

# Worldly Ways Won't Work

James 3:13—4:10

## Introduction

Have you seen the commercial where the father tells his son, who is trying to start a lawn mower, “Pull fast, not hard.” Then, after a few more tidbits like this, the son comes to the father and asks for financial advice. The father says, “Son, you know how I hate to give advice.” Well, it seems that everyone wants to give advice today. Just look at all the videos on You Tube, showing how to do things. Well, I’m here to tell you, when it comes to living this life, these **WORLDLY WAYS WON’T WORK**. That’s what James is talking about when he says: *Do you not know that friendship with the world is enmity with God?* (**James 4:4**).

## Characteristics of Wisdom

James asks: *who is wise and understanding among you* (**James 3:13**)? The world equates wisdom with common sense. But that’s not what James is talking about. He’s talking about wisdom from above (**v. 15**), God’s wisdom, not worldly wisdom, which James says is *earthly, unspiritual, and demonic* (**v. 15**). He gives us five qualities or characteristics of God’s wisdom.

### Pure

First, it’s pure. God’s wisdom has no ulterior motives. It’s not there to try and make us look good or appear smarter than everyone else. One with this wisdom has no hidden agenda.

### Meek

Second, it’s meek. Sometimes, people have thought of meekness as being milk-toast. But James describes meekness as being *peaceable, gentle, and open to reason* (**v. 17**). The meek person is always seeking a peaceful solution, is kind, and willing to listen.

### Merciful

The third characteristic of God’s wisdom is mercy. A truly wise person is merciful, always willing to cut the other some slack.

### Impartial

Fourth, true wisdom is impartial. A truly wise person does not show favoritism when making decisions.

## Sincere

Finally, a truly wise person honestly cares about others. He or she is sincere, not saying one thing while meaning another. The truly wise person can be trusted.

## Submit to God

But how do we get this wisdom from God? James gives us a two-step process: *Submit yourselves therefore to God [and] resist the devil* (James 4:7). Notice before we can think about resisting the devil, the world, or our flesh, we must submit to God. We see a picture of submitting to God in verses 8 through 10 (read **v. 8—10**). To submit to Him, we humble ourselves in His presence and repent of our sin. We humble ourselves in His presence through Bible reading and study. The Catechism helps focus us on the Scripture we need. Luther says in the Longer Preface to his ***Large Catechism***: *Catechism study is a most effective help against the devil, the world, the flesh, and all evil thoughts* (***Large Catechism, Longer Preface, 10***).

## Resist the Devil

This helps us resist the devil because, as the ***Explanation of the Small Catechism*** says: *Christ has completely conquered the devil. Therefore the devil can no longer accuse me of my sins, and I can resist his temptations* (***Explanation of the Small Catechism, Apostles' Creed, Q 137***). When we submit ourselves to God through His Word, we avail ourselves to His power to defeat Satan. When we eat and drink the bread and wine that has been blessed by the Word, we are submitting to Him as well. Through God's Word He gives us His wisdom from above to live a successful life before Him. No, **WORLDLY WAYS WON'T WORK**. God's way is the way to success.

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*And the peace of God,  
Which surpasses all understanding,  
Will guard your hearts and minds in Christ Jesus.*

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