

19. Wisdom is how spiritual maturity is defined. It indicates maximum inventory of divine thought which is able to encounter the trials and difficulties of the devil's world while remaining copacetic.

### C. Definition of Copacetic

1. The word "copacetic" is classified as slang by etymologists and here is an explanation of why:

This slang word for excellent, topnotch, or first-rate was labeled in one of our earlier books the probable invention of Bill "Bojangles" Robinson, one of the great black entertainers of this century and certainly one of the greatest tap dancers who ever lived. At least one reader challenged that attribution, saying that he had heard comedian Joe Frisco use the term in 1911. That may well be, but since Bojangles was probably active also in that time, all we can prove is that the word was well known in show business circles and that, while Robinson may not have invented it, he surely did much to popularize it.<sup>1</sup>

2. Therefore, copacetic is indicated as slang in English dictionaries and defined as follows:

**Very satisfactory; excellent; first-rate; in excellent order; fine and dandy; as it should be; cool.**

3. The best analysis of the word, and as a result, how it plays into the concept of our study, is found in *Word Mysteries & Histories*:

All is not copacetic when we consider how little we know about the origin of the word *copacetic*, meaning "excellent, first-rate." Is its origin to be found in Italian, in the speech of southern blacks, in the Creole French dialect of Louisiana, or in Hebrew? John O'Hara, who used the word in *Appointment in Samarra* <sup>2</sup> later wrote *copacetic* was "a Harlem and gangster corruption of an Italian word." O'Hara went on to say, "I don't know how to spell the Italian, but it's something like copacetic." The spelling is now fixed, however, as *copacetic*, even though the origin of the word has not been determined.

The Harlem connection mentioned by O'Hara would seem more likely than the Italian, since *copacetic* was used by black jazz musicians and is said to have been southern slang in the late nineteenth century. If *copacetic* is Creole French in origin, it would also have a southern homeland.

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<sup>1</sup> William Morris and Mary Morris, "copacetic," in *Morris Dictionary of Word and Phrase Origins* (New York: Harper and Row, Publishers, 1977), 152.

<sup>2</sup> "Town in north-central Iraq, 65 miles NNW of Baghdad, on the east bank of the Tigris River" (*Merriam-Webster's Geographical Dictionary*, 3d ed., s.v. "Samarra".)

According to this explanation, *copacetic* came from the Creole French word *coupersètique*, which meant “able to be coped with,” “able to cope with anything and everything,” “in good form,” and also “having a healthy appetite or passion for life and love.”

Those who back the Hebrew or Yiddish origin of *copacetic* do not necessarily deny the southern connections of the word. One explanation has it that Jewish storekeepers used the Hebrew phrase *kol bēsedeq*, “all with justice,” when asked if things were O.K. Black children who were in the store as customers or employees heard this phrase as *copacetic*.

No explanation of the origin of *copacetic*, including the ones discussed here, has won the approval of scholars.<sup>3</sup>

4. Regardless of its origin, *copacetic* describes the relaxed mental attitude that occurs in a believer’s soul who has made significant advance toward the sophisticated spiritual life.
5. The “joy” spoken of by James takes us to the high ground of spiritual maturity. He takes us there in the very first verse of the opening paragraph with the word.
6. He then begins the process of teaching us how to get there. I have made this clear. We will be working systematically toward the objective of unalloyed happiness.
7. This is not to be interpreted as a mental attitude that, for example, a believer might stand transfixed in the middle of a fire, grinning like a jackass eating briars, and saying, “I’m good. This doesn’t bother me at all. I have unalloyed happiness. Just call me one *copacetic* dude.”
8. A person can encounter a tremendous amount of suffering, mental or physical, and endure it all while living inside the bubble.
9. The idea of unalloyed happiness does not imply an ongoing status of a satisfied smile while enduring the exigencies of the devil’s world. The objective is a satisfied mind.
10. To amplify the development of unalloyed happiness from Scripture, we’ll review a passage from 1 Peter 1:7–8.

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<sup>3</sup> David J. Jost, et al., eds, “*copacetic*,” in *Word Mysteries & Histories: From Quiche to Humble Pie* (Boston: Houghton Mifflin Co., 1986), 51–52.

#### D. Peter's Development of the Copacetic Spiritual Life

1. True happiness is the mental attitude possessed by Christ while being judged for the sins of the human race.
2. He was sustained by the enabling power of the Holy Spirit. The Lord's doctrinal and grace orientations were motivated by His unconditional love for all mankind.
3. This happiness is made available to us through the execution of the ten problem-solving devices.
4. Knowledge of doctrines which teach about the Lord's uses of these devices enables the believer to do the same by means of the Holy Spirit's power.
5. The problem-solving devices utilized by our Lord on the cross are the subject of the first chapter of Peter's First Epistle.
6. Two verses are important to our study so we will note verses 7 and 8 of chapter 1 followed by their expanded translations:

**1 Peter 1:7** The proof of your faith, being more precious than gold which is perishable, even though tested by fire, may be found to result in praise and glory and honor at the revelation of Jesus Christ;

**v. 8** and though you have not seen Him, you love Him, and though you do not see Him now, but believe in Him, you greatly rejoice with joy inexpressible and full of glory. (NASB)

**1 Peter 1:7** that the genuineness of your doctrinal inventory, being much more precious than gold, which is perishable, even though tested by fire for the purpose of approval, may be discovered to result in praise and glory and honor at the revelation of Jesus Christ at the Rapture;

**v. 8** and though you have never seen Him, you continue loving Him, with reference to Whom at the present time you continue not seeing Him, yet you keep on believing with sublime unalloyed happiness that is inexpressible and full of resplendent glory. (EXT)

1. Verse 7 concludes by referencing the Rapture of the church: “at the revelation of Jesus Christ.” In verse 8, the personal pronoun “Him” refers to the Lord.
2. The initial verb in verse 8 is the aorist active participle of the verb ὁράω (*horáō*) accompanied by the negative conjunction οὐκ (*ouk*).
3. This is translated, “you have never seen Him.” That we also have never seen Jesus Christ becomes a major issue in the Christian way of life for we must learn about Him from Scripture in order to know Him.
4. We can only know Christ by studying the Bible and from that revelation we are able to acquire personal love for Him, the present active indicative of the verb ἀγαπάω (*agapáō*).
5. The present tense is durative for an action or state that began in the past and continues into the present for those who are advancing in the plan of God at problem-solving device #7.
6. *Agapáō* is the main verb and the action of the aorist participle, “not to see,” precedes the act of loving Him.
7. Therefore, we come to love a Person whom we have never seen. Having never seen Christ is important since the action of the constative aorist of *horáō*, to see, views the action of the verb in its entirety.
8. Since we have never seen Him, but yet love Him, then we have advanced to problem-solving device #10: occupation with Christ.
9. Although we have never seen Him, we acquired personal love for Him. This is the first increment of the believer’s staying power inside the operational divine dynasphere.
10. *Agapáō* is the main verb and refers to these believers’ virtue love: (1) personal love for God which must precede (2) unconditional love for all mankind. Virtue love demands grace and doctrinal orientation for it to be sustained.
11. As the verse continues we have a second participle. The first was the aorist active participle of *horáō* with the negative *ouk* indicating we “have never seen Him.”