

## Before the Lesson

**Read the Scriptures and overview below before your LIFE Group meets.**

Scripture passages: James 3:13-18, Matthew 5:2-12

“Who among you is wise?” Can you raise your hand with an affirmative, “I am!” Let’s take a look at what is wise and what is unwise, according to this portion of Scripture. Here, James compares earthly wisdom and Godly wisdom, emphasizing that bitter jealousy, selfish ambition, and false truths are lifestyle traits that display unwise and worldly living. They reflect that which is demonic and unspiritual. He then contrasts this kind of earthly wisdom with the Godly traits of gentleness and meekness to give us a clear picture of that which is truly wise.

The word *meek* indicates a humble spirit or a person who is not concerned with being self-assertive or self-promoting. A meek or humble person is broken before the Lord, is submitted to His authority, and is confident in the Lord’s dealings with him. That being said, wisdom does not simply refer to knowledge and understanding but rather Godly attitudes and actions that shape a life and display the goodness of God in thought, word, and deed. So what are the character traits of a wise person? They are: pure, peaceable, gentle, open to reason, full of mercy and good fruits, impartial, and sincere. Is that a picture of you?

**Focus question: When it comes to wisdom, are you reflecting the world or the Lord?**

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## Group Discussion

- Earthly wisdom operates from a limited perspective and the standards of the world. Its focus is on power, position, privilege, and prestige. It is self-seeking. Godly wisdom is based on the precepts of God and is humble, other-oriented, and points everything and everyone to God. Read these verses that vividly describe the wise and the unwise. Compare and contrast the two types of wisdom (earthly and Godly) based on these Scriptures and any others that come to mind. Proverbs 3:5, 3:13-18, 10:23, 12:15, 14:16, 17:27-28, 18:15, 24:3-7, Ecclesiastes 10:12, Jeremiah 9:24, 33:3, John 18:12, Ephesians 1:16-19, 5:15-17, Colossians 3:16, 2 Timothy 2:7, James 1:5
- Read James 3:13-18. How would you define “the meekness of wisdom”? Give illustrations of what this looks like.
- Define bitter jealousy. Give examples of how you have seen this portrayed.
- What does selfish ambition look like?

- One way bitter jealousy is played out is through the “entitlement mentality.”
  - How have you seen this evident in your workplace, family, children, or neighbors?
  - How can you be a stark contrast to this type of behavior to those you know?
  - How should you respond to someone who shows bitter jealousy toward you?
- Selfish ambition is often manifested through performance. It says, “I can do more than others can do,” and “I’m important, and I will prove it.” It suggests a person who struggles with insecurity and self-worth. What does Paul tell us in Philippians 2:3-11, and who does he use as an example for us to reflect?
  - How can you display the attitude of Christ rather than the attitude of self to others this week?
  - How can you be an example of Godly wisdom to someone who is characterized by selfish ambition?
- Choose one of these examples from the Old Testament and discuss how the earthly wisdom that was exercised could have been handled with Godly wisdom. How might the results have been different had Godly wisdom been employed? (Jacob and Esau – Genesis 25:29-34 and 27:1-38, or Sarai and Hagar – Genesis 16 and 21)
- Read Matthew 5:2-12. Discuss the “Beatitudes” one by one and how they paint a portrait of Godly wisdom and character.
  - Do you deal with others with a humble or haughty spirit? Do you yield to others, or must you have it your way?
  - How do you respond when dealing with those who differ? Are you stubborn, or do you portray meekness?
  - What or who satisfies you? Do you seek to be righteousness or right?
  - Are you quick to forgive because of the mercy that has been shown to you?
  - Do you look to God’s Word and seek to purify your heart, or do you look to man?
  - Are you a peacemaker, or do you need to “prove yourself right” in most situations?
- To reflect Godly wisdom, we must strive to be vertically right with God. Once we are consistently seeking after the wisdom from above, the way we behave in our horizontal relationships will begin being based on Godly wisdom as well. How do we begin to cultivate right relationships in these areas – vertical relationship with God, horizontal relationship with others? (2 Timothy 3:14-17)
- What can you do this week to show the world around you that true wisdom is rooted in a God-centered humility rather than a self-advancing superiority? (Be specific.)

## Further Study (to be used in your personal Quiet Time)

Read 1 Corinthians 13 this week and make a list of the traits of love that are listed in this passage. (e.g., patient, kind, ...) Beside each trait, note with whom and in what situation you will attempt to reflect these attributes of Godly wisdom.

*O God, make us a wise people to engage this age and to advance Your Kingdom!*  
 – David H. McKinley

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