

Living Faith in the World: Book of James

Lesson 2

True Wisdom Comes from God Alone

Scriptures 1

1) Trials test our faith, building endurance and spiritual maturity.

One of the most incredible gifts that God **offers** us is wisdom, and all we have to do to receive it is ask!

Romans 5:3-5 "Not only so, but we also glory in our sufferings, because we know that suffering produces perseverance; perseverance, character; and character, hope. And hope does not put us to shame, because God's love has been poured out into our hearts through the Holy Spirit, who has been given to us." It is quite natural to glory or exalt what is positive, but not in sufferings and tribulations. Suffering teaches the believers to stay under the pressure, like squeezing a lemon to get the concentrated juice. *The pressure results from the conflict of faith and its enduring benefits vs a fallen world under Satan's influence.*

Matthew 5:10-12 "Blessed are you when people insult you, persecute you and falsely say all kinds of evil against you because of me. Rejoice and be glad, because great is your reward in heaven, for in the same way they persecuted the prophets who were before you." *Those who are persecuted for Christ's sake suffer like Him in this life that they may be glorified with Him in the next and inherit the kingdom of heaven.*

Psalms 62:10 "Do not trust in extortion or put vain hope in stolen goods; though your riches increase, do not set your heart on them." *Place expectant faith in God not ill-gotten riches achieved through force or threats.*

1 Timothy 6:17 "Command those who are rich in this present world not to be arrogant nor to put their hope in wealth, which is so uncertain, but to put their hope in God, which richly provides us with everything for our enjoyment." *All we have comes from the Lord and is temporary. Where there is wealth, pride is often nearby. Believers can counter this haughtiness by concentrating on good deeds, being generous in their giving, trusting in the living God alone.*

Luke 12:15 "Then he said to them, 'Watch out! Be on your guard for all kinds of greed; life does not consist in an abundance of possessions.'" *Jesus isolates the real issue; greed or coveting.*

Romans 5:3-5 Worldly wisdom; Success, wealth or pleasure.

Things not going well we feel; Frustrated, angry, sad, or disappointed.

Joy comes from the Holy Spirit. It's a spiritual reality, not a feeling that comes and goes.

Philippians 4: 12-13 "I know what it is to be in need, and I know what it is to have plenty. I have learned the secret of being content in any and every situation, whether well fed or hungry, whether living in plenty or in want. I can do all this through him who gives me strength."

Notes: _____

Lesson 2 True Wisdom Comes from God Alone

In the Book of James we will learn what true wisdom is and how we find it. James is about practical wisdom—applying the truth of God’s Word to our everyday-life situations.

James 1:2-4, 12 “Consider it pure joy, my brothers and sisters, whenever you face trials of many kinds, because you know that the testing of your faith produces perseverance. Let perseverance finish its work so that you may be mature and complete, not lacking anything.” **V12** “Blessed is the one who perseveres under trial because, having stood the test, that person will receive the crown of life that the Lord has promised to those who love him.”

1) Trials test our faith, building endurance and spiritual maturity.

Q: Why did James say we should count trials as joyful things in our lives? The trials that God allows strengthens the believer and are different from the consequences of sin in a believer’s life. This is true when walking through trials of all kinds. It means to thoughtfully and with confidence see the good that God can do through it. Give an example in your own life. This ATTITUDE is foundational to a life of godly wisdom and is the complete opposite of the wisdom of the world.

Perseverance: We do not resign ourselves to whatever happens, but to have a tough resolve or brave endurance in adverse circumstances. Trials produce durability as well as maturity.

Suffering is not a sign of God’s displeasure with us. Trials are not a necessary evil in our lives that we just have to get through. Persecution for Christ’s sake is a blessing. (**Matthew 5:10-12**)

We should thank God because trials are what make us stronger, they build our faith and endurance. Those who have the Holy Spirit shift their thinking to see things the way God does.

Q: What does it mean to be complete, lacking in nothing? How do we get there? Material prosperity isn’t a sign of God’s favor. Scripture tells us not to set our hearts on riches (**Ps 62:10**) and teaches wealthy believers not to trust in wealth. (**1 Timothy 6:17**) Material prosperity is often a snare. (**Luke 12:15**) That is why the prosperity gospel is the opposite of the true Gospel of Jesus Christ.

Worldly “wisdom” links happiness to external circumstances such as success, wealth or pleasure. When things are going well in life, we feel happy. When they aren’t we feel frustrated, angry, sad or disappointed. Those who think this way can see joy only in material prosperity. We can experience joy in EVERY circumstance because joy comes from the Holy Spirit within us. It’s a spiritual reality, not a feeling that comes and goes with the circumstance. (**Romans 5:3-5**)

Q: How have trials you have experienced helped you grow spiritually?

Q: What would our spiritual maturity level be like if we never went through any trials, if we only had everything handed to us on a silver platter?

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Lesson 2

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Scriptures 2

2) We can ask God for wisdom, and He will give it to us generously.

Those with wisdom know how to respond in the midst of confusing circumstances, having a clarity God gives.

James 1:5 "If any of you lacks wisdom, you should ask God, who gives generously without finding fault, and it will be given to you." Picture a beautiful banquet table set up with all the delicious items of wisdom that God made available to believers. This shows God's generosity. God provides us with the guidance we need, without any shame, ridicule, or contempt.

1 Corinthians 2:10-16 " *these are the things God has revealed to us by his Spirit*. The Spirit searches all things of God. For who knows a person's thoughts except their own spirit within them"? In the same way no one knows the thoughts of God *except the Spirit of God*. What we have *received* is not the spirit of the world, but *the Spirit who is from God*, so that we may understand what *God has freely given us*. This is *what we speak*, not in words taught us by human wisdom but in words *taught by the Spirit, explaining spiritual realities with Spirit-taught words*. The person without the Spirit does not accept the things that come from the Spirit of God but considers them foolishness, and cannot understand them because they are discerned only through the Spirit. *The person with the Spirit makes judgements about all things*, but such a person is not subject to merely human judgements, for, 'Whom has known the mind of the Lord so as to instruct him?' *But we have the mind of Christ*." The Holy Spirit speaks directly to our hearts and minds.

We need to ask for wisdom in prayer. It is an expression of humility and dependence on God.

1 Kings 3:9 "So give your servant a discerning heart to govern your people and distinguish between right and wrong. For who is able to govern this great people of yours?" *The humility of a discerning heart give birth to a spirit that is sensitive to what God says through His Word and His people. To discern is to have the ability to choose between two options.*

Psalms 119:98 "Your commands are always with me and make me wiser than my enemies." *God's Word gives to all believers, wisdom that exceeds that of their enemies.*

1 Corinthians 2:13 "This is what we speak, *not in words taught us by human wisdom* but in words taught by the Spirit, explaining spiritual realities with Spirit-taught words." Not the world!

Notes: _____

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James 1:5 “If any of you lacks wisdom, you should ask God, who gives generously to all without finding fault.”

1Kings 4:29-30 “God gave Solomon wisdom and very great insight, and a breadth of understanding as measureless as the sand on the seashore. Solomon’s wisdom was greater than the wisdom of all the people of the East, and greater than all the wisdom of Egypt.”

2) We can ask God for wisdom, and He will give it to us generously.

Q: What should we do if we lack wisdom? How will God respond?

If we lack wisdom, we are to ask God for it! This is simple, straightforward, practical advice.

When Solomon became king, God appeared to him in a dream and offered anything he wanted.

If he lived in our culture today, what might he have asked for and why? _____.

Q: Solomon asked for wisdom above all else. Why? He was young, inexperienced, overwhelmed, and big responsibility facing him. In what way have you felt any of these kinds of concerns? _____

God gives wisdom generously and “without reproach” to ALL believers who ask.

Reproach: *Shaming, to censure or disgrace, often being a target of ridicule or contempt.*

Regardless of our past mistakes, current difficulties, or future uncertainties, God is ready to provide us with the guidance we need, without any shame, ridicule, or contempt.

As believers, we have the Holy Spirit dwelling inside us speaking directly to our hearts and minds, speaking spiritual wisdom with spiritual words (**1Corinthians 2:10-16**). We still need to ask God for wisdom in prayer because the *act of asking is important*. Asking God for wisdom is a posture of the heart, a profound expression of humility and dependence on God. *By asking, believers acknowledge our limitations and demonstrate our trust in God’s infinite wisdom.*

Admitting we don’t know how to “discern between good and evil” on our own apart from God.

(1Kings 3:9) This intentional wording comes from the story of the Fall, when Adam and Eve ate from the Tree of the Knowledge of Good and Evil. *They wanted to decide for themselves what was good and evil.* We are doing the OPPOSITE of what Adam and Eve said in the Fall. **We trust that God is the source of all wisdom, and knows good from evil. We trust what He says is right—above what we think or feel!** We must study His written Word faithfully (**Psalms 119:98**) with guidance from the Holy Spirit (**1Corinthians 2:13**) seeking wisdom from Him. *Not the world!*

Q: How does making financial gain our priority hinder our spiritual growth and keep us from becoming the person God wants us to be?

Q: Recall a situation where it was difficult to discern good from evil. How did you find answers

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Scripture 3

3) When we ask God for wisdom, we must trust that His wisdom is right.

James 1:6-8 "But when you ask, you must believe and not doubt, because the one who doubts is like a wave of the sea, blown and tossed by the wind. That person should not expect to receive anything from the Lord. Such a person is double-minded and unstable in all they do." *The double minded person is spiritually conflicted and therefore unstable in all ways. True faith produces people that are stable, looking only to God for the wisdom they need, knowing that He will respond.*

Q: What does the image of being tossed by the wind tell us about doubt?

Q: we ask in faith with no doubting. All have doubts at times.

Remember what we do know about God.

1) We believe, that means God is trustworthy. And rely on Him. Our faith is personal.

2) When we ask God for wisdom if we doubt we won't trust His answer.

Asking means we don't know

Wave doesn't decide where it will go blown around by the wind. wisdom of the world is new

The world constantly changes their "wisdom". and truth in the world.

Ephesians 4:14 "Then we will no longer be infants, tossed back and forth by the waves, and blown here and there by every wind of teaching and by the cunning and craftiness of people in their deceitful scheming."

Proverbs 3:5-6 "Trust in the Lord with all your heart and lean not on your own understanding; in all your ways submit to Him, and he will make your paths straight."

God's wisdom is unchanging. From generation to generation, place to place, and culture to culture, it remains the same.

Have you ever tried to teach a child to drive who has never operated a car; an overconfident teenager with no experience is a recipe for disaster. Doing life well, as God intends, demands much more capability than driving a vehicle. In what areas of life have you been leading out of your own wisdom? _____

Choose to repent and ask for God's wisdom to live life in His way in these areas of your life.

Notes: _____

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James 1:6-8 “ But when you ask, you must believe and not doubt, because the one who doubts is like a wave of the sea, blown and tossed by the wind. That person should not expect to receive anything from the Lord. Such a person is double-minded and unstable in all they do.”

3) When we ask God for wisdom, we must trust that His wisdom is right.

Q: What does the image of being tossed by the wind tell us about doubt? When we ask God for wisdom, we ask in faith with no doubting. This doesn't mean we never have doubts in our Christian life. We will all have doubts at times. Faith in God is a relationship, not a scientific experiment. It requires a commitment that transcends, or goes beyond the evidence (what is seen and understood) and becomes validated (shown to be truth) over time. *When we face what we don't know, we must remember what we do know about God.*

1) Remember what we know about God. When we say we believe that means God is trustworthy, we have confidence in and rely upon Him. Our faith is personal not intellectual.

2) Trust God with what we don't know. When we ask God for wisdom we cannot ask God with doubt, because if we do, we won't trust His answer. Asking God is an admission that we don't know for ourselves what is right. **We don't have to test God's answers against the worlds when He speaks clearly in prayer or from His Word.**

A wave is tossed about by the wind. In a storm, the wind blows waves back and forth. The wave doesn't decide where it will go; it is simply blown around by the wind. If we doubt what God says is true, we will be blown around by whatever the latest “wisdom of the world is. When the “wind” changes to something different we'll believe that new “wisdom.”

The world constantly changes their “wisdom”. There are ever-changing beliefs about spirituality, morality and truth in the world. Everyone seems to have their own take on all of these!

God's wisdom is unchanging. It's steady. From generation to generation, place to place, and culture to culture, it remains the same. When you trust God's wisdom you don't get blown around by the winds of “teachings” (Ephesians 4:14)

3) Trying to listen to both the wisdom of the world and the wisdom of God or fuse them, is being “double-minded”. They are opposing voices. You will be “unstable”, trying to have one foot in each of two different worlds. **Stand firm on God's wisdom as the truth.** We can't only half believe it or somehow combine it with the world's wisdom being blown around from “truth” to “truth” we will eventually sink.

Q: Describe some “truths” being taught in our culture that are contrary to the Gospel. How do some people try to blend the two ideas together? How does it make them unstable?

Q: How can we stand firm on God's wisdom alone? How can we know what God's truth is?