

James 1:5-11

But if any of you lacks wisdom, let him ask of God, who gives to all generously and without reproach, and it will be given to him. But he must ask in faith without any doubting, for the one who doubts is like the surf of the sea, driven and tossed by the wind. For that man ought not to expect that he will receive anything from the Lord, *being* a double-minded man, unstable in all his ways. But the brother of humble circumstances is to glory in his high position; and the rich man *is to glory* in his humiliation, because like flowering grass he will pass away. For the sun rises with a scorching wind and withers the grass; and its flower falls off and the beauty of its appearance is destroyed; so too the rich man in the midst of his pursuits will fade away.

Now that we have an understanding where trials come from and we understand that God puts them in our lives purposefully with an intent to make us more like Jesus, we now must move on to “What happens if I don’t accept the trials that come in my life?”

The text starts off with a great word “But if”. This is a word that links the previous text with the following. For instance, one could say “If you go to college you will have a greater opportunity to make more money in your life, *But If* you do not go to college, you will have a lesser opportunity to make money”. James is basically saying, “Here is God’s standard (i.e. how we should act in a trial **James 1:2-4**), but if you can’t follow through with **verses 2-4**; then you need to do **verses 5-8**.”

Verse 5 starts off with an assumption, those who cannot fulfill **verse 2-4** do not have the wisdom. This means that for us to actually endure, we will need wisdom. So, ultimately you can’t do **verse 2-4** without wisdom, and this wisdom needs to come from God. James comes back to this thought process in **James 3:17**, where James says (and I quote) “But the wisdom from above is first pure, then peaceable, gentle, reasonable, full of mercy and good fruits, unwavering, without hypocrisy.” What we see in that verse is that there are two kinds of wisdom, one from above and one from below. The wisdom from above has a different set of characteristics than that of the wisdom from below.

Which leads me to a question, how many of us, when stuck in a jam (i.e. trial) quickly turn to someone for help? I would think it is safe to assume, most of us do. I have a follow-up question, what are the characteristics of the person you go to? Would you say, integrity, honesty, loving or perhaps are they unbiased? Let me ask another question, is that person a Christian? Maybe you do not turn to people but to books? Believe it or not, but self help books sell a lot and a lot of self help books are NOT based on the word of God. Now, psychology (in either book or person) isn’t bad when it has a Biblical foundation; yet, without a Biblical foundation it will lead you astray...maybe not today or tomorrow, but it will lead you astray. Let us do some math...

UnChristian Wisdom + Christian = Unrighteousness*[A little leaven leaven's the whole dough (Galatians 5:9)]***Christian Wisdom + Christian = Righteousness**

Unchristian wisdom is defined in **James 3:14-15** as: “jealousy...selfish ambition...arrogant...lie[s]...earthly, natural, demonic”. Now, some may say “Well, it may not be Biblical but it can still be good”. I would have to disagree, based on what God says in the Bible a “natural man does not accept the things of the Spirit of God, for they are foolishness to him; and he cannot understand them, because they are spiritually appraised.” (**1 Corinthians 2:14**). This tells us that a natural man cannot understand the things of God and if **James 1:17** tells us that “Every good thing and every perfect gift is from above” then in **James 3:17** tells us that “wisdom from above is first pure, then peaceable, gentle, reasonable, full of mercy and good fruits, unwavering, without hypocrisy”; then you see that only good and perfect wisdom can come from God and God alone – it cannot be found anywhere else.

So what does this mean? This means that if a Christian goes to an UnChristian for wisdom, they truly do not want wisdom that is good, perfect, peaceable, reasonable, bearing good fruit, and without hypocrisy – they would rather have wisdom that is earthly (fading away), natural (sinful) and demonic (evil). After all if that person was a “Christian” why would they look *anywhere* other than the Bible? Do they not believe the Bible is the living word of God? Do they not believe that the Bible is everything we need? Shouldn't they know this? That is why, if we truly want change, if we truly want wisdom then we need to go the only source of Godly Wisdom and that is God.

So this begs the question, “Is it ok to go to a pastor, Sunday school teacher, or small group leader for wisdom?”. That question actually answers itself, because if your pastor, Sunday school teacher or small group leader is a man or woman who, by their fruits, proves they love God then their wisdom should have Biblical backing to it. Therefore, in short, yes you can go to your pastor, Sunday school teacher or small group leader for wisdom – as long as their fruits prove their roots and their roots are grounded in Jesus.

Moreover, this chapter has really opened my eyes and heart. Before studying this, I used to think “If I am in a trial I need to ask for wisdom”. I would ask for wisdom and not always receive it. I would be confused saying to myself “Um...You tell me if I am in a trial I need to ask for wisdom”. Part of my error was, I was asking for wisdom to get out of the trial. However, if God put the trial in my life to make me more like Jesus and I tell God I don't want that trial – I am telling God I don't want be like Jesus and

actually running away from the very thing that will make me holy. So obviously, that is not going to add up.

However, I never thought of what *kind* of wisdom I need to ask for. See, the context here is God putting a trial in my life to prove that I love Him and make me more like Jesus. If I have trouble understanding that or enduring that trial, then I need to ask for wisdom; but what wisdom should I ask for? Should I ask for some arbitrary wisdom that is general? No, the text is speaking about wisdom to *endure* the trial. Remember that word at the end of **verse 3**? Yes, that word “Endurance”. God wants us to ask for wisdom to *endure* the trial, so that God will bless us, crown us, because we prove we love Him.

Well, there you go. We need to ask for wisdom to go through the trial, that means to actually go into it. Not around it, not away from it, but into the trial. One of the greatest things is that we do not have a God who gives wisdom to some and not to others. We already alluded to why some do not receive the wisdom they ask for. 1.) Because they ask for wisdom to *get out* of the trial rather than to *endure* the trial, 2.) **Verse 6** tells us we need to ask in faith. This “ask[ing] in faith” is a very important concept. Does this mean that we must believe He will answer? Yeah, I believe that has something to do with it, but better yet – I have the feeling it is a focused faith. The kind of Faith that knows what God starts, He will finish (**Philippians 1:6**); that God won’t put us in something we can’t get out of (**1 Corinthians 10:13a**); and when we are in the trial, God will enable us to endure it (**1 Corinthians 10:13b**). This is the kind of faith that believes that whomever God predestined will be changed from degree of glory to another, so we will be like Jesus (**2 Corinthians 3:18; Romans 8:29**) and that God uses everything for good (**Romans 8:28**). This is the faith that believes that God loves us so much that He is going to work in our lives to make us righteous.

So we ask in faith, because we believe that what God is allowing in our lives is for our own good and God won’t leave us hanging, better yet, God will administer a grace to us that will enable us to endure the trial(s). Therefore, if we were to ask God to get out of a trial, then we are asking with doubt, ultimately saying “God, I know ‘this’ trial is going to make me more like Jesus, but I’d rather not do this”. What kind of Christian would not want to do what God wants them to do to make them more like Jesus? Sounds like a really immature Christian or someone who is an UnChristian. It is kind of like, the body builder who wants to be entered in to “body building shows” without lifting weights. The only show they will be in is an afterschool special on how to raise your self esteem, because they will be getting beaten up by the big body builders. That logic doesn’t make sense and neither does a Christian who doesn’t want to go through the very thing that will make him or her more holy and like Jesus.

Therefore as **verse 7** says “that man ought not to expect that he will receive anything from the Lord, being a double-minded man, unstable in all his ways”. The person who can’t make up his/her mind to

follow in God's footsteps is unstable and will fall apart prove they do not love God – they will not be able to fulfill **Verse 12** and ultimately prove – they are not Christian.

Well, now you may ask “What if God doesn't give me the wisdom and I have asked correctly?” I would have to say you are either a.) Deceiving yourself. Because, God gives wisdom to endure, not to escape and you obviously want escape. Or b.) not a Christian. Because, you do not understand the ways of God. God makes it very clear, if you ask for wisdom with a clear, focused faith in that He will make you more like Jesus through the trial, and you ask to endure the trial not to escape it – He will give you that wisdom to go through the middle of that trial, prove you Love God because he wants to bless you.

God came to save sinners (**1 Timothy 1:15**) and God wants every person to repent (**2 Peter 3:9**). It would be against God's word (**1 Corinthians 10:13; James 1:5**) for him not to give wisdom to you – when you ask for it according to His Will. So the reception of the wisdom isn't contingent upon God, but of the one asking. God wouldn't just say, “This Christian is cool and this one is to, but this Christian is a waste of time; therefore wont' get any wisdom”. Why would God withhold the very thing He wants to give you, so you will be more like Jesus and share in His glory? The answer is simple, He wouldn't do that – it just is not logical. God wants to give you wisdom to endure the trial because that is the whole purpose of giving you the trial. Why would God want to stop or withhold the very thing He is trying to do in you? He wouldn't!

We can note that God has a Standard. If we cannot match that Standard, we need to clarify why and ask How To Meet This Standard. Once we do that He will give wisdom and we will Receive Wisdom for the purpose of meeting His Standard. Let me illustrate:



Why does God give generously? Because He wants everyone to be transformed into Jesus, He wants everyone to be saved.

Another great note is at the end of **verse 5**. We see that God gives generously and without reproach. The idea of giving without reproach is the idea of God giving and not regretting. God doesn't give wisdom then say "Shoot! That didn't work out" or "Grr! I my wisdom failed there again!". Where God gives, God will conquer, He will win. See if God were to give wisdom and then His wisdom fail, then that would hurt His integrity to actually have the ability to work in your life. That would make God *not all powerful* but *sometimes powerful*.

This concept is so unlike us. See, I can tell you I recently rented a movie where in the first five minutes there was porn and nudity. After fast forwarding through that part, the movie then went on into club. Not just any normal club but a strip club. Now, that is me renting a movie with reproach. Then the next time I want to rent a movie someone will say to themselves, that I do not have the integrity to pick a clean movie – I will have been discredited. That is the same logical progression we will get if when God gives it *sometimes* doesn't work out.

The wisdom from God is the source of understanding trials as a "good and perfect" thing, that will create in us an endurance to become better people, like Jesus. If we do not "Get that" then we haven't received it from God and it is due to our failure to ask correctly.

Therefore, we really have to say to ourselves "Am I asking God for wisdom to endure the trial?", "Am I asking God in faith". For Him not to do this would be against His own will. So, when we do this, He will give wisdom and it will work. Period.

This is consistent with the rest of Scripture too:

Jeremiah 24:7

'I will give them a heart to know Me, for I am the LORD; and they will be My people, and I will be their God, for they will return to Me with their whole heart.

Romans 8:29

For those whom He foreknew, He also predestined to become conformed to the image of His Son, so that He would be the firstborn among many brethren;

2 Corinthians 3:18

But we all, with unveiled face, beholding as in a mirror the glory of the Lord, are being transformed into the same image from glory to glory, just as from the Lord, the Spirit.

1John 3:2

Beloved, now we are children of God, and it has not appeared as yet what we will be. We know that when He appears, we will be like Him, because we will see Him just as He is.

Philippians 3:20-21

For our citizenship is in heaven, from which also we eagerly wait for a Savior, the Lord Jesus Christ; who will transform the body of our humble state into conformity with the body

Just to name a few.

James 1:9-10 tells us, explains to us, economic status has nothing to do with our ability or inability to receive God's blessing (wisdom). The rich man will be humbled (Because he isn't depending on himself) and the poor man will be lifted up (Because he considered a "nobody" receive the blessing of a "somebody").

James 1:11 tells us, just as the sun will destroy the flower and the grass, if we try to live off of our worldly "stuff", that too will rust and fade away. God has an "inheritance which is imperishable and undefiled and will not fade away, reserved in heaven for you" (**1 Peter 1:4**).

Finally, let me leave you with quote from an early 1990's grunge rock singer "It is better to burn out, then fade away". This quote is very close to this topic in this chapter. Let me illustrate. If we have a trial in our life, and it "Fades Away", then we cannot recall it because it wasn't worth memorizing. However, if we have a trial that "burns out" we will remember it because it will leave a scar.

Therefore, we can point to that scar in our life and say "This is a trial I went through, and it is only by the Grace of God that I endured this trial and you know what? I proved I loved God because I stuck it out know that the "testing of [my] faith produces endurance" and I "Let endurance have its perfect result, so that [I] may be [made] perfect and complete, lacking in nothing" and that brings me joy. (**James 1:2-4**).

So what's the "Bottom Line"?

- When we come to a trial in our life. We need to understand what it is for. We need to ask ourselves, *"What is God teaching me through this time"*.
- If we are struggling with this, then we need to come to God and ask Him to give us wisdom to help us endure the trial
- If we do not do this, we will do every earthly measure to get out of it, and that will not be an investment in the kingdom of heaven, but something that will mean nothing and fade away.
- If we do understand and accept then we will lead a life of being take care of in the hands of God.

THEOLOGY

But if any of you lacks wisdom, let him ask of God, who gives to all generously and without reproach, and it will be given to him. But he must ask in faith without any doubting, for the one who doubts is like the surf of the sea, driven and tossed by the wind. For that man ought not to expect that he will receive anything from the Lord, *being* a double-minded man, unstable in all his ways. But the brother of humble circumstances is to glory in his high position; and the rich man *is to glory* in his humiliation, because like flowering grass he will pass away. For the sun rises with a scorching wind and withers the grass; and its flower falls off and the beauty of its appearance is destroyed; so too the rich man in the midst of his pursuits will fade away. **(James 1:5-11 – NASB)**

- Here is our 2nd option if we do not count trials “Joy”, we must ask for wisdom in order to consider our trials as “joy”.
- God is a giver of wisdom and when He gives wisdom, he doesn’t give and then regret it.
- Therefore, we can count on the wisdom He gives us will work through us to give us endurance through the trials.
- God will give us wisdom when we ask with a clear, focused conscience (i.e. faith) that God will follow through with his promise.
- Your status in life has no bearing on His willingness or ability to give wisdom.

APPLICATION

- “Generously”: hayg – eh – om – ahee:
 - “bountifully: - liberally” or “simply, openly, frankly, sincerely”
- The Point Here is God gives freely to those who trust Him.
 - Have you ever given someone something, but felt force to do out of duty rather than in love?
 - How would it make God look if He gave out of duty rather than love?
 - Make up a scenario in your mind, what it would look like if God gave out of duty rather than love.
 - How would it feel if you didn’t (or couldn’t), trust (or love) your parents/siblings or significant other? Would you ask them for anything and if so what would you expect? Do you see an act of love in that or would you think there was a “catch” involved?

PRAYER

Take a moment and pray:

1. Adore God for following through with His promise in **1 Corinthians 10:13**.
2. Confess any shortcomings you discovered in this study and His Word that proves it.
3. Thank God for not leaving you hanging and always reaching out His hand to you.
4. Supplicate (Ask) God to give you grace to stop what you are doing in a trial and ask for wisdom.