



the Wisdom of James

SUMMARY | From ancient times, the New Testament letter of James was attributed to James “the Lord’s brother” (Galatians 1:19). If so, we can be sure that, together with Jude (Jude 1:1), he didn’t grow up thinking of their older brother as the Savior of the world (John 7:5). Only after Jesus rose from the dead (1 Corinthians 15:7) would he think of himself as a servant of the exalted Lord (James 1:1; 2:1).

Interestingly, though, James doesn’t promote and distinguish himself as someone who grew up in the same house as Jesus. Instead, he treats his readers like members of the family and urges, “Dear brothers and sisters, when troubles of any kind come your way . . . If you need wisdom, ask our generous God, and he will give it to you. He will not rebuke you for asking” (1:2, 5 NLT).

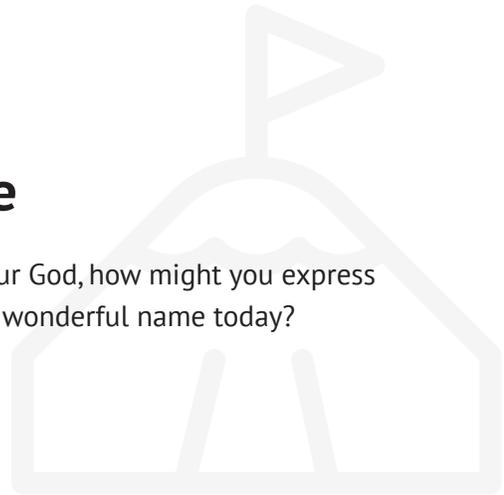
Later in the letter, we learn that James is speaking of a wisdom that offers a different way of responding to the insults and inequalities of life. After addressing problems surfacing among followers of Jesus, he writes, “Wherever there is jealousy and selfish ambition, there you will find disorder and evil of every kind. But the wisdom from above is first of all pure. It is also peace loving, gentle at all times, and willing to yield to others. It is full of mercy and the fruit of good deeds. It shows no favoritism and is always sincere. And those who are peacemakers will plant seeds of peace and reap a harvest of righteousness” (James 3:16–18 NLT).

This Week’s Discussion Questions

1. Can you think of troubles you’ve had in the past that you can now say you are honestly thankful for?
2. How can both the poor and wealthy find joy despite their differing circumstances? (James 1:9–11).
3. In what sense do you think the joy and wisdom James is referring to are “pure”? What kind of contamination do pure joy and wisdom lack? (3:13–15).
4. How might a desire for peace grow out of realizing the kind of joy that is found in living under the influence of Christ without the pollution of envy, jealousy, and selfish ambition? (3:13–17).
5. As it took Jesus’ resurrection to convince James and Jude that Jesus is the Son of God and Savior of the world, do you think such wisdom sounds attractive to someone who isn’t under the influence of Jesus? (1:1; 2:1).

Challenge

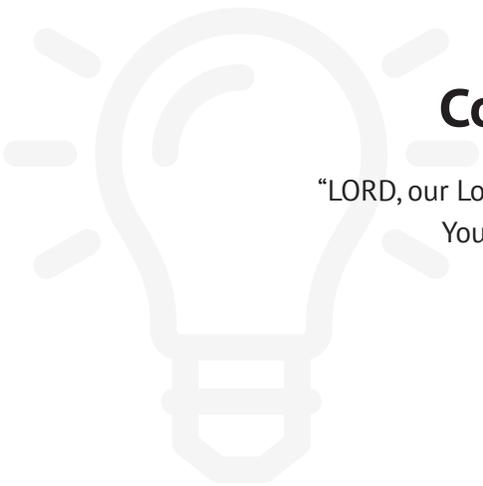
As we ponder the matchless, majestic name of our God, how might you express worship and praise to Him because of His wonderful name today?



Commit To Memory

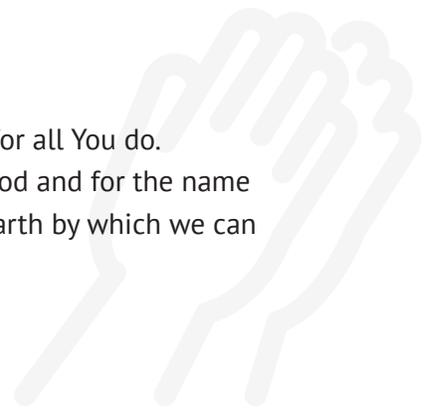
“LORD, our Lord, how majestic is your name in all the earth!
You have set your glory in the heavens.”

Psalm 8:1



Prayer

Loving Lord, I praise You for who You are and for all You do.
I praise You for Your matchless name as the eternal God and for the name
of Your wonderful Son—the only name in heaven or earth by which we can
be saved! Amen.





the Wisdom of James

SUMMARY | In our last discussion we saw that James wrote his New Testament letter with a view of Jesus that was very different from the one he had while growing up under the same roof. In a similar way, his letter urges his brothers and sisters in Christ to experience a new perspective and way of thinking about the common troubles of our lives.

Under the influence of Jesus, James urges us to see trouble as an opportunity to reflect the attitudes of wisdom. When such insight alludes us, he assures us that God is ready to help us— if we're ready for a change. For instance, if we're ready to go beyond our default inclinations of self-interest, James says, the wisdom from God comes in a far purer and more peace-loving spirit. As he puts it, rather than being marked by self-centeredness, “the wisdom from above is first of all pure. It is also peace loving, gentle at all times, and willing to yield to others. It is full of mercy and the fruit of good deeds. It shows no favoritism and is always sincere. And those who are peacemakers will plant seeds of peace and reap a harvest of righteousness” (James 3:17–18 NLT).

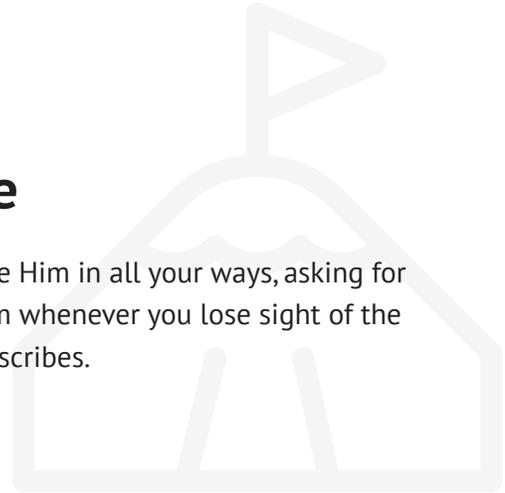
This Jesus-like way of living is a summary of the wisdom James alludes to in his introduction. It's the kind of heart needed to override the disruptive pride, prejudice, and insults of life described in the first three chapters of his letter.

This Week's Discussion Questions

1. If the peace of Christ (the shalom of God) is the outcome of this wisdom, can you see how each of the individual characteristics of wisdom relate to one another by their presence or absence? See James 3:17–18.
2. **How possible would peace be without gentleness?**
3. What would gentleness be without a willingness to listen?
4. **What good would come if we listened without mercy?**
5. How whole would our goodness and kindness be if we showed it only to our friends?
6. **Do you remember reading anything in James' letter that would indicate why he would end the description of wisdom as being “without hypocrisy”? (James 3:17 NASB).**
7. What similarities or differences do you see between James' description of the wisdom that comes from above and Paul's description of the fruit of the Spirit? (Galatians 5:22–23).

Challenge

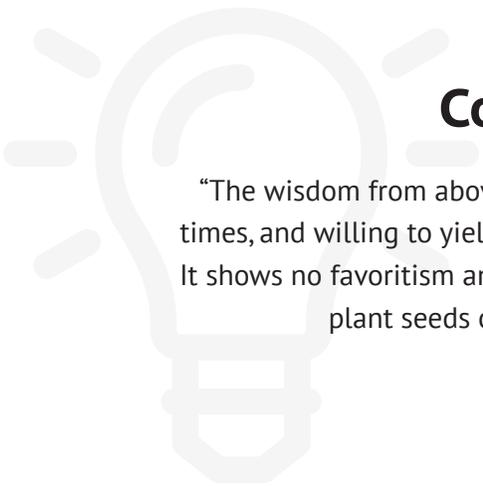
Ask the Lord to help you remember to acknowledge Him in all your ways, asking for His counsel, His help in everything, and His wisdom whenever you lose sight of the kind of wisdom James describes.



Commit To Memory

“The wisdom from above is first of all pure. It is also peace loving, gentle at all times, and willing to yield to others. It is full of mercy and the fruit of good deeds. It shows no favoritism and is always sincere. And those who are peacemakers will plant seeds of peace and reap a harvest of righteousness.”

James 3:17–18 NLT



Prayer

Father, we are so inclined to respond with our own short-sighted inclinations. We see too late the joy we lose and the harm we do by not looking up to You and the wisdom personified in your Son. Please help us to see the troubles of this day as an opportunity to see You fill them with wisdom that resonates with the love, joy, and peace of Your Spirit. Amen.

