

# Wisdom from Above

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BY Guest Writer

**Scripture Reading: James 3:13-18, Proverbs 11:18, Romans 12:9-21, Galatians 5:22-23, Hebrews 12:11**

You could fill an entire library with all the bad dating advice heard around the world. As early as elementary school, girls are told to change their style or personality to woo a crush. In high school, magazines tell girls to pretend to laugh at his jokes or play hard to get. Even in our twenties, thirties, and beyond, the barrage of bad dating advice from media, friends, and professionals is inescapable. Advice rooted in jealousy, insecurity, and selfishness has engulfed our culture.

We've all sought advice from the world, whether on dating or some other aspect of life. We all face experiences that challenge and confuse us—they're often the moments that grow us the most. As James says from the very beginning of his book, the trials of life produce maturity (1:2-4). But **where we choose to turn with our questions when we've lost our way can dramatically change the course of our journey.**

As a counselor, people often turn to me for advice and wisdom while in the throes of crisis. And the truth is, I don't have all the answers or the perfect advice for every person. Thankfully, my work is more about supporting people along their journey, rather than telling them which steps to take. The desire for clarity isn't wrong, but there is only one all-knowing and perfect Counselor—and it sure isn't me.

We need to be careful whom we trust to speak into our lives. Hear me on this: it is immeasurably valuable to open your life up to guidance from your trusted church community. But we need to remember that all of us are broken vessels, imperfectly reflecting the image of God. The Lord speaks through people (Matthew 10:20), but we must weigh the words of others with the help of the Holy Spirit to discern what God Himself is saying.

James does not take the matter of bad advice lightly, going as far as to call it demonic (James 3:15). Why is it such a big deal? Because bad advice can wound people and even destroy lives. **There is a sharp distinction between wisdom from above, and wisdom from below. Knowing how serious the consequences can be, we need to be careful with both the counsel we take and the counsel we give.**

Thankfully, James describes what godly “wisdom from above” looks like. Wisdom from God is “pure, then peace-loving, gentle, compliant, full of mercy and good fruits, unwavering without pretense” (3:17).

Interestingly, those descriptions don’t sound anything like the most “influential” voices in our culture. But is there anyone that does come to mind when you read James’s description of wisdom? Those are the people we ought to turn to for advice, the people we should hope to grow more like over time.

Of course, **the life of Christ is the ultimate example of godly wisdom in action.** If anyone knows what it is like to face trials, it’s Jesus before the cross. And ultimately who does He seek for comfort and wisdom but His Father? (Luke 22:39-43). This is God’s best for us too.

In times of crisis and pain, when we’re looking for direction, may our hearts learn to hear the instruction of the Holy Spirit. May we seek first the wisdom of our Heavenly Father. Even now, He longs to be gracious to us, to generously give us wisdom when we ask Him for it (Isaiah 30:18; James 1:5). We’ll know it’s from Him because true wisdom from above carries with it the sweet aroma of gentleness and peace.

*Kaitie Stoddard is a professional counselor who recently relocated from Chicago to Colorado with her husband. She has her Master’s degree in Clinical Psychology and is passionate about helping couples and families find healing in their relationships. On any given weekend you’re likely to find Katie snowboarding in the Rocky Mountains, checking out new restaurants with friends, or catching up on her favorite Netflix and podcast series.*