



# JAMES 3:13-4:10

## WISDOM & WORLDLINESS

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### BEGIN BY READING JAMES 3:1-12 TOGETHER:

**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.

**4** What causes quarrels and what causes fights among you? Is it not this, that your passions are at war within you? **2** You desire and do not have, so you murder. You covet and cannot obtain, so you fight and quarrel. You do not have, because you do not ask. **3** You ask and do not receive, because you ask wrongly, to spend it on your passions. **4** You adulterous people! Do you not know that friendship with the world is enmity with God? Therefore whoever wishes to be a friend of the world makes himself an enemy of God. **5** Or do you suppose it is to no purpose that the Scripture says, "He yearns jealously over the spirit that he has made to dwell in us"? **6** But he gives more grace. Therefore it says, "God opposes the proud but gives grace to the humble." **7** Submit yourselves therefore to God. Resist the devil, and he will flee from you. **8** Draw near to God, and he will draw near to you. Cleanse your hands, you sinners, and purify your hearts, you double-minded. **9** Be wretched and mourn and weep. Let your laughter be turned to mourning and your joy to gloom. **10** Humble yourselves before the Lord, and he will exalt you.

**NOTE:** *After you read the passage together, pray, and then allow for a few minutes of silence so that you and your students can read over the passage again and start to think about it. This may feel awkward at first, but it's vital to allow for some reflection time before diving into the questions.*

When you're ready, begin the discussion by going through the following questions:

## CONTEXT QUESTIONS

1. **What are some key themes in this section that connect to earlier sections in the letter?**

**NOTE:** Every book of the Bible has certain key themes that are carried throughout its pages. In James chapter 1 the author introduces the key themes of wisdom and works, as well as the importance of keeping oneself unstained from the world. Have your students turn back to James 1 and see if you can find where James begins these themes, and then how he continues them in James 3:13-4:10.

## OBSERVATION QUESTIONS

**NOTE:** As you go through these questions, give your students time and silence to really look at the text to see what God is revealing to them personally. Be patient with them as they seek to flesh out what they are seeing in God's Word.

1. **How does this passage challenge you?**
2. **What does this passage teach you to desire?**

## RESPONSE QUESTIONS

**NOTE:** In this passage James contrasts two types of wisdom. The first is "wisdom from above" (see 3:17) and the second is earthly wisdom, or worldliness (see vs. 3:14-16; 4:4). One is a gift given by God to those who approach Him in humility, the other comes from selfish ambition and sinful passions. One brings peace, the other brings, quarrels and fights. Spend some time discussing with your students the difference between wisdom and worldliness.

1. **What do these verses tell us about wisdom?**
2. **What do these verses tell us about worldliness?**

## CHRIST CONNECTION

**NOTE:** *This section presents us with two ways to live. One is the way of wisdom and the other the way of worldliness. On our own all of us are ruled by sinful passions, we naturally seek friendship with the world over friendship with God. The wisdom of God seems like foolishness to us, and so we experience the heartache and conflict that come from worldliness.*

*But this passage makes clear that there is hope for all who approach God in humility. If we try to puff our selves up with our own wisdom and selfish ambition we will only find destruction. But if we confess how lost and foolish we are, how attached we are to this world, then we will find that God “gives more grace” (6).*

*The grace of God comes not to those who think they deserve it, but those who confess to God that they need it. True wisdom is a gift from God. God's perfect wisdom came down to us in the person of Jesus Christ. Christ has revealed God to us, and has made a way for us to receive God's grace. In His death and resurrection Christ has overcome this world that holds so much power over us, and has given us access to the grace and wisdom of God. But we can only receive this if we come to Him in humility, confessing our need and not our worthiness. It is only in this way that we can receive true wisdom and peace.*