

James - Finding Wisdom

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[0:00] All right, if you have your Bibles this morning, where are we at? James, that is right. We started in James last week, and we're going to kind of continue our walk through the book of James.

And if you remember, I shared last week that James is often considered, it's kind of the Proverbs of the New Testament. In the Old Testament, we know that the book of Proverbs is a book of wisdom, a book with a lot of practical advice on how we as Christians should live out our lives, how we can do that with the wisdom that God gives us.

Well, James in the New Testament is kind of another book of wisdom. And it's a book that really talks about how we apply our faith as we live our lives, how we put it into action.

As I shared last week, the book of James is really where the rubber meets the road. It's practical faith, how we should live our lives.

And a lot of it is challenging. And it is meant to be challenging. As Christians, if we are never challenged, do you know what? We're not going to grow.

[1:06] The only way to grow is to be challenged. And the book of James does that. You know, in some verses in James, which we'll get to later on, it talks about looking in the mirror.

How many of you looked in the mirror this morning? Did you like what you saw? No, that's an irrelevant question. But you look in the mirror.

And when you look in the mirror, you expect to see a reflection, right? Of what's actually there. Not what you want it to be. Not what you wish it was.

That's a magic mirror. That's not a regular mirror, is it? You look in the mirror, and the reflection you get is what is actually there. The book of James, it says that we need to be like a person looking in the mirror.

Not at ourselves physically, but ourselves spiritually. To be honest enough to see what is truly there. And to see what areas we may need to work on in our lives.

[2:10] When we look in the mirror in the morning, we see areas we need to work on, right? Don't you? Amen to that. When we look in the mirror spiritually, when we come to church on a Sunday morning, we need to be seeing things we need to work on, because we've all got them.

All of us have areas that we need to work on. And that's really what James is all about. And I hope, as it talks about, we're not like somebody that looks in the mirror and then just walks away without doing anything.

I'm guessing none of you did that this morning. You looked in the mirror and you thought, I need to comb my hair. I need to wash my face. I need to do something to look better than that looks.

Because I hope when we come to church that we don't just hear and then leave, that we say, hey, this is an area that I need to work on.

So that's what the book of James is. And if you remember last week, what did we talk about last week? It started right off the bat with really a tough thing. Trials. Challenges that we have in life. And that's not the challenge, because those come. We don't have to work to have a challenge in our lives. Those just happen. The challenge that it gives us is, what are we supposed to do in those challenges?

[3:15] Count it all joy when you fall into these challenges. That is the challenge, isn't it? Not to have the challenges those come, but to face them with joy in our heart of knowing that God's got it, of knowing that God's involved, and knowing that God's on the throne and nothing will change that.

So that's what we talked about this week, or last week. This week, we are in James chapter 1, and we're going to start in verse 5. Now, I'm going to ask, if you're able, if you would stand this morning as we read God's Word.

James 1, beginning in verse 5. If any of you lack wisdom, let him ask of God, that giveth to all men liberally, and upbraideth not, and it shall be given him.

But let him ask in faith, nothing wavering. For he that wavereth is like a wave of the sea, driven with the wind and tossed. For let not that man think that he shall receive anything of the Lord.

A double-minded man is unstable in all his ways. Let's pray together this morning. Lord God, we once again just thank You for Your presence in this place. We thank You that You are a God that created us, that You are a God that loves us, that You are a God that has a desire to meet with us this morning, to speak to our hearts.

[4:39] Lord, to give us Your wisdom so that we can grow in our lives. And I pray that is what happens in this place. Lord, for each one of us that's here, I know there's other things we can think about, other activities that we can just let our minds drift to.

But I pray for the next few moments that we would truly be able to focus on You, on our relationship with You, on what You desire to see in our lives, and that we would have a commitment in our hearts to focus on that and to strive to be the people that You want us to be.

So teach us this morning from Your Word, Lord, and help us to have hearts that are soft and moldable. And we ask and pray these things in the name of Jesus Christ, and all God's family said, Amen.

You can be seated this morning. All right, so as we look on and move on here in James, this section starts with a little two-letter word that...

I mean, God knows exactly what it needs to say, but I sometimes wonder whether this word really needs to be in there or not. What is the word? If. So that's a question, right?

[5:44] If any of you lack wisdom. If. Giving us the benefit of the doubt.

That's really giving us the benefit of the doubt. Do we lack wisdom? It's not a trick question. I'm really asking, do we lack wisdom?

Certainly at times. And I would say most of the time we lack wisdom of ourselves. When we rely on ourselves, when we rely on our own smarts, when we rely on our own ability to make decisions, we are inevitably going to lack wisdom.

Because this is something that we do not have enough of on our own. We don't have enough strength on our own, but the other thing we don't have enough of is wisdom. So when it says, if any of you lack wisdom, I think it would be just as fitting if it would say, when you lack wisdom.

Because it's not really a question of if we do, it's just when we do. Because there are always times in our lives when we think, I don't know what to do. How many times in your life have you had that thought go through your mind, I am not sure what to do in this situation.

[6:56] I am not sure how to handle this conversation. I am not sure how to handle this relationship. I am not sure in this specific circumstance how to handle it or what to do or what to say.

Have you found yourself in that before? Guess what you need? Everybody say wisdom. Wisdom. I think, I'm guessing, we have all had those times in our lives. When we just get to the point where like, I don't know. I don't know what to do. I don't know what to say. I don't know how to handle this. Those are the times when we lack wisdom. Not if, but when. And the thing is, God understands that at times we're going to lack wisdom.

And that's why He gives us the recipe for what to do when we're at that point. He doesn't just leave us not knowing. What does it say if you lack wisdom or when you lack wisdom?

[7:52] However you want to look at that. What does it say to do? Ask. Ask. Ask. Ask. Ask. Ask. Now, there's another part of that that's vital. Ask God.

Ask God. That's the vital part, right? I mean, we can ask a lot of other people for wisdom, right? Are they always going to give you real wisdom?

Are they always going to give you good advice? I mean, you have people in your life that give you good advice, I hope, right? Right? Are they always going to be correct? No.

Who is always going to be correct? God. So it's not just telling us to ask, but it's directing us who to ask. Ask, let him ask of God.

That is our source of wisdom. That is who we should go to. So when we lack wisdom, ask God, and then it tells us something about God. It says that gives to all men liberally.

[8:52] What does that mean? Freely. Generously. Any other words you can think of? Abundantly. Here's the thing, folks, that I think we need to remind ourselves of.

Our God is not stingy in giving out wisdom. He's not. Sometimes when we give out things, we're stingy because we only have a limited supply of it, right?

Isn't that the case often? If somebody asks us for something or we're giving something away, we usually have a limited supply of it. So we kind of all give a little here and all. Money.

None of us have an endless supply of money, do we? If you do, come talk to me. I got some uses for it. But we don't have an unlimited supply of money.

So we think carefully about how we give it out, don't we? And who we give it to. Some things we have no choice. We need to pay taxes. We need to pay for heat and food and all these things.

[9:51] But then we often give to other things. And we may give a little here as we can and a little there as we can. And we really have to consider because our supply is limited.

But, folks, when it comes to wisdom with God, here's the thing. Do you know why He can give liberally? Because He's unlimited. He has a supply that's never-ending. And He can just continue to give out this wisdom.

And not only that, God wants to give out this wisdom to us. Do we understand that? Do you think God wants us to be wise? Yeah, because what does wisdom lead to?

Good decisions. Does God want us to make good decisions? Think about your children. If you have children, do you want them to be wise? Do you want them to make good decisions?

If they ask you for advice, will you do everything within your power to give them the best wisdom that you can? Sure you will. Folks, that's God. He wants us to ask for wisdom because He says, I'll give it.

[10:53] I've got plenty. All you have to do is ask. Well, that seems easy, doesn't it? So why do we sometimes not ask for wisdom?

Pride. How does our pride get in the way of asking for wisdom? Self-sufficiency? We think we already know it all.

The other thing, it goes on. We'll come back to that. But it says, who gives to all men liberally. And the King James says, and upbraids not. Upbraideth not. Do you know what that means, upbraided? If you look up upbraideth in the dictionary, it means to criticize or to scold severely. That means when we ask for wisdom, God isn't going to scold us.

He's not going to say, you dummy. Why didn't you figure that out on your own? He's not going to say, how many times are you going to come here asking me for wisdom? I'm tired of giving it to you. That's not our God. He's not going to scold us.

[11:57] Again, He wants to give this to us. That's His desire. He wants to give it to us. All we have to do is ask. How often do we not ask because of, somebody said, pride.

Self-reliance. We somehow think that we can do it on our own. We don't need to ask for wisdom because I'm smart enough.

You ever think that? You ever think you're smarter than the average person? How many of you don't want to answer that out loud? I think often we think that.

But God says, ask Him for wisdom. All we have to do is ask. And this isn't the only place in the Word that God tells us to ask.

Look in Matthew. I wasn't going to have you turn here, but look in Matthew 7. Matthew 7, verse 7. Give you a minute to find it.

[12:58] We don't have it up here because I didn't tell them we're going to be here. Matthew 7, verse 7. It's a surprise verse. And I've got to say, if you ever get a chance, Dan and Chris that work back in the sound booth, thank them.

Every week they go through. I give them the Scriptures. They look up the verses so we can have them up here. And they put all that together. So thank them if you ever get a chance. But this is a bonus.

Matthew 7, beginning in verse 7. What's the first word? Ask. Ask and it shall be what? Given. Ask and it shall be given you.

Seek you shall find. Knock it shall be opened unto you. For everyone that asks, receives. And he that seeks, finds. And him that knocks, it'll be opened.

So again, what is God asking us to do? Or what does He say to do? Ask. It's not complicated, is it? Is it? We make it complicated.

[13:56] I think, at least for me, I will be the first to admit, I do not ask God for wisdom often enough. I don't. That should be something on a daily basis that we are asking God for because we

need it.

How many decisions do you make in a day? How many? Everything from the little seemingly insignificant ones to the big ones. We make thousands of decisions every day.

Tens of thousands every week. Hundreds of thousands every month and year. Millions in our lifetime of decisions that we make. How often in the midst of all those decisions do we say, God give me wisdom.

God give me the wisdom I need to make the decisions that you want me to make. God says, ask. He wants us to ask for this wisdom. Look back in James 4.

This also is not up here. It's another bonus. Talking about asking. James 4, verses 2 and 3. You lust and you have not.

[15:07] You kill and desire to have and cannot obtain. You fight and war, yet you have not because you ask not. If you don't ask, finish the sentence.

You're not going to get it. He's saying ask. If you want it, you need to ask. You have not because you ask not. And you ask not and don't receive it because you ask amiss, that you may consume it upon your own lusts.

So he's saying sometimes when we ask for things, we ask for things that are off the mark. Things that are not in God's will. Things that God has another plan for. Here's the thing though.

When we ask for wisdom, that request is right on the mark. That is a request that God will always honor because it's something He always wants us to have.

We pray for other things that maybe God has other ideas about, right? Whether we like it or not, isn't that sometimes true? We have a physical illness or a disease and we say, God, I ask you to please heal me.

[16:10] Guess what? Sometimes that may be God's plan. Does God sometimes have other plans? Yeah. Sometimes He may say, not now.

There's something I want to accomplish and then I'll heal you later. Maybe God says, no, that's not within my plan. I want to call this person home or I want to call you home. God's plans sometimes are different than ours.

So sometimes we ask and God says, no, that's not my desire for you right now. But when we ask for wisdom, that's always God's desire for us.

So we can ask and it says you ask amiss. That's why you don't receive. But when we ask for wisdom, that's asking for something that is right on target, right on the mark. And it is never too late to ask for wisdom.

You know, I don't care. If you're in school, ask for wisdom. Start young and it'll save you a lot of heartache and pain in your life. But maybe you're on the other end of life. Guess what? There's still decisions to be made and difficult things to go through.

[17:09] Ask for wisdom. But it also says, look back in James chapter one where we were. He abrades not and it says it shall be given him.

But let him ask in faith. Not wavering. What does that mean to ask in faith, not wavering?

Trust it'll happen. Trust it'll happen. Don't doubt what you're asking for. Trust it'll happen. Don't doubt what you're asking for. Because again, this is something you already know God wants you to have.

It's not something you have to wonder whether God wants you to have wisdom, whether that's his will or not. God's will is for you to have more wisdom in your life. That is God's desire. So ask for it. And when you do with that faith that God will deliver, then God will give you that wisdom.

That's not what I'm telling you. That's what God's word is telling you. Ask and it will be given you. Ask in faith. But it says, don't waver.

[18:12] He that wavers is like a wave of the sea driven with the wind tossed. Let not that man think he'll receive anything of the Lord. A double-minded man is unstable in all his ways.

Don't be double-minded. Don't go back and forth. Don't rely on God and ask him for wisdom and then take it in your own hands and figure it out yourself. Don't go back and forth. Rely on God.

Ask for his wisdom and then use his wisdom. That is God's desire for our life. Now I told you last week that often James would talk about things in the first chapter and then he would expound upon it.

He'd explain it a little more later on. And I want you to look in James 3 because this is where he talks more about that wisdom that we need to ask for. James 3, look in verse 13.

James 3, beginning in verse 13. Who is a wise man and endowed with knowledge among you? Let him show out of a good conversation his works with meekness of wisdom.

[19:15] But if he has bitter envy and strife in your hearts, glory not and lie not against the truth. This wisdom descendeth not from above, but is earthly, sensual, devilish.

For where envy and strife is, there is confusion and every evil work. But the wisdom that is from above is first pure, then peaceable, gentle, easy to be entreated, full of mercy and good fruits without partiality and without hypocrisy.

And the fruit of righteousness is sown in peace of them that make peace. So James here goes on to talk a little bit more about this wisdom that you and I need to ask for.

And he starts off again with a question. He started before with that if, and here he starts off with who is. Who's a wise man and has knowledge among you? In other words, how do you identify someone that has wisdom?

Isn't that the question that it's asking? How do you identify someone that has wisdom? How do you know if they have wisdom? How do you know if you have wisdom?

[20:25] How do you know? You have a sign in your forehead, I'm wise. I'm asking what's two plus two?

Because that's an easy answer. So how do you know if someone's wise? How do you know if you have wisdom? Your life will show it. Look what it says.

Who is a wise man and a dude with knowledge among you? In other words, how do you know?

Who is that wise man? It says, let him... So now it starts describing this wise person. Let him show out of a good conversation his works with meekness of wisdom.

What does that mean? What are works? What are works? Actions? Good things we do? Our life's actions. Our life's actions.

Make sure you're walking the walk. And here's the thing. I think that's a big part of it. Walking the walk. But it also says, let him show out of a good conversation.

[21:33] I think how we know if a person is wise, how we know if we are wise, do our words and our actions match? Do they go along with each other? How often does somebody say something but then does something else?

Do they have God's wisdom? What if they do it but their conversation is something else? The two have to match. What we say we believe and what we live out in our lives.

Those two things need to match. They need to go along with each other. If not, you know what we're called? Hypocrites. Do you know what Jesus said about hypocrites? His strongest words were for the Pharisees and Sadducees who he called hypocrites.

He did not. He called them snakes and vipers and all kinds of things. God doesn't have much room for hypocrites. He wants our lives and our hearts to reflect each other.

He says his works with weakness of wisdom. But there's another kind of wisdom we can have and that's earthly wisdom. Verse 14, but if you have bitter envy and strife in your hearts, glory not and lie not against the truth because this wisdom is descended not from above but is earthly.

[22:53] So here's the second kind of wisdom. There's God's wisdom that He wants to give us but then there's earthly wisdom which we can look for on our own. What is the earthly wisdom like?

What does it lead to? It says it leads to bitter envying and strife. That's what earthly wisdom leads to.

Do you know why? Because it's all about self. And if it's all about self, it's all about me and then I begin to envy what I want, what I have, what I can achieve and you're thinking the same thing and that causes strife.

Because I want what's best for me, you want what's best for you and we're not concerned about each other and guess what? That's going to cause strife. That is where the earth's wisdom leads to. But then He gives a description of the wisdom that God wants to give to us. And this is an amazing, wonderful description because it's not about self.

[23:59] The wisdom that God gives us is all about others. Look at the way He describes it. Verse 17, but the wisdom that is from above.

So again, this is whose wisdom? God's wisdom. The wisdom we need to be asking for. The wisdom from above is first pure. What does that mean?

What does it mean to be pure? What's the opposite of pure? Impure. All right. What are some other words? Dirty, corrupted, tainted.

That's not the wisdom God wants for us. He wants wisdom for us that is pure, that is good. So the wisdom that He'll give us is first pure, but then what's the next thing it says it is?

Peaceable. Peace-loving. It's not a wisdom that's going to cause strife and envy between people. It's wisdom that the more of it we get, the more peace we'll have in our lives.

[25 : 03] The more of it we get as a church, the more peaceful we'll be with each other. The more of it God's family gets, the better they're going to get along. That's what peaceable is all about, isn't it?

Is that always present in churches? No. I'll answer that question. That was a rhetorical question.

The answer is no. Can there be strife within a church?

Can there be hard feelings? Anger? That's not what God wants. That's not His wisdom. His wisdom that He gives is peaceable. It puts others first.

It's pure. It's peaceable. Again, all these are talking about towards others because what is the next thing? Gentle. Who do you think that's talking about? Just for us or gentle towards others?

It's towards others. That's how you know if something's general, it's how they're treating something else. That's gentleness, isn't it? You know, I remember when my kids were really young, and if you've ever seen really little kids, all right, you hand them like this tiny little baby kitten, and you're handing them to a little child.

[26 : 08] What do you have to tell them? Be gentle. Because what will happen if you don't tell them that? Grab it. Oh, look, I got a kitty. You need to tell them, be gentle with that because gentle is how we treat something outside of ourselves.

The wisdom that God gives us allows us to be gentle with others around us, with other believers, and with the world outside these walls. Gentleness describes God's wisdom that He gives us.

Easy to be entreated. What does that mean? What's that? Willing to yield. Oh. Oh.

Are we willing to yield? What does it mean to yield? You know, you're learning the roundabouts around here now, right? What does it mean to yield? You let somebody else go first.

You give them the right away. But I want to be first. So you just go faster. You get there before them. No, yield. Put others in front of yourself.

[27 : 15] Again, it's how we treat others. That's the wisdom God gives us. Full of mercy and good fruits. Mercy, again, that's something we have outwards towards others, isn't it? God shows us mercy.

We're supposed to show that mercy to others. That's what His wisdom leads to. Without partiality, treating everyone the same. Without hypocrisy.

We already talked about that. And the fruit of righteousness is sown in peace of them that make peace. Folks, to wrap it all up, here's the bottom line.

Do you need more wisdom? Let me answer that for you. Say yes. And that includes me. What is the source of wisdom? God.

God. So do we have to twist His arm to get it? What do we have to do? Ask. Ask. And believe. Ask in faith. And believe. And the wisdom that He gives us, who is it going to benefit the most?

[28 : 16] Yeah, that's kind of a trick question. It'll benefit us. But who else is it going to benefit? Those around us. That's God's wisdom. Folks, this world needs us to have God's wisdom.

This world needs God's children, His people, to have His wisdom. That's how we're a light to this world, by having His wisdom. And then we are a reflection of Him to the world around us.

Here's the number one thing, folks. It says you have not because you ask not. What do you need to do? Ask Him for it. Ask Him for it how often? I asked Him for it.

I asked Him for it last year, so I should be good now, right? Can you ever ask too much? Ask all the time.

Because God wants to give it to us. Ask for His wisdom. He will give you that wisdom. Let's pray.

Lord God, thank You again for this morning. And Lord, I pray that each one of us would not forget, but we would have it in our minds, to ask You for wisdom because it is desperately needed.

[29 : 22] We need it. The people around us need us to have that wisdom because it benefits not us, but all the relationships that we're in. It benefits the church. It benefits your family.

All of these things, Lord. So Lord, help us to ask for Your wisdom in faith that we will receive it. And then help us to use that wisdom to glorify You.

Thank You for Your Word, Lord. And we ask it in the name of Jesus Christ. Amen.