



CAPITOL COMMISSION™

Asking for Wisdom

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Greg Beaupied / cell: (919) 710-9147 / Greg.Beaupied@capitolcom.org

Introduction

Once you are in a trial, how do you get out of it? You have to go through it. Certainly there are many things we can do to avoid some trials. We will be more successful if we work hard. We will be healthier if we eat well and get proper exercise. Our cars will last longer if we change the oil regularly. Life is full of such practical ways we can avoid problems. But trials will come. They may come regardless of our best efforts. Nevertheless, once in a trial, the way out of it is through it. It would make sense to ask for wisdom when we find ourselves dealing with a trial.

James 1:5-8

If any of you lacks wisdom, he should ask God, who gives generously to all without finding fault, and it will be given to him. But when he asks, he must believe and not doubt, because he who doubts is like a wave of the sea, blown and tossed by the wind. That man should not think he will receive anything from the Lord; he is a double-minded man, unstable in all he does.

If any of you lacks wisdom...

The last study taught us that God desires maturity which means completeness and lacking nothing. Here James takes up the one thing a mature believer must not lack. Without it there is no maturity. This important ingredient is wisdom.

he should ask God...

The Bible has a great deal to tell us about wisdom, and we should start at the beginning.

"The fear of the LORD is the beginning of wisdom, and knowledge of the Holy One is understanding" (Proverbs 9:10).

There is a prerequisite for wisdom. We must begin with a fear of the Lord. To fear God means to acknowledge everything about Him. Many believe that God is a distant, unknowable deity who has no relevance to our daily lives. He is not the kind of God to whom one would ask for daily bread. He is to

some a God who is not really here, who is not really engaged, and who is not personally involved in the lives of His people.

The Westminster Longer Catechism describes God. *God is a Spirit, in and of himself infinite in being, glory, blessedness, and perfection; all-sufficient, eternal, unchangeable, incomprehensible, everywhere present, almighty, knowing all things, most wise, most holy, most just, most merciful and gracious, long-suffering, and abundant in goodness and truth.*¹

who gives generously...

God is a giver. He gave His only Son. Some people foolishly believe they deserve the gifts of God. They believe their imperfect works somehow merit His good pleasure. Our imperfect efforts cannot merit the wonders of eternal life. Nobody has enough capital to buy a ticket to Heaven.

Nor can God forgive us without some compensation for justice. Only a perfect payment on our behalf can deserve the glories of God. One person is able to offer the perfect sacrifice for our redemption. Jesus completed His perfect work and He offers it to us as a gift.

Unless we know God as the perfect One who saves us from our miserable inadequacies, we cannot find wisdom. First, if we do not know Him we are not able to go to Him and ask for wisdom. Second, if we do not know Him, we will not trust Him.

to all...

We ought to be careful when we encounter words like "all" and "every" in the Bible. In our desire to believe everything it says and to interpret the Word just as it is, we can make the mistake of making more of words than they are intended to say. Here "to all" means to all who are believers or to all who would come to God. "All" does not mean everyone on the face of the earth, not those who reject Him, not those who do not know Him

BIBLE STUDIES

LEGISLATORS: MONDAYS, 5:00 PM OR WEDNESDAYS, 7:30 AM, ROOM 1425

STAFF: MONDAYS, 12:00 NOON, CHAPEL

North Carolina

James

without fault...

God gives to His children without finding fault. He delights in us in every way. He has adopted us into His family and invited us into a relationship of complete intimacy. None of this is possible except for the finished work of Christ. In Him we can have intimacy with God, in Him we stand faultless before the Father, in Him we are accepted, in Him we have access to the throne room (cf. John 17:20-26).

Fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom, and living in an ongoing relationship with God is the perfecting of wisdom. Wisdom starts when we know God, but wisdom will grow over the rest of our lives as we get to know Him more and more.

And it will be given to him.

In our previous study we examined the question of asking “Why.” We learned there are many different reasons for God not answering all of our “whys?” But, sufficient wisdom will be given to the one who asks God for it. Wisdom is more than knowing information. Wisdom is walking with God, knowing who He is, and understanding our dependence upon Him

But when he asks, he must believe and not doubt...

And without faith it is impossible to please God, because anyone who comes to him must believe that he exists and that he rewards those who earnestly seek him (Hebrews 11:6).

God says, “Come and ask.” But when we do ask, we must believe. “Without faith it is impossible to please God.” We do not ask God just in case it might help our situation. We ask God because He is the answer to our trials.

When I owned a paint store a man came in and asked a question about how to properly paint the exterior of his home. We gave him careful and appropriate instructions. The customer replied, “My next door neighbor didn’t tell me to do that!” We asked what his neighbor did for a living, and we were told he was a butcher. Perhaps you can see the point, the

man asked us, who were experts, and yet he did not believe. Somehow he thought a butcher might know more about painting his house than the experts at a local paint store.

That’s how we can go to God. We ask but we do not believe. He may give us the answer through good biblical counsel, through reading His Word and prayer, through listening to our pastor teach us from the pulpit, but we just do not really believe.

...because he who doubts is like a wave of the sea, blown and tossed by the wind.

When you doubt God you are open to any idea or suggestion that may come along. Often, we can waver between two or more opinions. James will give us much godly guidance but when it comes we must respond with belief knowing he gives us the words of God.

That man should not think he will receive anything from the Lord; he is a double-minded man, unstable in all he does.

James underscores his instruction with strong and direct words. A double-minded person is in danger of not receiving anything from the Lord. Imagine being cut off from the very source of living water. Yet, this is how we are all prone to live—with one foot in God’s Kingdom and the other in the world. We fool ourselves into thinking we are somehow getting the best of both—having our cake and eating it too! James calls those who do so unstable. The One who knows all and loves us more than anyone is blocked out by our lack of spiritual focus. This seems like a possible tragedy in the making.

Questions to think about...

1. What are your typical reactions to a serious trial? Are these reactions pleasing to God? Do they work?
2. Why is asking God for wisdom so often not our first response to a trial?
3. When you ask God for wisdom, how do you get the answer?
4. How does God’s peace help you hear the answer?