

**James 3:14,16**  
**“This wisdom doesn’t descend from above”**

- I. Intro**
- II. Vs. 14, 16 Four characteristics of worldly wisdom’s**

**I. Intro**

In chapter three James makes the point that wisdom is essential for a godly life, but such wisdom doesn’t come from the world and can only come from God. As I said last week; Godly wisdom is inspired depth-perception that enables a person to hear what God hears and see what God sees. **It is a vertical thrust of the mind and heart of God into the horizontal level of human affairs.** The outline of this section reveals that there are three contrasts between human wisdom and Godly wisdom that we can use to determine what type of wisdom we are listening too:

- I. Its ORIGIN**
- II. Its OPERATION**
- III. Its OUTCOME**

Last week we examined the first of those, “**ORIGIN**”. This morning we will examine the last two “**OPERATION**” as James contrasts the two types of wisdom in the world today. We will see four distinct characteristics of the world’s wisdom and when we come back to this text we will examine the nine characteristics of Godly wisdom. Finally, we will compare the outcomes. Our study will better enable us to determine which of these two types of wisdom we are listening too.

- II. Vs. 14, 16 Four characteristics of worldly wisdom’s**

Vs. 14,16 As noted the two types of wisdom is Godly wisdom that James notes in verse 17 “is from above” and we will see that it has 9 characteristics with regards to its operation. The second type of wisdom that is available to both fallen humanity and redeemed humanity appeals to three areas of our fleshly nature, “Earthly” that is to say that it appeals to our natural reason and intellect which is contrasted against our spiritual nature. Second “Sensual” and as we saw that word in the Greek is where we get our English word for Psychology which reveals to us that worldly wisdom appeal to our emotions and feelings. Lastly, James says that it is “***Demonic***” and as such we see that it appeals to our pride and arrogance. This being the case James elaborates further by telling his readers that **we will be able to determine worldly wisdoms influence over us by seeing four characteristics of its operation in our lives**. First note, that there are two lists, one in verse 14 and the other in verse 16 but some of these correspond to better clarify the characteristic of worldly wisdom:

1. ***Biter, envy***: These word’s in verse 14 and 16 in the Greek carries the meaning of selfish ambition and zeal. It ties into James thought about teachers who were ambitious for the position and title. The world rewards ambition and self-promotion, it tells you that you are better than the next person and deserve to be advanced, our have special treatment over others. Even Jesus’ own disciples were prone to being influenced by this type of worldly wisdom as we are told in Luke 9:46 that they argued among them about who would be the greatest. Later Jesus gave the Godly wisdom explanation to how to achieve greatness in Matthew 23:11-12 when He said, “*he who is greatest among you shall be your servant. And whoever exalts himself will be humbled, and he*”

*who humbles himself will be exalted.*” It can be very easy to get on an ego trip under the guise of spiritual zeal where we begin to see our rights pushing against our wrongs! The wisdom of this world makes us jealous and insecure of others where we want to glorify in our talents, position, and identity instead of glorifying in who we are in Christ. When we are stepped in the wisdom of this world we rob ourselves of security and steal the praise of God for the praise of ourselves! Paul wrote to the believers in Corinth about this as they were carnal in their application of worldly wisdom, so he said in 1:29-31 “*Let no flesh glory in His presence. But of Him you are in Christ Jesus, who became for us wisdom from God -- and righteousness and sanctification and redemption --- that, as it is written, “He who glories, let him glory in the Lord.*” We can see whether our spiritual zeal is carnal or spiritual in whom we want to see get the credit and the glory! Do we do as Paul said in Romans 12:15 “*Rejoice with those that rejoice, and weep with those that weep?*” **Or is it that we weep for ourselves if those that are advancing are rejoicing and do we rejoice when those same folks are weeping?** There is far too much fleshly self-promotion, selfish ambition and human glorification in the church, and it all comes from the application of worldly wisdom! To accomplish this people, push over others to promote themselves.

2. **Self-seeking do not boast:** In the Greek this word was used of a politician who was out “canvassing for votes” as they were trying to really people together to support them. We would recognize this influence of worldly wisdom as manipulation to influence people in order to get what we want. The world will

apply manipulation in order to be above the people they are befriending. Paul wrote in Philippians 2:3 that we are to not “*Let anything be done through strife of vain ambition, but in lowliness of mind lest each esteem others better than themselves.*” You can tell what a person’s true relationship is with God by noticing their relationship is like with other people. If they are boastful, argumentative, trouble making, drama making and competitive people then they are getting their wisdom from the world not from God. Oh, they may be busy in the church, active in service and maybe even in a leadership position but they are not getting their wisdom from God but rather from the world. Paul had to address such a thing in the church in Corinth as they had regressed to “**person identification**” to promote themselves in 1:12-13 when he wrote, “*it has been declared to me that there are contentions among you...that each of you say, “I am of Paul, or I am of Apollos, or I am of Cephas, or I am of Christ.” Is Christ divided? Was Paul crucified for you? Or were you baptized in the name of Paul?*” “Do not boast”, it is clear that there is a direct correlation between self-seeking and arrogance as pride always is attached to our self-seeking. The wisdom of the world always loves to brag about itself as we saw above in Corinth. When God’s wisdom is being used by us the outcome is always the opposite as we don’t wish to be praised instead we seek God’s glory and our humility! We won’t be comparing ourselves to our fellow believers as all we want to see is Jesus and we won’t get a clear view of Him if we are hogging the mirror!

3. **Lie against the truth, Confusion**: The next two examples of following

worldly wisdom is “lying against the truth” and “confusion”. The progression is that, self-seeking and arrogance will lead to us having to lie and exaggerate in our attempt to gain an advantage over our fellow saint. A person’s life is never to viewed in their own biographies and press releases. It can only be viewed in how they treat others. The more we lie to promote ourselves the more “confused” we will become as these are linked together for good reason. The word “confusion” in verse 16 in the Greek is a word that means to “*disturb*” and is used to describe “*anarchy*”. James used it in 1:18 to describe a “*double-minded man*” who is “*unstable in all their ways*”.

“*Unstable*” is the same word as the one used here for “*confusion*”. Whenever we use worldly wisdom the outcome is always instability which always leads to mental and emotional confusion. Paul wrote in 1 Cor. 14:33 that, “God is not the author of confusion, but of peace, as in all the churches of the saints.” Confusion is always a sign that we are following worldly wisdom instead Godly wisdom!

4. **Every evil thing**: The word in the Greek for “evil” doesn’t mean “bad” instead it means “worthless” or “good for nothing”. The point James is making is that the wisdom of this world isn’t necessarily “evil”, but it is always “worthless” as it comes to no value. Isaiah said in 29:14 that “*For the wisdom of their wise men shall perish, and the understanding of their prudent man shall be hidden.*” The wisdom of this world divides people it never brings people together it is “*good for nothing.*” Instead of producing peace and fellowship it produces strife and bitterness. It has nothing to do with a person’s lack of

intelligence and everything to do with what wisdom they are submitting too. Put a person who is getting their wisdom from the world into any church or bible study and the outcome will be division and strife within the personal relationships. What they possess is from the devil and not from God and the work they are involved in is satan's work instead of God's. Paul wrote of this in his 2<sup>nd</sup> letter to the Corinthians in chapter 12:20 saying, "*For I fear lest, when I come, I shall not find you as I wish, and that I shall not be found by you as you wish; lest there be contentions, jealousies, outbursts of wrath, selfish ambitions, backbitings, whisperings, conceits, tumults...*" Paul makes a list of those 8 things that William Barclay called the, "*marks of an unchristian church.*" One of the reasons why people have rejected Jesus is because of their experience in Church, we simply don't live like our Lord told us too.

Next time we get into the text we will again take a look at the operational characteristics of wisdom in our life but this time it will be the "Nine characteristics of Godly wisdom". Then we will conclude with the last way we can determine which of the two types of wisdom is influencing us as we will see the outcome of the two types of wisdom.