

Request Granted

WISE

OPENING QUESTIONS

- What are the best “words of wisdom” you’ve ever heard and why?
- How would you define wisdom?

WHAT THE BIBLE HAS TO SAY ABOUT IT

What does the word “wisdom” actually mean? We use phrases like “conventional wisdom says...” to mean something that everyone agrees is true and “let’s hear some words of wisdom from so-and-so...” to mean that so-and-so knows more than your average person. In movies, elderly people are often portrayed as founts of wisdom, like Peter Parker’s Uncle Ben in the Spider-Man movies or Professor Dumbledore in the Harry Potter series. Sometimes it seems like the main criteria for being considered wise is living past a certain age! This all makes it seem like wisdom is the same as agreeing with others, knowing more than others, or being more experienced than others.

The book of James has a different idea of what counts as wisdom. James, brother to Jesus, wrote this book as a really practical guide to living a life of faith. He wrote it to a group of people who were learning what it meant to live as Christians. They had no “conventional wisdom” or “words of wisdom” to follow because Christianity was brand new! James has some very specific things to say about heavenly wisdom that make it clear that God doesn’t think age or popular opinion are the main ways to achieve it.

This is good news because it means that no matter how young you are, all you have to do is ask to receive wisdom from God! However, James makes it clear that heavenly wisdom has to be asked for and received without ulterior motives of jealousy or greed. It’s not like our earthly concept of wisdom, which comes from our broken, human understanding of the world. Luckily, James gives us a list of ways we can know the difference between the wisdom of the world and heavenly wisdom.

Read James 1:5–8, 3:13–18

Answer:

- Think of the wisest person you know. Why would you say he or she is wise?
- Describe a time when you needed wisdom.

- Have you ever thought about asking God for wisdom before?
- James explains that doubt, jealousy, and selfish ambition conflict with heavenly wisdom. Do you struggle with any of these three things?

A SECOND LOOK

TV stars Chip and Joanna Gaines have achieved a lot throughout their marriage. After years of barely making ends meet, they made it big through their TV show, *Fixer Upper*, where they helped families buy and renovate homes. Chip and Joanna's positive relationship was a big reason for their success. As the success of the show grew, they were able to start a booming retail store in their hometown of Waco, TX, launch wallpaper and furniture lines, and even create a product line for Target.

In countless interviews, Chip and Joanna have been clear that their Christian faith motivates the way they live their lives. Before they made it big, Joanna was running a successful home furnishing store, but she and Chip sensed the Lord telling them to close it down in order to focus on their children. Though it felt like Joanna's dream was dying, they experienced great peace as they obeyed the Lord. It was through that obedience that Joanna began taking part in Chip's home renovation business, and the rest is history.

This willingness to lean into God's wisdom continues to be true of the Gaineses. They recently announced that they are ending their hit show in order to focus more on their family. This is complete earthly foolishness, as their show is the source of their success and a guarantee that their other endeavors will stay in the limelight. But instead of pursuing selfish ambition, the Gaineses are choosing to pursue a wisdom that will result in good fruits within their own family life.

Answer:

- How have Chip and Joanna's actions reflected heavenly wisdom rather than earthly wisdom by our definition from James?
- The Gaineses' experience supports what James says about God's wisdom and peace:
 - How often do you experience God's peace about your decisions?
 - Brainstorm some ways you can seek God's wisdom in your everyday life to experience more of his peace.

- Is there any place in your life where you think that God is inviting you to live by his heavenly wisdom instead of earthly wisdom?

APPLY IT

God makes an amazing promise to give wisdom to anyone who asks! What can you do today to seek more of God's wisdom? (NOTE: you could use some of the ideas the group brainstormed in the "A Second Look" discussion above.)

Be specific:

- What are you going to do?
- When are you going to do it?
- Is there someone who can keep you accountable?

THINK ABOUT IT

"Some people go their entire lives without realizing that they are elevating their own wisdom and abilities above the Lord's." – John Stange, *Overcoming Anxiety*

MEMORY VERSE

"If any of you lacks wisdom, let him ask God, who gives generously to all without reproach, and it will be given him."

James 1:5 (ESV)



Disciples of Christ find peace in seeking God's wisdom.