

JAMES 1:5-8  
Our Big Wisdom God

BIG God by Orlando Saer

If there's ever been a time when we need a BIG God, and Big Wisdom, it is NOW.

Middle school year book – "Seek Wisdom" (not jellybeans)

"Wisdom comes from experience" – NOT – it comes from evaluated experience.

Conventional Wisdom is a definite category in American life, whether it be in politics, business, advertising, education, sports, and even moral issues etc.

Pundits and talking heads will tell us what the 'conventional wisdom' is about a player, politician, or business venture.

Most people like to be in line with the conventional wisdom of the culture, but as Christians, if we want wisdom we SHOULD NOT look to our culture. We should look to God, and James is our 'go-to' guy. He tells us where we can find it and then he fleshes out what it looks like.

For the next few months we have the privilege of being pastored by James as we read and consider his letter to believers who are scattered. He writes to those who are facing trials in the face of difficult situations. James is not under any illusions about the issues that face these believers. Like us, they must deal with areas of prejudice, unknown futures, interpersonal quarrels, and the impact of angry bitter words.

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. 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. 7 For that man ought not to expect that he will receive anything from the Lord, 8 being a double-minded man, unstable in all his ways.

We've spent two weeks talking about the reality of trials – v. 1-4. Now James points their hearts to what they need in times of trial – WISDOM, and the gracious nature of God who gives it generously.

To benefit from trials we need the wisdom of God, which is readily available. It's so simple and straightforward that we might miss it.

If we're paying attention from v. 4 we might be confused because it ends with the phrase, "that you be perfect and complete, lacking in nothing."

Then v. 5 says, "But if any of you lacks wisdom".

To move from counting it all joy to being complete, we need to gain wisdom. Fortunately there is a plentiful supply and it is free.

The SUPPLY- DEMAND aspect of wisdom is not in line with "conventional" wisdom, which is that you don't want the supply to be too far out in front of demand. But here we see that the supply is plentiful, yet the command for us to ask indicates that there is a problem on the demand side. I'm afraid that all too often, people don't ask. After all, "we can figure it out ourselves; we're modern,

sophisticated, educated, technologically advanced people so we don't need God. Who needs God, when we can just Google it?"

GOOGLE IT is not the advice that we get from James.

Last week we saw that **Our God IS BIGGER THAN OUR TRIALS** and today we see that **Our BIG God gives BIG WISDOM**

It is understandable why some would be skeptical and balk at seeking wisdom from God since He is the one in control of all things and COULD have stopped the trial that is causing our need for wisdom.

If that is where you are this morning, then you are not alone in the history of the church. If we're all honest, we've all probably been there at some time, to some degree. Again, that is where I've found the Psalms so helpful.

### **James 1:5-8 Big Wisdom for facing trials**

v. 1-12 is about trials. Remember the context when reading 5-8, because it fits the issue of trials. They are linked to v. 1-4

Suffering can make us mature in what we lack, and quite often we lack wisdom in trials. What we need in trials is wisdom, which is what we need to face suffering.

v. 5 by saying (DR. Rayburn) "If any of you lacks wisdom..." Perhaps the thought runs like this, "In the midst of trouble, as we so often are, it is hard to see how these trials can possibly serve our spiritual growth and development. To see that connection, and then to apply it to your situation, you need wisdom. So pray for it."

What is this wisdom that they lack?

It must include the fear of the Lord, which is the beginning of wisdom.

J.I.Packer explores the topic well, in KNOWING God

There are two traits we need to lay hold of the gift of wisdom:

1. **We must learn to reverence God.** "The fear of the LORD is the beginning of wisdom" (Ps 111:10; Prov 9:10; compare Job 28:28; Prov 1:7; 15:33). **Not till we have become humble and teachable, standing in awe of God's holiness and sovereignty, acknowledging our own littleness, distrusting our own thoughts and willing to have our minds turned upside down, can divine wisdom become ours.**

2. **We must learn to receive God's word.** Wisdom is divinely wrought in those, and those only, who apply themselves to God's revelation. "Your commands make me wiser than my enemies," declares the psalmist; "I have more insight than all my teachers"—why?—"for I meditate on your statutes" (Ps 119:98-99).

So Paul admonishes the Colossians: "Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly. . . with all wisdom" (Col 3:16). How are we of the twentieth century to do this? By soaking ourselves in the Scriptures,

Doug Moo - Wisdom is the means by which the godly can both discern and carry out the will of God.

It enables us to perceive the purpose of God and to apply ourselves to carrying out the will of God.

The need for wisdom is not trying to figure out WHAT God IS DOING, but to have insight into what I SHOULD BE DOING.

C.S. Lewis

"There is something which unites magic and applied science (technology) while separating them from the "wisdom" of earlier ages. For the wise men of old, the cardinal problem had been how to conform the soul to reality, and the solution had been knowledge, self-discipline and virtue. For magic and applied science alike, the problem is how to subdue reality to the wishes of men.

Wisdom is dealing with reality as it is, not as we want it to be.

Wisdom doesn't get hung up on why things happened or fault-finding. It seeks to know how to respond by faith in the current reality.

EX: Packer – Wisdom is like driving a car. You don't worry about why the driver ahead or behind is so erratic or why the road curves or dips. You simply try to see what is going on and do the right thing in the actual situation that presents itself. The effect of divine wisdom is to enable you and me to do just that in the actual situations of everyday life.... To drive well, you have to keep your eyes skinned to notice exactly what is in front of you. To live wisely, you have to be clear-sighted and realistic — ruthlessly so—in looking at life as it is.

#### INSIGHTS FROM JAMES 1

- Wisdom is given to those who know they need it. This calls for self-examination and awareness
- God isn't embarrassed by our lack of wisdom He never tires of our asking him. He gives wisdom generously and in a non-demeaning way. He doesn't scold you for asking for wisdom.
- God is glorified when we seek wisdom from him.
- We seek wisdom from God when we know his character (Hebrews 11:6).
- Faith is trust in the character of God himself. It sees self as helpless and God as powerful and abundant.
- Faith is an anchor for the soul and for life because it centers on God, not self (doubt makes us unstable in all our ways).
- Don't doubt the ONE who has and will give wisdom- it is God alone.
- The double minded man is contrasted with the single minded God. V.8

The fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom. Wisdom is not like something we order on Amazon and it arrives two days later all packaged up. We can't expect wisdom if we're not walking with and trusting God and His word in general. Wisdom that comes from God is rooted in His word. A big part of what wisdom means is to have a biblically formed perspective on life.

If our heart is divided between God and the world, we can't expect for wisdom to take root within us.

EX: JESSE JAMES and church discipline. He had the self-awareness to know that he was a double-minded man.

The first successful daylight bank robbery in the United States occurred in Liberty, MO on February 13th, 1866. One young man – a passerby – was killed and the bank robbers got away and were never caught. However locals knew that the perpetrators were the members of Jesse James' gang. Here is where the story gets interesting.

At the time of the robbery, Jesse James was a member in good standing of the First Baptist Church of nearby Kearney, MO. The church minutes record that deliberations to impose ecclesiastical discipline on Jesse were complicated by the fear that he might burn down the church in retaliation! Everyone in the community, so it says in this report, knew Jesse was staying at his mother's farm (she was herself a Sunday School teacher), so two deacons – the Baptist equivalent of elders – were deputed to confront Jesse according to the Lord's instructions in Matthew 18. However, perhaps not surprisingly, the next minutes report that, for one reason or another, the deacons were unable to find a convenient time to visit the farm and have their conversation with Jesse James.

The minutes then report that Jesse himself arrived at the meeting and, wishing to cause no embarrassment to the congregation, requested that his name be removed from the roll. The church obliged.

(Dr. Rayburn) But the fact of the matter is vast multitudes have lived such a double-minded life. Monday through Saturday they sow their wild oats and come to church on Sunday to pray for crop failure! They pose as Christians, no doubt believing themselves to be Christians, but it would never occur to them to rejoice in their trials or to boast in their poverty, because they do not see themselves, the world, or life as a real Christian must and will. They do not have a biblically informed perspective on life, a large part of what the Bible means by wisdom.

James resonates with the book of Proverbs on the theme of wisdom. It is something valuable and worth pursuing – Seek it by ASKING FOR IT  
PROV 3 – seek wisdom

How blessed is the man who finds wisdom  
And the man who gains understanding.  
14 For her profit is better than the profit of silver  
And her gain better than fine gold.  
15 She is more precious than jewels;  
And nothing you desire compares with her.  
16 Long life is in her right hand;  
In her left hand are riches and honor.  
17 Her ways are pleasant ways  
And all her paths are peace.  
18 She is a tree of life to those who take hold of her,  
And happy are all who hold her fast.

You can have a heart for God and His wisdom and ways even when there are certain doubts that creep in. Those are the moments we cry out, "Lord, I believe; help my unbelief" That is NOT a heart that is divided and wavering for it is actually fixed and rooted in pursuing God. God sees the sincerity of faith, though it may be fragile at times.

If you are even worried about being the double minded man or woman, it is probably a sign that you ARE NOT.

J.I. PACKER – KNOWING God Wisdom

Thus the effect of his gift of wisdom is to make us more humble, more joyful, more godly, more quick-sighted as to his will, more resolute in the doing of it and less troubled (not less sensitive, but less bewildered) than we were at the dark and painful things of which our life in this fallen world is full. The New Testament tells us that the fruit of wisdom is Christlikeness—peace, and humility, and love (Jas 3:17)—and the root of it is faith in Christ (1 Cor 3:18; 2 Tim 3:15) as the manifested wisdom of God (1 Cor 1:24, 30). Thus, the kind of wisdom that God waits to give to those who ask him is a wisdom that will bind us to himself, a wisdom that will find expression in a spirit of faith and a life of faithfulness. Let us see to it, then, that our own quest for wisdom takes the form of a quest for these things, and that we do not frustrate the wise purpose of God by neglecting faith and faithfulness in order to pursue a kind of knowledge which in this world it is not given to us to have.

Wisdom is SOMEONE WE MEET, so pursue Christ to find Wisdom 1 Cor 1:24