

How to Recognize God's Wisdom

Intro:

1. v13 - What is wisdom?
 - a. American Heritage Dictionary: "An understanding of what is true, right & lasting".
 - b. It's the ability to live successfully.
 - c. It's how to know & practice what is right.
 - d. It's how to relate to people & make decisions.
2. There are two types of wisdom - worldly wisdom & heavenly wisdom.
3. How can you recognize them & make the right choice?

James 3:13-18

I. v14-16 - The Wisdom of the World

A. v15 - Notice it's source.

1. **Earthly** (ἐπίγειος) = sensual, having the worldly orientation.
2. **Unspiritual** (ψυχικός) = of the soul.
 - a. The ancient people divided humans into 3 parts:
 - (1) The body - the physical flesh & blood.
 - (2) The soul - physical life like the animals.
 - (3) The spirit - only man possesses which makes him a rational being akin to God.
 - b. The wisdom of the world is no more than thinking on the animal level.
 - (1) Jam 1:14 - but each one is tempted when, by his own evil desire, he is dragged away and enticed.
 - (2) I Cor 2:14 - The man without the Spirit does not accept the things that come from the Spirit of God, for they are foolishness to him, and he cannot understand them, because they are spiritually discerned.
3. Of the devil - enticed by Satan. **ILL: The Temptation of Eve** (Gen 3:1-7).

B. v14 - Notice it's characteristics.

1. **Selfish ambition** (ἐριθεία) technical term =
 - a. lit. "spinning for hire" (a woman looking for work);
 - b. then it became "any work done for pay";
 - c. then it became "doing whatever it takes to get what you want".
 - d. So - it is eagerness to display itself more than to display the truth; willingness to cause division in order to get to the top.
2. This leads to **bitter envy** (ζῆλος) = jealousy & bitterness. This eats away at you emotionally & eventually affects your health.
 - a. **ILL: In Gen 39:7-20, it was jealousy that sent Joseph into slavery.**
 - b. **ILL: In Jn 11:45-53, it was jealousy that sent Lord Jesus to the cross.**
3. Then, this leads to **boasting & lying against the truth.**
4. Having wisdom from above, you are more aware of what you do not know than what you do know.

C. v16 - Notice it's results.

1. **Disorder** (ἀκαταστασία) = lit. a negative standing down, so - confusion & instability.
2. Jam 4:1-2 - What causes fights and quarrels among you? Don't they come from your desires that battle within you? You want something but don't get it. You kill and covet, but you cannot have what you want. You quarrel and fight.
3. This becomes a breeding place for evil practices, not for good.

D. What should you do about it? Don't glory in your wisdom - but in your humbleness.

II. v13, 17-18 - The Wisdom from Above

A. v17 - Notice it's source.

1. It's from above - heavenly - from God.
2. You can get this wisdom by:
 - a. Asking the Lord for it! Jam 1:5 - If any of you lacks wisdom, he should ask God, who gives generously to all without finding fault, and it will be given to him.
 - b. Drinking in the Word of God! II Tim 3:15-17 - and how from infancy you have known the holy Scriptures, which are able to make you wise for salvation through faith in Christ Jesus. All Scripture is God-breathed and is useful for teaching, rebuking, correcting and training in righteousness, so that the man of God may be thoroughly equipped for every good work.

B. v17 - Notice it's characteristics.

1. **Pure** (ἄγνός) technical term =
 - a. lit. means innocent, clean & unmixed (like pure gold).
 - b. then it became "without spot or blemish" - qualified to be an acceptable sacrifice to God.
 - c. then it also became a person who went through the process to function as a priest in the Temple.
2. **Peace loving** (εἰρηνικός) = peaceful - characterizes the people of God (Matt 5:9).
3. **Considerate** (ἐπιεικής) = seemly, equitable, yielding, that which goes beyond the written law. One who would forgive when the Law would give him the right to condemn.
4. **Submissive** (εὐπειθής) only here in the NT = ready to obey or yield, openness to reason, ready to be convinced - but not gullible or weak. The opposite of Archie Bunker!
5. **Full of mercy** (ἐλεάω) = mercy, pity - compassion for people even when they are suffering the consequences of their own sin. (Used only of God & godly people in the NT)
 - a. We tend to say, "He made his own bed, now he can lay in it. Serves him right".
 - b. But - God had compassion on you even when you were hopelessly lost in sin (Rom 5:6-9).
 - c. When you are full of mercy, you can then receive mercy from God (Matt 5:7).
6. This mercy then produces **good fruit** - here probably means good practical help.
7. **Impartial** (ἀδιάκριτος) = undivided, unwavering - makes decisions based on the absolutes of God.
8. **Sincere** (ἀνυπόκριτος) = unhypocritical, open & honest, not pretending to be something you're not.

C. Notice the results.

1. v13 - **Understanding** - you have the "mind of Christ". I Cor 2:15-16 - The spiritual man makes judgments about all things, but he himself is not subject to any man's judgment: "For who has known the mind of the Lord that he may instruct him?" But we have the mind of Christ.
2. v18 - **a harvest of righteousness** - a good life & reputation.

D. What should you do about it?

1. Seek wisdom from above through the word of God, the example of Christian people & godly counsel.
2. Weed out of your life any worldly wisdom that opposes wisdom from above.
3. v13 - Demonstrate this wisdom in your life.

Your life will become abundant, purposeful & meaningful!