

THE POWER OF WISDOM (Part 3) (James 1:5-6)

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~"I will walk into the EXPECTED END of God—by the power of Wisdom."

~As a veteran shepherd of souls, James knew that it's relatively easy to live as a Christian when things are calm. But it's a much more difficult prospect when the storms of life hit with full force.

~At such times, it's easy to get off course or even to make shipwreck of your Faith.

~His readers were facing various difficult trials. They were dispersed abroad (**1:1**), mostly due to persecution.

~They had suffered the loss of their homes and possessions. Many were not able to escape persecution even in the places to which they had fled.

~James wanted them to know how to navigate through these trials so that they could not only endure, but JOYFULLY endure (**1:2**).

~James exhorts them (and us) to adopt a radical attitude when we encounter various trials:

~He exhorts us to "Consider it all joy." (**1:2**)

~We can do this if we understand a reassuring truth, "that the testing of your faith produces endurance." (**1:3**)

~But it is necessary to submit to the refining process: "LET endurance have its perfect result." (**1:4**)

~But there is a further ingredient that we need to endure trials joyfully so as to bring glory to God, namely, God's wisdom. So James tells us how to obtain wisdom from God.

To obtain wisdom to endure trials joyfully, 1.) see your need, 2.) know your God, and then 3.) ask Him in faith to meet your need.

~When James says, "If any of you lack wisdom," he is not suggesting that some have it together so well that they have no need of wisdom.

~The Greek conditional sentence implies that we all lack wisdom when we face difficult trials. But, we don't always see our need for God's wisdom.

1. To obtain wisdom to endure trials joyfully, you must SEE YOUR NEED.

~We need to be clear about the terms that James uses here:

A. JAMES IS TALKING ABOUT GOD'S WISDOM THAT ENABLES US TO ENDURE TRIALS JOYFULLY.

~When you study the Bible, it is crucial to study the text in its context, and also to understand how the words are used in Scripture.

~In the context of (**James 1**), wisdom refers to the wisdom that we need to endure trials with God's joy, so that we will be "perfect and complete, lacking in nothing" (**1:4**).

~James realizes that in a time of trials, God's people often do lack His wisdom on how to endure those trials with joy.

~Thus he adds (**Vs. 5-8**)—Of course, we can ask God for wisdom in any matter in life that we face, but in the context here, it is focused on asking God for the wisdom that we need to endure trials joyfully.

~Enduring trials with joy goes against our "natural inclination."

~When trials hit, we're all prone to ask, "Why is this happening to me?"...But that is usually the wrong question.

~Sometimes, God graciously reveals to us the reason for our suffering, but not always...Often the answer to why we suffer must wait until we're in heaven.

~The important questions to ask when a trial hits are, **A.)** "How can I understand this trial from God's perspective?"

B.) "How can I navigate through this storm in such a way as to bring glory to God?"

C.) "How can this trial help me grow in maturity?"

(Pastor Warren Wiersbe)—tells about a secretary of his who was going through difficult trials. She had had a stroke, her husband had gone blind, and then he had to be taken to the hospital where, as far as they knew, he would die.

~Wiersbe saw this woman in church one Sunday and assured her that he was praying for her.

~She startled him by asking, “What are you asking God to do?” He replied, “I’m asking God to help you and strengthen you.” She said “I appreciate that, but pray about one more thing. **Pray that I’ll have the wisdom not to waste all of this!**”

~This is the KEY...God’s wisdom will enable you to not waste even one tear or trial!

~It also helps to understand the meaning of the Old Testament word for wisdom.

~James is steeped in the Old Testament...and the main idea of Old Testament wisdom is that of SKILL.

~It includes the skill of workers who made garments for the high priest and who were able to work with metal, stone and wood (**Exod. 28:3; 31:3-5; 36:1-2**).

~It also extends to those who are able to execute a battle plan (**Isa. 10:13**), lead in government (**Deut. 34:9**), and shrewdly assess a difficult situation and persuade others to take necessary action (**2 Sam. 20:22**).

~It refers to those who speak prudently (**Ps. 37:30**) and use their time carefully (**Ps. 90:12**).

~Rather than just theoretical understanding, **Biblical wisdom focuses on practical living in obedience to God’s revealed will.**

~The fool in Proverbs is not the man who is **mentally** deficient, but rather the man who is **morally** deficient.

~He ignores God’s commandments and lives according to human wisdom...and human wisdom will always differ to what FEELS BEST at the moment.

~The wise man lives in obedience to God. He skillfully puts together a life that is beautiful from God's perspective.

~The Bible affirms (**Job 28:28**), "The fear of the Lord, that is wisdom; and to depart from evil is understanding."

~So, by wisdom, James is talking about the skill that enables us to live obediently before God in the midst of trials. The result will be a truly beautiful life that glorifies God.

B. YOU MUST SEE YOUR NEED FOR WISDOM TO DRIVE YOU TO GOD TO SUPPLY THE NEED.

~By nature, all of us are self-sufficient know-it-alls.

~In America, it's the spirit of rugged individualism, or the self-made man. But I'm sure that every culture idolizes the strong person who seems to have it all together by himself, because pride is endemic to the human heart.

~To come to God, we must humble ourselves and admit that we do not know what we need to know in order to live joyfully in the face of trials.

~In fact, a main reason that God enables trials in our lives is to humble us from our pride, so that we look to Him.

~The proud Laodicean church thought that they were rich and had no needs, but God's view was that they were "wretched and miserable and poor and blind and naked" (**Rev. 3:17**).

~So a prerequisite to obtaining wisdom from God is to recognize our **lack of wisdom**.

2. To obtain wisdom to endure trials joyfully, you must KNOW your God.

~Our text shows four ways in which we must know God in order to obtain His wisdom:

A. KNOW THAT GOD IS THE SOURCE FOR ALL WISDOM.

~To ask God for wisdom implies that He can deliver!

~The Bible plainly states, “For the Lord gives wisdom; from His mouth come knowledge and understanding” (**Prov. 2:6**).

~It warns, “There is no wisdom and no understanding and no counsel against the Lord” (**Prov. 21:30**).

~In other words, if worldly “wisdom” contradicts or goes against God, it is false “wisdom.” Only God’s wisdom stands.

~“**Philosophy**” comes from two Greek words meaning, “the love of wisdom.”

~But worldly philosophers are not so much in love with wisdom as they are with their own wisdom.

~They are not so much interested in how to live wisely before God, whose existence they question or deny, but rather in showing how wise they are in being able to win arguments.

~Writing to those who took pride in the great Greek philosophers, Paul contrasted the so-called wisdom of this world with God’s wisdom as seen in the CROSS of Christ (**1 Cor. 1:18-30**).

~He sarcastically asks (**1 Cor. 1:20-21**), “Where is the wise man? Where is the scribe? Where is the debater of this age? Has not God made foolish the wisdom of the world? For since in the wisdom of God the world through its wisdom did not come to know God, God was well-pleased through the foolishness of the message preached to save those who believe.”

~The point is, if you have not come as a sinner to the cross of Christ to obtain God’s mercy through faith, you do not know God and thus you cannot obtain the wisdom that comes only from Him.

~But, how does God impart the wisdom that we need?

B. KNOW THAT GOD REVEALS HIS WISDOM BY HIS SPIRIT THROUGH HIS WORD.

~God's wisdom does not come as a sudden revelation or impression that hits out of nowhere.

~You won't find it in "Dear Abby" or Reader's Digest, unless they accidentally say something that coincides with God's Word.

~God's wisdom comes directly from God and is revealed in His Word.

~It especially centers in the knowledge of Christ, "in whom are hidden all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge." (**Col. 2:3**)

(Col. 1:9) "For this cause we also, since the day we heard it, do not cease to pray for you, and to desire that you might be filled with the knowledge of His will in all wisdom and Spiritual understanding."

(Eph. 1:16-17) "Cease not to give thanks for you, making mention of you in my prayers; That the God of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of Glory, may give unto you the Spirit of Wisdom and revelation in the knowledge of Him."

~God reveals His wisdom by the Holy Spirit to those who are spiritual.

(1 Cor. 2:6-16) READ

~That wisdom has to do with knowing how to apply biblical truth to particular situations in life.

~Thus if you are not spending consistent time learning God's Word, you will not have the wisdom that you need when trials hit.

~The time to seek wisdom from God is before the calamity hits

(Prov. 1:20-33) READ

C. KNOW THAT GOD REVEALS HIS WISDOM BY HIS SPIRIT THROUGH HIS WORD TO THOSE WHOSE HEARTS ARE FULLY HIS.

~James goes on to say that we must ask God for wisdom "in faith without any doubting" (**1:6**), and that the one who doubts is "a double-minded man, unstable in all his ways" (**1:8**).

~The Greek word, literally, is a “double-souled” man.

~It refers to a man whose heart is divided between allegiance to God and the allurements of the world. In other words, he’s not sure that he wants to know God’s wisdom, **because he isn’t fully committed to submitting to it.**

~It would be nice to know God’s wisdom for his situation, but before he commits to obeying it, he needs to find out if he “likes” it. In other words, he’s “shopping” for answers that fit what he wants to do.

~If God’s wisdom sounds good, he’ll follow it. But if worldly wisdom sounds better, he’ll follow that. James says that such a person will not receive anything from the Lord.

~If we want God’s wisdom in any decision or in any trial, we must be fully committed to obey Him.

D. KNOW THAT GOD GIVES GENEROUSLY AND WITHOUT REPROACH TO ALL THAT ASK HIM IN FAITH.

(James 1:5) says that God “gives to all,” you need to define “all” by the correct context.

~God does not give wisdom to everyone, but rather to every believer in Christ who asks in Faith.

~But James emphasizes that the manner in which God gives is “generously and without reproach.”

~“Generously” has the nuance of “simply,” or “without mental reservation.”

~He gives because He delights to give to His children.

~“Without reproach” means that He does not say, “What? You again? I just gave you what you wanted and you’re back here bugging Me again?”

~God never makes you feel cheap or irresponsible for asking again and again. Rather, He invites you to ask for all the wisdom you need.

~Some fathers are stingy and selfish. Their standard answer is, “No!” Or, if they grudgingly give you what you ask for, they never let you forget it.

~You have to budget your requests carefully, because if you get a yes on something, it will be a long, long time before you get another yes.

~God is ready and willing to lavish His wisdom on His children who ask for it. So to obtain wisdom from God to endure trials joyfully, the first thing is to recognize your need for it.

~Then know your God, who is the source of all wisdom. He reveals that wisdom chiefly in His Word through His Spirit to those whose hearts are ready to obey Him. He gives generously and without reproach to all that ask.

3. To obtain wisdom to endure trials joyfully, ASK God in FAITH to meet your need.

There are three parts to this:

A. ASK.

~The verb (**1:5**) is present tense, indicating that you probably will need to ask more than once to obtain what you need. But it's a simple command, “Let him ask.”

~There is no magic formula or special incantation that you need to mutter while you sprinkle holy water on a consecrated altar. He does not say, “Let him work for or earn or buy wisdom.” It's not for sale; it's a gift. Just ask.

B. ASK GOD. (“Let him ask of God”) (1:5).

~Every believer is a Priest who can approach God directly.

~You do not need to go through a priest or a Pastor. I am not saying that it is wrong to go to a spiritually mature counselor, who can help direct you to God’s Word for wisdom. But you don’t need to approach God through any human intermediary. If you know Christ, ask God directly.

~The Bible never tells us to pray to the virgin Mary or to some other saint. It never tells us to look within ourselves and decide what to do based on subjective feelings.

~It certainly never tells us to consult with a worldly psychologist or with Dear Abby, Dr. Phil, or Oprah!

~Peter tells us that God’s “divine power has granted to us everything pertaining to life and godliness through the true knowledge of Him who called us by His own glory and excellence. For by these He has granted to us His precious and magnificent promises...” (**2 Pet. 1:3-4**).

~Paul assures us (**Eph. 3:12**) that in Christ “we have boldness and confident access through faith in Him.”

~So, when you need wisdom to endure a trial in a manner pleasing to God, go directly to God in prayer through the mediation of Jesus Christ.

~Ask Him to direct you to the wisdom in His Word that you need. He promises to give it generously!

~Some Christians make the mistake of saying, “But I’m not worthy for God to grant my request. I’ve sinned too many times. I’ve failed Him so often. So I can’t go to Him and ask for wisdom.” But that’s an excuse for disobedience and unbelief.

~Every Christian has sinned. Every Christian has failed. Every Christian is unworthy.

~We do not come to God based on our worthiness. We come to God on the merit of Jesus Christ and His shed blood.

~Since God commands us to ask Him for wisdom, we are disobedient and unbelieving if we do not ask.

C. ASK GOD IN FAITH, WITHOUT DOUBTING.

~Faith is essential in approaching God, because as (**Hebrews 11:6**) says, “Without faith it is impossible to please Him, for he who comes to God must believe that He is and that He is a rewarder of those who seek Him.”

~It would be silly to ask something of a Being that you weren’t sure existed. Or, if He did exist, you weren’t sure if He cared about your request or if He had the power to grant it!

~So to ask from God, you must believe that He exists, that He personally cares for you, and He is able to give you the wisdom that you need to endure your trial with His joy.

~If you doubt God’s existence or His ability to give you wisdom for your need, James says (**1:6**) that you’re “like the surf of the sea, driven and tossed by the wind.”

~The surf has no inner power or principle to direct itself. It is totally at the will of the wind. It is completely unstable and chaotic. And, it can be a destructive force as it batters a boat or drives it against the rocks.

~That’s a picture of the person who lacks faith in God.

~The root of this unbelief is being double-minded. The person who doubts God is not committed to obey God no matter what. His heart is not fully surrendered to do God’s will.

~He’s curious about God’s wisdom, to find out if it agrees with him, but he’s not committed to do it if it involves suffering or inconvenience.

~That person, James says, “ought not to expect that he will receive anything from the Lord” (**1:7**).

~So the first thing in obtaining wisdom from God is to COMEPELETLY surrender your heart to Him.

