

## CONFLICT OVER WISDOM

**Request:** “In our age of enlightenment, we seem to be in conflict over wisdom both in our nation and our churches. Could you address this problem?”

In (Jms.3:13-18), James shows this conflict over wisdom. He taught that the conflict over wisdom was due to the two sources of wisdom in the world.

He taught that one source of wisdom was earthly, natural, and demonic – Old Man Cosmos Diabolicus thinking (OMCD). “This wisdom is not that which comes down from above, but is earthly, natural, and demonic.” (Jms.3:15)

It was a source of conflict with the other source of wisdom that James refers to heavenly, spiritual, and divine – New Man, Divine Viewpoint thinking (NMDV). “But the wisdom from above.” (Jms.3:17a)

James taught that everyone is influenced by one of these two sources for his wisdom – “Who among you is wise and understanding?” (Jms.3:13a)

James’ message is directed towards two groups in the church. One group he refers to as “teachers” and the other group as “my brethren” - “Let not many of you become teachers, my brethren, knowing that as such we shall incur as stricter judgment.” (Jms.3:10, 11-12)

Notice that James opens our lesson text with this rhetorical **question** – “**Who** among you is wise (sophos) and understanding (epistamai/ p.m.ptc/ skilled worker or master of a subject)? (Jms.3:13a)

Then James **answered** his question – “Let him **show** (deiknumi / a.a.impv.3ps) [to display or exhibit] by (ek+abl. of source) his **good** (tes kalos) **behavior** (anastrophe) [manner of life] his **deeds** (ta ergon) [divine production] in (en+inst of means) the gentleness (prautes) [grace orientation / humility] of wisdom (sophia).” (Jms.3:13b) [the good life]

<b>This lesson will study three aspects of the Conflict Over Wisdom.</b>
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### 1. The Greek word James used for wisdom was Sophia.

Sophia refers to practical insight into the realities of life. “Like a bad tooth and unsteady foot is confidence in a faithless man in time of trouble.” (Prov.25:20; 1:7)

Sophia was used for a master of a craft or highly skilled (2 Kings 24:14-16; Isa.3:3; Gen.41:33, 38-39). Sophia wisdom is the thinking and work of the wise man (Heb.5:11-14; Eph.5:15-17; Col.4:5-6).

The OT has a section known as Wisdom Literature (Job, Psalms, Proverbs, Ecclesiastes, and Song of Solomon). This Sophia wisdom is referring to the thinking and writing for the godly or divinely wise believer. “Like cold water to a weary soul, so is good news from a distant land.” (Prov.25:25) [Solomon]

Solomon was a classic example of divine wisdom – “Behold, I have done according to your words. Behold, I have given you a wise and discerning heart, so that there has been no one like you before you, nor shall one like you arise after you.” (1 Kings 4:12)

## 2. James taught that there were two different sources of wisdom in the world. We will contrast them as worldly wisdom and divine wisdom.

Note how James introduced earthly or worldly wisdom of OMCD – “**But if you (1cc).**” (Jms.3:14)

James described worldly wisdom as earthly, natural, and demonic – “This wisdom (he Sophia) is **not** that which comes down (katerchomai / p.m.ptc nsm) from above (anothen), **but** (alla / adversative) is earthly (epigeios), natural (psuchikos), and demonic (daimoniodes).” (Jms.3:15) [hindrance to NMVD] (John 8:44)

James described worldly wisdom as the practical application of OMCD (Jms.3:14-16). James reflects worldly wisdom by six areas of bad behavior: Since you have bitter jealousy and selfish ambition, do not be **arrogance** (me katakauchomai/ p.m.impv.2pl) and so **lie against** (pseudomai / p.m.impv.2pl) **the truth** because it leads to **disorder** (akatastasia) and **every evil thing** (phaulos pragma) (Gen.37) [Joseph sold] (Jms.3:14-16).

You can see Sophia worldly wisdom of OMCD operating in the disciples of Jesus in their request for greatness (**Luke 9:46-48**). – “Who set their minds on earthly things.” (Phil.3:19b) “Set your minds on the things above, not on the things that are on earth.” (Col.3:2)

NMDV thinking leads to good behavior - “And as for you, you meant evil against me, but God meant it for good in order to bring about this present result, to preserve many people alive.” (Gen.50:20) [Joseph]

## 3. James also described divine wisdom (from above) as the application of NMDV

(Jms.3:17-18) “In humility (prautes) [grace orientation] receive the word implanted, which is able to save your soul.” (James 1:21b)

“This wisdom comes down (katerchomai/ p.m.ptc) **from above (anothen)**.” (Jms.3:15)

Jesus used these same terms when talking to Nicodemus: “Truly, truly, I say to you, unless one is born again (gennao anothen), he cannot see the kingdom of God.” (John 3:3)

Jesus contrasted these two sources of wisdom in His discussion with Nicodemus: “If I told you earthly (ta epigeia) things and you do not believe, how shall I tell you heavenly (ta epourania) things?” (John 3:12)

James described divine wisdom as the practical application of NMDV (Jms.3:17-18): “Let him show (exhibit or display/ a.a.impv/ command) by his good behavior his deeds in the gentleness of wisdom.” (Jms.3:13b)

The spiritual maturing believer is to exhibit sophos (wise) and epistami (understanding) good behavior (tes kalos anastrophe) with everyday life, circumstances, and people.

James reflects divine wisdom by eight areas of **good behavior and deeds in the gentleness** (prautes) [grace orientation / humility] **of wisdom** (Sophia) [practical application of NMDV].

pure (hagnos)	full of mercy (mestos eleos)
peaceable (eirenikos)	good fruits (agathos karpos)
gentile (epieikes)	unwavering (adiakritos)
reasonable (eupeithes)	without hypocrisy (anupokritos)

When we change the source our thinking, we change the results of our behavior – “For as he thinks within himself, so he is.” (Prov.23:7)

**Note James’ conclusion about the divine production of “the gentleness of wisdom.”**  
(**Jms.3:18**; Eph.4:22-24; Rom.12:2).