

# God Gives Wisdom

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[ 0 : 00 ] So we pray. Father, as we come this morning, Lord, we have comfort in the fact that you know our needs.

! Lord, we ask in the name of Jesus that in this moment that you would meet those needs! In this occasion, in the name of Jesus we pray.

And I'll be able to say, Amen. Kindly turn in your Bibles to the book of James, the letter of James. And we will be reading from chapter 1, verses 5 through 11. The book of James, reading chapter 1, verses 5 through 11.

And as you turn there, you will be aware that we are in a multi-sermon series in the book of James.

[ 1 : 07 ] James, and today we are in the third installment of the series. James chapter 1, verses 5 through 11.

James writes, If any of you lacks wisdom, let him ask God, who gives generously to all without reproach.

And it will be given him. But let him ask in faith with no doubting. For the one who doubts is like a wave of the sea that is driven and tossed by the wind.

For that person must not suppose that he will receive anything from the Lord. He is a double-minded man, unstable in all his ways.

Let the lowly brother boast in his exaltation, and the rich in his humiliation. Because like a flower of the grass, he will pass away.

[ 2 : 21 ] For the sun rises with its scorching heat and withers the grass. Its flower falls, and its beauty perishes. So also will the rich man fade away in the midst of his pursuits.

James approaches a very pragmatic, a very practical, everyday issue.

That we all face, and that we will continue to face as long as we are on this earth. Trials and difficulties. And James tells us how we, as believers, how we, as believers, must deal with trials and difficulties.

James' acknowledgement that believers face trials and difficulties, and the remedy he offers actually fly in the face of those who say that such, that life itself should always be hunky-dory for the believer.

You know, that there are people who say that, who suggest that everything should be all right all the time. Well, the fact that we find in the verses that we have read, James' account, James speaking to believers in this way, and offering to them comforting words, things that they ought to do, suggests that life is not going to be a bed of roses, as some would describe it.

[ 4 : 13 ] Having told believers that they should have a disposition that differs from that of the world when they encounter challenges, James now comes to verses 5 to 11, and gives us the basis and the foundation of that difference.

You'll recall from last week that James writes to the dispersion, and James says, count it all joy, my brothers, when you meet trials of various kinds.

So James says, count it all joy when you meet trials of all kinds, for you know that the testing of your faith produces steadfastness. And then he says, let steadfastness have its full effect.

So in the verses that form the basis for our message this morning, verses 5 to 11, James gives us the basis and the foundation of how we as believers are to face these trials and difficulties.

And this is the essence of those verses that we read. The essence is this, to face challenges and difficulties in your life, you need wisdom, which the Lord gives generously to those who have faith.

[ 5 : 55 ] That's James' point. Let me say it again. James' point is this, you have trials and difficulties, well, you need wisdom. You need wisdom.

Wisdom, which the Lord gives generously to those who have faith. Somehow I feel I need to say that again. James said, if you have challenges and difficulties in your life, as a believer, you need wisdom, which the Lord gives generously to those who have faith.

Yes, we find in these verses that James addresses three main points. James tells us the source of wisdom.

Right? The source of wisdom. Then he tells us how to get wisdom. And then finally, like a good teacher, James concludes with an illustration of wisdom.

Perhaps you're wondering, perhaps you were wondering, and I'm hoping that you're not still wondering, what in the world is James talking about?

[ 7 : 23 ] What is he talking about? Surely he wants believers who are facing difficulties to do something that is more concrete than to seek wisdom.

To understand what James is saying, it would be useful to know what he was talking about in the verses preceding. I want to examine these verses preceding just real quickly once again.

Let's see what he says in these verses that we just recently read, in verses 2 through 4. James tells believers two primary things as they face challenges and difficulties.

The first is, he says, you need to count it all joy. Count it all joy when you meet trials and temptations.

And then he says, be steadfast. Be steadfast. That ought to be the disposition, the attitude of the believer.

[ 8 : 38 ] Count it all joy. And to be steadfast. But how does one have that kind of disposition?

To count it all joy and to be steadfast during undesirable events. How do we do it? James tells us.

The first thing we see here in verse 5, James tells us about the source of wisdom.

The source of wisdom. He says, if any of you lacks wisdom, let him ask of God. So right away, James helps us to see that wisdom comes from God.

Indeed, the Bible tells us and the Bible tells us in Proverbs 2, verse 6, for the Lord gives wisdom.

From his mouth come knowledge and understanding.

[ 9 : 47 ] The Lord himself gives wisdom. And you would be right to say, preacher, what is this word, wisdom? We're saved. You're talking a lot about it. What is it? What is it?

What are you really talking about here? Why is it so necessary? Because it really does seem strange that James would be saying that in the midst of challenges, we ought to seek wisdom. What is it really that he is talking about? Well, to answer that question, I leaned on giants in the faith, R.C. Sproul and J.A. Mortier.

And of course, let me say that anything that I say that is bit off, I can't attribute it to those men. This is my lack of understanding. James clearly believes wisdom is paramount.

Wisdom teaches us how to both know and follow the will of God.

[ 11 : 05 ] That's important. You've got to get this now. We're talking about wisdom. You want to say, what is it? You want some practical, working knowledge of this thing that James is talking about?

Well, wisdom, we know that it comes from God. The Bible teaches us that. James helps us to see that at the beginning of verse 5. Proverbs says it. Well, what is it?

Wisdom teaches us how to both know and to follow the will of God. Proverbs 8, 35 tells us how important it is.

Here's what it says, for whoever finds me, whoever finds wisdom, finds life and obtains favor from the Lord.

What is wisdom? Wisdom is knowing how to live a life that is pleasing to God. That's what wisdom is.

[ 12 : 05 ] Wisdom is knowing how to live a life that is pleasing to God. In other words, living wisely means living godly.

Living wisely means living godly. J. Mottier in his commentary on the book of James writes, Wisdom sees life as serving the purposes of God.

You want to be wise? I want to know if you are wise or you serving the purposes of God.

So James tells us, let's see if we can kind of string this together a little bit. James says you've got trouble, you've got difficulties. He says go after wisdom.

He says find out from the Lord how to serve me in the middle of the trials and the difficulties. That's what he is saying.

[ 13 : 13 ] How can we live godly in the midst of it all? How can we serve the purposes of the Lord in the midst of the trials and the difficulties that are part of this fallen world?

God. When considered logically it would make sense that wisdom is about serving the purposes of God.

Since God is the only thing that is eternal and he has given us clear instructions it must be true when you think about it logically that wisdom has to be linked to God because anything else that wars against him that goes contrary to him we know will be brought to nothing.

The Bible tells us that the earth is the Lord's and the fullness there are. wisdom is not knowledge. Wisdom they're not the same thing. You know that a person can be intelligent as we describe him they can have considerable knowledge but have no wisdom.

[ 14 : 38 ] In fact the Bible refers to such a person as a fool someone who does not have God in his heart.

You can have knowledge without wisdom but you cannot have wisdom without knowledge. You got to know the will of the Lord. The purpose of knowing the things of God is to have wisdom.

We cannot live a life pleasing to God if we do not know God. the Bible teaches us that the fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom and I know that most of not all of us know this verse and it continues all those who practice it have good understanding his praise endures forever.

The fear the reverence of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom. I want to share this quote with you.

J. Mott here in his commentary on James he writes I believe it's being projected how are we to see what is of stable worth and what a pencil of disappointment and loss.

[ 16 : 17 ] We'll break it down for us a little bit. He's asking the question how are we to see what is the difference between what is significant and what is really insignificant.

That's what he's asking. That's the question. How are we to see what is of stable worth what is meaningful and what is a pencil of disappointment and loss.

He answers the question only by the wisdom that God gives. Only by the wisdom that God gives. A wisdom that makes us see earth in light of heaven.

A wisdom that makes us see life in the light of eternal life. A wisdom that makes us see the flickering pattern of experience in the light of the steady reality of salvation.

What is the point here? The point is that as we face life's challenges and difficulties, wisdom allows us to put things into their right perspective.

[ 17 : 42 ] Wisdom helps us to see earth, the things on earth in light of heaven. As we face our challenges, imagine us readying our hearts for heaven.

life, the light of eternal life, and the flickering pattern of experience in the light of the steady reality of salvation.

The salvation that God himself gives that no man can take away but the things of this world that come go so easily.

in the verse that we just read. James makes clear, he says, if any of you lacks wisdom, let him ask God.

Let him ask God. How do we do that? We ask God in prayer. Ask God in prayer for wisdom. Take me to my next point.

[ 18 : 48 ] How do we get wisdom? Listen to what James writes in verses 5 through 8 again. He says, if anyone lacks wisdom, let him ask of God who gives generously to all without reproach and it will be given him.

But let him ask in faith without doubting. For the one who doubts is like a wave of the sea that is driven and tossed by the wind. For that person must not suppose that he will receive anything from the Lord.

He is a double-minded man, unstable in his ways. James starts this section with these words, if anyone lacks wisdom, it would be natural for one to ask.

If anyone lacks wisdom, to do what? If anyone lacks wisdom, to do what? Of course we see from the preceding verses that James is talking about trials and temptations.

And during those moments, one might ask, during the moments of trials and temptations that we face, one might ask, Lord, what is the purpose of this?

[ 20 : 05 ] Why is this happening to me? How might I bring you glory? How might I glorify your name in the midst of these hard times that I'm going through?

Can't pay the bills, relational issues, loss of job. Why is this happening?

Lord, how do I bring glory to you with this weight on my shoulder, this insurmountable hurdle? what decision, Lord, should I make?

Among these various alternatives, what should I do? It seems those are questions we would like answers to so that we might rightly respond and ultimately grow in maturity. All of these things point ultimately to the sovereignty of God. His sovereignty is expressed not only in his knowledge of things, of what is happening and what will happen, not only in his permitting things to happen, but also in the fact that he stands ready to cause things to work together for our good.

[ 21 : 37 ] In these verses, James explains to us how wisdom is gotten. James says, the first thing we need to do, we need to ask the Lord. You see that? He says, if anyone lacks wisdom, let him ask God.

That's the first thing we ought to do. We ought to ask in prayer. Proverbs 2, verse 4 tells us that we should seek wisdom like silver and search for it as for a hidden treasure. in the midst of our challenges, this is practical living for all of us because all of us go through stuff. In fact, probably all of us are going through some stuff right now. Some of us are going through some serious stuff. You haven't told anybody about it, but it's true you're going through some stuff. And so what is James saying to us, to all of us? James says the answer is ask the Lord for wisdom. And he says to pursue it like you would silver and hidden treasure.

[ 22 : 52 ] Go after it. Search for it until you find it. Then James tells us several things about how the Lord is going to respond.

How he responds to our prayerful wisdom. Says the Lord responds to us. First thing he says is that the Lord gives wisdom generously.

He gives wisdom generously. When you give something generously, you give a lot of it. You give it abundantly. You give it unconditionally. James says go to the Lord in prayer and the Lord will give generously.

And the next thing he says, James says he gives to all. He doesn't discriminate. Gives to all believers who ask of him.

So you and I today, we have no excuse. peace. And then here's the next thing he says. Let's take a look at this. This is a big one he says who gives generously to all without reproach.

[ 24 : 13 ] What is he saying there? That is to say that he gives without expressing disappointment or disapproval or finding fault in us.

I want to stay here just for a moment. James is saying to you and I that despite our shortcomings, the Lord will give generously to us wisdom without consideration of what we've done, of how wicked we've been, how perhaps unforgiving we have been.

he says that the Lord will give to us without reproach. He doesn't express disappointment or approval or disapproval or find fault in that moment.

My point is this, that right where we are, we can approach the Lord with the expectation that he will grant wisdom to us, generously, all of us, all of us without reproach, without finding fault, without expressing disappointment in us, what promises we have.

James tells us, further in these verses, he said, we must ask in faith. Having made it abundantly clear that God desires to grant us wisdom, James tells us how we must ask.

[ 26 : 07 ] What is the posture of our heart? He says we must ask in faith, not doubting. perhaps in these verses, James has already addressed some of the reasons why you and I might doubt.

Perhaps we doubt because we think we are undeserving. James says no. He gives generously to all. Without reproach. Perhaps we are doubting because we say, Lord, this is the second time we've been this way before and we didn't do what we ought to have done.

James says, no, without reproach. Perhaps we are in this circumstance because of something that we have done that was very sinful.

That's why we are doubting. Lord, I know, I come into you, but I know you're not really going to hear me because I brought this on myself. James says, no, without reproach.

When we read the entirety of verses 7 and 8, we get a sense of the kind of person James is telling us to avoid being when we come to the Lord.

[ 27 : 30 ] A faithless person, he says. You see, this person that James writes about in these verses in 7 and 8, James says, beginning in verse 6, but let him ask in faith with no doubting.

For the one who doubts is like a wave of the sea that is driven and tossed by the wind. For that person must not suppose that he will receive anything from the Lord.

He is a double-minded man and unstable in all his ways. So James is saying to you and to me, he says, the thing that blocks this abundant wisdom that the Lord has for us that he wants to shower us with is doubt.

He says, that really kills it. It's doubt that kills it. And it would seem if you consider this, James here is writing about someone who approaches God with an unbelieving heart.

we just going to God, we just praying because, you know, we heard a message on wisdom, but we really don't believe it. James says, well, if you're doubting, it's not going to happen for you.

[ 28 : 47 ] And then perhaps there is another category of persons James is talking about. And I want you to hear this one because I think this one is real deep. And it perhaps touches far too many of us, far too often.

could it be that James here is talking about someone who wants to hold on to this bit of sinfulness. We're going to the Lord and asking the Lord to do something for us. But there is some element that is not pleasing to the Lord that we really don't want to give up.

James says he's a double-minded man, unstable in all his ways.

Such a person, James writes, should not suppose that he will get anything from the Lord. as we move into the final section of these verses, i.e.

[ 30 : 03 ] verses 9 through 11. The good teacher, James, provides us with an illustration. Listen to what he writes.

Let the lowly brother boast in his exaltation and the rich in his humiliation because like a flower of the grass he will pass away for the sun rises with the scratching heat and withers the grass. Its flowers fall and its beauty perishes. So also will the rich man fade away in the midst of his pursuits.

What is James saying to us? With the single illustration featuring differing conditions, James amplifies the point of the need for godly wisdom.

He does this by helping us put things of this world into their proper perspective. More specifically, here's what James does in verses 9 through 11.

[ 31 : 20 ] Firstly, he outlines how a believer who is poor should view his circumstances versus a believer who is rich.

Then he says that the poor brother, the lowly brother, should boast in his exaltation. So here's what James is saying. James is saying that a person who is poor should consider himself rich.

Rich because he is in Christ. Yes, he is poor in this world's goods, but he is rich in Christ.

We can only get this from the wisdom of God. He is poor in this world's goods, but he is rich in Christ, which ultimately, James helps us to see, is the only thing that matters.

Remember, that's what wisdom is. Wisdom is pursuing those things that truly matter. Wisdom is having in view those things that truly matter.

[ 32 : 37 ] In his commentary on the book of James, John MacArthur writes, he may be hungry, but he has the bread of life.

He may be thirsty, but he has the water of life. He may be poor, but he has eternal riches. He may be cast away by men, but he has received.

He has been eternally received by God. He may have no home on earth, but he has a glorious abode in heaven.

James is helping us to put things into perspective. James is saying that we know how this poor man is going to be regarded, but this poor man, he ought to boast in his exaltation.

He ought to consider what he has in Christ. He ought to consider what he has in Christ. Those things that will last forever.

[ 33 : 49 ] that the bread of life, as MacArthur said, that the water that will cause it never to thirst again.

Meanwhile, meanwhile, James speaks here of this man who is rich in earthly things. James says to him, the rich man ought to boast in his humiliation.

He says that's wise. The person who is rich in this world's good should boast in their humiliation since everything that he has will perish.

That's what James says. that's the perspective that the rich ought to have. Boast in your humiliation.

Boast in the fact that these things that you have, they're all going to disappear one of these days. That's a wise man.

[ 35 : 01 ] Wise man sees things the way God sees them. It soothes God's godly things. James seems to be telling believers that we should view life through spiritual lenses.

And when we do, we will see circumstances, good and bad, as no different. We will see them for what they truly are.

Transient becomes and they go. They are fleeting. James could have used other contrasting circumstances to make his point.

He could have used sickness versus health, marital challenges versus marital blitz, job loss versus promotion.

He could have used any of them to make his point. But let's face it, let's come down to reality.

[ 36 : 11 ] It's not easy to view life that way. A fallen nature doesn't lend itself to that kind of perspective readily. That is why, that is why we must pray and ask the Lord to grant us wisdom both to understand and to do.

That's the point of this message. James understands that we can't handle this by ourselves. So James says, if anyone lacks wisdom pertaining to what he's going through, let him ask of God who gives generously and without reproach.

as we conclude, as we face trials and temptations, we're instructed to seek wisdom from God who grants it to us generously and without reproach.

In that way, we will be able to glorify him during trials and of course, we will rightly resist temptation of all kinds.

Can I tell you something? As I read that, in that way, in that way, we'll be able to glorify him even during trials and temptations.

[ 37 : 51 ] As I read that, it spoke to me, it spoke to my heart, that even in the midst of challenges, that we can bring glory to God, the one who grants us wisdom in the midst of our difficulties.

And so as we conclude, I want to remind all of us that the Apostle Paul, in writing to the church at Corinth, said, and because of him, you are in Christ Jesus, who became to us wisdom from God, righteousness, and sanctification, and redemption, so that it is as it is written, let the one who boasts, boast in the Lord, God, yes, Christ is our wisdom, yes, he works in us so that we might live godly lives.

And so today, if you don't know him, if the light of the gospel has not penetrated your heart, our prayer today is that the Lord would do a new work in your heart.

Let us pray. Oh, Lord, thank you for these convicting and profound words that tell us how to live.

Lord, we are convicted because we see ourselves even in this moment not living according to these words and we ask your forgiveness.

[ 40 : 00 ] We pray, oh Lord, that you would write to us a heart that is obedient. Lord, cause us in the middle of trials and difficulties and disappointments to seek wisdom so that we might mature, so that we might glorify you.

Lord, help us to put things in their right perspective. Lord, only you can do this. We can't talk ourselves into this. We know this, Lord.

We've tried. So, Lord, by your Holy Spirit, do a work that no preacher can do. Do a work, Lord, that only you can do.

You are the physician who works on the hearts of men. And so, Lord, we open our hearts to you now, and we ask, Lord, that you would grant to us wisdom to navigate the difficulties that we face.

Oh, Lord, help us to view earth in light of heaven. Lord, help us to view the challenges we face in light of the glory that will be ours when Christ returns.

[ 41 : 31 ] In the name of Jesus, we pray, and all God's people say, amen.