

LESSON 8

WHAT DO YOU KNOW?

JAMES 3:13–18



1 List some of the most ambitious people you know. What are they like? What are their goals?

2 List some of the wisest people you know. What evidence of wisdom have you seen in their life? What are their goals?



Read James 3:13–18 and the following notes:

☐ 3:13–18 ☐ 3:14, 15

3 What are the characteristics of earthly wisdom?

4 How can you tell earthly wisdom from heavenly wisdom?

5 Why is earthly wisdom often mistaken for heavenly wisdom (3:17)?

6 Why are jealousy and selfish ambition singled out as characteristics of earthly wisdom (3:15)?



The world praises those with ambition, and sometimes we admire them too. Most people think it's smart to be ambitious. Yet James draws a clear contrast between this kind of earthly wisdom and God's wisdom. They have dramatically different characteristics, orientations, and results. The world does a great job of packaging and marketing its own wisdom, without apology, proudly, and insistently. That's the reason Paul's warning in Romans 12:2 to not "copy the behavior and customs of this world, but let God transform you into a new person by changing the way you think." Watch out for the seductiveness of the world's wisdom. Following it may seem like the smart thing to do, but that's not a wise choice.

7 How might a church make a decision based on earthly wisdom rather than God's wisdom?



8 List some examples of how earthly wisdom is packaged and presented on current television shows or ads.

9 How might non-Christians defend earthly wisdom? What negative comments might they possibly have for the wisdom that comes from heaven?

10 Why is selfish ambition a part of earthly wisdom? Is it ever right for a Christian to be ambitious?

11 In what areas of your life are you most vulnerable to the world's wisdom?

12 Who can help you say no to the world's wisdom and yes to God's wisdom?

13 What practical steps can you take to gain more of God's wisdom?



14 Write out a prayer asking God to make you wise with the wisdom that comes from heaven. Pray this prayer each day this week.

A What is the significance of James putting the words *bitterly* and *jealous* together? How have you seen them come together in your life or in your church?

B What would prompt someone who was harboring selfish ambition and bitter jealousy to boast about it?

C What "evil practices" might result from earthly wisdom? What mechanism does your church have for dealing with such things?

D In describing the quality of God's wisdom, why does James say that it is "first of all pure"? What makes it difficult for us to have a wisdom that is pure?

E What does it mean to be a peacemaker (3:18)? How do peacemakers plant and reap?

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