



Faith and Trials

The Testing of Personal Faith

Main point: Perseverance in trials requires the right use of prayer.

Expositional Outline:

The right use of prayer amid trials (vv.5-8)

A. The need for wisdom (v.5a)

But if any of you lacks wisdom,

B. The request for wisdom (vv.5b-8)

let him ask of God, who gives to all generously and without reproach, and it will be given to him.

1. The human obligation

But he must ask in faith without any doubting,

2. The nautical illustration

for the one who doubts is like the surf of the sea, driven and tossed by the wind.

3. The personal examination

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.

Observations:

Digging deeper

- God's wisdom**—What is the meaning and source of wisdom? (Read Job 28; Ps.111:10; Prov.1:7; 2:6; 9:10; 1 Cor.1:30; James 3:13-18) Job tells us three truths about God's wisdom: 1) *You cannot find God's wisdom by human effort (vv.1-11)* 2) *You cannot buy God's wisdom with money (vv.12-22),* and 3) *God must give His wisdom by grace (vv.23-28).*

James tells us 8 characteristics of God's wisdom: 1) it is *holy in motive (3:17a)*, 2) it *promotes right relationship with God and others*, 3) *it is not abrasive*, 4) *it willingly yields and doesn't insist on its own rights*, 5) *it shows compassion to those in need*, 6) *it produces good works*, 7) *it doesn't show favoritism*, and 8) *it is sincere, genuine, and doesn't put up a front.*

- God's nature**—Read James 1:5. Think about God's *impartiality, generosity, and mercy* and identify one way that they have touched your life today.

Interpretative discussion questions:

- What are the kinds of wisdom that the Bible refers to? Give chapter and verse.
- What attribute of God's nature is found in verse 5, and what thoughts in your mind fight against this truth? Does it sound familiar? (Clue: *Genesis*)
- Tease out what it means to "ask in faith without any doubting." What DOES IT NOT mean? What DOES it mean?
- Read 1 Corinthians 1:30. In what ways has Christ become wisdom to us.

Applicational questions:

1. How do we pray in faith?
2. How do we combat doubting thoughts in our minds?

Memory verse for lesson 3:

- **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. ⁶But 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. ⁷For that man ought not to expect that he will receive anything from the Lord, ⁸being a double-minded man, unstable in all his ways.*



Insights on Our Trials:

Keith Brazier

It is natural for human beings to crave independence. Anyone who has spent any considerable amount of time in the presence of children fights this battle constantly. The baby wants to hold the spoon himself or he refuses to eat. Your sweet second grade princess does not want to go to school, because she cannot pick out her outfit and fix her hair the way she wants it. Teenagers want to stay out all night with whomever they want, because they *know what they're doing*. Adults continue to fumble through unsound decisions and then return or call home for a "bail out." Even with glasses on, your elderly father can hardly see at night, but insists on driving anyway. Whether you have dealt with any of these scenarios or find yourself about to face one, the struggle does not present itself only when dealing with others. We are all children in the eyes of God, and we all complicate our trials from time to time by wanting to rely solely on self.

Much like teenagers (who think they know), we have not been on this planet long enough to understand the whys and hows of everything. Experiences in and of themselves can teach us many things, but they will never be able to convey divine wisdom. Believers must seek it from God, as only He possess it abundantly (*Rom.11:33*). Realizing that this dependence is good and healthy, believers can experience joy and peace in the midst of trials (*Heb.11:1*). Our same sovereign Father who controls and allows the trials tells us how ask Him for help. He brings us through the storms while providing us with the wisdom to endure (*1 Cor.10:13*). We have to accept that we will not always understand every challenge when we are busy facing it.

We also need to admit that we do not always wish to understand or make sense of it; we just want it to end. This is exactly why James drives home the point of seeking God's wisdom with the proper attitude and expectation in our prayer. He counsels us on how to make sense in the turmoil through a very clear command: "*he must ask in faith without any doubting*" (James 1:6). Trials highlight our own inadequacies and further demonstrate our need to depend on God, the ultimate and most glorious teacher. In His infinite wisdom, our Father has designed a means for using discomfort to teach us a lesson and make us wiser while simultaneously drawing us closer to Him.

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