

21. The overriding reason for this situation is that his stream of consciousness is filled with human viewpoint, human good, and evil; his volition responds to that inventory of ideas by directing his tongue to verbalize his cosmic concepts toward others causing great discord among the brethren.

James 3:11 Does a spring supply to a fountain both fresh [γλυκός (*glukús*): “sweet” (KJV) i.e., “potable”] and bitter water?

v. 12 Is it possible for a fig tree to produce the fruit of an olive tree, my fellow believers, or a grape vine the fruit of a fig tree? Neither can a saltwater spring produce fresh water. (EXT)

v. 13 Who among you is wise and understanding? Let him show by his good behavior his deeds in the gentleness of wisdom. (NASB)

1. Verse 13 begins with the phrase, “Who among you is wise.” The word “wisdom,” σοφία (*sophía*), has several applications and meanings.
2. The Greek lexicons provide a number of meanings for the word dependent upon its use and context. When referring to human application it is defined as, “knowing how to do something: clever, skillful, experienced; understanding that results in wise attitudes and conduct. *Wise* in that the wisdom is divine in nature and origin (James 3:13).”⁶
3. A second analysis refers to its meaning in the New Testament and its Hebrew equivalent, *chokmah*, and differs from the classical meaning in two ways:

First of all, the biblical concept of wisdom is theocentric rather than anthropocentric. It denotes a fear of God and an understanding of His ways. It does not necessarily imply brilliance or scholastic training; rather, *sophós* indicates adroitness, the ability to apply with skill what one knows (especially religious truth). The word is used of one who has acquired special information, secret doctrine (*mustérion* [μυστήριον **mystery: Church Age]).⁷**

4. The third emphasizes wisdom whose definition reads:

⁶ Walter Bauer, “σοφός,” in *A Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament and other Early Christian Literature*, 3d ed., rev. and ed. Frederick William Danker (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 2000), 935.

⁷ Spiros Zodhiates, ed., “σοφός,” in *The Complete Word Study Dictionary: New Testament*, rev. ed. (Chattanooga: AMG Publishers, 1993), 1301.



σοφός [wise]: Knowledge of practical moral wisdom resting on a knowledge of God. The opposite of arrogance, it indicates the submissiveness to offense that is free from malice and desire for revenge.⁸

5. There are millions of people who accrue knowledge over time. Some become erudite in one specific area of knowledge in which they are considered professionals. Science, mathematics, medicine, jurisprudence, economics, and even nature, among other disciplines, each has its own vocabulary of technical language.
6. One may be characterized as having “wisdom” in one of these. However, there is a category of wisdom that is not associated with the ones suggested here.
7. There is a wisdom that is obtainable by anyone who has a willingness to learn, under the indwelling and filling ministries of the Holy Spirit. This development of wisdom is acquired by consistent study and retention of Bible doctrine.
8. This wisdom is available to anyone who is humble enough to give the Word of God a positive hearing and receptive enough to accept and retain them by positive volition to its content.
9. The Bible contains eleven categories of systematic theology, each of which has an inventory of associated subjects that define each specific category.
10. Any believer who is positive to the teaching ministry of the Holy Spirit and objective enough to place his personal faith in its content, will slowly but surely acquire and retain the knowledge of God.
11. It is from this ever-increasing inventory of divine thought that a believer grows in grace and with perseverance advances to the sophisticated level of divine viewpoint.
12. Through this process, the believer has the opportunity to apply these principles to his life and the circumstances he encounters. The trigger that makes this possible is the verb, **πιστεύω (pisteúō)**: “to believe,” and the noun, **πίστις (pístis)**: “faith.”
13. The verb, *pisteúō*: “to believe,” is transitive and demands an object. Therefore, this verb’s meaning is not clear until its working object is stated. In the gospel of salvation, the working object is Jesus Christ. Post salvation, it is one’s belief in the Word of God.
14. In the secular categories of knowledge there are principles, laws, doctrines, and categories that are specific to each discipline. They have been put to the test, applied to circumstances, and discovered to be consistently accurate.

⁸ Cleon L. Rogers Jr. and Cleon L. Rogers III, “James 3:13,” in *The New Linguistic and Exegetical Key to the Greek New Testament* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan Publishing Co., 1998), 560.



15. Over time they have been accepted and certified as a “law of science, a law of medicine, or a law of economics.” Even some of these well-established disciplines are often challenged by those who assert discovery of different results and therefore different conclusions.
16. What these disciplines are really desirous of establishing is a law that can be depended upon to produce the same affect over and over again and thus become a “law of whatever.”
17. Recently we referred to the law of gravity and Sir Isaac Newton’s publication of the “Three Laws of Motion.” Having done so, Newton certified the existence of gravity, he did not understand its source. No one else has done so since.
18. Therefore, the existence of gravity is confirmed and utilized by elite mathematicians to understand the structure of the universe, how all heavenly bodies possess gravity, but are simultaneously acted upon by the gravitational pull of other bodies.
19. The earth is held in its orbit by the gravitational pull of the sun while the moon is held in its orbit by the gravitational pull of the earth. This dance among the luminaries continues unabated from time immemorial, Genesis 1:1 to the present day.
20. Here is Sir Newton’s comment on the fact gravity exists, but admits he does not know its cause or source.

So far, I have explained the phenomena of the heavens and of the sea by the force of gravity. I have not yet been able to deduce from the phenomena the reasons for these properties of gravity and I invent no hypotheses. Everything which is not deduced from the phenomena should be called an hypothesis, and hypotheses, whether metaphysical or physical, whether occult qualities or mechanical, have no place in experimental philosophy.

21. Newton saw clearly that his universal law of gravitation is a description, not an explanation. He wrote in a letter to Richard Bentley:

You sometimes speak of gravity as essential and inherent in matter. Pray, do not ascribe that notion to me; for the cause of gravity is what I do not pretend to know.⁹

⁹ Morris Kline, *Mathematics and the Search for Knowledge* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1986), 223.



22. Both he and mathematicians who followed have remained flummoxed about the “cause of gravity.” Therefore, we boldly go where no mathematician has gone before by appealing to the “source of truth” for the answer. We find it in:

Colossians 1:16 For by means of Him [Jesus Christ, v. 15] all things were created [κτίζω (*ktízō*): to produce from nothing, Gen. 1:1], both in the heavens and on earth, the visible things [the universe] and invisible things [mathematics], whether human governments or constituted authorities, or angelic rulers and authorities: all things through Him and for His purpose have been created.

v. 17 He eternally existed before all things, and by means of Him all things hold together [συνίστημι (*sunístēmi*): i.e., gravity]. (EXT)

23. Sir Isaac Newton discovered gravity which Jesus Christ created. The former is true while the latter is truth. Know the difference between the two.
24. Those who discover phenomena of nature are wise in the category of experimentation which results in a conclusion.
25. Those who study Scripture discover truth revealed by the source of all that is knowable, the revelations provided by the Holy Spirit. Continued inculcation eventually completes the edification complex of the soul.
26. The word the NASB uses for this advance is, “understanding”: **ἐπιστήμων** (*epistēmōn*). This word does refer to personal understanding of a subject, however, its application here is far more complex.
27. To ensure that the word, *epistēmōn*, is clearly understood, we consult the lexicons and dictionaries to amplify its definition:

ἐπιστήμων pertains to being knowledgeable in a way that makes one effectual in the exercise of such knowledge, expert, learned. The expert in σοφός [sophós: wise] will be verified by quality of performance.¹⁰

ἐπιστήμων, to know thoroughly. Endued with knowledge, understanding, expertise, the equivalent to the English “scientist.”¹¹

(End JAS3-88.Rev. See JAS3-89.Rev for continuation of study at p. 341.)

¹⁰ Walter Bauer, “ἐπιστήμων,” in *A Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament and other Early Christian Literature*, 3d ed., rev. and ed. Frederick William Danker (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 2000), 381.

¹¹ Spiros Zodhiates, ed., “ἐπιστήμων,” in *The Complete Word Study Dictionary: New Testament*, rev. ed. (Chattanooga: AMG Publishers, 1993), 639.



28. Dan G. McCartney provides this insight to the word **ἐπιστήμων (epistēmōn)**:

James resumes the concern with those who would be teachers (3:1) and connects it with the practical demonstration of wisdom by good works. The paragraph also links the issues of speech and wisdom with the discussion of faith in James 2: those who deem themselves wise and understanding (i.e., have the potential to be a teacher) must show their works by good behavior. The works are the same kind of works as were instrumental in the justification of Rahab and Abraham: works of faith.

Hence, although James says literally that the wise and understanding must show the works in humble wisdom by means of good behavior, the context makes it clear that the works are instrumental in showing faith, so here works are the key to showing what kind of wisdom one has. Good behavior points to the kind of works that point to humble wisdom.¹

29. Conclusion: academic understanding cannot effectively be applied. The concept is understood, but not considered as a working object for application.
30. The unbeliever can perform what he considers to be a “good work” and by doing so, he wrongly assumes he wins a point with God. Yet, no matter what he does as an unbeliever, he gains no approval whatsoever from God.
31. Principle: With regard to salvation, there is absolutely no “work” an unbeliever can perform to acquire salvation. Salvation is acquired by the unbeliever placing his personal faith in the working object of Jesus Christ.
32. Post salvation, the believer must grow in grace in order to acquire guidance and understanding about how to make good decisions based on the working object of the Word of God.
33. The “works” of a believer may be characterized in two ways: (1) human good and (2) divine good.
34. Human good occurs when a believer performs a work that, in his view, is biblically sound. Possibly so, but if he does so out of fellowship, i.e., not current on rebound, then the deed is done outside the bubble.

¹ Dan G. McCartney, *James* (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2009), 198.