

## Can You Correct Others With Gentleness?

The *International Sunday School Lesson* for Sunday August 17, 2008  
James 3:1-10, 13-18

*“But the wisdom from above is first pure, then peaceable, gentle, willing to yield, full of mercy and good fruits, without a trace of partiality or hypocrisy”* (James 3:17—NRSV).

*“But the wisdom that is from above is first pure, then peaceable, gentle, and easy to be intreated, full of mercy and good fruits, without partiality, and without hypocrisy”* (James 3:17—KJV).

Before the time of King Jesus, people acclaimed King Solomon as the world’s wisest king (see Matthew 12:42). In answer to his prayers, God gave King Solomon “wisdom, discernment, and breadth of understanding as vast as the sand on the seashore” (1 Kings 4:29). However, all those who ask King Jesus can enjoy and share with others the blessings of an even greater wisdom, “the wisdom from above.”

James wrote, “But the wisdom from above is first pure.” Of first importance, to maintain pure wisdom we must not mix beliefs or practices that are contrary to the Bible’s teachings with our faith. King Solomon made this mistake when he set up idols around Jerusalem and misled his people.

When making efforts to maintain a pure faith in our lives, homes, and churches, we must avoid becoming thoughtless, unkind, judgmental, or hypercritical, for “the wisdom from above” is peaceable and gentle.

Gentleness is “born of wisdom” and a fruit of the Spirit (James 3:13 and Galatians 5:23). Therefore, those living and guided by the Holy Spirit will manifest gentleness. Paul wrote that our gentleness should be known to everyone, and if we need to correct someone, we should do so with gentleness (Philippians 4:5 and 2 Timothy 2:25). Peter wrote that if we need to give others a reason for our hope that we should do so with gentleness (1 Peter 3:16). Because the wisdom from above is gentle, those who seek it will avoid becoming boastful, arrogant, or rude, and strive to treat others with love, patience, and kindness (see 1 Corinthians 13). — Copyright 2008 L.G. Parkhurst, Jr.

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## Questions for Further Thought or Class Discussion

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Think about your answers to the questions below before your Sunday school class meets, discuss in class, or use for further study. In some cases, I do not always write the questions to have a definitive right or wrong answer. In most cases, the questions should encourage everyone to think about how to apply biblical truths to their daily lives. Before beginning to answer the questions below, read the entire Scripture lesson in your favorite translation or compare translations. Write your thoughts in the space provided and take them to your Sunday school class for discussion.

1. Why do you think the Holy Spirit moved James to emphasize purity first in his list? In what ways can our lives, homes, and churches begin to lack pure wisdom today? What can happen to people as the months and years pass by when pure wisdom is lacking in their life, home, or church?
2. Can you remember a time when someone corrected you without gentleness? How did that make you feel?
3. How has it made you feel after you have realized that you corrected someone without gentleness? What can you do after such a situation? Why is gentleness important for Christians?
4. How can someone acting and speaking unlovingly, unkindly, and unmercifully to an unbeliever or someone who is mistaken about the true teachings of the Bible drive them further away from what is right and true? Can you think of someone who has been affected by such unkindness when correcting them? What happened to them?
5. Why do some people misunderstand gentleness for weakness in a Christian? What can a believer say or do if someone misunderstands their gentleness for weakness and this misunderstanding leads to abusive treatment in actions or words?

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