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Wisdom: What it Looks Like in Action (James 3:17)

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A leader is continuously handling challenges, often some that seem insurmountable. How do you refill your capacity to create solutions?

INTRODUCTION

Have you asked God for breakthroughs as you face the current demands in your life? Solomon was thrust into high office as a young man. This new King asked God for wisdom, a discerning heart to lead His people (1Kings 3:9). God blessed Solomon, giving him wisdom, wealth, and honor. The Scriptures invite us to ask for wisdom. **“If any of you lacks wisdom, you should ask God, who gives generously to all without finding fault, and it will be given to you”** (James 1:5). Have you prayed for more wisdom? What does wisdom look like in practice?

DISPLAYING WISDOM

James 3:13 Who is wise and understanding among you? Let them show it by their good life, by deeds done in the humility that comes from wisdom.

Scholars throughout history have acclaimed wisdom to be the most noble and valuable of all possessions. Solomon wrote, **“Acquire wisdom; and with all your acquiring, get understanding”** (Proverbs 4:7). The Scriptures seem to use the terms “wise” and “understanding” synonymously. Author-Pastor John MacArthur, points to a subtle difference.¹ The Greek word *Sophos* (wise) is a general word used to communicate knowledge, theory, or philosophy. Jewish writers in the New Testament used the word *Epistemon* (understanding) to specify the specialized knowledge of a skilled tradesman or professional. The Apostle James challenges those who possess wisdom to demonstrate it in their behavior. **How are your deeds or activities revealing the wisdom that you have gained?** A person with great wisdom has the ability to act meekly or with humility. Moses was trained as a warrior but was described as “very meek”, under the sovereign control of God (Numbers 12:3). **Are you referred to as one who displays power under control? Can you give an example of this?**

CHARACTERISTICS OF TRUE WISDOM

James 3:17 But the wisdom from above is first pure, then peaceable, gentle, open to reason, full of mercy and good fruits, impartial and sincere.

John MacArthur adds detail to list given by James.² **Peaceable** is the first characteristic in the list. This is the seventh of Jesus’ Beatitudes (Matthew 5:9). A wise person does not cause conflict by their selfishness, but produces peace through their humility. **Have you seen this in practice?**

A person with wisdom is **gentle**. This is displayed as patience, courtesy, being able to handle dishonor, even abuse (Matthew 5:5). **Jesus was called “gentle”**.

Reasonable is a third attribute of a person with wisdom. This is reflected in the first Beatitude as teachable, compliant, and not stubborn. Military discipline typically produces a leader who meets the demands of any situation. Consider: Cornelius (Acts 10:4) and Naaman (2Kings 5:13).

Wisdom is displayed by one who is **full of mercy**. We see this in a person who is forgiving, reaching out to help others in difficult situations (Matthew 5:7). **Have you seen this in action? Consider the Good Samaritan (Luke 10:37).**

Good fruits, good works are examples of a person with godly wisdom. This clearly demonstrates the character that is within a person with wisdom. Dorcus’s life was fruitful (Acts 9:35). **Can you think of a leader who is being fruitful?**

Wisdom is evident in a person who is **unwavering**. There is no uncertainty, indecision, inconsistency or doubtfulness. **George Washington Carver was unwavering in his life and work**

Finally, James shows that a person with wisdom is **without hypocrisy**. There is no deceit, envy, or slander (1Peter 2:1). Jesus was confronted by those who tried to trick Him, slander His Name, and were envious of His popularity.

A PRAYER

Aba Father, help me to find examples of those living in wisdom so that I may sharpen my practice. Guide me in the way. Give me a wise and discerning heart so that I can provide leadership in the settings that You place me in. Bless me with a breakthrough in this, my present situation. I pray in the Name of Jesus, Your Son. Amen.

¹ John MacArthur, The MacArthur Study Bible, (Thomas Nelson, Inc.) 2006. p1900.

² John MacArthur, New Testament Commentary. (Moody Publishers) 1998. pp176-180.