

## **JAMES 1:5-8**

### **“WHAT IS HAPPENING?”**

Please turn in your Bibles this morning to James chapter 1 as we continue our study through this challenging letter that James has written to Jewish Christians who have been scattered abroad or to those Jews living outside the land of Israel. And the reason they fled was because of the persecution they were facing because of their faith in Jesus.

And, as we saw last time, James opens up this letter dealing with trials that these Jewish Christians were facing. It was not easy for them and yet, James wants to encourage them to continue on in the faith, don't give up because through all of this God is working in their lives.

And we saw the following in regard to what these trials are to do in our lives, how we are to respond to these things that come upon our lives. Thus, as we are going through trials . . .

***THAT WE WOULD COUNT IT ALL JOY IN THE TRIALS THAT COME OUR WAY!***

***THAT WE UNDERSTAND THAT TRIALS COME UPON OUR LIVES TO TEST OUR FAITH!***

***THAT ALL THAT WE GO THROUGH ARE FOR THE PURPOSE OF PRODUCING RESULTS IN OUR LIVES, THAT WE ENDURE TILL THE END!***

***AND ALL THAT GOD IS DOING IS LEADING TO MATURITY AND A COMPLETENESS IN OUR LIVES!***

And what we will be looking at this morning is born out of what James has just said regarding these trials that come upon our lives. I have called this study, ***“What is Happening?”*** because I think that is the question that many of us, if not all of us, have as we are going through tough times, as we are going through trials in our lives!

And trials are not easy, nor are they meant to be easy. God is working in us through these trials, testing our faith, helping us to grow, to mature in the faith, as I have said. Listen to this story and you will see what I mean. We are told,

Some years ago in Dublin, a company of women met to study the Bible. One of them was puzzled by the words of Mal 3:3, “And he shall sit as a refiner and purifier of silver.”

After some discussion, a committee was appointed to call on a silversmith and learn what they could on the subject. The silversmith readily showed them the process. “But, sir,” said one, “do you sit while the refining is going on?” “Oh, yes, indeed” he said. “I must sit with my eyes steadily fixed on the surface, for if the time necessary for refining is exceeded in the slightest degree, the silver is sure to be damaged.”

At once they saw the beauty and comfort of the Scripture passage. As they were leaving, the silversmith called after them, “Oh, one thing more! I only know when the process is complete by seeing my own image reflected on the silver.”

That is what the Lord Jesus wants to see in you and me as He refines us by fire - His blessed image. And it will be reflected to others, too.

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I love my wife and when she is going through difficult times, she tells me, “I wish that God would just give me the five-year plan. Just let me know what is going to happen so I am prepared for it for the next five years!”

I love that but that is not how it works. God will let us in on what is happening, but not usually five years down the road of all that will take place. It is usually daily, but we need to ask as we will see this morning. And not only to ask, but to ask in faith!

And let’s face it, we know that trials will come our way, but we just don’t like it. I love the way one writer put it. He wrote, “Most people count it all joy when they escape trials. James said to count it all joy in the midst of trials.” (J. Ronald Blue, The Bible Knowledge Commentary, New Testament – James, p. 820)

Remember all that Job went through, the testing of his faith. And in Job 28:12-22 we see Job speak to his friends, his counselors, the ones who gave to Job foolish advice, and he said to them, **“But where can wisdom be found? And where is the place of understanding? Man does not know its value, Nor is it found in the land of the living. The deep says, ‘It is not in me’; And the sea says, ‘It is not with me.’ It cannot be purchased for gold, Nor can silver be weighed for its price. It cannot be valued in the gold of Ophir, In precious onyx or sapphire. Neither gold nor crystal can equal it, Nor can it be exchanged for jewelry of fine gold. No mention shall be made of coral or quartz, For the price of wisdom is above rubies. The topaz of Ethiopia cannot equal it, Nor can it be valued in pure gold. From where then does wisdom come? And where is the place of understanding? It is hidden from the eyes of all living, And concealed from the birds of the air. Destruction and Death say, ‘We have heard a report about it with our ears.’”**

As we are going to see this morning, James is going to answer that question for us. And, like Job said, **“God understands its way, And He knows its place. For He looks to the ends of the earth, And sees under the whole heavens, To establish a weight for the wind, And apportion the waters by measure. When He made a law for the rain, And a path for the thunderbolt, Then He saw wisdom and declared it; He prepared it, indeed, He searched it out. And to man He said, ‘Behold, the fear of the Lord, that is wisdom, And to depart from evil is understanding.’”** Job 28:23-28.

God has all the wisdom we will ever need, for every situation that we find ourselves in and thus, we need to ask Him for wisdom through the situations we face in life so we know what to do, how to respond, which way to go!

Let me share this poem with you and then we will look at our text this morning and see how we can gain wisdom for the situations we are in. The poem goes like this,

My life is but a weaving,  
Between my Lord and me;

I cannot choose the colours.  
He worketh steadily.

Ofttimes He weaveth sorrow  
And I in foolish pride,

Forget He sees the upper  
And I the under side.

Not till the loom is silent  
And the shuttles cease to fly,  
  
Shall God unroll the canvas  
And explain the reason why,  
  
The dark threads are as needful  
In the Weaver's skillful hand,  
  
As the threads of gold and silver,  
In the pattern He has planned.

- Source Unknown

How true that is. In this life we are never going to fully understand all that God is doing in our lives. But can we trust in Him? Can we place our faith in the One who loves us and knows exactly what we need in our lives?

That is what James is doing here and he is showing us that in spite of all that we are going through or will go through, we can come before God and ask Him for wisdom in what we are facing. Remember that James chapter 1 is dealing with ***THE BELIEVER AND SUFFERING*** and we may not like to link the two together, but it is just part of the Christian life. It is part of what God is doing in us so that He can work through us!

This morning we will be covering James 1:5-8 and we are going to break down these verses like this,

***ASK FOR WISDOM – JAMES 1:5***

***ASK IN FAITH – JAMES 1:6***

***THE RESULTS OF NOT ASKING IN FAITH – JAMES 1:7-8***

***CONCLUSION***

And keep in mind that these verses we will be looking at this morning are born out of what James has just said, in verses 2-4 of James chapter 1. Listen to what James is saying and then we will dig into our text this morning. He wrote, **“My brethren, count it all joy when you fall into various trials, knowing that the testing of your faith produces patience. But let patience have its perfect work, that you may be perfect and complete, lacking nothing.”**

So, with that as our background, let's begin reading in James chapter 1, starting in verse 5 and see what the Lord has for us as we look at this topic of ***THE BELIEVER AND SUFFERING*** and focus on this thought as we go through these difficult times, ***“WHAT IS HAPPENING?”***

### **JAMES 1** **VERSE 5**

Let me start out by making this distinction between knowledge and wisdom. Knowledge is information and more importantly for us as Christians, it is the truths of God found in the Word of God. That is knowledge! And I believe that James is tackling this subject of trials in our life knowing that we have this knowledge already, we already know the truths of God found in the Word of God!

But wisdom is different. Wisdom is taking that knowledge, that information, the truths of God found in the Word of God, and applying it to our lives! It is walking according to what God's Word has to say and not by our feelings or emotions or whatever!

A great example of this is seen with scientists. They see the complexity of life. They see what a simple cell is made up of. Listen carefully to what one book wrote about DNA. We are told,

. . . We now know that the simple organic cell is itself a highly complex system.

DNA (deoxyribonucleic acid) is the basic information content of an organism's genetic material. The human genome is the entire collection of this DNA information used in the organic construction of a person. Encoded in our DNA are 3.1 billion letters of information. It has been calculated that to read this information out loud at three letters per second would take thirty-one years! What we call the simple cell is anything but simple. The cell is a highly complex multi-part machine for transmitting and replicating information that makes a supercomputer look like a simple classroom calculator!

Reviewing the problems in the evidence, biologist Michael Denton wrote,

***Is it really credible that random process could have constructed a reality, the smallest element of which – a functional protein or gene – is complex beyond our own creative capacities, a reality which is the very antithesis of chance, which excels in every sense anything produced by the intelligence of man?***

Denton does not argue for the existence of God, only that there are predetermined pathways that evolution must follow. Mutations do not arise by chance, but through some unidentified property that enables an organism to direct its own development. Denton is willing to dissent from the majority view because the evidence is pointing elsewhere. A Christian is entitled to share this dissent, and argue that the evidence points not to predetermined pathways but to a divine intelligence.

- Chris Sinkinson, *Christian Confidence: An Introduction to Defending the Faith*, p. 160

So, the information that life could not just happen by random chance is out there and we see it with the complexity of a single cell or even just in the DNA itself! But many suppress the truth that is out there. They have the information, they just don't apply it correctly to their lives and that is not wisdom, but the Lord says that they are fools!

Now how does that apply to the trials that we are going through? Think about it. When we are going through difficult times, when our life seems like it is a mess, we don't need more knowledge we need more wisdom! ***Someone once said that knowledge is the ability to take things apart, but wisdom is the ability to put things together.*** Yes, that is wisdom and that is what we lack many times in the situations we face and because we don't ask for wisdom from God, we mess things up!

Now you may be thinking that the situation you are going through the Bible does not directly speak about. Well, as one writer said, "The Bible does not give specific answers to the innumerable problems that arise in life. It does not solve problems in so many words, but God's word does give us general principles. We must apply these principles to problems as they arise day by day. That is why we need wisdom. Spiritual wisdom is the practical application of our Lord's teachings to everyday situations." (Source Unknown)

Exactly. And folks, as we find ourselves in various trials, various situations, God wants us to seek Him for wisdom, He wants to give us the wisdom we need to walk accordingly.

Now, let me say this. If you want wisdom, go to the Word of God, the Bible, that is where you need to start.

The place to end, well, that is also the Bible. You see, God is not going to deviate from His Word and thus, true wisdom will always be consistent with God's Word, we just need to apply it to our lives!

Remember what Jesus said in Matthew 7:7-11, **“Ask, and it will be given to you; seek, and you will find; knock, and it will be opened to you. For everyone who asks receives, and he who seeks finds, and to him who knocks it will be opened. Or what man is there among you who, if his son asks for bread, will give him a stone? Or if he asks for a fish, will he give him a serpent? 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!”** In other words, just ask and then walk accordingly!

But that is not what we do many times and I think Spurgeon nailed it when he wrote, “We are all so ready to go to books, to go to men, to go to ceremonies, to anything except to God. . . . Consequently, the text does not say, ‘Let him ask books,’ nor ‘ask priests,’ but, ‘let him ask of God.’”

I am not saying that we can't learn from books, from other Christians, we can. But why do we not bring these things before God and ask for His wisdom?

***“God does not speak to me! I ask and I don't get any wisdom!”*** That is not true. You may not like the wisdom that God is giving to you, but He is showing you what you need to do, and you have chosen not to obey, not to apply what He has said to your life! Or, as we will see, you ask in unbelief and that lack of faith will hinder what God has for you!

How can I be so sure that God will give wisdom to me? Because James tells us that if we ask for wisdom from God that He **“ . . . gives to all liberally and without reproach, and it will be given to him.”** James 1:5.

I like that! God is so generous that He gives to us what we need, more than what we need, and He does so without reprimanding us or putting us down. Calvin put it like this, “This is added, lest anyone should fear to come too often to God . . . for he is ready ever to add new blessings to former ones, without any end or limitation.”

That tells me that God is open to give to us the wisdom we need for the situations that we face! As one person put it, “We understand that He is the God of the open hand, not the God of the clenched fist.”

Now let's think about this for a minute. In the days we are living in, information is being thrust upon us very quickly. We have so much information, that is not the problem. Let me show you what I mean, and this blew me away.

Knowledge doubled from 100 B.C. to 1700 (1800 years).

It doubled from 1700-1900 (200 years).

It doubled from 1900-1950 (50 years).

It doubled from 1950-1970 (20 years).

It doubled from 1970-1980 (10 years).

It doubled from 1980-1988 (8 years).

It now doubles every 12 months.

Soon it will double every 12 hours.

Now let me show you the different types of knowledge and their growth rates.

Online info doubles every six months.  
Biological info doubles every 18 months.  
Corporate info doubles every 18 months.  
Genetic info doubles every 18 months.  
Technical knowledge doubles every 18 months.  
Clinical knowledge doubles every 18 months.

That is crazy, and it is exciting but there is a problem, a big problem. We have all this information and it is doubling very quickly, but we are lacking the wisdom. How can I say that? Because look at the way we are living, are we applying what we know to our lives to make this world a better place or are we more interested in what we want and when we want it? I think you know the answer that one!

Professor Allan Bloom touched on this in his book, "The Closing of the American Mind." He wrote,

My grandparents were ignorant people by our standards, and my grandfather held only lowly jobs. But their home was spiritually rich because all the things done in it, not only what was specifically ritual, found their origin in the Bible's stories and the commentaries on them, and had their imaginative counterparts in the deeds of the myriad of exemplary heroes. My grandparents found reasons for the existence of their family and their fulfillment of their duties in serious writings, and they interpreted their special sufferings with respect to a great and ennobling past . . . [and then comes the punch] I do not believe that my generation, my cousins who have been educated in the American way, all of whom are M.D.s or Ph.D.s, have any comparable learning. When they talk about heaven and earth, the relations between men and women, parents and children, the human condition, I hear nothing but clichés, superficialities, the material of satire.

- Allan Bloom, The Closing of the American Mind, p. 60

How true that is. We have lost that ability to take what we know; the truths of God found in the Word of God and apply them to our lives. Thus, there is always a new book, a new teaching, a new this and a new that to apply to our lives. And it is not helping, that is why you always need something new. But it doesn't have to be like that.

Let me show you an example from the Bible in the life of someone who asked for wisdom from God to rule a nation and how he used that wisdom. I am speaking of King Solomon! I think it is important to look at these godly examples so we can learn from them, we can grow by applying these things to our own lives.

In II Chronicles 1:10 we see Solomon pray, "**Now give me wisdom and knowledge, that I may go out and come in before this people; for who can judge this great people of Yours?**"

We are told in I Kings 3:5 that the Lord met with Solomon in a dream when he was at Gibeon, where the Tabernacle was located. For Solomon, he asks God for wisdom to lead the people by.

Remember, Solomon is only around 20 years of age and what a responsibility this is. Listen to what his Father, David said to him in I Chronicles 29:1 and 22:12. David told him, "**... 'My son Solomon, whom alone God has chosen, is young and inexperienced; and the work is great, because the temple is not for man but for the LORD God.' . . . 'Only may the**

**LORD give you wisdom and understanding, and give you charge concerning Israel, that you may keep the law of the LORD your God.”**

Now Solomon echo’s the prayers of his father David, that God would give him wisdom and understanding to lead His people, for he rightly recognized he could not do it on his own.

And we see that God gave to him the desire of his heart, for it is what God wanted for him. Solomon did not ask for his own personal gain, and with his heart being right, God blessed him abundantly with the wisdom he needed to rule the nation by.

And in I Kings 3:16-27 we see an incident in which Solomon needed the wisdom of God to decide what to do.

Two harlots, both gave birth to sons within a three-day period. They lived together and one night one of the mothers rolled over and suffocated her child while she was sleeping. Now she took this dead child and switched him with the other child, hoping to fool her friend. But when she awoke and examined the child, she knew that this was not her son.

What was Solomon going to do? How was he going to decide which mom this child belonged to? Interesting enough, Solomon’s solution to the problem was to cut the living child in two, and give each mother half of the child. That seems crazy, but it was a very wise action on Solomon’s part.

I think you can imagine what the birth mom felt, and in no way was she going to let her child be put to death.

So she tells Solomon to let the child live. The other mother, who has no real feelings toward this child, says that it is good to cut him in two.

Thus, by their words Solomon was able to discern who the real mom was, and gave the child to the woman who requested the child to live.

It is as John Trapp wrote in regard to this sword being brought to Solomon, “For what purpose? Thought the standers by; wondering and perhaps laughing within themselves. The actions of wise princes are riddles to vulgar constructions: nor is it for the shallow capacities of the multitude to fathom the deep projects of sovereign authority.” Godly wisdom being manifested in the life of Solomon, just as God had promised him!

And we read in I Kings 3:28, **“And all Israel heard of the judgment which the king had rendered; and they feared the king, for they saw that the wisdom of God was in him to administer justice.”**

Solomon asked the Lord for the wisdom to run the nation and God gave him the wisdom he needed and the people **“saw that the wisdom of God was in him to administer justice.”**

Do we take the time to ask God for wisdom in a given situation? We need to! It is important because what may seem right to us may not be what God wants us to do! It is as Proverbs 3:5-6 says, **“Trust in the Lord with all your heart, And lean not on your own understanding; In all your ways acknowledge Him, And He shall direct your paths.”**

May we truly understand that! Our understanding can be flawed, we can be wrong and thus, we need to trust in the Lord, to seek His direction and He will lead us in the way we need to go, in the things we need to do!

I can’t tell you how many times God has given me wisdom in situations that I have been in. And as I waited on God He clearly showed me what I needed to do, what I needed to say, the things that were truly going on behind the scenes.

And I can tell you that in the situations that I have been in, I have prayed for God to give me wisdom, to make it clear in what I needed to do. And He has done so much more. It was so black and white that it made the decision very easy.

The problem many times is that I could have jumped in on my own and it would have been a mess. But waiting upon God, listening to what He was showing me was amazing and it was what needed to be done. God is very clear if we would only ask, if we would only wait upon Him and then, we must walk accordingly!

Thus, may we **ASK FOR WISDOM!**

### **VERSE 6**

Next, we are to not only **ASK FOR WISDOM**, but we are to **ASK IN FAITH!** Make no mistake about it, the Christian life is one of walking in faith.

Think about this for a minute. When you were saved you believed by faith in the promises of God! There was no signed document with your name on it saying, "So-and-so has entrance into the Kingdom of God!"

There were no e-mails, text messages or anything like that! Then how do you know you are saved? How do I know that I am saved? Like I said, we believed by faith in the promises of God that are found in the Word of God!

What did we believe in? The Bible tells us that we are sinners separated from God. That there are none good, no, not even one. So, we are condemned to Hell for our sins! That is the bad news!

But the Good News, the Gospel Message is that God became flesh and dwelt among us. That by His atoning work on the cross of Calvary and His resurrection from the dead our sins were paid in full and by asking Him to be Lord and Savior of our lives we are saved.

That is faith, trusting in the promises of God and we do that for our salvation but when it comes to trials, difficulties in our lives, we toss faith aside and we become angry, we become bitter, we become discouraged, we become hopeless and-so-on.

Remember what Paul said in Hebrews 11:6, "**But without faith it is impossible to please Him, for he who comes to God must believe that He is, and that He is a rewarder of those who diligently seek Him.**"

You see, our Christian life begins in faith and for many, that is where it ends. But that is not to be the case. Keep in mind that James is writing to these Jewish Christians who were immature in the faith and he wanted them to grow up. Thus, faith not only begins our Christian life, but it is something that we need to exercise all through our Christian life until the Lord calls us home!

So, as we go through various trials we need to ask for wisdom in faith, not doubting God's Word or His ability to give us wisdom. You see, if you doubt God's Word, if you don't trust God, then your actions will reflect that attitude and your life will not be better, it will be worse!

Spurgeon put it like this in regard to asking in unbelief. He wrote, "You know, dear friends, that there is a way of praying in which you ask for nothing, *and get it.*" How true that is.

Now why in the world would we doubt that God would give us wisdom for the situation we are in? Why do we ask God apart from faith, not trusting in Him? I think there are a few reasons why we do this.

There are some Christians who believe that they are not worthy to receive anything from the Lord. I am going to let you in on a little secret. **NONE** of us are **WORTHY** to receive anything from the Lord, not even our **SALVATION!** God freely gives to us out of His grace and not because we are worthy to receive it. So, this is a true statement, we are not worthy to receive anything from the Lord, but it is irrelevant!



Some may feel that they are not important to God. That God is just too busy to listen to their requests, there are bigger fish in the sea, you might say, that He is dealing with. Are you kidding me? God became flesh, dwelt among us to go to the cross of Calvary to die for your sins because He loves you that much and then He is going to ignore you? Not at all!

And others don't seek the wisdom of God in a situation, they don't ask God for His wisdom because they are angry with God for allowing this to come into their life in the first place! But you have lost sight of what God is doing. These things are not coming upon your life, my life just to mess with us! Not at all!

God allows these trials in our life to test our faith, to help us to grow, to mature. Remember what James said, **"knowing that the testing of your faith produces patience (endurance). But let patience have its perfect work, that you may be perfect (mature) and complete, lacking nothing."** James 1:3-4.

We need to understand that, we need to believe that by faith that God is working in us so that He can work through us.

I thought about this question and it really made me think, it was not an easy one. ***"If I could go back and change the things that happened to me in my life, would I change anything?"***

I think the easy answer is that there are things in all our lives that we would love to change as we look back. But the harder answer is that we should not want to change anything because these things happened in our lives, God brought them into our lives to make us into the men and women we are!

Let me help you put this into perspective. We are told,

One night when an ambassador and his valet were obliged to sleep in the same room in a hotel, the valet noticed his master tossing and turning in bed. "Sir, what bothers you?" he asked.

"Oh, I have so many things on my mind. The burden of my responsibility is hard to bear."

"Forgive me, sir, but do you think God has been governing the world up till now?"

"Of course."

"And do you think He'll manage even after you've left this world?"

"Undoubtedly."

"Then don't you think it's possible for you to trust Him to do it even during your lifetime?"

The ambassador got the point and was soon fast asleep.

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I think that puts things into perspective for us. God is in control. He will allow things to happen in our lives that may seem overwhelming to us, but I know that it is just what we need. Not too much and not too little.

I know, there have been times in my life and I am sure in your life that you were overwhelmed by what is happening to you. But here you are, God saw you through it all and He will continue to do that. It may not be what we think should happen, but God has a perfect plan and I think many times, as we look back at our life, we see what God was doing to bring us where we are at, but He is not going to leave us here. He will continue to bring trials into our lives to test our faith, to help us to grow, to help us to mature!

Now James tells us what a person is like who does not ask for wisdom in faith, and we will deal more with this in a few minutes. But listen carefully to what James says, **“for he who doubts is like a wave of the sea driven and tossed by the wind.”** James 1:6.

I call this person someone who has a “roller-coaster faith.” What do I mean by that? Simply, their faith is up, it is down, it is up again, it is down again, just like riding a roller-coaster!

One minute they are trusting God to help them, to give them the wisdom they need. Then, all of a sudden, they are down and anxious and doubting if God will even help them! Up and down and through it all we end up trying to take things into our own hands and work it out. Which ends up being even more of a mess!

This was the immaturity that James was dealing with in the lives of these Jewish believers! But that is not how we should live out our faith, live out our Christian lives. Paul put it like this in Ephesians 4:14 as he is speaking of growing in the Lord, maturing in the faith. He wrote, **“that we should no longer be children, tossed to and fro and carried about with every wind of doctrine, by the trickery of men, in the cunning craftiness of deceitful plotting.”**

We should not be tossed all over the place in regard to our faith, but we should stand strong in the faith that has been entrusted to us. I am not saying that we will never doubt or have struggles, but can you get back to the Word of God and allow the Spirit of God to comfort you and guide you instead of feelings or emotions or situations? You need to, I need to!

Turn to Proverbs chapter 2 and listen to what Solomon has to say regarding Wisdom starting in verse 1. We are told, **“My son, if you receive my words, And treasure my commands within you, So that you incline your ear to wisdom, And apply your heart to understanding; Yes, if you cry out for discernment, And lift up 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 find 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 uprightly; He guards the paths of justice, And preserves the way of His saints. Then you will understand righteousness and justice, Equity and every good path. When wisdom enters your heart, And knowledge is pleasant to your soul, Discretion will preserve you; Understanding will keep you, To deliver you from the way of evil, From the man who speaks perverse things, From those who leave the paths of uprightness To walk in the ways of darkness; Who rejoice in doing evil, And delight in the perversity of the wicked; Whose ways are crooked, And who are devious in their paths; To deliver you from the immoral woman, From the seductress who flatters with her words, Who forsakes the companion of her youth, And forgets the covenant of her God. For her house leads down to death, And her paths to the dead; None who go to her return, Nor do they regain the paths of life - So you may walk in the way of goodness, And keep to the paths of righteousness.”** Proverbs 2:1-20.

Very wise words to listen and apply to our lives! You see, you will not gain wisdom; you will not grow in the Lord if you place the Bible under your pillow at night! You will gain wisdom; you will grow in the Lord as you dig into His Word on your own! Psalm 42:1-2a tells us this very thing, seeking after God’s Word to know God. The Psalmist wrote, **“As the deer pants for the water brooks, so pants my soul for You, O God. My soul thirsts for the God, for the living God. . . .”**

And not only read for knowledge but then take what we have read and apply the truths of God to our lives - **WISDOM!**

Let me show you something in these verses here in Proverbs chapter 2. We see that if you “**receive my words,**” if you “**incline your ear to wisdom,**” if you “**apply your heart to understanding,**” if you “**cry out for discernment,**” if you “**lift up your voice for understanding [crying out to God for understanding],**” if you “**seek her as silver,**” if you “**search for her as for hidden treasure,**” the result will then be that “**you will understand the fear of the LORD, and find the knowledge of God.**”

God does not hide this wisdom from us, but He wants us to dig it out, to search for it. And you know what, if God’s Word is that important to you, then you will dig these nuggets out and if it is not that important to you, then you won’t.

But let me also say this. The things gleaned from God’s Word can change our life where as the things of this world tend to be useless or they don’t help us but hurt us, they bring us down instead of lifting us up. Obviously not everything, but with God, it is never for our destruction but edification, to build us up.

One example of something that may look great but is of no value if you think about it, is that of a body builder. He or she has muscles where many don’t even realize muscles existed.

But what are they used for? Did you ever think about that? They are good for nothing except for standing in front of the mirror or in front of a crowd of people and flexing. Set your priorities to know, to understand the fear of the Lord and He will give you the wisdom you need in life!

And if you don’t, that is what James will deal with next.

But remember to **ASK FOR WISDOM** and **ASK IN FAITH!**

### **VERSES 7-8**

So, we are to **ASK FOR WISDOM** and when we do we are to **ASK IN FAITH!** And now James deals with the negative aspect, **THE RESULTS OF NOT ASKING IN FAITH!**

You see, here is the problem. We ask God for wisdom and then we doubt what God’s Word says is true. In a sense this person is double-minded, and he is unstable.

John Bunyan, in his classic allegory, Pilgrim’s Progress, called this person “Mister facing both ways.” Yes, it is physically impossible to do, and it is spiritually impossible to do, and yet many try!

You know this person. Everything is a crisis, he is tossed to and fro as he goes through various trials and Jesus says that this person will not receive from Him because he is double-minded, he lacks faith.

In fact, this idea of being “**double-minded**” Clarke makes this point as he relates it to a two-souled man. He says, “The man of two souls, who has one for the earth, and another for heaven: who wishes to secure both worlds; he will not give up earth, and he is loath to let heaven go.”

And of this person, James tells us that they are “**like a wave of the sea driven and tossed by the wind . . . unstable in all his ways.**” James 1:6, 8.

The Greek scholar, Marvin Vincent said, “The emphasis falls on tossing; moving before the impulse of the wind, but not even moving in regular lines; tossed into rising and falling peaks.”

In other words, the doubter is completely out of control. You may think of this person like this. They are on a wild ride to nowhere!

That is not what we are to do. I am not saying, nor is God looking for perfection, because He would not find it in us. Just look at the men of faith in the Bible, like Abraham and even Moses and they were not perfect in their faith.

We all wrestle with doubt from time to time. What James is speaking of is someone who has two minds you might say. He may look to God but then sees no need to seek God or to ask for wisdom and when his life is out of control, he blames God for all that is happening to him!

You see, God is looking for people who seek wisdom from His Word and thus, they must believe the Scriptures are from God and they speak to us today!

If you think about it, Christian maturity is all about being single-souled or making a full commitment to God. And thus, no matter what comes your way, you will surrender to Him and walk accordingly, seeking His wisdom in situations.

If you don't, then your life will be like a roller-coaster, as I have said. It will be up one minute and down the next. There will be instability and anxiety in your life until you stop being double-minded in your walk with the Lord. **TRUST IN HIM!**

Spurgeon put it like this, "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.'"

I don't think Spurgeon is saying to name it and claim it or blab it and grab it. But let your requests be made known to God so that His peace can fill your life!

Thus, the **RESULTS OF NOT WALKING IN FAITH** is that your life will be a mess, you will be tossed to and fro and there will be no real direction. Therefore, may we **ASK FOR WISDOM** and when we do may we **ASK IN FAITH!**

Now I want to bring this to a **CONCLUSION** this morning, what we have learned. We may not like what God is doing. It may not be easy. We may not even fully understand all that God is doing. But can we trust Him?

We see this in the life of Habakkuk. It was prior to the first invasion of the Babylonians upon the Southern Kingdom of Judah and Habakkuk is crying out to God, seeking direction, he was not sure what God was doing.

And God basically says to Habakkuk that he is not going to believe what he is doing. And God tells him, and Habakkuk says, basically, "***I don't believe it!***" You see, he struggled with God using the wicked Babylonians to judge His people, the Jews and specifically the Southern Kingdom of Judah, by.

But then Habakkuk put things into a proper perspective. He said in Habakkuk 3:17-19, "**Though the fig tree may not blossom, Nor fruit be on the vines; Though the labor of the olive may fail, And the fields yield no food; Though the flock may be cut off from the fold, And there be no herd in the stalls - Yet I will rejoice in the Lord, I will joy in the God of my salvation. The Lord God is my strength; He will make my feet like deer's feet, And He will make me walk on my high hills.**"

In other words, it didn't matter what came upon him, he was going to put his trust in the Lord. Habakkuk was not going to serve the Lord only when things went the way he wanted, but no matter the situation he would not only serve the Lord but praise the Lord. God will give him the strength to endure and in the end, God will give stability to his life!

There is another person, Jacob, who was on the run from his brother Esau. And in Bethel, before he got to his uncle Laban's house for safety, this is what Jacob said, "**Then Jacob made a vow, saying, 'If God will be with me, and keep me in this way that I am going, and give me bread to eat and clothing to put on, so that I come back to my father's house in peace, then the Lord shall be my God.'**" Genesis 28:20-21.

That is how some live out their Christian life. "Lord, if you get me out of this jam, I will serve you!" "Lord, if you bring my wife back to me, I will serve you!" "Lord, if I get that promotion at work, I will serve you!"

You don't make deals with God. You serve Him because He is God. And we serve Him in spite of what we are going through, because, as we have seen, all that we are going through there is a reason for it as God is growing us, maturing us in the faith as He tests our faith with trials!

Therefore, may we **ASK FOR WISDOM** and when we do may we **ASK IN FAITH!** May we not be a double-minded person because we have seen the **RESULTS OF NOT WALKING IN FAITH!** Let me close with this. We are told,

A minister tells how in his first parish a banker occasionally came to his church, and every time he came the minister happened to be preaching on faith. The banker said to him, "Why don't you preach on something other than faith? Why don't you preach on something practical?"

A few days later there was a run on his bank, and the minister went down to see what was going on. He found the people demanding their money; they were alarmed and suspicious, and the banker was going up and down the line saying to these people, "Everything is all right. There is nothing wrong with the bank."

The minister touched him on the shoulder and said, "What is the matter?" "Why," he said, "there is nothing wrong, but these people have lost faith in the bank."

The minister replied, "Do you remember when you told me to preach on something more practical than faith?" "Oh, yes," he said, "I remember it very well, and I take it all back. After all, there is nothing so fundamental to the business interests and commercial life as faith."

- Illustrations of Bible Truths

Remember the title of this message, "**What is Happening?**" I pray that as you have seen in our study this morning, that God is in control and He is allowing these trials in our lives to test our faith. To help us grow in the Lord. To help us mature in the faith. Thus, through all these things we face, may we **ASK FOR WISDOM** and when we do may we **ASK IN FAITH!** God is calling to us and He is ready to give us the wisdom we need in the situations we face! May we ask in faith!