

## “The Wisdom That Is From Above”

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Have you noticed lately that there are some sections of the New Testament that really express our aspirations for genuine Christian character? Examples include the Beatitudes (Matthew 5:1-12), the Fruit of the Spirit (Galatians 5:22-23), the Christian’s Armor (Ephesians 6:13-17), and the Christian Graces (2 Peter 1:5-7). While these verses may not show us what we presently are as a Christian, they definitively project what we can be as a Christian. The optimism of verses like Philippians 4:13 motivates us to make the effort to mirror these wonderful traits in our lives. Philippians 4:13 says, “I can do all things through Christ who strengthens me” (NKJV).

May we add to the list of helpful Scriptures in this connection James 3:17 which unveils “the wisdom that is from above.” It says, “But the wisdom that is from above is first pure, then peaceable, gentle, and easy to be entreated, full of mercy and good fruits, without partiality, and without hypocrisy.”

Perhaps a brief word study from the Greek text will allow us to focus on this impressive list of desirable character traits.

ἀγνη,	pure (from ἅγιός which means “holy” and “morally upright”)
εἰρηνικη,	peaceable
ἐπιεικής	gentle
εὐπειθής	easy to be entreated; open to reason, willing to give in (to someone else)
μεστή ἐλέους	full of mercy
καρπῶν ἀγαθῶν	full of good fruits
ἀδιάκριτος	without partiality; without prejudice or favoritism
ἀνυπόκριτος	without hypocrisy; sincere, genuine

(James made use of alliteration—four “α” words; four “ε” words—to convey these concepts. One possible reason why he did may be for ease of memorization for his original readers. While it doesn’t help us much who are reading in English, it is at least interesting.)

A comparison of James 3:17 from just two other translations may deepen the study and appreciation of the teaching it contains without extending the study much further. The New King James Version reads, “But the wisdom that is from above is first pure, then peaceable, gentle, *willing to yield*, full of mercy and good fruits, without partiality and without hypocrisy” (italicized emphasis added). And, the American Standard Version, “But the wisdom that is from above is first pure, then peaceable, gentle, easy to be entreated, full of mercy and good fruits, *without variance*, without hypocrisy” (again, the italicized emphasis has been added).

The infusion of the concepts communicated in these words into our character will yield “the wisdom that is from above” in our lives.