

James 3:17-18 – You know you’re growing in godly wisdom if

Jewish rabbis fully understood and were in agreement that the true wisdom comes from above. It was not the attainment of man but the gift of God.

In an ancient book written by Solomon called *Wisdom*, he describe wisdom as, “*The breath of the power of God, and a pure influence flowing from the glory of the Almighty.*”

1. Pure

The words “*first pure*” actually means this is the priority characteristic of wisdom which must come first. The word refers to moral integrity and holy living. Integrity is living honestly consistently over time. Every adjective in this list is hinged to this word “pure.” The word refers to someone who shrinks away from pollution of any kind; a wise person grows increasingly disgusted with the wretchedness of sin.

The world’s wisdom is described as “*confusion and corruption*” (verse 16) “*...disorder and every evil thing*”, *sensual, criminal, demonic, depraved and devious.*

We don’t need to go to God and say, “Give me wisdom as to whether or not ...”

- To be faithful to my spouse
- To tell the truth
- To obey my parents
- To guard my appetite
- To put filters on my computer
- To clean up your language
- To stay out of clubs
- To keep my promises
- To be honest with my employer
- To write my own term paper
- To pay for the items I get at a store
- To do my job with good quality and attitude
- To control my temper
- To control my thoughts

2. Peaceable

Compare / contrast – worldly wisdom is:

- Arrogant
- Cleverly separating relationships
- Leads one to look with superior contempt on others
- Takes delight in hurting others with cunning, but callous words
- Worst of all, there is a worldly wisdom that is depraved which seduces people away from their loyalty to God
- Godly wisdom always brings people into closer relationships with one another and with God.

Translated, this adjective means peace loving. The Greek word peace loving, is a wise person who does not compromise with sin in order to keep the peace. It refers to a person who may be standing up against sin, but while doing so hungers for peace, yearning to heal all the divisions by wise counsel.

3. Gentle

The word here in verse 17 refers to someone who continues to trust God in the face of injustice. Gentle could be paraphrased as “one who yields their right of way to another.” This word is demonstrated in the yielding of Abraham who gave Lot, his nephew, the fertile land of Jordan in **Genesis 13**.

True godly wisdom is not rigid but is willing to listen and is competent in knowing when to wisely yield. The “gentle” person knows how to forgive when absolute justice gives him the right to condemn. Instead he makes allowances, and knows when to not demand his rights. The gentle person tempers justice with mercy.

4. Reasonable / willing to yield

This word refers to someone who is easy to work with, who is open to reason and not defensive or easily angered when others disagree with them; they are agreeable.

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The opposite of being reasonable is being stubborn to the will of those in authority over you and ultimately to the will of your heavenly Father.

5. Full of mercy and good fruits

In James’ day this word meant “*to show pity for the person who is suffering unjustly.*” However, Christianity took this much further. In Christian terms it means to “show mercy for the person who is in peril even if the trouble is his own fault.” Christian pity is a reflection of God’s pity.

Contrast – The wisdom of the world, in verse 16 “*engages in every evil thing*” but the wisdom of heaven is engaged in a harvest of mercy. Joseph, the prime minister of Egypt, in **Genesis 45** demonstrated godly wisdom when dealing with this dishonest brothers.

The wisdom of God is merciful – it is the gospel of mercy:

- *For Christ saved us according to His mercy (Titus 2:5)*
- *God is rich in mercy (Ephesians 2:4)*

6. Without partiality / unwavering

Without partiality or unwavering refers to not wavering or vacillating on principle. An example – you’ve made a commitment to Jesus Christ, and you will not waver. No matter how your commitment is tested; you are devoted to following Him.

Every day when we face the world we’re deciding whose side we’re on ... the side of godly wisdom, or the side of worldly wisdom. If we’re vacillating back and forth, then our mind is already made up and we’ve failed at possessing godly wisdom. It is then time to confess, refocus, and get switched to the godly wisdom side.

7. Without hypocrisy

The Greek word, hypocrites (υποκριτης) referred to an actor, literally one who wears a mask. *In the days of James, the Greek actors didn’t change clothes, and they often played more than one character. They wore or held up masks attached to a stick, and they became that character. If they wanted to play a different character, they simply changed masks.*” [Warren W. Wiersbe; *Be Mature*]

James says godly wisdom doesn’t wear a mask. There is no pretense; godly wisdom does not deal in deception, or play-acting in church or in the life of a growing, maturing believer.

Verse 18

Verse 18 can be translated this way, “*And the seed whose fruit is righteousness is sown in peace by those who make peace.*” In other words, a wise person of peace sows righteousness and reaps a fruitful harvest of righteousness.

The word *righteousness* in old English was actually pronounced right-wiseness. Over time, right-wiseness became righteous.

If you sow the seeds of wisdom you’re going to get a righteous harvest of peace with God, peace with others, peace within your own conscience as you walk through your day.

James wrote in verse 5 of chapter 1, “*If any man lacks wisdom, let him ask of God.*” The condition of this Greek construction implies that we all lack wisdom from time to time. It could be rendered, “Since all of us lack wisdom, let’s ask God for it.”