

## Ask and Receive

*James 1:5*

### Introduction

When we have a question about something, where do we typically turn? My bet is the most of us turn to the internet, something like google. But what if you could ask God one question, what would you ask Him?

Over the last few weeks, we have asked some of our kids in our NextGen ministry this question, and here are some of their responses... (Show Video)

Before we get too far, I want to give credit to one of our students, John Hervey, affectionally known as John-John, who produced this video for us this morning!

Now, those questions were great! Some of the questions were deep. Some of the questions were personal. Some were fun. But all of the questions were genuine and sincere. They reflect a child-like faith in God, who is all-knowing and all-wise. This morning, we are going to briefly consider God's invitation to ask Him for wisdom, especially when things are hard.

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James 1:5

If any of you lacks wisdom, you should ask God, who gives generously to all without finding fault, and it will be given to you.

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### Exposition

When James, Jesus' half-brother, wrote his letter to a group of scattered Christians, he was writing to encourage them during a hard time. Have you ever been through a hard time or had to make a hard decision? It may be a hard time in class. It may be a hard time while playing a game or a sport. It may be a hard time at work. Have you ever been through a hard time when you didn't really know what to do? (Encourage the audience to indicate whether they have ever gone through a hard time by using the Green (Yes) or Red (No) indicators in their seats)

I can remember when my two oldest sons were faced with a hard decision. Carter was eight years old, and Jude was six years old. It was the winter of 2015 in Ouachita County, Arkansas. Earlier that day, the boys and I had killed a deer but did not have any way to transport the deer from the woods. So, a church member offered to come back in the evening with his ATV and help us get the deer. Carter and Jude would have to stay in my suburban in the middle of the woods while I rode on the ATV with my friend to get the deer. It was pitch black. Now, remember that Carter and Jude were eight and six years old. It was probably their first time in the woods with me, and now I was asking them to stay put in the car and wait for me to get back. Do you think that would have been scary? (Encourage the indicators here)

Well, the boys told me that they could wait in the car, and I told them, "Do not, under any circumstance, get out of this car." My friend and I headed off, deeper into the woods to get the deer, and apparently, at some point during this journey, Carter got worried about me.

So, in spite of what I told him, he grabbed his flashlight and Jude, got out of the car, and started walking into the woods to find me.

If you have ever been in the woods at night, it can be a little scary. You see things moving. You hear eerie sounds like a pack of coyotes howling, which echoes all throughout the woods. Does that sound fun for an eight-year-old and a six-year-old all by themselves, walking in the woods? (Wait for indicators) Well, for those of you that answered, “No, that does not sound like fun,” you would be correct. Yet, my boys were worried about me, so they took off into the woods to find me.

After my friend and I got the deer on the ATV and started heading back to the vehicles, I started to hear screams of “Daddy!” My friend thought that I just heard the coyotes, but I knew that it was my sons. I knew that they had gotten out of the car, but I didn’t know where they were at. And they didn’t know where I was at. They were scared. I was scared. This was the first time my wife had let me take them hunting and I was sure that if we even found them that it would probably be the last time as well.

In God’s mercy, we found the boys walking on the ATV trail, carrying their flashlights, holding on to each other, looking for their lost dad. They had not wandered off the trail. Once we all calmed down, I asked Carter, “Why did you leave the car after I said not to?” He told, “Because I worried about you.” Needless to say, I never left them in the car again when we were hunting.

Carter and Jude were faced with a hard decision in a scary situation. I’m sure we’ve all been there before. Kids and adults alike face difficult times when we do not always know what to do. This morning’s message is simple but very important. In times when we are afraid, in hard and difficult times, God invites to ask Him for wisdom.

According to James 1:5, wisdom is a gift from God, which he generously gives to all who ask. And to you know what’s so amazing about God’s gift? He gives this gift of wisdom without “finding fault” in us. Have you ever asked a question, and someone say, “Well, that’s not a good question.” Or, “That’s a ridiculous question.” Or maybe even, “I’m not answering that question because you did something wrong.” God does not respond to our request for wisdom with ridicule or shame or by holding our sins against us. As James 1:5 tells us, “*He give generously to all without finding fault.*”

James’ words in this verse sound a lot like Jesus’ words in Matthew 7:7, which says, “Ask and it will be given to you.” James wants us to see how willing and able God is to meet our need for wisdom, even in hard times. James wants us to not be shy in asking God for the help and guidance that we need in order to please Him.

Now, does this mean that we shouldn’t study for a test at school or prepare for our presentation at work or practice our sport? No. We should still prepare and honor God with our hard work and preparation. I can remember as a kid coming home after a hard test at school and praying to God, asking Him to “change the wrong answers on my test to the correct answers.” To be honest, I’m not really sure if those prayers was ever answered, not because God couldn’t change the answer, but because I believe God wanted me to honor him with the hard work of studying and doing my best.

Yet, at the same time, we ought to seek God's wisdom in every aspect of our lives. In other words, it's great to pray to God to ask Him to help us in our schoolwork, our athletics, or our careers. Students, as you think about going to college and/or choosing a career, it is good for you to look to God for wisdom on these decisions. He delights when His people express their need and dependence on Him by asking Him for help and guidance. James wants us to know that God loves hearing and answering our requests for help!

## **Conclusion**

What James is teaching us this morning is that God hears our request for wisdom and desires to answer. This is the **Big Idea** of this morning's message: God welcomes us to ask Him for wisdom. He calls us to seek Him and trust Him instead of trusting in our own understanding.

Our elementary students have been learning **Proverbs 2:6** as a memory verse. And this verse says (elementary students, you can say it along with me), "The LORD gives wisdom. Knowledge and understanding come from His mouth." When we need wisdom, when we need guidance, we should go to God, who delights in giving us wisdom!

James wants us to see that God is gracious to us. He is kind. Even though we have sinned against God, when we ask Him to forgive us, He is faithful to do it. He answers this request! He is pleased to forgive us. Why is God pleased to forgive us? Because of the amazing love that He has demonstrated to us in Jesus Christ. Some of our kids have been learning about how "Jesus is Amazing." We even sang about it earlier in the service, but our Preschoolers have even been learning a verse from **Luke 2:47** that describes Jesus in this way. The verse says, "Everyone who heard him was amazed *at his understand and his answers.*"

The most amazing thing about Jesus is how he came into the world, suffered, died, was buried, and rose again from the dead so that we might be forgiven of our sins and receive eternal life. All He calls us to do is turn away from our sins to Him and trust Him.

We turn to many different sources in life for answers to our questions. We look to all sorts of people for guidance and help. We put a lot of trust in those different sources.

But did you know that there is only one source for wisdom that leads to eternal life? Only one source that leads to forgiveness and hope?

That source is Jesus. Jesus, in His life, death, burial, and resurrection, has revealed God's wisdom to us by dealing with the biggest problem we would ever face in this life, the problem of our guilt before God because of our disobedience and rebellion against Him. God, in His kindness, sent His Son into the world, Jesus Christ, to secure salvation for everyone who would trust Him. To everyone who would ask for forgiveness and salvation.

God's Word promises that all who ask for salvation because of Jesus will be saved by Jesus. Have you asked and received this free gift of God's salvation? Parents, have you talked to your children about this free gift of God's salvation?