

BROOKLAND BAPTIST CHURCH
Bible Study
Dr. Charles B. Jackson, Sr., Pastor
Reverend Dr. James A. Jamison, Presenter

Lecture III

Wednesday, February 1, 2023

Code of Conduct: Growing in the Faith

Last week, we ended our study on **verses 1-4** of the Book of James helping us to understand that we must have the right attitude to deal with the trials and challenges of life, and that when we endure and persevere trials, however there are three words we need to complete that will help us to become mature, complete, and lacking nothing.

Mature: — seasoned, experienced, well-developed, fit for the tasks God sent us into the world to do. Maturity in this sense is not related to age. It is a quality developed by how much we have learned from the trials we have experienced. Someone has defined experience as the ability to recognize a mistake when we make it again. Maturity is the ability to recognize a mistake before we make it again. It is a trained ability to learn from each previous experience. But maturity takes time.

Complete — **fully trained**. The weaknesses and imperfections are being removed from our character; we are gaining victory over old sins; we are demonstrating a sense of competence about life. This completeness relates to the breadth of our experience. We have passed through trials of many kinds. To be complete means that we have become mature in many areas of life. God does not want cheap substitutes, but thoroughly developed Christians.

Not lacking anything — the basic life skills are there, ready to be used; the obvious weaknesses or blind spots of the past have been corrected; more and more clearly we mirror Christ himself! We will not be lacking anything when we are mature and complete in all the essential areas of life. Although this last quality is stated in the negative, it describes a security or contentment that comes from knowing that God has what we need, when we need it. Believing in God's faithfulness, we have everything we need.

Now we will turn our shift our focus to **verse 5**, where James shares the difference between earthly wisdom and the wisdom that comes from God. Also, James informs us that if we ask according to God's conditions, he will give it to us liberally.

James 1:2-4 - describes the benefits of responding correctly to trials, this verse draws attention to our hopelessness without God's assistance, and how we can receive wisdom to triumph over trials. The shift is sudden and helpful. The command to consider or ***“chalk it up”*** (**verse 1:2**) relates to the need for wisdom (**verse 1:5**). We need a certain kind of wisdom in order to consider it pure joy when facing all kinds of difficulties. If we are paying attention to the implications of the first verses in this letter, we will be struck with our lack of wisdom. That wisdom, says James, comes from God.

Let's look at the definition of the word, some distinct characteristics of the wisdom that we need. And what God guarantees. James begins by saying ***“If any of you lack wisdom, let him ask of God....”*** The word ***“if”*** assumes that there are times when you need an answer from God. The word ***“lacks”*** is a form of the Greek word ***leipo*** and describes a deficiency. In the Old Testament Septuagint, it describes possessing something only in a measure which, of course, means you were lacking the rest. Maybe you possessed a little bit of something, but it was just a remnant of what you really needed.

Later this word ***leipo*** came to depict a deficit, insufficiency, shortage, or undersupply. As used in **James 1:5**, it meant to be without, to have want of, to be in need of, to be lacking, to be short of, to be low on, to not have enough of, or something that exists in an insufficient amount. All of these meanings correctly convey the idea in the Greek text. But for our purposes, we will say it could be interpreted, ***“If you are short on wisdom...”*** or ***“If you find yourself to be lacking wisdom....”***

But what did James mean by ***“wisdom”***? The word ***“wisdom”*** is a form of the Greek word ***sophos***, which describes special insight or special understanding. Hence, this verse could be interpreted as, ***“If anyone among you lacks special understanding regarding an issue.”*** This word denoted special insight and understanding that could be worked out in real-life practice. It was an answer, an insight, or an enlightenment that had some type of practical application. Thus, the verse could be interpreted to mean: ***“If any of you are short on knowing what to do...”***; ***“If any one of you is experiencing a deficit regarding what action to take...”*** or ***“If any one of you is in need of special answers regarding what to do....”***

There are certain characteristics of the kind of wisdom we are supposed to have:

- 1.) **It is practical:** The wisdom from God relates to life even during the most trying times. It is not a wisdom isolated from suffering and trials. This wisdom is the tool by which trials are overcome. An intelligent person may have profound ideas, but a wise person puts profound

ideas into action. Intelligence will allow someone to describe several reasons why the car broke down. The wise person chooses the most likely reason and proceeds to take action.

- 2.) **It is divine:** God's wisdom goes beyond common sense. Common sense does not lead us to choose joy in the middle of trials. This wisdom begins with respect for God, leads to living by God's direction, and results in the ability to tell right from wrong. It is a wisdom that James will describe at length in chapter 3.
- 3.) **It is Christ like:** Asking for wisdom is ultimately asking to be like Christ. The Bible identifies Christ as the "*wisdom of God*" (1 Corinthians 1:24; 2:1-7).

James now tells us that there is a certain way to ask God for wisdom.

Next, James told us what to do. He wrote, "*If any of you lacks wisdom, let him ask...*" The word "*ask*" is from the Greek word *aiteo*, a word that primarily means to be adamant in requesting and demanding assistance to meet tangible needs, such as food, shelter, money, and so forth. Additionally, it expresses the idea that one can possess a full expectation to receive what has been firmly requested.

This means you shouldn't go to God only for spiritual blessings. The use of the word *aiteo* tells us that most questions about which you seek His wisdom will involve practical answers as well as spiritual — pertaining to tangible needs such as food, shelter, money, etc.

But God gives us one condition that we must fulfill before He will answer our petitions for wisdom. Verse 5 continues, "*If any of you lacks wisdom, let him ask of God.*" The word "*of*" in Greek is *para*, which means *close, side by side, or alongside*. As used in this verse, this word provides the condition we must meet in order for God to answer us. To qualify for God's answer, we must be in a close, side-by-side position with Him.

God our Father truly desires to clearly and abundantly answer our questions. He will not refrain from answering us as long as we get in the right position to ask Him. You see, God doesn't want to just answer our request for wisdom. He wants us to come alongside Him, close to His heart. In that position, He will not only answer us, but He will embrace us, cleanse us, and change us. "*If you are short on answers you need, ask God to give you those answers. But the one request He makes first before He will provide the answers you are asking Him for is that you come alongside Him.*"

James wrote that God “...giveth to all men liberally, and upbraideth not; and it shall be given him.” In this verse, we find five guarantees that God makes to those who seek answers to their questions.

We are guaranteed that God “giveth.”

We are guaranteed that God gives “to all men.”

We are guaranteed that God gives “liberally.”

We are guaranteed that God “upbraideth not.”

We are guaranteed that answers “shall be given” to the one asking.

Let’s look at each one of these five guarantees.

James 1:5 guarantees that when we ask for wisdom and we meet God’s condition of drawing close to Him, God will “give” us the answers we are falling short of. The Greek word used for “giveth” is **didontos**, a form of **didomi**, which means **I give**. But in this Greek case, the grammar does not describe the random, occasional act of God, but rather the regular behavior of God. In fact, the entire Greek phrase is **tou didontos theou** and is literally translated **the giving God**. Hence, God is not one who holds out on us when we need wisdom or information. He is, in fact, the giving God — one who is reputed for habitually giving answers to those who meet His conditions.

James 1:5 guarantees that God gives “to all men.” This removes the uncertainty that God may answer some and not others. If God’s condition has been met — that is, if we have drawn near to His heart and come closely alongside Him — He will answer us, because each of us fits into that phrase “all men”!

James 1:5 guarantees that God gives to all men “liberally.” This is the Greek word **haplos**. It denotes something that is bountiful. It actually portrays one who gives copiously, amply, extravagantly, generously, lavishly, liberally, plentifully, or richly. This is a person who has an open hand, as opposed to one who keeps a closed fist. Hence, God doesn’t dangle the bait before us and then quickly jerk it out of our reach. If we have met His conditions and pulled up alongside His heart, He reaches down with an open hand to give the answer we seek — and He gives us the answer bountifully.

James 1:5 guarantees that God “upbraideth not.” This is a translation of the Greek phrase **me oneididzontos**. The word **me** is emphatic for **not**, while the word **oneidodzontos** is a form of the word **oneinidzo**, which means:

- *to berate,*
- *to censure,*
- *to correct,*
- *to rebuke,*
- *or to scorn.*

In other words, God is not going to get upset with you if you ask Him for answers. He will never berate, censure, correct, rebuke, or scorn you when you come alongside Him to receive wisdom.

James 1:5 guarantees that answers “*shall be given*” to the one who is seeking them and who has fulfilled God’s conditions. The Greek tense used for “*shall be given*” makes this verse a promise. Even if you don’t know the answer right now, the answer that you seek will be given to you!

James 1:5 conveys this idea in the Greek:

- “If you are short on the answers you need, insistently ask God for them.
- But God first requests that you come alongside Him.
- That is the one request He makes before He will provide the answers you seek Him for.
- God is the giving God.
- He is known for habitually answering those who seek answers from Him, and when He answers, He does so lavishly and with an open hand.
- He never berates, scolds, or scorns you for asking.
- One thing is for sure — answers will be given to you when you ask God’s way!”

A Faith that Stands Still

Verses 6. 1:6 - Let him ask in faith.

The one condition for receiving this gift of God is faith. God will generously give wisdom, but the one who asks will not receive it if he does not have confidence that God will answer the request. Second, James said that we must ask “*in faith.*” The Greek lays emphasis on the word “*in*” — as something that the person is locked into or as something that is immovable. In other words, this person is praying for a stable, immovable, decided position. He knows what he wants and isn’t going to budge.

Faith knows what it wants, and faith stands still. Faith doesn’t waver. The verse also says that we must ask in faith and not “*doubt.*” The word “*doubt*” in Greek is *diakrinomai*, which means to differ or to be at variance with one’s self. In other words, your mouth may be saying all the right words,

but your heart is not really in agreement. It's just a mouthful of correct, empty words. Until, your heart and mouth get into agreement, you are not really asking in faith, so James told us that we must ask with hearts that are in agreement with our mouths.

Further, James said that if we are not asking in faith — that is, if we are not standing firm in our position of faith — we are like unto a “**wave**” of the sea. The word “**wave**” is the Greek word **kludunai**, and it describes the billowing sea, or one roll of waves after another, or the ever-changing sea. Waves may look impressive, but they don't last long. And likewise, a person who doesn't stand firm in faith may temporarily look or sound impressive when he prays, but like a wave of the of the sea, his prayers and desires are ever-changing; and therefore he is not standing firm in a position where he can be blessed.

In **verse 7**, James continued to say, “***Let not that man think that he shall receive anything of the Lord.***” It's not that God doesn't want to bless this man; He can't bless this man, because the man doesn't stay in a position of faith long enough to receive an answer to his prayers. Like the waves of the sea, he is shifting all the time from one request to another about the same issue — and then when a little pressure is applied and he doubts, he shifts again.

Verse 1:8 - He is a double-minded man, unstable. (NKJV)

To be double-minded and unstable is to “**trust**” God and claim to be a believer and yet be filled with doubt, keeping other options open in case God does not prove to be dependable. A double-minded person is trying to be allied to both sides in a war. That person is a walking contradiction. Augustine confessed to this kind of thinking when he remembered one of his earliest prayers, “***O Lord, grant me purity, but not yet!***”