

# WISDOM FOR TRIALS

(James 1:5-11)

## INTRODUCTION

Where is the most dangerous intersection in the US?

*In 1999, State Farm Insurance rated the most dangerous intersections for accidents in the United States was the corner of Belt Line Road and Midway Road in Addison, Texas. There were 263 reported crashes at that intersection in the Dallas suburb in a year. That averages out to about five wrecks per week, not counting the unreported fender benders.*

*When you get to that intersection 'be careful!' You need to know which way you are going and how to get there.*

Sometimes as we drive down the road of life, we come to dangerous intersections. Sometimes we refer to them as “forks in the road.” They are those moments where a choice we make or don’t make sets us on a course that could influence the rest of our journey. Do we stop or go. Turn right or left. Go ahead or turn back. Perhaps you feel like you are at a dangerous intersection right now in your life.

The Bible speaks about a divine resource we can utilize when we come to those intersections. It is called wisdom. There are many times when we will approach one of those intersections and we will realize we have a shortage of wisdom. This is the very situation James addresses in 1:5-8

James has just finished speaking about the various trials we encounter in life. These are the difficulties and afflictions that come our way. Often times, these trials bring us to one of those intersections where we feel lost and don’t know which way to go. We don’t understand the cause of the trial or its purpose. We begin to feel acutely our shortage of wisdom. In this text, James tells us what to do.

## YOU ARE TO PRAY FOR WISDOM

In verse 5 it says that you are to respond to your trials by praying and trusting God to give you insight into the purpose of the trial.

**If any of you lacks wisdom, let him ask of God, who gives to all liberally and without reproach, and it will be given to him.**

James is saying here that if in the midst of your trials you want to gain some insight into what God is doing in your life, then you ought to ask God to give you wisdom to understand.

Bro Kevin spoke about this in one of his messages. When the children of Israel were thirsty and came to a bitter pool of water named Marah. What were they to do? They were to pray for God to show them what He wanted them to learn. It says that “there God tested them.” God sends trials to test us. Why? God reveals His purpose in testing in Deuteronomy 8:2-3. A great passage.

**(Deu 8:2-3 NKJV) "And you shall remember that the LORD your God led you all the way these forty years in the wilderness, to humble you and test you, to know what was in your heart, whether you would keep His commandments or not. {3} "So He humbled you, allowed you to hunger, and fed you with manna which you did not know nor did your fathers know, that He might make you know that man shall not live by bread alone; but man lives by every word that proceeds from the mouth of the LORD.**

God's purpose in trials is to know what was in their hearts. Not that God needs to know, He knew. But they needed to know what was in their heart so that they could gain insight into their greatest need. A test is a way of determine what yo should know.

God wants us to know how He can provide for us. God wants us to know how to trust Him in bitter situations. God wants us to know what is in our hearts. Do you know what's in your heart today? Do you know how you would respond to a great crisis in your life? Would you have faith to trust God while going through dark times or would you turn from God or blame God or get mad at God? If the difficulty doesn't turn out the way you want it to, will it affect your love for God, your service of God? These are important things to know about ourselves, so that we can correct them. These are things that trials and testings bring about.

We need wisdom to understand these things. How do we get this wisdom? By asking God to reveal it to us.

**If any of you lacks wisdom, let him ask of God, who gives to all liberally and without reproach, and it will be given to him.**

## **GODLY WISDOM**

What kind of wisdom will God give us? There are various definitions of wisdom. One dictionary defines it as “*the ability to make right use of knowledge.*” One prominent theological dictionary defines wisdom as “*competent action to*

*master the various problems of life... ” There is an aspect of knowledge in wisdom. But it goes beyond that. Wisdom involves the practical use of that knowledge to deal with life’s issues.*

I like this definition of wisdom: *Wisdom is the convergence of knowledge and skill which enables a person to make right choices that honor God.*

True wisdom, according to Scripture, begins with God. Proverbs 1:7 tells us that the **“fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom.”** From a biblical perspective, if a person does not know God who created all things, revealed truth, and established absolute values, then one cannot be wise. How could a person make right choices without knowing God and His truth? So, wisdom begins with the fear of the Lord. That is, the reverent relationship of knowing God.

We gain a clear perspective on wisdom by looking at its opposite – foolishness (folly). In Proverbs 1:7, we learn that the fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom but **fools despise wisdom and discipline.** Proverbs tells us that **fools hate knowledge.** The fool is the person whose choices contradict God’s truth. The fool ignores God’s value system. The fool makes poor choices.

When you are surrounded by confusing problems and trials, seeing no way out, what should you do? When you come to a dangerous cross road in your life, what are you to do? James says, "Ask God for wisdom! And he will give you that wisdom."

Now, this is very important to understand. If you do not face up to your lack of wisdom, you will never ask for it. It is the arrogant person who thinks they never need counsel. It is the foolish person who refuses to admit his/her need for wisdom.

Has life created a demand for wisdom in your heart today? Do you face a situation you cannot figure out? Don’t know which way to turn or what to do or think?

## **ASK IN FAITH**

When you ask God for wisdom in the midst of your trials, one of the qualifications is that you come to Him in “single-minded” faith. Verses 6-8.

**(James 1:6-8 NKJV) But let him ask in faith, with no doubting, for he who doubts is like a wave of the sea driven and tossed by the wind. {7} For let not that man suppose that he will receive anything from the Lord; {8} he is a double-minded man, unstable in all his ways.**

Single-minded faith means that you really want to know in order to cooperate with what God is doing. Single-minded faith means that you do not come to God as a double minded man.

A person who is double minded is a person who wants his will and at the same time God's will.

He is like the character in John Bunyan's Pilgrim's Progress named, "Mr. Going Both Way." He wants to serve God--but then he doesn't. He is all out for God--but then he's not quite so sure. He wants to see God work in his life, but he doesn't want it to cost him. He's back and forth. That kind of person will receive nothing from God.

*I have read that if you want to catch a monkey in the wild, one of the easiest ways to do it is to put rice inside of a jar and tie it to a tree. When the monkey comes along he smells the rice. He then pushes his scrawny little hand down the thin neck of the jar and grabs the rice. Then he is caught because he refuses to release the rice and pull his hand out. He chatters and screams and jumps up and down. And then his captors come to take him away. All he needed to do was to let go of the rice.*

That's the double-minded man. Down inside the jar is his will. He says, "I want to live under God's plan, but I want that rice too. And so I hang on to the rice." That's being double-minded and that person will not receive God's wisdom or insight.

If we come to God truly wanting insight into His will, he will give us wisdom freely. He will give it generously. God is not stingy with this gift. He knows how badly you and I need it. The word James uses here means "without reserve.". He will give it without finding fault. The word means without reproach or insult. God will not insult you and make you feel an inch tall for coming and asking im for wisdom.

Have you ever been in a situation where you dreaded asking someone for something because of all the grief you had to go through to get it? You just knew that they were going to say something like, "OK, I'll give this to you but if you weren't such a loser I wouldn't have to."

God is not like that when we ask for wisdom. Remember God's attitude toward gift giving. Jesus explained it in Matt. 7:9-11. He pointed out that a good parent never insults the child who comes asking for bread by giving him a stone. He doesn't give him a snake if he asks for fish. So, Jesus concludes:

**(Mat 7:11 NKJV) "If you then, being evil, know how to give good gifts to your children, how much more will your Father who is in heaven give good things to those who ask Him!"**

## TWO ILLUSTRATIONS

What are some examples of some people who need God's wisdom. James mentions two. One is an example of a poor man who lacks money and the second is an example of a rich man who loses money.

Have you ever been tested in your faith to trust God for financial needs? What does God want to teach us when we are humiliated by our lack of resources? Verse 9a tells us:

**Let the lowly brother glory in his exaltation....**

Here James is saying that the poor man ought to learn from God, through the trial of his poverty, how to glory in how rich he really is in Christ. Our true riches are not what we have on earth, but it is what God gives us freely in Christ.

In chapter 5 James touches on what the poor have

**(James 2:5 NKJV) Listen, my beloved brethren: Has God not chosen the poor of this world to be rich in faith and heirs of the kingdom which He promised to those who love Him?**

God's wisdom to the poor is to focus on the riches we have in Christ. It is to realize that what counts in life are the eternal blessings we have, not the temporal ones. Jesus said to his disciples, **".... rejoice because your names are written in heaven."** (Luke 10:20)

The other example of a person who needs God's wisdom is the rich man. The rich man needs to learn wisdom from God also.

**(James 1:10-11 NKJV) but the rich in his humiliation, because as a flower of the field he will pass away. {11} For no sooner has the sun risen with a burning heat than it withers the grass; its flower falls, and its beautiful appearance perishes. So the rich man also will fade away in his pursuits.**

This rich man seems to have been humbled. James says that the rich man needs to also know where his true wealth is. It is the same of the poor man's.

Jesus taught this lesson when he told the story of the rich man to filled all his barns, retired and sit down to eat, drink, and be merry. But God required his soul that night and then what good did his earthly rich do him.

**(Luke 12:20 NKJV) "But God said to him, 'Fool! This night your soul will be required of you; then whose will those things be which you have provided?'**

The rich man who has been humiliated by losing his wealth ought to learn from God that anyone who trusts in his money puts his trust in a phantom. For riches can be so quickly taken away.

The rich and the poor need to learn that the only riches that count are the eternal riches we have in Christ or the eternal treasures that we have are what we do for Christ while on this earth. Every material trial we have should result in us understanding this piece of Godly wisdom.

## CONCLUSION

The purpose of God's testing is to reveal what is in our hearts. It is to reveal if we have single-minded faith or double-minded. It is to reveal if we are putting our hope on our eternal riches or earthly riches. This is the path to wisdom.

I love the words of Abraham Lincoln who said, "I have been driven many times to my knees by the overwhelming conviction that I had nowhere else to go. My wisdom and that of all about me seemed insufficient for the day."

Can you identify with those words today? Are you at an intersection in ;Do you face a problem which has exhausted your best efforts to solve? Are you looking for answers which seem to evade you? Has your wisdom and the wisdom of those around you fallen short?

There is hope. The One who is Himself All-wise delights to give His wisdom to those who ask with a trusting heart. Have you asked God for wisdom in your situation?