

## **Jas03 – We Need Wisdom and Faith James 1:5-8**

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Open your Bibles. Title of the message, “We Need Wisdom and Faith.” James chapter 1 verses 5-8.

For us to have the joy that surpasses our trials in the midst of our trials, we need God’s wisdom and genuine faith. There is joy, an almost unspeakable joy, a supernatural confidence that is available in our trials. It comes not just from us being in the trial, but being steadfast in the trial. It comes from us depending on God in the trial. It comes from us meeting God in the trial. And it turns into *an eternal blessing from a temporal difficulty*. We dealt with that last message. However, for that to occur in your life, you need God’s wisdom. It’s not automatic.

Our trials don’t automatically produce the eternal benefits of endurance and spiritual completeness. That whole thing about “whatever doesn’t kill us makes us stronger” when we talk about going through a trial, no, it’s not true. If we go through that trial steadfast in Christ it will make us stronger. If we go through that trial leaning on God it will make us stronger. If we receive God’s wisdom and go through that trial in genuine faith it will make us stronger.

We need God’s wisdom to go from “Woe is me, God must hate me,” to “God is my strength and my joy in the midst of my trial.” We need God’s wisdom and faith to make that leap.

Let’s pray. *Lord God, we need your Spirit to just open our eyes, to open our ears, to open our hearts. Lord you promised that in this world we would have tribulation, and at the same time you said be of good cheer. Not because of the tribulation but because you have overcome this world. And so God we need to see that in the midst of our trials. We need to grasp the overcoming part. We need to grasp the joy that’s available. And Lord, your Word will tell us today that it’s through your wisdom, asking for your wisdom, and operating in genuine faith. And so Lord, make it real for us today. In Jesus’ name, amen.*

These verses tie to last week’s verses, and since they are so closely tied, let’s review.

### **James 1:2 (ESV)**

**2 Count (Consider) it all (Great or Total) *joy, my brothers, when you meet trials of various kinds,***

Count means to “*make a deliberate decision to hold on to the joy God brings in the midst of our trial.*” It’s a firm belief based not on what we see, feel or think, but on who God is.

### **James 1:3 (ESV)**

***3 for you know that the testing of your faith produces steadfastness.***

Testing, as in the Refiner's fire (1 Peter 1), produces steadfastness, heroic endurance and spiritual toughness.

### **James 1:4 (ESV)**

***4 And let steadfastness have its full effect, that you may be perfect and complete, lacking in nothing.***

This is allowing God to bring eternal good out of your temporal trials. It's allowing the testing of your faith to produce what God wants to produce in your life.

And then there is a grammar connection between verse 4 and verse 5. Your Bible may or may not have the word, but in the Greek translation there is a word there translated either "but" or "and." Five Bible versions that I use insert the word "but" there at the beginning of verse 5, however three versions say "now" connecting these two sets of verses. So verse 5 goes with verse 4.

### **James 1:5 (ESV)**

***5 (But) If any of you lacks wisdom, let him ask God, who gives generously to all without reproach, and it will be given him.***

The connection between being in a difficult trial and needing wisdom in that trial is critical to see. When the heat is really turned up in a trial, we so badly need the wisdom of God. God wants to do something good in the midst of our trial. God is at work in the midst of our trial, for good. But we must receive God's wisdom for that trial if we ever want to join God in what he's doing.

The previous verses say "Have joy, because God is producing something good in the midst of your trials." But, if you are in that trial without any of God's wisdom, look out! The word "lack" (in verse 5) is a banking term. It means "a deficit." We've got to come to grips with the fact that we have a huge deficit in our wisdom account and we seriously need God to make a deposit on our behalf.

How many Christians do we know that use the world's wisdom or their own wisdom to navigate a trial? (Most.) It is often hard to see the difference in response to a trial between a Christian and a non-Christian. And remember, it's not just going through a trial that brings the greater eternal blessings from God... Verse 4 says it's allowing our steadfastness in the trial to have God's full intended effect. That's what produces the good that God wants to bring and for that to happen we need God's wisdom.

And here's the great news in verse 5. James says: ***If any of you lacks wisdom, let him ask God.*** The literal translation is "ask of the giving God." Look at how the Amplified Bible translates James 1:5.

**James 1:5 (AMP)**

***5 If any of you is deficient in wisdom, let him ask of the giving God [Who gives] to everyone liberally . . . and it will be given him.***

This phrase, "the giving God" is referring to the Character of God. He is "the giving God." His nature is to give.

**Romans 8:32 (ESV)**

***32 He who did not spare his own Son but gave him up for us all, how will he not also with [Christ] graciously give us all things?***

Our God is a "continually giving" God and he desires to give you his wisdom in the midst of your trial. R. Kent Hughes says this:

**R. Kent Hughes:**

***God is like a pitcher tilted toward his children, just waiting to pour wisdom over the trial-parched landscape of their lives, if they will but ask.***

God wants to generously give you wisdom for your trial. He is ready to pour it onto your trial-parched life. However, he will not force his wisdom on us. We must ask, seek, desire, God's wisdom.

And, if we will, not only will God generously give you his wisdom, verse 5 in the ESV says: ***He will give it WITHOUT REPROACH.*** Let's re-read James 1:5 in the NLT.

**James 1:5 - in the (NLT)**

***5 If you need wisdom, ask our generous God, and he will give it to you. He will not rebuke you for asking.***

The ESV says "God gives generously, without reproach."

The NLT says "He will not rebuke you for asking."

God is giving us every possible encouragement to rush to him to receive his wisdom, *in our trials*. First he tells us he is "the continually giving" God. Then he promises he will "not rebuke us for asking." God will not remind us how unworthy we are. God will not remind us how we blew it last time. God will not hold our sins, or our past against us in any way. God says *ask* and I will pour out my wisdom for you to get through this trial

and find joy in the midst. God is saying “I want to bring eternal good into the midst of your trial. But you’ve got to look to me. You’ve got to ask me for my wisdom.”

When we are in the midst of a trial, it is not in our nature to seek God for his wisdom, resulting in joy. That is *not* our natural response. Our natural response is, “God, why me?” “God why are you doing this to me?” “God why won’t you make this go away for me?”

It is not natural for us to say, “Lord I need your wisdom right now.” “I know you’re at work for good, and I need your wisdom to join you in what you’re doing here” “I need to know what to do. I need to know what not to do. I need to know how to even feel right now. Lord I am looking to you alone, waiting on you alone.”

### **Psalm 62:1–2 (ESV)**

***1 For God alone my soul waits in silence; from him comes my salvation.***

***2 He alone is my rock and my salvation, my fortress; I shall not be greatly shaken.***

That is not a supernatural response. And when we will do that, God will pour his wisdom into our lives.

One more thing before we move on. The word “ask” in James 1:5; ***If any of you lacks wisdom, let him ASK God . . .***

The word “ask” is written as a “continual, purposeful action.” It is written the same way as in Luke 11 where Jesus says “ask and keep asking” and it will be given to you.

In the Greek, it is *continually, on purpose, asking God* for his wisdom to bring you through this trial with joy. If we are going to “count it all joy” when we face our trials, if we are going to “stand steadfast” in our trials, if our faith is going to be perfected in our trials, then we are going to need God’s wisdom.

And so, we have to begin to ask, “*HOW?*” How do we begin to receive God’s wisdom? First, write down (and read it) to see how much God values you asking for his wisdom 1Kings 3:1-13.

#1) GOD’S WORD – God’s wisdom is found in God’s Word

#2) PRAYER – According to God’s Word

#3) GODLY COUNSEL – Directing you to God’s Word and prayer.

And in this entire “receiving process” you must approach God in complete surrender . . . we can’t receive God’s wisdom if we are full of our own.

**Psalm 111:10 (ESV)**

***10 The fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom; all those who practice it have a good understanding. His praise endures forever!***

When we are in the midst of a trial for us to join God in what he's doing, we must ask (and keep asking) for God's wisdom. However, can we ask "willy-nilly?" Can we ask "Las Vegas" style – "I'll throw it out to God and see if he can pull it off and if not, I'll go with my own idea?"

No, we cannot ask that way. At least if we do, we cannot expect to receive anything from the Lord. There's a condition James puts on this incredible blessing of God "generously giving us" his wisdom.

**James 1:6–8 (ESV)**

***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.***

***7 For that person must not suppose that he will receive anything from the Lord;***

***8 he is a double-minded man, unstable in all his ways.***

This is so like James! Verse 5 shows God's incredible character of giving wisdom generously to all without reproach and then BAAM! Verses 6 -8 say wait just a minute. God is the generously giving God, he will give you all the wisdom you need for your trial, BUUUUUTTT, not without your genuine faith!!! The title of our series is Faith Works, as in true faith, truly works. And that is what James is saying in these verses. ***But let him ask in faith, with no doubting . . .***

Hebrew 11:1 sums up what asking in faith "looks like." From the Net Bible for clarity:

**Hebrews 11:1 (NET BIBLE)**

***1 Now faith is being sure of what we hope for, being convinced of what we do not see.***

***Faith is being SURE of what we HOPE for . . .***

And this word *hope* means "what we confidently expect. Faith is being sure of what we confidently expect and being convinced of what we do not see. We must come to God; sure of his promises and convinced that he is at work for good. Not because we see or know what he is doing, but because we know our God. That is where our faith comes from. And Hebrews 11 says:

**Hebrews 11:6**

***6 And without faith it is impossible to please God . . .***

If we are going to receive God's wisdom for the trial we're in, we must come to him in genuine faith.

And what does verse 6 mean by, with no doubting? ***But let him ask in faith, WITH NO DOUBTING***

The phrase "with no doubting" is a bit unfortunate – because it can imply we must have perfect faith. But if we look at the Pillars of Faith, we'll know better. Abraham. Moses. David. All great men of faith, but none were *perfect* in their faith. But James isn't talking about not have what we might describe as "times of uncertainty (doubting)."

In verse 8 James defines the person he's taking about: ***he is a double-minded man, unstable in all his ways***

John Bunyan, in his famous "Pilgrims Progress" calls this person "Mr. Facing-Both-Ways." James says he is a "double minded person. A Facing-Both-Ways person. A spiritual "two-faced" person. (Oooo, that was a real insult in high school to be called "two-faced.") That is the person James is talking about. Look how well the NLT handles James 1:6:

**James 1:6 (NLT)**

***6 But when you ask him, be sure that your faith is in God alone. Do not waver, for a person with divided loyalty is as unsettled as a wave of the sea that is blown and tossed by the wind.***

James is talking about a person with "divided loyalties," a person who is not looking to God alone. It is a person who looks to God on Sunday, then looks to the world on Monday, then looks to their flesh on Tuesday, then looks to their addiction on Wednesday, then looks to their denial on Thursday, looks to their anger of Friday, looks to their self-pity on Saturday, then looks back to God on Sunday. Wait a minute. Some of us aren't just "double minded" we're "seven minded." We have a different mind for each day of the week, and God say that is a deal breaker.

Let's re-read James 1:6-8.

**James 1:6–8 (NLT)**

***6 But when you ask him (for His wisdom in your trials), be sure that your faith is in God alone. Do not waver, for a person with divided loyalty is as unsettled as a wave of the sea that is blown and tossed by the wind.***

***7 Such people should not expect to receive anything from the Lord.***

***8 Their loyalty is divided between God and the world, and they are unstable in everything they do.***

At the end of verse 6 is our first great word-picture from James. This one is a simile (which most of his are.) A simile is when we paint a picture with words and say “This person is *like that*.” And this person of “double –mind” and “divided loyalty” James says it ***IS AS UNSETTLED as a wave of the sea that is blown and tossed by the wind.***

Growing up in Nazareth with Jesus, James would’ve seen many storms on the Sea of Galilee and the Sea of Galilee is actually a lake. And storm waves build different on a lake than in the ocean. When a storm hits a lake, there is no rhyme or reason to the waves. The waves are up, down, sideways, in circles, going every which way. And verse 6 says that is exactly what this “double-minded” person is like when it comes to their faith in God.

And so, let’s take a deep breath and read verse 7.

**James 1:7 (NLT)**

***7 Such people should not expect to receive anything from the Lord.***

It’s really hard for me to say that to people even when they’re questioning God and asking me why. “Actually, you have divided loyalties and you’re as unstable as the storm waves on a lake... so really you shouldn’t expect to receive anything from God at all” and “Thanks for stopping by.” But that is the truth, James style!

If your loyalty is divided between God and the world, and (from a faith standpoint) you’re ***unstable in everything they do***, really, you can’t expect the supernatural life changing wisdom from God that will bring joy into the midst of your trial.

However, if you will genuinely ask God for his wisdom with genuine faith, you will experience a supernatural, confident, settled joy *in the midst* of your trial.

Are you going through some trial right now? Some difficulty? Don’t be tossed about like a cork on a stormy sea. Don’t have “divided loyalties” between God and the world. Allow God to use that trial for your good. You can be steadfast, refined, and perfected by God *in the midst* of your trial, if you will actively, purposefully seek God’s wisdom with genuine faith, totally and completely trusting God alone and looking to God alone with no divided loyalties!!

If you will ask with that faith and keep asking, God will generously give you all the wisdom you need to not only get through this trial, but to allow God to bring good out of it, into your life. And for that you can consider your trial and opportunity for great joy.

Let's pray. *Heavenly Father, Lord this is a response relationship. We don't have any desire to be intellectually educated for education alone. We want our lives to be transformed. We want our hearts to be changed. We want to be cleansed of the flesh and our sin. We want to be renewed and restored. We want to be revived and reconciled God. We want to know that when we ask you for wisdom that you'll give it. So Holy Spirit, convict us of what we need to repent of in our lives in order to ask in genuine faith.*

*(What is it your life right now? What is it in you? What do you need to repent of that is not genuine faith?) Lord, I repent of my own way. Of my devices, my avoidance, my denial and my convictions. The things that I use to control my situation. I repent. I turn from those things and I turn to you, Jesus. To you alone. Save me from my own devices, from my pride, self-centeredness, from my ego. Break me, make me humble. Give me the fear of the Lord. Transform me radically, Lord. Transform me so I can receive your wisdom for the trial I am in. It is in your name I pray Jesus, amen.*