

The Wisdom to Make Peace

James 3:13-18

Wisdom is revealed in what we show, not just in what we know.

- I. Wisdom from the world produces _____ (14-16)
 - A. Worldly wisdom is generated by _____
_____ (14, 16)
 - B. Worldly wisdom is characterized by _____
_____ (14, 16)
 - C. Worldly wisdom produces _____
_____ (14, 16)

- II. Wisdom from heaven produces _____ (13, 17)
 - A. Heavenly wisdom is demonstrated by _____
_____ (17a)
 - B. Heavenly wisdom is characterized by _____
_____ (17b)
 - C. Heavenly wisdom produces _____ and
_____ (18)

Imagine yourself sitting in the center of a small art gallery. The brightly lit room is empty except for two contrasting portraits on opposite walls. On the one side hangs the portrait of an arrogant, worldly, devilish fellow on a dark backdrop that stirs emotions of anger and envy. A scraggly beard and mustache veil his features and a large hat casts a shadow over his shifty eyes. He leaves chaos and destruction in his wake as he advances unflinching toward the pursuit of his goals, driven by jealousy and ambition. The caption beneath the portrait reads: "The Unwise" painted by "Self."

The portrait on the facing wall couldn't be more different. That man bears a gentle demeanor, his posture relaxed and expression serene. His eyes are inviting, and his hands appear ready for service. Behind him people follow, eager to hear his words and mimic his actions. Children celebrate his arrival, delighted to see what gifts he might bring. Clearly respected, he shows no signs of pride, and in his path are joy, peace, and prosperity. Below this portrait the caption says: "The Wise" painted by "The Spirit of God."

In light of the two contrasting pictures of the wise and unwise in James 3:13-18, with which portrait do you identify? Do you struggle with jealousy of others' successes? Is your life motivated by personal pursuits at the cost of peace? How have these inward feelings and outward actions affected those around you? Do disorder and pettiness mark your life? Do you pursue the things of the world rather than the things of God?

Or is your life characterized by gentleness and humility? Do people know you as a person of mercy, authenticity, and peace? Do you act the same way at home as you do at work or at church or in public? Do you build others up, rejoice at their successes, and place the needs and interests of others ahead of your own? Do you leave harmony and joy in your wake?

As you seriously think through these questions, avoid answering the way you wish things were. Answer the way things really are. Try to defend your answer with actual evidence from examples that come to mind. Ask yourself whether your closest family members or friends would answer these questions for you the same way.