

# If Any of You Lacks Wisdom

Michael  
Gifford



If Any of You Lacks  
**Wisdom**

Michael Gifford

Published by



***New Heights Marketing, Inc.***

SoundBibleStudies.com

NewHeightsInc.com

770-606-9195

Copyright © 2016 by Michael Gifford

All rights reserved. This book or any portion thereof may not be reproduced or used in any manner whatsoever without the express written permission of the publisher except for the use of brief quotations in a book review or scholarly journal.

First Printing: 2016

New Heights Marketing, Inc.  
4740 Allison Drive  
Sugar Hill, GA 30518  
770-606-9195

SoundBibleStudies.com  
NewHeightsInc.com

Unless otherwise noted, all scriptures are taken from the NEW KING JAMES VERSION®. Copyright© 1982 by Thomas Nelson, Inc. Used by permission. All rights reserved.

This book is dedicated to my children, Whitney Mitchell, Elise Gifford, Andrew Gifford, Adam Gifford, and my son-in-law, David Mitchell. May the Lord continue to bless you with the wisdom from above as you serve Him faithfully.

## **Other Books Available from Michael Gifford**

- Bible Study Books
  - The Essence of Living Faith
  - Hope - Anchor of the Soul
  - The Greatest of These
- Grief Recovery Books
  - In the Lap of God - Comfort from the Psalms
  - A Walk with Grief

Order from

 ***New Heights Marketing, Inc.***

SoundBibleStudies.com

NewHeightsInc.com

770-606-9195

# Contents

Introduction.....	i
Chapter One: The Wisdom from Below .....	1
Chapter Two: The Wisdom from Above - Introduction.....	13
Chapter Three: The Wisdom from Above - Pure .....	25
Chapter Four: The Wisdom from Above - Peaceable .....	37
Chapter Five: The Wisdom from Above - Gentle .....	49
Chapter Six: The Wisdom from Above - Willing to Yield .....	60
Chapter Seven: The Wisdom from Above - Full of Mercy .....	72
Chapter Eight: The Wisdom from Above - Full of Good Fruits .....	84
Chapter Nine: The Wisdom from Above - Full of Good Fruits 2 .....	95
Chapter Ten: The Wisdom from Above - Without Doubt.....	108
Chapter Eleven: The Wisdom from Above - Without Hypocrisy ...	119
Chapter Twelve: Additional Benefits of Wisdom .....	131
Chapter Thirteen: Obtaining Wisdom .....	143
Appendix A: Wisdom in Proverbs by Category .....	155
Appendix B: God's Plan of Salvation .....	175



## Introduction

"Wisdom *is* the principal thing; *Therefore* get wisdom. And in all your getting, get understanding." (Proverbs 4:7).

Deep in the heart of every man and woman is the desire to be wise. We want to make wise choices, be they choices regarding business decisions, financial matters, or relationships. We want to provide wise answers when someone asks us for advice. Some want wisdom to create insightful, quotable comments that will live on through the ages while others just wish they could come up with quick, pointed retorts to put another person in his or her place.

Wisdom, however, is more than just making decisions, offering answers, and tossing out witty one-liners. Wisdom is neither a gimmick nor is it something that is to be called upon only when we think we need it. Instead, its root seeks soil beneath the routine issues of life and into the very heart of our being.

How many of us have truly plumbed the depths of wisdom? Sadly, too often we turn to the words of mere men in hopes that their thoughts can inspire wisdom within us. While the sayings of the ancients such as Aristotle and Plato as well as their modern-day counterparts can provide us with some degree of wisdom, they will never completely satisfy our appetite for this precious commodity. There is only one satisfactory source for the wisdom that will not only sustain us, but that will lead us into a fuller life and, ultimately, eternal peace. Both King Solomon and his father, King David, wrote that wisdom begins with fear (reverence, respect) of the Lord (Psalm 111:10; Proverbs 9:10). The wisdom that needs to permeate our lives originated with God (Proverbs 8:22). Therefore, it is to God that we must turn and ask, "Lord, how can I obtain this wisdom?" As we open

## *If Any of You Lacks Wisdom*

---

our hearts and eyes and ears we find that He has abundantly answered our plea in His inspired Word, the Bible.

This book focuses on this "wisdom from above." In it, you will find a study of the attributes of wisdom, its benefits, and how to obtain it. Because of the fact that sometimes we can only appreciate the light after we have seen the darkness, you will also find herein a description and consequences of the "wisdom from below" so that you can clearly see the distinction between what God calls wisdom and what the world calls wisdom. Recognition of the difference between the two types of wisdom is critical if we are to benefit from the type that promises God's blessings.

My hope and prayer is that this study will help each of us develop the deeper wisdom that God offers through His Word. May the Lord receive the glory through this effort.

Michael Gifford  
June 27, 2016

If Any of You Lacks  
Wisdom



# Chapter One:

## The Wisdom from Below

### Memory Work:

"But if you have bitter envy and self-seeking in your hearts, do not boast and lie against the truth. This wisdom does not descend from above, but *is* earthly, sensual, demonic. For where envy and self-seeking *exist*, confusion and every evil thing *are* there." (James 3:14-16)

No book of the Bible draws a sharper contrast between the way of God and the way of the world than the epistle of James. The two are polar opposites, with God's way leading us to eternal life and the world's way leading us to eternal loss. Writing to Christians who were scattered abroad, perhaps due to persecution, James made it clear that God was not to blame for their troubles (James 1:13-16). To the contrary, he said, God is always good (James 1:17). To illustrate that truth, he wrote, "Of His own will He brought us forth by the word of truth, that we might be a kind of firstfruits of His creatures." (James 1:18). How much more evidence do we need of the goodness of God than the fact that He saves those who obey Him through the blood of Jesus Christ?

This contrast between the way of God and the way of the world is again seen in James' later comments regarding wisdom.

"Who *is* wise and understanding among you? Let him show by good conduct *that* his works *are done* in the meekness of wisdom. But if you have bitter envy and self-seeking in your hearts, do not boast and lie against the truth. This wisdom does not descend from above, but *is* earthly, sensual, demonic. For

where envy and self-seeking *exist*, confusion and every evil thing *are* there. 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." (James 3:13-17).

The wisdom from above, which is the primary focus of this book, is rich with Godliness and blessings while the wisdom from below is rife with evil and heartache. Sadly, we often blur the line between the two types of wisdom, thus causing us to call that which is good evil and that which is evil good (Isaiah 5:20). Recognizing the definitive distinction between the two will help us identify the one that we should pursue.

Let's begin by noticing the characteristics of the wisdom from below as stated in James 3:15. First, it is not from above. God did not originate it. He is not the cause of the untold damage that results when people live by this type of wisdom. If we want to be angry at someone for the evil in this world, let's be angry at Satan for promoting the evil and at ourselves for listening to and obeying him. He is the father of lies (John 8:44). He is selling us a bill of goods and far too many of us are buying it. Satan is the ultimate scammer, offering us his version of wisdom but neglecting to point out its consequences.

Secondly, the wisdom from below is earthly. Isn't that pretty much what James just said when he wrote that it is not from above? Indeed it is, but we're all familiar with the fact that the three best ways to learn something are "repetition, repetition, and repetition." Both Paul and Peter wrote of the importance of repeating truths (Philippians 3:1; II Peter 1:12-15). In basically saying the same thing but in a slightly different manner, James reminds us that the finger of blame for evil should not be pointed at God.

The majority of the times the word "earthly" is found in the New Testament, it is used in contrast to that which is heavenly or spiritual. For example, Jesus said, "If I have told you earthly things and you do not believe, how will you believe if I tell you heavenly things?" (John

3:12). Paul wrote, "For many walk, of whom I have told you often, and now tell you even weeping, *that they are* the enemies of the cross of Christ: whose end *is* destruction, whose god *is their* belly, and *whose* glory *is* in their shame—who set their mind on earthly things." (Philippians 3:18-19). Again, God is not the author of the wisdom from below.

Thirdly, the wisdom from below is sensual. Notice the digression of each consecutive term as James described this type of wisdom. He went from the general ("does not descend from above") to the more specific ("earthly") and now he has gone down to a lower level in his description of the wisdom from below. On the surface, the word "earthly" may not be immediately recognized as signifying evil in and of itself. The context determines its meaning. On the other hand, the use of "sensual" strikes the reader at first sight with thoughts of wickedness and lewdness. While the original Greek word was also used to describe the human life as a whole ("natural" in I Corinthians 2:14), in this context it denotes evil just as it did when Jude used the word in Jude 19. "But you, beloved, remember the words which were spoken before by the apostles of our Lord Jesus Christ: how they told you that there would be mockers in the last time who would walk according to their own ungodly lusts. These are sensual persons, who cause divisions, not having the Spirit." (Jude 17-19).

At the bottom of the list of the characteristics of the wisdom from below, both in order and in actuality, is the word, "demonic" or "devilish" in the King James Version. This is the only time this word is used in the New Testament. It shows that the source of this wisdom is as low as it can get. Yes, it is not from above, it is earthly, and it is sensual, but at the very core of it is Satan himself. That fact, in and of itself, should be enough to persuade us that we should not pursue this type of wisdom.

Now that we've noted the characteristics of the wisdom from below, let's consider how this wisdom manifests itself. It does so in two ways according to James 1:14; through bitter envy and self-seeking.

We're all too familiar with what envy is. It often rears its ugly head in our own lives today. When someone receives a promotion, buys something really nice or has other blessings come their way, the temptation is to envy them, especially if they got the promotion over us or if we can't get our hands on the same (or better) things than they have. Paul said that when Christians are blessed, other Christians are to "rejoice with those who rejoice" (Romans 12:15). This is polar opposite to the attitude of envy. Envy causes us to make unfair judgments, question motives and even suggest that someone who has been blessed must have done something ungodly to get what they got. Interestingly, the word translated, "envy" also carries with it a positive meaning ("zeal" in II Corinthians 9:2). This fact reminds us that words in the Bible must be examined in their context. It also reminds us that the same heart that has the potential to produce evil also has the potential to produce good.

The wisdom from above doesn't manifest itself just in envy though. James wrote of "bitter" envying. This is envying to the <sup>nth</sup> degree. This type of envy doesn't stop with the attitude. It acts on that attitude. Think of King Saul after David killed Goliath. According to I Samuel 18:6-7, as David was returning from that battle, the women of the cities of Israel came out in celebration and said, "Saul has slain his thousands, and David his ten thousands." The next two verses describe Saul's response. "Then Saul was very angry, and the saying displeased him; and he said, "They have ascribed to David ten thousands, and to me they have ascribed *only* thousands. Now *what* more can he have but the kingdom?" So Saul eyed David from that day forward." (I Samuel 18:8-9). Reading on from that point, we learn of how Saul tried to kill David. His envy was indeed bitter.

Beside manifesting itself in bitter envy, the wisdom from below shows its true colors through self-seeking. "Get whatever you want for yourself no matter who you have to destroy to get it." That was the philosophy of life to which James was referring. Sorrowfully, we must admit that this philosophy is still prevalent. This word is found

in the list of the works of the flesh ("selfish ambition") in Galatians 5:20. That list is followed by the tragic words, "those who practice such things will not inherit the kingdom of God." (Galatians 5:21). Count Diotrophes in the number of individuals who have personified the word "self-seeking." John said of him, "I wrote to the church, but Diotrephes, who loves to have the preeminence among them, does not receive us. Therefore, if I come, I will call to mind his deeds which he does, prating against us with malicious words. And not content with that, he himself does not receive the brethren, and forbids those who wish to, putting *them* out of the church." (II John 9-10). Wherever we see men and women who are promoting themselves and pursuing power and wealth, despite how their actions might harm others, we are seeing the manifestation of the self-seeking wisdom from below.

James was quite thorough in his warning regarding the wisdom from below. Not only did he list its characteristics and cite examples of how it manifests itself, he then proceeded to describe the fruit that is produced wherever and whenever the seed of this wisdom is sown and nurtured.

The first fruit of the wisdom from below is confusion. It's obvious why confusion comes from envy and self-seeking. Where these exist, there is no unity. Instead, there is, as the original word translated, "confusion" indicates, disunity and instability. Those who manifest the wisdom from below are looking out for themselves. They argue, fuss, and fight and have no single standard by which they can all agree to abide. There is, in fact, a single standard (God's Word - John 17:17), but they have forsaken it. To them, each one is his or her own standard. Those who choose to follow rather than lead become confused by the worldly-wise leader in this corner crying out, "Follow me!" while the worldly-wise leader in the opposite corner demands, "Follow ME!" Whom should we follow? Unfortunately, it's often the one who looks the best, has the most money, or promises the most reward who attracts the most followers. If you think this sounds like our modern-day political scene, you're not far off. It's also an apt description of the denominational world.

The confusion that is born of the wisdom from below is a specific fruit. Generally speaking, according to James, every evil comes from this type of wisdom. That's the second fruit. To see more about the produce that comes from the wisdom from below, read Galatians 5:19-21 for starters. Wherever you read of sin in the Bible, you are seeing the fruit of the wisdom from below. The same can be said for the evil we see in our world today.

The wisdom we have just considered is not from above. It is earthly, sensual, and demonic. It manifests itself in bitter envy and it is self-seeking. Its fruits are confusion and every evil thing. There's one more fact that James wrote about it that needs to be brought out. According to James 3:14, this wisdom, and all that goes with it, comes from the heart.

Going back to James 1:13-16, we find that evil is produced when we listen to temptation and act upon it. Jesus also said that evil comes from within (Matthew 15:19-20). In essence, when it comes to the wisdom from below, the heart of the matter is a matter of the heart. It's no wonder that Solomon wrote, "Keep your heart with all diligence, for out of it spring the issues of life." (Proverbs 4:23).

Had the Lord stopped James from writing at James 3:16, we would have every reason to be distressed. What if we hate all of this evil? What if we don't want to commit all of this wickedness? What if we want to do better? If verse 16 were the end, we would be left with no alternative but to give up hope. But then the Holy Spirit, through James, opened the door of darkness to expose the light of the wisdom from above. We don't have to remain in the night of sin. We can step forth into the ray of righteousness and benefit from the wisdom from above.

May we all take away at least two lessons from this chapter. First, the wisdom from below is evil and destructive to our lives as well as to our souls. Second, the marvelous mercy of God offers us a better way if we will only humble our hearts and seek it.

## **Exercise Your Mind**

### **TRUE OR FALSE**

1. T – F: God is not to blame for the troubles we face.
2. T – F: The wisdom from below is earthly.
3. T – F: The wisdom from below is sensual.
4. T – F: The wisdom from below is demonic (devilish).
5. T – F: God offers an alternative to the wisdom from below.

### **MULTIPLE CHOICE**

1. The source of the wisdom from below is: A) God; B) people; C) Satan.
2. Words in the Bible: A) must be examined in their context; B) no longer have any meaning for us; C) can be defined however we feel is best.
3. To envy someone is to: A) wish the best for them; B) want what they have even if it means hurting them to get it; C) have a true love and concern for them.
4. The wisdom from below causes confusion because: A) God wants it to; B) everyone sets up their own standard of right and wrong; C) God does not offer a better alternative.
5. To stop practicing the wisdom from below ourselves, we must change: A) our hearts; B) God's Word; C) the way everyone else thinks.

### **FILL IN THE BLANKS**

(Note: All scripture quotations are taken from the New King James Version and can be found in this lesson.)

1. "Of His own will He \_\_\_\_\_ us forth by the word of \_\_\_\_\_, that we might be a kind of \_\_\_\_\_ of His \_\_\_\_\_."

*If Any of You Lacks Wisdom*

---

2. "If I have told you \_\_\_\_\_ things and you do not \_\_\_\_\_, how will you believe if I tell you \_\_\_\_\_ things?"
3. "For many \_\_\_\_\_, of whom I have told you \_\_\_\_\_, and now tell you even \_\_\_\_\_, *that they are* the \_\_\_\_\_ of the \_\_\_\_\_ of Christ: whose end is \_\_\_\_\_, whose god is *their* \_\_\_\_\_, and *whose* \_\_\_\_\_ is in their \_\_\_\_\_ - who set their \_\_\_\_\_ on earthly things."
4. "I wrote to the \_\_\_\_\_, but Diotrephes, who loves to have the \_\_\_\_\_ among them, does not \_\_\_\_\_ us. Therefore, if I come, I will call to mind his \_\_\_\_\_ which he does, prating against us with \_\_\_\_\_ words. And not \_\_\_\_\_ with that, he himself does not \_\_\_\_\_ the \_\_\_\_\_, and \_\_\_\_\_ those who wish to, \_\_\_\_\_ *them* out of the church."
5. "Keep your \_\_\_\_\_ with all \_\_\_\_\_, for out of it spring the \_\_\_\_\_ of life."

**QUESTIONS FOR DISCUSSION**

1. Is it important for us to study about the wisdom from below? Why or why not? \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_
-

*The Wisdom from Below*

---

---

---

2. Why do some blame God for their troubles? \_\_\_\_\_

---

---

---

3. What can we say to help someone who is blaming God for their troubles? \_\_\_\_\_

---

---

---

4. What does it mean to "call that which is good evil and that which is evil good"? Can you think of any examples of this? \_\_\_\_\_

---

---

---

5. What are some ways in which Satan tries to deceive us? \_\_\_\_\_

---

---

*If Any of You Lacks Wisdom*

---

6. Other than those mentioned in the lesson, what are some other things that we allow to make us envious of others? \_\_\_\_\_

---

---

---

7. Cite one other Bible example of envy. Who was envious of whom? Why were they envious? What were the results of that envy? \_\_\_\_\_

---

---

---

8. What scripture or scriptures would be good for us to consider if we have become self-seeking individuals? \_\_\_\_\_

---

---

---

9. What was Diotrephes doing and how was he harming the church?

---

---

---

*The Wisdom from Below*

---

10. Why would envy and self-seeking cause confusion? \_\_\_\_\_

---

---

---

11. What current day examples of confusion other than those in the lesson come to mind? \_\_\_\_\_

---

---

---

12. Why did Paul say in Galatians 5:21 that those who engage in the works of the flesh will not inherit the kingdom of God? \_\_\_\_\_

---

---

---

13. How can we keep our hearts "with all diligence?" \_\_\_\_\_

---

---

---

*If Any of You Lacks Wisdom*

---

14. How does pursuing the wisdom from below draw us away from God? \_\_\_\_\_

---

---

---

15. Why does God give us an alternative to the wisdom from below? \_

---

---

---

**SEARCH THE SCRIPTURES**

(Note: For this section, you will find a good concordance helpful. All scripture quotations are taken from the New King James Version.)

Where is the following Bible verse located? \_\_\_\_\_

"For you are still carnal. For where *there are* envy, strife, and divisions among you, are you not carnal and behaving like *mere men*?"

# If Any of You Lacks Wisdom

This 13 lesson book focuses on the "wisdom from above" as described in James 3:17. In it, you will find a study of the attributes of the wisdom from above, its benefits, and how to obtain it. Beyond this, you will find a categorical listing of many of the Proverbs of Solomon to aid you as you strive to develop the wisdom from above in your life.

The Lord said that He will grant wisdom "liberally and without reproach" if we will only come to Him for it (James 1:5). Join us as together we heighten our knowledge of this wisdom and increase our hunger and thirst for it through a study of God's Word.

Michael Gifford has been preaching and teaching the Gospel of Jesus Christ for 37 years. He is the author of the books, The Greatest of These, The Essence of Living Faith, Hope - Anchor of the Soul, In the Lap of God - Comfort from the Psalms, and A Walk with Grief, as well as numerous articles that can be found online at [www.SoundBibleStudies.com](http://www.SoundBibleStudies.com). He has preached in located works in Georgia and Alabama, has hosted and co-hosted Bible-based radio and television programs, and is currently an instructor for the Georgia School of Preaching and Biblical Studies. He holds the Bachelor of Arts degree in Bible from Freed-Hardeman University and the Master of Arts in Religion degree in Counseling from Harding Graduate School of Religion. He is married to the former Emily Waites. They have six children and four grandchildren. Michael and Emily reside in Sugar Hill, Georgia and are members of the church of Christ in Buford, Georgia.



Order From:

 ***New Heights Marketing, Inc.***

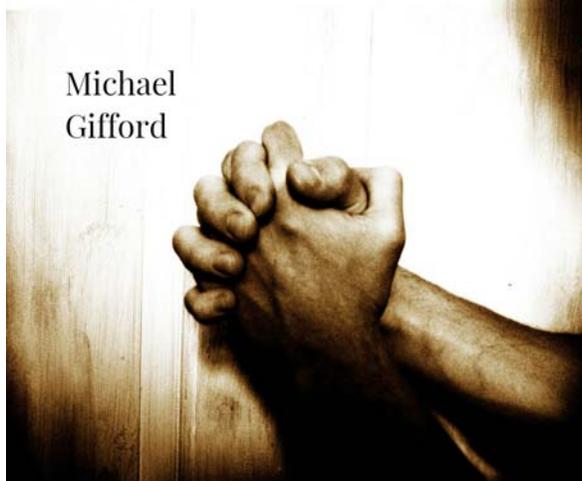
Phone: 770-606-9195 - Order online at [www.SoundBibleStudies.com](http://www.SoundBibleStudies.com)

[CLICK HERE](#) TO ORDER THIS BOOK



# If Any of You Lacks Wisdom

Michael  
Gifford



Other Books by Michael Gifford

- The Essence of Living Faith
- The Greatest of These is Love
- Hope - Anchor of the Soul
- In the Lap of God: Comfort from the Psalms
- A Walk with Grief

All books can be ordered from New Heights Marketing Inc. at [soundBiblestudies.com](http://soundBiblestudies.com) or by calling 770-606-9195.