‘Come,’ and he comes, and to my servant, ‘Do this,’ and he does it.”

When Jesus heard this, he marveled and said to those who followed him, “Truly, I tell you, with no one in Israel have I found such faith. I tell you, many will come from east and west and recline at table with Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob in the kingdom of heaven, while the sons of the kingdom will be thrown into the outer darkness. In that place there will be weeping and gnashing of teeth.”

And to the centurion Jesus said, “Go; let it be done for you as you have believed.” And the servant was healed at that very moment.”

**TEACHINGS ON SINCERITY**

**a. The Sermon on the Mount – Giving to the Needy (Matthew 6:1-4)**

Jesus teaches that acts of charity should be done sincerely and discreetly, without seeking public recognition or praise.

*Matthew 6:1-4 – English Standard Version*

“Beware of practicing your righteousness before other people in order to be seen by them, for then you will have no reward from your Father who is in heaven. “Thus, when you give to the needy, sound no trumpet before you, as the hypocrites do in the synagogues and in the streets, that they may be praised by others. Truly, I say to you, they have received their reward. But when you give to the needy, do not let your left hand know what your right hand is doing, so that your giving may be in secret. And your Father who sees in secret will reward you.”

**b. The Sermon on the Mount – Prayer (Matthew 6:5-6)**

Jesus emphasizes sincere prayer, encouraging His followers to pray privately and authentically, rather than for show.

### *Matthew 6:5-6 – English Standard Version*

“And when you pray, you must not be like the hypocrites. For they love to stand and pray in the synagogues and at the street corners, that they may be seen by others. Truly, I say to you, they have received their reward. But when you pray, go into your room and shut the door and pray to your Father who is in secret. And your Father who sees in secret will reward you.”

#### **c. The Sermon on the Mount – Fasting (Matthew 6:16-18)**

Jesus instructs His followers to fast sincerely, without drawing attention to themselves, highlighting the importance of inner devotion over outward appearance.

### *Matthew 6:16-18 – English Standard Version*

“And when you fast, do not look gloomy like the hypocrites, for they disfigure their faces that their fasting may be seen by others. Truly, I say to you, they have received their reward. But when you fast, anoint your head and wash your face, that your fasting may not be seen by others but by your Father who is in secret. And your Father who sees in secret will reward you.”

#### **d. Parable of the Two Sons (Matthew 21:28-32)**

In this parable, Jesus contrasts the actions of two sons, showing that sincerity in following through with one’s commitments is more important than empty promises.

### *Matthew 21:28-32 – English Standard Version*

“What do you think? A man had two sons. And he went to the first and said, ‘Son, go and work in the vineyard today.’ And he answered, ‘I will not,’ but afterward he changed his mind and went. And he went to the other son and said the same. And he answered, ‘I go, sir,’ but did not go. Which of the two did the will of his father?” They said, “The first.” Jesus said to them, “Truly, I say to you, the tax collectors and the prostitutes go into the kingdom of God before you. For John came to you in the way of righteousness, and you did not believe him, but the tax collectors and the prostitutes believed him. And even when you saw it, you did not afterward change your minds and believe him.”

## Understanding Heavenly Wisdom from Jesus’ Teachings

James 3:13-18 encapsulates the essence of godly wisdom, which is perfectly exemplified in the life and teachings of Jesus. His humility, rejection of selfish ambition, emphasis on purity, peace, mercy, impartiality, and sincerity align seamlessly with James’ portrayal of heavenly wisdom. By following Jesus’ example, believers can embody the wisdom from above, leading to a life that reflects the righteousness and peace that comes from God.

## The Beatitudes Point to Heavenly Wisdom

The heavenly wisdom described in James 3:13-18 closely corresponds to the Beatitudes given by Jesus in the Sermon on the Mount. Both passages emphasize the virtues and attitudes that characterize a life aligned with God’s kingdom. In some sense, the Beatitudes wrap up Jesus’ teachings as they relate to heavenly wisdom in a single sermon.

### Beatitudes from the Sermon on the Mount (Matthew 5:2-12 ESV)

And he opened his mouth and taught them, saying:

- ❖ “Blessed are the poor in spirit, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven.

- ❖ "Blessed are those who mourn, for they shall be comforted.
- ❖ "Blessed are the meek, for they shall inherit the earth.
- ❖ "Blessed are those who hunger and thirst for righteousness, for they shall be satisfied.
- ❖ "Blessed are the merciful, for they shall receive mercy.
- ❖ "Blessed are the pure in heart, for they shall see God.
- ❖ "Blessed are the peacemakers, for they shall be called sons of God.
- ❖ "Blessed are those who are persecuted for righteousness' sake, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven.
- ❖ "Blessed are you when others revile you and persecute you and utter all kinds of evil against you falsely on my account. Rejoice and be glad, for your reward is great in heaven, for so they persecuted the prophets who were before you.

## Correspondence Between Heavenly Wisdom and the Beatitudes

### 1. Humility

**James 3:13:** "Let them show it by their good life, by deeds done in the humility that comes from wisdom."

**Beatitude:** "Blessed are the poor in spirit, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven." (Matthew 5:3)

Both passages emphasize humility as a key characteristic of godly wisdom and those who belong to the kingdom of heaven.

### 2. Purity

**James 3:17:** "But the wisdom that comes from heaven is first of all pure..."

**Beatitude:** "Blessed are the pure in heart, for they will see God." (Matthew 5:8)

Purity of heart is a fundamental attribute of heavenly wisdom and is blessed by Jesus as essential for seeing God.

### 3. Peace-loving and Peacemaking

**James 3:17-18:** "...then peace-loving... Peacemakers who sow in peace reap a harvest of righteousness."

**Beatitude:** "Blessed are the peacemakers, for they will be called children of God." (Matthew 5:9)

Both emphasize the importance of seeking and making peace, and the blessedness of those who pursue peace.

### 4. Considerate (Meekness)

**James 3:17:** "...considerate..."

**Beatitude:** "Blessed are the meek, for they will inherit the earth." (Matthew 5:5)

Consideration and meekness involve gentleness and self-control, reflecting a wise and godly disposition.

### 5. Full of Mercy

**James 3:17:** "...full of mercy and good fruit..."

**Beatitude:** "Blessed are the merciful, for they will be shown mercy." (Matthew 5:7)

Mercy is a key component of heavenly wisdom and is explicitly blessed by Jesus.

## 6. Impartial and Sincere

**James 3:17:** "...impartial and sincere."

**Beatitude:** While there is no direct beatitude that mentions impartiality and sincerity, these qualities are inherent in many of the beatitudes. For example:

"Blessed are those who hunger and thirst for righteousness, for they will be filled." (Matthew 5:6)

The pursuit of righteousness involves fairness (impartiality) and authenticity (sincerity).

## Understanding the Beatitudes in James' Heavenly Wisdom

Heavenly wisdom as described by James involves humility, purity, peace, consideration, mercy, and sincerity. These qualities align closely with the Beatitudes, where Jesus blesses those who are poor in spirit, meek, pure in heart, merciful, and peacemakers. Both James and the Beatitudes highlight a countercultural way of living that reflects God's kingdom values, emphasizing inner qualities and actions that promote peace, righteousness, and genuine love for others. This harmony between James and Jesus' teachings underscores the consistency of the biblical message regarding the character and behavior expected of those who follow God.

## The Word of God Our Example of Heavenly Wisdom

While we can see a beautiful tapestry woven through both Old and New Testaments when it comes to heavenly wisdom, let's begin to wrap it up, understanding that the Bible, as the Word of God, encapsulates God's wisdom through its teachings, narratives, laws, prophecies, poetry, and ultimately through the life and work of Jesus Christ. The wisdom described in James 3:13-18 as heavenly wisdom is characterized by purity, peace-loving nature, consideration, submissiveness, mercy, good fruit, impartiality, and sincerity. Let's explore how the Bible as a whole reflects these attributes of heavenly wisdom.

### 1. Purity

#### Old Testament:

**Psalms 119:9 (ESV):** How can a young man keep his way pure? By guarding it according to your word.

**Proverbs 30:5 (ESV):** Every word of God proves true; he is a shield to those who take refuge in him.

#### New Testament:

**Matthew 5:8 (ESV):** "Blessed are the pure in heart, for they shall see God."

**1 Peter 1:22 (ESV):** Having purified your souls by your obedience to the truth for a sincere brotherly love, love one another earnestly from a pure heart,

The Bible calls believers to live pure lives, reflecting God's own holiness and purity. This purity is foundational to heavenly wisdom, guiding ethical and moral conduct.

## 2. Peace-loving

### Old Testament:

**Isaiah 9:6 (ESV):** For to us a child is born, to us a son is given; and the government shall be upon his shoulder, and his name shall be called Wonderful Counselor, Mighty God, Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace.

**Psalms 34:14 (ESV):** Turn away from evil and do good; seek peace and pursue it.

### New Testament:

**Matthew 5:9 (ESV):** "Blessed are the peacemakers, for they shall be called sons of God."

**Romans 12:18 (ESV):** If possible, so far as it depends on you, live peaceably with all.

The Bible emphasizes the importance of peace, both in relationship with God and with others, embodying the peace-loving nature of heavenly wisdom.

## 3. Consideration

### Old Testament:

**Proverbs 12:18 (ESV):** There is one whose rash words are like sword thrusts, but the tongue of the wise brings healing.

**Micah 6:8 (ESV):** He has told you, O man, what is good; and what does the LORD require of you but to do justice, and to love kindness, and to walk humbly with your God?

### New Testament:

**Philippians 2:3-4 (ESV):** Do nothing from selfish ambition or conceit, but in humility count others more significant than yourselves. Let each of you look not only to his own interests, but also to the interests of others.

**Colossians 3:12-13 (ESV):** Put on then, as God's chosen ones, holy and beloved, compassionate hearts, kindness, humility, meekness, and patience, bearing with one another and, if one has a complaint against another, forgiving each other; as the Lord has forgiven you, so you also must forgive.

Consideration for others is a key theme in Scripture, reflecting the compassionate and thoughtful nature of heavenly wisdom.

## 4. Submissiveness

### Old Testament:

**Leviticus 26:3-7 (ESV):** "If you walk in my statutes and observe my commandments and do them, then I will give you your rains in their season, and the land shall yield its increase, and the trees of the field shall yield their fruit. Your threshing shall last to the time of the grape harvest, and the grape harvest shall last to the time for sowing. And you shall eat your bread to the full and dwell in your land securely.



I will give peace in the land, and you shall lie down, and none shall make you afraid. And I will remove harmful beasts from the land, and the sword shall not go through your land. You shall chase your enemies, and they shall fall before you by the sword.”

**Proverbs 3:5-6 (ESV):** 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 straight your paths.

### New Testament:

**Matthew 26:39 (ESV):** And going a little farther he fell on his face and prayed, saying, “My Father, if it be possible, let this cup pass from me; nevertheless, not as I will, but as you will.”

**James 4:7 (ESV):** Submit yourselves therefore to God. Resist the devil, and he will flee from you.

Submissiveness to God’s will and to one another in humility is a consistent biblical theme, exemplified in the life of Jesus.

## 5. Full of Mercy and Good Fruit

### Old Testament:

**Micah 6:8 (ESV):** He has told you, O man, what is good; and what does the LORD require of you but to do justice, and to love kindness, and to walk humbly with your God?

**Proverbs 11:30 (ESV):** The fruit of the righteous is a tree of life, and whoever captures souls is wise.

### New Testament:

**Matthew 5:7 (ESV):** “Blessed are the merciful, for they shall receive mercy.”

**Galatians 5:22-23 (ESV):** But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, self-control; against such things there is no law.

The Bible consistently calls for mercy and producing good fruit, indicating a life transformed by God’s wisdom.

## 6. Impartial and Sincere

### Old Testament:

**Deuteronomy 10:17 (ESV):** For the LORD your God is God of gods and Lord of lords, the great, the mighty, and the awesome God, who is not partial and takes no bribe.

**Proverbs 16:2 (ESV):** All the ways of a man are pure in his own eyes, but the LORD weighs the spirit.

### New Testament:

**Acts 10:34-35 (ESV):** So Peter opened his mouth and said: “Truly I understand that God shows no partiality, but in every nation anyone who fears him and does what is right is acceptable to him.

**James 2:1 (ESV):** My brothers, show no partiality as you hold the faith in our Lord Jesus Christ, the Lord of glory.

The Bible highlights the importance of impartiality and sincerity in reflecting God's just and truthful character.

## Jesus as the Embodiment of Heavenly Wisdom

### Jesus Christ, the Living Word

*John 1:1-3 – English Standard Version*

In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. He was in the beginning with God. All things were made through him, and without him was not any thing made that was made. In him was life, and the life was the light of men.

*Note that we will delve more into this idea of Jesus as the embodiment of Wisdom, especially as seen through his role as the Word of God.*

### Jesus as "The Way, The Truth, and The Life" (John 14:6):

*John 14:6 – English Standard Version*

Jesus said to him, "I am the way, and the truth, and the life. No one comes to the Father except through me.

Jesus is the ultimate revelation of God's wisdom. His life, teachings, death, and resurrection embody the characteristics of heavenly wisdom, providing the perfect example for believers to follow.

*Note that we will delve more into Jesus' message and meaning of this passage at the end.*

## Summarizing the Bible as Our Perfect Example of Godly Wisdom

The Bible, as the Word of God, encapsulates God's wisdom through its teachings and through the person of Jesus Christ. The characteristics of heavenly wisdom described in James 3:13-18—purity, peace-loving, consideration, submissiveness, mercy, good fruit, impartiality, and sincerity—are woven throughout the Scriptures.

- ❖ Purity: The Bible calls for moral and ethical integrity.
- ❖ Peace-loving: The Scriptures promote harmony and reconciliation.
- ❖ Consideration: The Bible emphasizes empathy and thoughtfulness towards others.
- ❖ Submissiveness: The Scriptures teach humility and obedience to God.
- ❖ Full of Mercy and Good Fruit: The Bible encourages acts of compassion and righteousness.
- ❖ Impartial and Sincere: The Scriptures uphold fairness and genuineness.

Through these themes, the Bible directs believers to live lives that reflect God's wisdom, ultimately pointing to Jesus Christ as the embodiment of this wisdom. By studying and applying the Word of God, believers can cultivate the heavenly wisdom that leads to a life of righteousness and peace.

## Jesus, the Manifestation of Heavenly Wisdom

We can explore various dimensions of Jesus' life and teachings that reflect the characteristics of divine wisdom. This includes His identity, His teachings, His actions, and how the New Testament writers present Him as the embodiment of God's wisdom.

# 1. Jesus' Identity as the Embodiment of Divine Wisdom

## Divine Logos (Word)

The Gospel of John introduces Jesus as the divine Logos (Word) in chapter 1 who was with God and was God. This Word became flesh and dwelt among us, full of grace and truth. The Logos concept ties directly to the Greek understanding of divine reason and wisdom, presenting Jesus as the ultimate revelation of God's wisdom.

*John 1:1-4 – English Standard Version*

In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. He was in the beginning with God. All things were made through him, and without him was not anything made that was made. In him was life, and the life was the light of men.

## Wisdom Incarnate

Paul defines Jesus' role as wisdom as found in Colossians chapter 2, portraying him as the repository of divine wisdom, the one in whom God's full wisdom is embodied and revealed.

*Colossians 2:1-3 – English Standard Version*

For I want you to know how great a struggle I have for you and for those at Laodicea and for all who have not seen me face to face, that their hearts may be encouraged, being knit together in love, to reach all the riches of full assurance of understanding and the knowledge of God's mystery, which is Christ, in whom are hidden all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge.

# 2. Jesus' Teachings Reflecting Heavenly Wisdom

**Beatitudes (Matthew 5:3-12):** Jesus begins His famous sermon with the Beatitudes, which outline the attitudes and characteristics of those who belong to the Kingdom of Heaven. Traits such as humility, mercy, purity of heart, and peacemaking align with the heavenly wisdom described in James 3:17-18.

**Teachings on Righteousness:** Jesus reinterprets the Law, emphasizing internal transformation over external compliance. For instance, He teaches that anger and lust are as serious as murder and adultery, calling for a deeper, heart-level righteousness.

**Parable of the Wise and Foolish Builders (Matthew 7:24-27):** Jesus concludes the Sermon on the Mount with a parable about two builders. The wise builder, who builds his house on the rock, represents those who hear and act on Jesus' words. This parable encapsulates the essence of divine wisdom: hearing and obeying God's Word leads to stability and security.

**Great Commandment (Matthew 22:37-40):** Jesus summarizes the Law and the Prophets with the commandments to love God and love one's neighbor. This teaching highlights the relational and ethical dimensions of heavenly wisdom, which prioritizes love and relationships over mere rule-following.

## 3. Jesus' Actions as Demonstrations of Heavenly Wisdom

### Miracles and Healings

**Healing the Sick and Casting Out Demons:** Jesus' miracles demonstrate His divine authority and compassion. These acts of mercy and power reveal a wisdom that seeks to restore and heal, reflecting God's redemptive purposes.

### Humility and Service

**Washing the Disciples' Feet (John 13:1-17):** In an act of profound humility, Jesus washes His disciples' feet, teaching them that true greatness in God's kingdom is found in serving others. This act contrasts sharply with the world's understanding of power and authority.

**Philippians 2:5-8:** Paul describes Jesus' humility and obedience, noting that He did not consider equality with God something to be used to His advantage, but emptied Himself and became obedient to death on a cross. This self-sacrificial love epitomizes heavenly wisdom.

### Sacrificial Death and Resurrection

**1 Corinthians 1:18-25:** Paul explains that the message of the cross is foolishness to those who are perishing, but to those who are being saved, it is the power of God. Jesus' crucifixion and resurrection reveal the paradoxical wisdom of God, where ultimate victory and life come through apparent defeat and death.

## 4. New Testament Presentation of Jesus as Wisdom

### Fulfillment of Old Testament Wisdom

**Proverbs and Wisdom Literature:** The wisdom literature of the Old Testament, including Proverbs, often personifies wisdom. Jesus is seen as the fulfillment of this personification. For example, Proverbs 8 describes wisdom as calling out to humanity and being present at creation, roles attributed to Jesus in John 1 and Colossians 1.

### Paul's Christology

**1 Corinthians 1:24, 30:** Paul explicitly states that Christ is the wisdom of God. Believers are in Christ, who has become for us wisdom from God—our righteousness, holiness, and redemption. This emphasizes that true wisdom is found in a relationship with Jesus.

## Understanding Jesus as the Embodiment of Wisdom

Jesus represents heavenly wisdom in several profound ways:

- ❖ **Identity:** As the divine Logos and the embodiment of God's wisdom, Jesus reveals the fullness of divine wisdom in human form.
- ❖ **Teachings:** His teachings, especially in the Sermon on the Mount, emphasize the heart's transformation and the importance of love, mercy, humility, and peacemaking.
- ❖ **Actions:** Through His miracles, acts of service, and sacrificial death, Jesus demonstrates wisdom that seeks to restore, serve, and redeem.
- ❖ **New Testament Theology:** The New Testament writers consistently present Jesus as the fulfillment and embodiment of divine wisdom, contrasting His way with the world's wisdom.

In Jesus, we see wisdom that is pure, peace-loving, considerate, submissive, full of mercy and good fruit, impartial, and sincere—perfectly aligning with James' description of heavenly wisdom. This divine wisdom challenges and overturns worldly expectations, calling believers to a higher, transformative way of life.

## John 1:1, Jesus the Word of God

John 1:1 introduces Jesus Christ as the "Word" (Logos), emphasizing His divine nature and role in creation and revelation. To understand wisdom in the Word of God, especially considering John 1:1, we can explore several dimensions: the concept of the Logos, Old Testament wisdom literature, and how the New Testament presents Jesus as the embodiment of divine wisdom.

### John 1:1 (NIV)

"In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God."

## The Concept of Logos

### 1. Logos in Greek Philosophy

In Greek philosophy, the term "Logos" (λόγος) referred to reason, speech, or a principle of order and knowledge. Philosophers like Heraclitus used it to describe the rational principle governing the cosmos.

### 2. Logos in Jewish Thought

In Jewish thought, particularly in Hellenistic Judaism, "Logos" carried the idea of God's creative word and wisdom. The Septuagint, the Greek translation of the Old Testament, often uses "Logos" for God's word in creation and revelation (e.g., Genesis 1, Psalm 33:6).

### 3. Logos in John 1:1-14

John presents Jesus as the Logos, emphasizing His preexistence, role in creation, and incarnation. Jesus, the Logos, is both with God and is God, highlighting the unity and distinction within the Trinity. The Logos becoming flesh (John 1:14) signifies God's ultimate revelation and wisdom embodied in Jesus.

## Wisdom in the Old Testament

### 1. Proverbs and Personified Wisdom

**Proverbs 1:20-33; 8:1-36; 9:1-6:** Wisdom is personified as a woman calling out to humanity, inviting them to live wisely and righteously. Proverbs 8:22-31 depicts wisdom as being present with God at creation, playing a vital role in the formation of the world.

Proverbs 9:10: "The fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom, and knowledge of the Holy One is understanding."

### 2. Psalms

**Psalms 19:7-11:** The Psalmist describes the law of the Lord as perfect, trustworthy, and wise, making wise the simple. God's word is a source of wisdom and guidance.

### 3. Job

**Job 28:** In this chapter, wisdom is portrayed as something elusive and priceless, ultimately found in fearing the Lord and shunning evil.

## Jesus as the Embodiment of Wisdom

### 1. Jesus in the Gospels

**Teachings:** Jesus' teachings in the Sermon on the Mount (Matthew 5-7) and His parables reveal profound wisdom about God's kingdom, emphasizing internal transformation and ethical living.

**Actions:** His miracles, acts of compassion, and interactions with people demonstrate wisdom applied in healing, restoring, and guiding.

### 2. Pauline Epistles

**1 Corinthians 1:18-31:** Paul contrasts worldly wisdom with God's wisdom revealed in Christ crucified. Though the cross appears foolish to the world, it is the power and wisdom of God. Christ is described as the wisdom from God (v. 30).

**Colossians 1:15-20; 2:2-3:** Jesus is portrayed as the image of the invisible God, the firstborn over all creation, and in whom are hidden all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge.

### 3. Hebrews

**Hebrews 1:1-3:** The author of Hebrews presents Jesus as the final and ultimate revelation of God. He is the radiance of God's glory and the exact representation of His being, sustaining all things by His powerful word.

## Theological Implications

### 1. Wisdom in Creation and Redemption

Jesus, as the Logos, is central to both creation and redemption. In creation, the Logos brings order and life (John 1:3). In redemption, the Logos becomes flesh to reveal God's wisdom and love, providing a way for humanity to be reconciled to God.

### 2. Revelation and Relationship

The Logos reveals God's nature and will. Through Jesus, we understand God's character, purposes, and the path to true wisdom, which involves knowing and fearing God (Proverbs 9:10).

### 3. Practical Wisdom

Following Jesus, the Logos, involves applying His teachings in our lives. This practical wisdom encompasses humility, love, service, and obedience to God's will, reflecting the divine wisdom embodied in Christ.

## The Word of God in Wisdom Understood

Wisdom in the Word of God is profoundly embodied in Jesus Christ, the Logos. John 1:1-14 introduces Jesus as the divine Word through whom all things were made and who reveals God's nature and wisdom. The Old Testament wisdom literature, such as Proverbs and Psalms, lays the foundation for understanding wisdom as both a practical and divine attribute. In the New Testament,

Jesus is the ultimate manifestation of God's wisdom, fulfilling and surpassing the wisdom traditions of the Old Testament. Through His teachings, actions, and person, Jesus exemplifies true wisdom, calling His followers to live in a manner that reflects God's wisdom and character.

## Via et veritas et vita

John 14:6 is one of the most profound and definitive statements made by Jesus about His identity and mission. To synthesize the concept of heavenly wisdom with statement, we integrate key biblical passages that collectively highlight the nature of divine wisdom as embodied in Jesus Christ. This synthesis brings together teachings from James, Paul, the Gospels, and the Old Testament, culminating in the person of Jesus, who is described as "the Way, the Truth, and the Life" in John 14:6.

### John 14:6-7 – English Standard Version

Jesus said to him, "I am the way, and the truth, and the life. No one comes to the Father except through me. If you had known me, you would have known my Father also. From now on you do know him and have seen him."

### The Way, The Truth, and the Life

This statement encapsulates the essence of heavenly wisdom as embodied in Jesus Christ. To understand its depth in relation to heavenly wisdom, we can break down each aspect of this declaration and compare it with the themes discussed from James 3:13-18, the Fruit of the Spirit in Galatians 5:16-26, the Foolishness of God in 1 Corinthians 1:18-25, Love in 1 Corinthians 13:1-13, the Beatitudes in Matthew 5:3-12, the Word of God as the source of Wisdom, and Jesus being the personification of Wisdom.

#### 1. Jesus as "The Way"

##### Heavenly Wisdom in "The Way":

Guidance and Path to God: Jesus describes Himself as the only path to the Father, underscoring that true wisdom involves knowing and following Him. This aligns with the biblical portrayal of wisdom as a journey towards a deeper relationship with God.

**Proverbs 3:5-6 (ESV):** 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 straight your paths.

**James 3:13b (ESV):** By his good conduct let him show his works in the meekness of wisdom.

**The Beatitudes:** The qualities of humility, meekness, and righteousness described in the Beatitudes are reflective of the path Jesus sets for His followers.

##### Practical Wisdom and Obedience:

Following Jesus' way involves practical obedience and living out the virtues described in the Fruit of the Spirit and the Beatitudes. It calls for humility, peace-making, and mercy, as illustrated in James 3:17-18.

## 2. Jesus as "The Truth"

### Heavenly Wisdom in "The Truth":

Revelation of God's Character: Jesus, as the Truth, reveals God's nature and will. In Him, we see the full embodiment of divine wisdom and truth, which counters the deceit and partiality of earthly wisdom.

**Colossians 2:3 (ESV):** In whom are hidden all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge.

**James 3:17:** Heavenly wisdom is described as impartial and sincere, reflecting the truthfulness and integrity found in Christ.

### Ultimate Reality and Understanding:

The truth of Christ provides clarity and understanding of God's plans and purposes, which surpass human wisdom and reasoning. This aligns with Paul's assertion in 1 Corinthians 1:18-25 about the perceived foolishness of the cross being the ultimate wisdom of God.

## 3. Jesus as "The Life"

### Heavenly Wisdom in "The Life":

Source of Eternal Life: Jesus as the Life signifies that He is the source of both physical and eternal life. This concept is intertwined with the wisdom that leads to a fruitful and righteous life.

**John 1:4 (ESV):** In him was life, and the life was the light of men.

**James 3:18 (ESV):** And a harvest of righteousness is sown in peace by those who make peace.

### Fruitfulness and Abundance:

Jesus offers a life that is abundant and marked by the fruit of the Spirit. The qualities of love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, and self-control are manifestations of living in Christ (Galatians 5:22-23).

## Heavenly Wisdom in James 3:13-18

James outlines the characteristics of heavenly wisdom:

- ❖ Pure
- ❖ Peace-loving
- ❖ Considerate
- ❖ Submissive
- ❖ Full of mercy and good fruit
- ❖ Impartial
- ❖ Sincere

This wisdom stands in stark contrast to earthly wisdom, which is marked by envy, selfish ambition, disorder, and evil practices. Jesus as the Way, the Truth, and the Life embodies the heavenly wisdom described by James. His life and teachings exemplify purity, peace, consideration, submission, mercy, good fruit, impartiality, and sincerity.



## The Fruit of the Spirit in Galatians 5:16-26

Paul describes the fruit of the Spirit, which align closely with the attributes of heavenly wisdom:

- ❖ Love
- ❖ Joy
- ❖ Peace
- ❖ Forbearance (Patience)
- ❖ Kindness
- ❖ Goodness
- ❖ Faithfulness
- ❖ Gentleness
- ❖ Self-control

These virtues are the natural outcome of living by the Spirit and stand in opposition to the acts of the flesh. The Fruit of the Spirit are the characteristics of a life lived in accordance with heavenly wisdom. Jesus, through the Holy Spirit, produces this fruit in His followers.

## The Foolishness of God in 1 Corinthians 1:18-25

Paul speaks of the "foolishness of God" as the wisdom revealed in Christ, particularly through the cross:

- ❖ The message of the cross is foolishness to those who are perishing but the power and wisdom of God to those who are being saved.
- ❖ This divine wisdom defies human expectations and reveals God's power in what appears weak and foolish to the world.

The "foolishness" of God's wisdom in the cross is revealed in Jesus, who is the Wisdom of God. His sacrificial death and resurrection defy worldly wisdom but display divine wisdom and power. And it is only through our repentance and bearing our own crosses can we find the way and eternal life through Jesus.

*Luke 9:23-24 – English Standard Version*

And he said to all, "If anyone would come after me, let him deny himself and take up his cross daily and follow me. For whoever would save his life will lose it, but whoever loses his life for my sake will save it.

## Love in 1 Corinthians 13:1-13

Paul emphasizes love as the greatest virtue, integral to true wisdom:

- ❖ Love is patient, kind, not envious, not boastful, not proud.
- ❖ Love does not dishonor others, is not self-seeking, not easily angered, and keeps no record of wrongs.
- ❖ Love rejoices with the truth, always protects, always trusts, always hopes, always perseveres.

Love is the greatest virtue and the foundation of true wisdom. Jesus' life and sacrifice epitomize this love, demonstrating the highest form of wisdom as given in Romans 5:6-8.

*Romans 5:6-8 – English Standard Version*

For while we were still weak, at the right time Christ died for the ungodly. For one will scarcely die for a righteous person—though perhaps for a good person one would dare even to die— but God shows his love for us in that while we were still sinners, Christ died for us.

## The Beatitudes in Matthew 5:3-12

Jesus' Beatitudes reflect the values of the Kingdom of Heaven, which align with heavenly wisdom:

- ❖ Poor in spirit
- ❖ Those who mourn
- ❖ The meek
- ❖ Those who hunger and thirst for righteousness
- ❖ The merciful
- ❖ The pure in heart
- ❖ The peacemakers
- ❖ Those persecuted for righteousness' sake
- ❖ These blessings emphasize humility, righteousness, mercy, purity, and peace.

The Beatitudes reflect the values of the kingdom of heaven, which Jesus inaugurates. His life and teachings fulfill these blessings and call His followers to embody them.

## The Word of God as the Source of Wisdom

The Bible consistently portrays God's Word as the source of true wisdom:

- ❖ **Psalm 119:105 (ESV):** Your word is a lamp to my feet and a light to my path.
- ❖ **Proverbs 2:6 (ESV):** For the LORD gives wisdom; from his mouth come knowledge and understanding;

Jesus, as the Logos, is the living Word of God. He perfectly reveals God's wisdom and truth, serving as the ultimate guide for righteous living.

## Jesus as the Personification of Wisdom

Jesus is the ultimate embodiment of divine wisdom:

- ❖ **Colossians 2:3 (ESV):** in whom are hidden all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge.
- ❖ **John 1:1-14:** Jesus as the divine Logos, the Word made flesh, who reveals God's wisdom.

## Jesus' Foretelling in the Old Testament

Several Old Testament prophecies foretell the coming of a wise and righteous Messiah:

- ❖ **Isaiah 9:6-7:** Describes the coming child as Wonderful Counselor, Mighty God, Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace.
- ❖ **Isaiah 11:1-3:** Speaks of a descendant of David endowed with the Spirit of wisdom and understanding.

Old Testament prophecies and wisdom literature find their fulfillment in Jesus. He is the personified Wisdom of God, bringing the ancient promises to completion.

## Jesus as "The Way, the Truth, and the Life" in John 14:6

And wrapping it back into this declaration, Jesus encapsulates the essence of heavenly wisdom:

- ❖ The Way: Jesus provides the path to God, exemplifying the journey of faith and obedience.
- ❖ The Truth: Jesus embodies and reveals ultimate truth, offering a clear and accurate understanding of God and His purposes.
- ❖ The Life: Jesus grants eternal life, bringing the fullness of life that reflects divine wisdom in its purest form.

## Bringing it All Together - Almost

John 14:6 encapsulates the essence of heavenly wisdom as fully embodied in Jesus Christ. He is the Way, providing the path to a relationship with God through humility and righteousness. He is the Truth, revealing God's character and ultimate reality, countering the false wisdom of the world. He is the Life, offering eternal life and the fullness of life characterized by the fruit of the Spirit. In Jesus, all the themes of heavenly wisdom found throughout the Scriptures converge, making Him the ultimate source and embodiment of divine wisdom.

And the synthesis John 14:6 with heavenly wisdom as presented in various scriptures highlights a comprehensive picture centered on Jesus Christ. James, Paul, and the teachings of Jesus himself all converge on a portrait of wisdom that is pure, peace-loving, humble, merciful, and loving. This wisdom is fundamentally opposed to the self-centered, envious, and chaotic nature of earthly wisdom.

### Key Points:

- ❖ Heavenly Wisdom Attributes: Pure, peace-loving, considerate, submissive, merciful, full of good fruit, impartial, sincere (James 3:17).
- ❖ Fruit of the Spirit: Love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, self-control (Galatians 5:22-23).
- ❖ Love: The greatest virtue that undergirds true wisdom (1 Corinthians 13).
- ❖ The Beatitudes: Reflecting kingdom values that align with heavenly wisdom (Matthew 5:3-12).
- ❖ The Cross: The ultimate display of God's wisdom and power, seen as foolishness by the world (1 Corinthians 1:18-25).
- ❖ Jesus as Wisdom: The personification of divine wisdom and the fulfillment of Old Testament prophecies.
- ❖ Jesus as The Way, The Truth, and The Life: The ultimate embodiment of wisdom, providing the path to God, the revelation of truth, and the source of eternal life (John 14:6).

By following Jesus, believers embrace the way of heavenly wisdom, marked by love, humility, and righteousness, leading to a life that reflects the character and purposes of God.

## And the Final Word and Application

Getting a full(er) picture of heavenly wisdom and how it ultimately comes from Jesus, we have one final piece of the picture, the New Man as described by Paul in Colossians 3. Paul's teaching on the "New Man" in Colossians 3 provides a practical framework for believers to live out the heavenly wisdom embodied in Jesus Christ, who is "the way, the truth, and the life." This teaching emphasizes the transformation of believers into the image of Christ, characterized by virtues that align with the wisdom described in James 3:13-18. Let's explore how these concepts apply to believers.

### Colossians 3:1-17

#### 1. *Setting the Mind on Things Above*

*Colossians 3:1-4 – English Standard Version*

If then you have been raised with Christ, seek the things that are above, where Christ is, seated at the right hand of God. Set your minds on things that are above, not on things that are on earth. For you have died, and your life is hidden with Christ in God. When Christ who is your life appears, then you also will appear with him in glory.

**Application:** Believers are called to focus on heavenly realities, aligning their thoughts and priorities with Christ. This reflects the purity and peace-loving nature of heavenly wisdom.

## 2. *Putting to Death Earthly Nature*

*Colossians 3:5-9 – English Standard Version*

Put to death therefore what is earthly in you: sexual immorality, impurity, passion, evil desire, and covetousness, which is idolatry. On account of these the wrath of God is coming. In these you too once walked, when you were living in them. But now you must put them all away: anger, wrath, malice, slander, and obscene talk from your mouth. Do not lie to one another, seeing that you have put off the old self with its practices

**Application:** Paul exhorts believers to abandon behaviors rooted in earthly wisdom—marked by envy, selfish ambition, and impurity—and instead embrace a new way of life. This reflects the contrast between earthly and heavenly wisdom in James 3:13-18.

## 3. *Putting on the New Self*

*Colossians 3:10-11 – English Standard Version*

and have put on the new self, which is being renewed in knowledge after the image of its creator. Here there is not Greek and Jew, circumcised and uncircumcised, barbarian, Scythian, slave, free; but Christ is all, and in all.

**Application:** The new self is characterized by a renewed nature in the image of Christ, who is the embodiment of heavenly wisdom. This includes impartiality and unity among believers, reflecting the impartial nature of heavenly wisdom.

## 4. *Virtues of the New Man*

*Colossians 3:12-14 – English Standard Version*

Put on then, as God's chosen ones, holy and beloved, compassionate hearts, kindness, humility, meekness, and patience, bearing with one another and, if one has a complaint against another, forgiving each other; as the Lord has forgiven you, so you also must forgive. And above all these put on love, which binds everything together in perfect harmony.

**Application:** The virtues Paul lists—compassion, kindness, humility, gentleness, patience, forgiveness, and love—directly correlate with the characteristics of heavenly wisdom described in James. These virtues are expressions of the new self and are essential for living a life that reflects Christ's wisdom.

## 5. *Letting the Peace of Christ Rule*

*Colossians 3:15 – English Standard Version*

And let the peace of Christ rule in your hearts, to which indeed you were called in one body. And be thankful.

**Application:** Embracing the peace of Christ involves fostering peace within the community of believers, aligning with the peace-loving nature of heavenly wisdom.

## 6. *The Word of Christ and Thankfulness*

### *Colossians 3:15 – English Standard Version*

Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly, teaching and admonishing one another in all wisdom, singing psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, with thankfulness in your hearts to God. And whatever you do, in word or deed, do everything in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks to God the Father through him.

**Application:** Allowing the word of Christ to dwell richly within and expressing thankfulness in all actions reflects a life rooted in divine wisdom. This includes sincere and genuine worship, teaching, and living out the faith in practical ways.

## How it All Applies

### 1. *Heavenly Focus:*

Believers are called to set their minds on things above, aligning their lives with the values and wisdom of heaven, which are pure, peace-loving, and considerate.

### 2. *Transformation:*

Putting to death the earthly nature involves rejecting behaviors associated with earthly wisdom, such as impurity, greed, and malice. Instead, believers are to embrace the new self, reflecting the purity and righteousness of heavenly wisdom.

### 3. *Virtues of the New Man:*

The new self is characterized by virtues such as compassion, kindness, humility, gentleness, patience, forgiveness, and love. These virtues mirror the heavenly wisdom described in James 3:13-18 and reflect the character of Christ.

### 4. *Peace and Unity:*

Letting the peace of Christ rule in the heart promotes unity and harmony within the body of believers, which is essential for a community living out heavenly wisdom.

### 5. *The Word of Christ:*

Allowing the message of Christ to dwell richly involves immersing oneself in Scripture and allowing it to transform every aspect of life, leading to sincere worship and thankful living.

### 6. *Living in Christ's Example:*

By embodying these virtues and focusing on Christ, believers live out the heavenly wisdom that Jesus exemplified. As followers of "the way, the truth, and the life," they reflect His character in their interactions and decisions.

By applying these teachings, believers can truly live out the heavenly wisdom described in James, embodying the principles of Christ and manifesting the transformed life that Paul describes in Colossians 3. This holistic transformation leads to a life that glorifies God and positively impacts the world, reflecting the true wisdom from above.

## Sources

Here are some sources that provide in-depth commentary and analysis on James 3:13-18 and related themes:

## Commentaries and Biblical Studies on James 3:13-18

1. "The Letter of James" by Douglas J. Moo (Pillar New Testament Commentary)

Moo's commentary offers detailed exegesis on the Epistle of James, including discussions on the themes of wisdom and righteousness in James 3:13-18.

2. "James" by Craig L. Blomberg and Mariam J. Kamell (Zondervan Exegetical Commentary on the New Testament)

This commentary provides a thorough examination of the text of James, focusing on its theological and practical implications.

3. "The Letter of James" by Scot McKnight (New International Commentary on the New Testament)

McKnight's work includes an in-depth analysis of James 3:13-18, with a focus on the practical outworking of heavenly wisdom in the life of believers.

4. "James: Faith That Works" by R. Kent Hughes (Preaching the Word)

Hughes' commentary is accessible and practical, making it suitable for both pastors and lay readers. It includes a discussion on the characteristics of heavenly wisdom in James 3:13-18.

## Studies on Related Biblical Themes

1. "The Fruit of the Spirit" by Christopher J.H. Wright (New Testament Teaching on Ethical Living)

Wright explores the fruit of the Spirit as described in Galatians 5:16-26, connecting it to the broader New Testament ethics and wisdom.

2. "The Cross of Christ" by John Stott

This classic work discusses the significance of the cross, providing insight into Paul's concept of the "foolishness of God" in 1 Corinthians 1:18-25.

3. "Love: The Greatest Gift" by N.T. Wright

Wright's writings on 1 Corinthians 13 provide an in-depth understanding of the primacy of love in the Christian life, highlighting its connection to wisdom.

## General Resources on Biblical Wisdom and Christology

1. "The Wisdom Literature" by Richard J. Clifford (Abingdon Old Testament Commentaries)

Clifford's work provides background on the Old Testament wisdom literature, offering context for understanding New Testament concepts of wisdom.

2. "Jesus the Wisdom of God: An Ecumenical Christology" by Denis Edwards

This book explores how Jesus is understood as the embodiment of divine wisdom, integrating Old Testament themes with New Testament revelation.

3. "The Theology of the Book of Proverbs" by Richard P. Belcher Jr.

Belcher examines the themes of wisdom in Proverbs and their fulfillment in Christ, providing a bridge between Old Testament wisdom literature and New Testament Christology.

4. "Proverbs, Ecclesiastes, Song of Songs" by Roland E. Murphy (New International Biblical Commentary)

Murphy's commentary on the wisdom books of the Old Testament offers insights into how these texts point towards the wisdom embodied in Jesus.

## Online Resources and Articles

1. Bible Gateway Commentaries and Study Tools

[Bible Gateway](#) provides access to a variety of biblical commentaries and study tools for in-depth study of specific passages, including James 3:13-18.

2. Blue Letter Bible

[Blue Letter Bible](#) offers a range of resources, including commentaries, interlinear tools, and lexical aids to study the original Greek text of James 3:13-18.

3. The Gospel Coalition Articles

[The Gospel Coalition](#) features articles and resources on biblical themes, including wisdom and the teachings of Jesus.

These resources should provide a comprehensive foundation for studying James 3:13-18 and its connections to heavenly wisdom as embodied in Jesus Christ.