

October 11, 2026
La Jolla Christian Fellowship
Storm Proof: A Study in James
S2E1: Wise as Hell
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James 3:13–18

13 Who is wise and understanding among you? By his good conduct let him show his works in the meekness of wisdom. **14** But if you have bitter jealousy and selfish ambition in your hearts, do not boast and be false to the truth. **15** This is not the wisdom that comes down from above, but is earthly, unspiritual, demonic. **16** For where jealousy and selfish ambition exist, there will be disorder and every vile practice. **17** But the wisdom from above is first pure, then peaceable, gentle, open to reason, full of mercy and good fruits, impartial and sincere. **18** And a harvest of righteousness is sown in peace by those who make peace.

Big Idea: There are two kinds of wisdom operating in the world. One is driven by self-interest and produces disorder. The other comes from God and produces righteousness and peace.

Central Question: What kind of wisdom is directing your life, and what kind of fruit is it producing?

Not All Wisdom Is Wise: Vs. 15 *This is not the wisdom that comes down from above, but is earthly, unspiritual, demonic. 16 For where jealousy and selfish ambition exist, there will be disorder and every vile practice. 17 But the wisdom from above is first pure, then peaceable, gentle, open to reason, full of mercy and good fruits, impartial and sincere.*

Wisdom from Below: James 3:14–16 *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.*

- **Earthly:** Its perspective is limited to the concerns and values of this world.
- **Unspiritual:** It operates according to natural human impulses rather than the Spirit of God.
- **Demonic:** Its character and effects reflect the destructive purposes of the enemy.

“Jealousy turns life into a competition and says, “If someone else is winning, I must be losing.”

Wisdom From Above: Vs. 17 *But the wisdom from above is first pure, then peaceable, gentle, open to reason, full of mercy and good fruits, impartial and sincere.*

- **James’ Diagnostic:** James makes it clear that you can diagnose the nature of wisdom by the fruit it produces.
1. **Wisdom is known by its conduct: Vs. 13** *Who is wise and understanding among you? By his good conduct let him show his works in the meekness of wisdom.*
 2. **Wisdom doesn’t keep score: Vs. 14-15** *But if you have bitter jealousy and selfish ambition in your hearts, do not boast and be false to the truth. 15 This is not the wisdom that comes down from above, but is earthly, unspiritual, demonic.*
 - a. James identifies two characteristics at the heart of false wisdom: bitter jealousy and selfish ambition.
 - b. Zēlos — zeal, jealousy, or an intense desire. Depending on its object and motivation, it can be positive or negative.
 - c. Pikros — bitter, sharp, harsh, or resentful. By adding pikros, James clearly identifies a destructive form of zeal—one characterized by bitterness, resentment, and rivalry.
 3. **Wisdom Makes Peace: 17** *But the wisdom from above is first pure, then peaceable, gentle, open to reason, full of mercy and good fruits, impartial and sincere. 18 And a harvest of righteousness is sown in peace by those who make peace.*

Practical Takeaway:

Before you act this week, ask yourself, “Will this action produce righteousness and peace?”

Small Group Discussion Questions:

1. How do our actions reveal the kind of wisdom we live by?
2. Where do jealousy and selfish ambition show up in our lives?
3. Which quality of heavenly wisdom do you struggle with most?
4. What's the difference between making peace and avoiding conflict?
5. Where is God calling you to replace earthly wisdom with heavenly wisdom?