



LET'S BEGIN HERE

If you could be guaranteed the receipt of any request from the Lord, for what would you ask? One of the most famous men in the Bible was presented with that very opportunity. Do you know what he requested? Riches? Great success? World fame? Long life and good health? None of the above. Solomon, the king of Israel, replied to the Lord's astounding offer: "Give me now wisdom and knowledge, that I may go out and come in before this people, for who can rule this great people of Yours?" (2 Chronicles 1:10).

That's right. Solomon asked for wisdom—not earthly wisdom but wisdom that could only come from God. James wrote to Christians in the first century that they would be wise to seek the same from heaven.



Getting Started: What You Need Is Wisdom

When searching the Scriptures, a helpful first step is to gather resources that will guide you in your study. Make certain you have a Bible dictionary and a concordance handy, as well as a reliable commentary on the book of the Bible you're studying. For this study of James, we recommend you get a copy of *Swindoll's Living Insights New Testament Commentary: James, 1 & 2 Peter*. You'll find a description of that and other resources on the last page of this study.

NOTE: From time to time throughout this study, you'll notice bolded page numbers in parentheses next to a question or comment. These page numbers correspond to the section in *Swindoll's Living Insights New Testament Commentary: James, 1 & 2 Peter* where that particular point is discussed.

Take a few minutes to read through all of chapters 1 through 3 of James to ensure continuity in your mind as you begin. Remember: At times it's helpful to read the same passage in multiple versions for comparison.

Quotable

James says,
"Resting neatly in
the secret place of
the human heart
are two basic
motivations: one is
jealousy, the other
is selfish ambition."

Both reside in
the recesses of the
unwise heart.

— Charles R. Swindoll



The Wise, the Unwise, and the Otherwise (Part One)

James 3:13–18



Helpful Hint

Remember: *Observation* is a critical beginning technique you will want to use to put together the pieces of a passage of Scripture. Paying particular attention to James 3:13–18, make some initial observations about what you see—for instance, *are there any repeated words? Did James use any connecting words that offer clues into what he was emphasizing?* Take some time to make notes on a separate sheet of paper about what you discover.



Your Turn in the Scriptures

James understood how critical wisdom is for enduring trials. But he also knew the human tendencies to rely on self-guidance, common sense, and worldly advice when tough times arise. That's why he wrote:

Who among you is wise and understanding? Let him show by his good behavior his deeds in the gentleness of wisdom (James 3:13, emphasis added).

Based on this verse, what are two clear evidences of godly wisdom?

A reliable principle for living is it's not only important what we do in response to trials but how we do what we do. How does James 3:13 support that wise principle?

What would be an example of someone doing what is good but not in the right frame of mind?



The Wise, the Unwise, and the Otherwise (Part One)

James 3:13–18

Correlation is the Bible-study technique that draws upon related Scriptures to discover insight and depth in the meaning of the passage you're studying.

Put your hands on a Bible dictionary or a theological dictionary of the New Testament. Look up the word *wisdom*. Read through the entry for this word that is used in both the Old and New Testaments. What did you discover?

How is wisdom used in the Old Testament as compared to or in contrast with its use in the New Testament? What examples did you find?

Now take a few minutes to read James 3:13–14. Read carefully and pay close attention to James' development of this thought. After you've read and studied these two verses, answer the questions below as specifically as possible.

James contrasted *divine wisdom* and *human wisdom*. Let's look a bit closer at these two distinctions. Divine wisdom is *genuine* (James 3:13):

- Marked by *good behavior*. What do you believe James meant by this? Try to support your answer with correlated passages in the New Testament. (Hint: Read Romans 10 and Colossians 3.)

- Marked by *gentleness*. Why did James include this as one of the markers of godly wisdom? (Hint: Read Galatians 5.)



The Wise, the Unwise, and the Otherwise (Part One)

James 3:13–18

Human wisdom is counterfeit (James 3:14).

Did you notice the phrase *in your heart*? James made clear that the two corresponding markers of human wisdom — bitter jealousy and selfish ambition — reside deep within the motive chamber of the unwise heart.

Read Matthew 12:22–37. Take some time to carefully study this passage. Who are the players involved? What is the context for this classic confrontation?

How does the response of the Pharisees to Jesus' ministry popularity and success correlate with James' teaching about bitter jealousy? Would you characterize their reaction as wise or unwise? Why?

James also indicated *selfish ambition* to be a clear sign that someone was operating by human wisdom. What did he say would be the result of living by such sinful motives (James 3:16)?

What did James say would be the results of someone living by godly wisdom (3:17–18)?



The Wise, the Unwise, and the Otherwise (Part One)

James 3:13–18

Now turn in your Bible to Proverbs 3. Take a few minutes to read through the entire chapter. As you do, write down instances, words, or phrases that align with James' teaching on wisdom in James 3.

What do you see?

A Scenario for You to Consider:

A friend stuck in a bad situation has come to you. She absolutely does not know what to do and needs to make a decision fairly quickly. By nature, she is bright, resourceful, highly educated, and very experienced in what she does professionally. But she seems to be paralyzed by indecision. Using Proverbs 3:1–6 and what you have learned from James 3:13–18, write a brief but personal note to her about how she can turn to God and His Word and find direction for her decision. Don't preach. But try to be clear and use examples from Scripture.

Dear FRIEND:

Praying for you,
Your friend, _____



A FINAL PRAYER

Lord, You are so gracious when You provide so generously the wisdom I need to walk in obedience to You and Your perfect will. Thank You for Your Word and for Your Holy Spirit which light the path through the darkness of each trial I face. Help me to wait on You and trust Your leading today. In Jesus' name, amen.



JAMES Hands-On Christianity

The Wise, the Unwise, and the Otherwise (Part One)

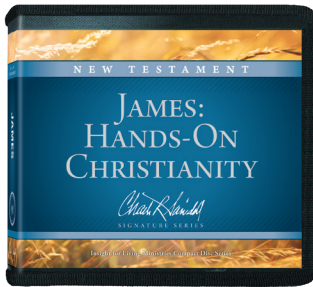
James 3:13–18

SEARCHING
THE
SCRIPTURES

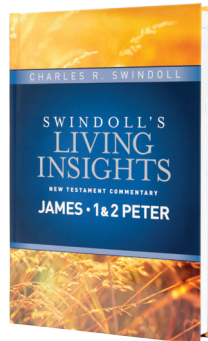
MESSAGE MATE



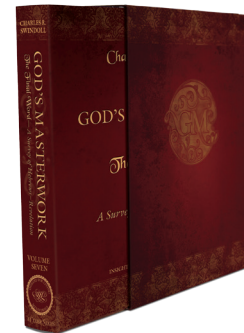
Tools for Digging Deeper



**James: Hands-On
Christianity**
by Charles R. Swindoll
CD series



**Swindoll's Living Insights
New Testament Commentary:
James, 1 & 2 Peter**
by Charles R. Swindoll
hardcover book



**God's Masterwork, Volume
Seven: The Final Word—A
Survey of Hebrews—Revelation**
by Charles R. Swindoll
CD series

For these and related resources, visit www.insightworld.org/store
or call USA 1-800-772-8888 • AUSTRALIA +61 3 9762 6613 • CANADA 1-800-663-7639 • UK +44 1306 640156

For the 2016 broadcast, this Searching the Scriptures study was developed by Mark Tobey in collaboration with Charles R. Swindoll based upon the original outlines, charts, and sermon transcripts. It was released as a Message Mate through Insight for Living Ministries.



www.insight.org | www.insightworld.org

Copyright © 1974, 2003, 2016 by Charles R. Swindoll, Inc. All rights are reserved worldwide. Duplication of copyrighted material for commercial use is strictly prohibited.

Committed to Excellence in Communicating Biblical Truth and Its Application

MM08

6