How to Receive Wisdom from God

James 1:5-8

**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 person ought not to expect that he will receive anything from the Lord, *being* a double-minded man, unstable in all his ways.**

**Introduction**

Good morning to you all. Today we are continuing our series of messages working through the New Testament epistle of James. So far we have looked at the background of the epistle and last week we looked at how God uses trials in this life to help us become more mature as believers in Christ. The topic of trials is continued this week, but now the focus is shifting to wisdom and how we may obtain from God the wisdom that we need when facing those trials. As we begin the message today I would like to ask you to think back to a time when you were faced with a difficult situation, but did not have any idea what the best way was to handle that situation? Sometimes we are put into situations where we are not able to think of a reasonable solution without seeking advice from others. This type of scenario is exactly what James is referring to in chapter 1 verses 5-8. Let us take a few minutes to look closely at these 4 verses today and unwrap what God wants us to know regarding wisdom.

1:5 “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.”

As we begin our study in verse 5 James informs his readers that the source of all wisdom is God. All knowledge and the ability to know anything comes from His gift of a rational mind to all humanity. In Genesis 1:26 we read “Then God said, “Let Us make mankind in Our image, according to Our likeness; and let them rule over the fish of the sea and over the birds of the sky and over the livestock and over all the earth, and over every crawling thing that crawls on the earth.” In making mankind like Him, God gave them a rational mind. Therefore, if anyone lacks the wisdom necessary to understand the trials that God brings to help us to mature in the faith James is teaching us that we must ask God to increase our wisdom so that we may better discern things.

The teacher in the book of Proverbs instructs his son on how he may obtain wisdom. In chapter 2 verses 2:1-9 he writes “My son, if you will receive my words and treasure my commandments within you, make your ear attentive to wisdom; Incline your heart to understanding. For if you cry out for insight *and* raise your voice for understanding; If you seek her as silver and search for her as for hidden treasures; Then you will understand the fear of the Lord and discover the knowledge of God. For the Lord gives wisdom; From His mouth *come* knowledge and understanding. He stores up sound wisdom for the upright;
*He is* a shield to those who walk in integrity, Guarding the paths of justice, And He watches over the way of His godly ones. Then you will discern righteousness, justice, And integrity, *and* every good path.” The teacher of wisdom in Proverbs tells His son that wisdom comes from listening to the words of God.

Secondly, wisdom must be sought out because there are so many other false hoods in the world competing for our attention. When wisdom is found it is like precious silver because it is a treasure. When man listens to Gods words of wisdom he will walk in righteousness and the fear of the Lord.

Finally, when we listen to the wisdom of God and practice it in our lives we will have the strength and courage to discern between the truth and lies. James wants his readers to know that God freely gives wisdom to those who seek it from Him and are willing to heed what He teaches.

1:6 “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.”

Not only is wisdom to be sought out and treasured, but when asking God for this wisdom man must believe that God will freely give it to those who seek it. It is important not to doubt the wisdom of God and to understand that God’s wisdom is the only truth that exists. As I have said so many times, all other claims to truth other than what is clearly taught in Scripture is false. To illustrate the importance of not doubting the wisdom of God, James using the example of the waves that come in from the sea. Waves either are small or can be large depending on the strength of the sea. This means that the waves can be unpredictable. When a man doubts the wisdom of God the only other option is to do things according to his own way. We have discussed previously in our discussions that when man chooses to do things his own way this leads to confusion, chaos, and despair.

Scripture clearly teaches that God is the only source of true wisdom and that relying on any other claim of truth is folly. Once again in the book of Proverbs the writer tells his listener “The fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom, And the knowledge of the Holy One is understanding” (Proverbs 9:10). In other words, it is impossible to have wisdom if you do not fear and know God.

1:7 “For that person ought not to expect that he will receive anything from the Lord,”

We should not expect for the Lord to share His wisdom with us if we do not trust in Him. Why is this the case? If we do not trust the Lord then will we do what He teaches? God does not share His wisdom with the man who does not trust in Him. Matthew Henry the 18th century commentary writer makes the point that this is the exact same attitude Jesus had when people came to Him asking to be healed. One such occurrence if found in Matthew chapter 9 where Jesus has just raised the daughter of the official of Capernaum back to life. After He left their home He had two blind men ask to be healed. Jesus asked them “Do you believe that I am able to do this?” (v. 28). When they answered in the affirmative He then proceeded to heal them. Why did Jesus ask this? He wanted them to publicly profess their faith in Him. Once they did so He healed them. God will provide healing and wisdom to those who truly believe in Him and do not have a wavering faith.

1:8 “*being* a double-minded man, unstable in all his ways.”

The term double-minded in this context is someone who goes back and forth from faith to doubt constantly. This wavering of faith causes a man to become unstable, meaning that he is unable to keep steady when the trials of life come upon him. “To ask God but to ask Him in a doubting way, shows that we are **double minded**. If we had no faith, we would never ask at all. If we had no unbelief, we would have **no doubting**. To be in the middle ground between faith and unbelief is to be **double minded**” (Dave Guzik).

Verse 8 connects us back to the previous topic of trials that we discussed last week. When we face trials, it is expected that those trials will test our faith and maybe even cause us from time to time to doubt. James is encouraging his readers by telling them that when they face the trials of life they need to keep their faith in Christ. The great preacher Charles Spurgeon had this to say regarding verse 8 ““Do you believe that God can give you wisdom, and that he will do so if you ask him? Then, go at once to him, and say, ‘Lord, this is what I need.’ Specify your wants, state your exact condition, lay the whole case before God with as much orderliness as if you were telling your story to an intelligent friend who was willing to hear it, and prepared to help you; and then say, ‘Lord, this is specifically what I think I want; and I ask this of thee believing that thou canst give it to me.’” If we really want to be delivered from a trial or are asking God to give us wisdom we must acknowledge that we believe He is able to do whatever we ask in His name. This is true faith.

**Applications**

1. **Whenever we are faced with a difficult situation and do not know what to do, we need to ask God for the wisdom to handle that situation. We are promised that if we ask for that wisdom it will be given. Do not seek wisdom in any other manmade religion or secular teaching but rely on the Lord so that He may direct your path. “Trust in the Lord with all your heart and do not lean on your own understanding.
In all your ways acknowledge Him, And He will make your paths straight” (Proverbs 3:5-6).**
2. **Let us encourage one another to have faith in the Lord so that He can work out His perfect will in our lives. If we are double minded, meaning that we want to please man and God at the same time, we cannot be successful. God desires that we totally focus on Him and allow Him to guide us into all that is true.**

**Conclusion**

Today as we conclude our time together I would like to encourage all of us to remember that we serve a God who is willing to share wisdom with all who call on His name. Our God wants to be a part of our lives if we will only allow Him in. Rather than permit the knowledge of this fallen world to guide us, we must rely on the wisdom of God as well as the wisdom of other brothers and sisters in Christ who are there to help us as we walk through this life. If we honor the Lord in this manner and fear Him He has promised that He will give us all that we need to live victoriously in Him. Let us pray.