

The God Who Gives

Suffering, Tests, and Temptation Part 4

James 1:5-8 9-14-2014

Summary: God is described as generous, free, and eager in His giving because unless we think of Him that way we won't ask with steadfast trust in Him, and so He won't answer our prayer for wisdom (or anything else) because there is a question mark over how we will use it. Wisdom (knowing what to do because you can predict likely outcomes) is a powerful tool, and dangerous in the wrong hands. God only answers prayer if the answer will be used for His glory. If you do have steadfast trust, God will give wisdom (not the answer but the ability to figure out the answer) by allowing the normal means of gaining wisdom to actually work.

Introduction.....	1
Review	1
We All Need Refining	2
God's Nature	3
Simple Giving	3
To All	4
Without Finding Fault.....	5
Our Faith	5
Reason for the Description.....	5
Contradiction?.....	6
Wisdom Defined	6
Everybody Wants Wisdom.....	7
Good and Bad Wisdom	7
Unloving to Give Wisdom to the Unstable	7
Answered Prayer	7
Proverbial.....	8
God's Answer	8
How God Answers This Prayer.....	8
Condensed	9
How to Get Wisdom	9
Prayer	9
Application Questions (James 1:25)	10

James 1:1 James, a servant of God and of the Lord Jesus Christ, To the twelve tribes scattered among the nations: Greetings. 2 Consider it pure joy, my brothers, whenever you face trials of many kinds, 3 because you know that the testing of your faith develops perseverance. 4 Perseverance must finish its work so that you may be mature and complete, not lacking anything. 5 If any of you lacks wisdom, he should ask God, who gives generously to all without finding fault, and it will be given to him. 6 But when he asks, he must believe and not doubt, because he who doubts is like a wave of the sea, blown and tossed by the wind. 7 That man should not think he will receive anything from the Lord; 8 he is a double-minded man, unstable in all he does.

Introduction

Review

I hope these last few weeks that we have spent together in James 1 have been as helpful to you as they have for me. God has really spoken to me in some powerful ways through this text. I was gone last week so I'll just refresh your memory a bit. When you face hardship in your life, just remember the first two commands in the book of James:

- 1) Consider it pure joy because of what you know about trials
- 2) Let perseverance finish its work

The way you consider trials pure joy has to do with what you know to be true about trials. Please don't confuse this with the world's ideas of positive thinking. This is not just looking on the bright side. It is not saying the glass is half full instead of half empty. It's not about that. It is about understanding what is big and what is little. What man is doing is little; what God is doing is big. James is not saying, "Hey, when you suffer – think of your glass as half full instead of half empty." What James is saying is more like, "When your glass is half empty, stop thinking about the glass and remember that you have a giant reservoir in your backyard." The bad things that people are doing – that's small. The good things that God is doing – that's big.

So command #1 is to consider trials pure joy because of what you know. Command #2 is to let perseverance do its work. Stay in the furnace until God gives you a way out that does not involve unfaithfulness to Him. Persevering means enduring the trial without reverting to a sinful response, like anger, or self-pity, or bailing out on responsibilities, or complaining. And that last one is really one of the hardest to ever get under control once you start the habit. There is no possible way to obey James 1 and consider trials pure joy and let perseverance do its work while you are complaining – no possible way. We are never obeying this passage when we are complaining.

So when things don't go the way you wanted, instead of complaining, instead of getting mad, instead of running away, just stay there in the furnace and let perseverance do its work. And while you are in the furnace, give your attention to what God is doing. Back in verse 2, I told you the definition of the word trial: any event that cause grief, sorrow, or pain. That is a dictionary definition of the word, but let me give you a theological definition. The theological definition of trials in Scripture is this: A trial is any event that causes grief, sorrow, or pain, sent or allowed by God for the purpose of changing you. Everything that happens to you that's hard, remember, "This is to change me. I am one way, this is to make me a different way." We are being molded and refined and shaped by the Potter's hand. Or to use the language of Hebrews 12, God is training us. Nobody trains to be the same. Training is for changing. If you want to change from being weak to being strong, you get a physical trainer and go through the workout regimen. If you want to go from being unskilled at a job to being skilled at that job, you go through the training. All training is for growth and change. That simple principle has really revolutionized the way I have interpreted my trials the past couple weeks. I tossed and turned all night and was dead tired in the morning because I hadn't gotten any sleep, but instead of just thinking, "Now it will be hard to do my work," or whatever, I think, "God let that happen to change me. He wants my character to be more like Jesus today than it was yesterday, so He kept me from getting rest last night." "Someone sent me another email criticizing my work and assuming bad motives on my part and telling me they are leaving the church. And the reason I got that email is because God wants me to change from the old Darrell with the weak, wobbly faith and selfishness and pride and self-confidence and bad attitudes, to a new Darrell who can respond to something like that with humility and love and trust in God." "The email really came from God. (And when I hit reply, God will be copied on my response.) I have found myself praying the prayer each time some unpleasant thing happens in my life, "God, let me be trained by this. This dinner that I was looking forward to turned out to be a disappointment, let me be changed by it. Thank You for sending this trial; let it do its job in me. Let it refine my faith."

We All Need Refining

Nothing is more valuable than strong faith. And nothing is more damaging than weak, patching, intermittent faith. But every one of us has faith that could be described, to some degree, as weak, patchy, and intermittent. Do you know why that is? It is because our faith is like a piece of gold that is filled with all kinds of impurities and contaminations. And there is one solution to that – it has to be refined. And only one thing can refine gold: fire. Some of those impurities are fool's gold – they look just like real faith. And not even you, even at your most honest moments, can discern whether it is real faith or fool's gold. The only way to discover is to get into the furnace and see what melts into dross and what emerges as pure gold.

Job 23:10 when he has tested me, I will come forth as gold.

That is how it works. How many times last week did you demonstrate your need for refinement? Ask the people in your household. We all need that.

God's Nature

All of that is review to refresh your memory from last time. But before we move on, there are some more things we need to see in verses 5-8. Please notice how James refers to God in verse 5.

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

In the Greek it actually comes out like a name. Literally, it's **Let him ask the giving generously to all without finding fault God...** If you are one who likes those posters with all the various names for God, here is one you can put on there. Which God? He is the **giving generously to all without finding fault God**. That's a good nickname for God because that describes His nature. Any time you find an explicit description of God like that in the Bible, take note. Nothing is more spiritually deadly than inaccurate thoughts about God. And nothing is more healthy and beneficial than accurate thoughts about God. Many of the attributes of God in Scripture are implied, or you have to piece them together from various things that are said or things God does, but in cases like this, when the Bible writer comes right out and says, "God is this way..." that is an attribute of God that is especially important for us to understand. Always ask yourself, "Is that the way I think about God?" Does that fit my understanding of what He is like?" If someone came to you and said, "I don't know anything about God. What is He like?" is there any chance you would say, "Well, for one thing, He is definitely a God who gives generously to all without finding fault"? If that does not naturally spring to mind, then we need to let this passage correct our conception of God.

Simple Giving

There are three parts to this description: the generosity part, the fact that it is **to all**, not just some, and the part about not **finding fault**. Let's take those one at a time. That word translated **generously** is an interesting word. It is not the normal word for generosity. The most literal meaning is *simple* or *single*. **Some people**, when **some people** ~~they~~ give you a gift, it complicates your relationship with them.

Proverbs 23:6 Do not eat the food of a stingy man, do not crave his delicacies; 7 for he is the kind of man who is always thinking about the cost. "Eat and drink," he says to you, but his heart is not with you.

There are people who will give you gifts and do you favors, but in reality they aren't really true gifts because their heart isn't with you. They are keeping track of what it cost them, and now you owe them. They give you something, supposedly as a gift with no strings attached, or they do something for you, but then later on when you aren't doing what they want, or they want something from you, they bring up the things they have done for you.

"You know – I did give you that thing that time."

"I did help you out of that jam back then, remember?"

Getting gifts from people like that complicates your relationship.

"Oh, we'd better make sure we get something nice for them for Christmas because remember last year they got us that real expensive gift?"

There are keeping score, and if it's your turn to owe them one, you had better believe they are acutely aware of that.

Now, having said that, let me also say this – please understand that not everyone is like that. There are some of you who don't like getting help or gifts from anyone, because you just naturally think in these terms. You think you owe everyone who ever gives you a gift, and you don't want to be indebted to people, so you don't accept gifts. And if you are one of those people you need to understand that not

everyone is like the guy in Proverbs 23. There really are some people who gift to you just because they love you, and they love God, and they enjoy giving. And it is a true gift. You don't owe them anything. You don't owe them money, you don't owe them a favor – nothing. It is a pure gesture of love. Those people are like God. God's gifts are very simple. He is not keeping score or keeping track or expecting repayment. You don't have to scratch His back after He scratches yours. When God gives His gifts it's very simple: God just says, "Here, here's a gift. I love you."

A great example of this is the way God responded to David after David took Bathsheba for himself and had her husband killed. Listen to what God said to David:

2 Samuel 12:7 ... 'I anointed you king over Israel, and I delivered you from the hand of Saul. 8 I gave your master's house to you, and your master's wives into your arms. I gave you the house of Israel and Judah...

Now, at that point some of you are thinking, "That sounds familiar." You can just hear your dad saying something like that when you messed up.

"I put a roof over your head and I worked my fingers to the bone to provide for you, and I gave you this and I gave you that and that and that – and how do you repay me? This is the thanks I get? I give you all those things, and you show no gratitude? I'm sorry I ever gave you any of it."

Maybe he did not come right out and say that last part, but that is definitely the feeling you get. You mess up, and now he regrets giving you all those things.

But let's keep reading, because that is not what God says to David. He doesn't say, "I gave you all those things, and now I'm sorry I did it." Look what He says:

8 ... And if all this had been too little, I would have given you even more.

"Oh, David. I gave you all those things because I love you, and it was in my heart to give you even more. My plan was to just keep giving to you until it was enough to satisfy your soul."

That is what God is like.

To All

So God gives simply. Secondly, He gives **to all**. God gives good gifts 1000 times a day to atheists and Satanists and people who mock His Son and kill His children.

Matthew 5:44 But I tell you: Love your enemies and pray for those who persecute you, 45 that you may be sons of your Father in heaven. He causes his sun to rise on the evil and the good, and sends rain on the righteous and the unrighteous.

Last week Tracy and I took our vacation down to Mexico. We were sitting on the beach in paradise – beautiful turquoise ocean, waves rolling in, white sand beach, sitting under a palm tree sipping cold, delicious fruit smoothies, and I look around and there's 100 other people enjoying all the same things. Some of those people were unbelievers. Some of them living in ways that just thumbed their nose at God's law. And yet, they all get to enjoy every single one of those waves that rolls in. We went to the steakhouse and I ordered flank steak, and there were people all around me enjoying flank steak. Every year, millions of people get to enjoy that amazing paradise. God did not fence it off so only His family could get in. It is not a gated community. Are there gifts that are reserved only for His children? Yes. But there are so many amazing gifts that God just showers on everybody, without distinction. Why? Just because that is His personality. That is what God is like – He gives to all, and He does so simply, without keeping score.

Without Finding Fault

And then the third description – He does it **without finding fault**. Your Bible might say **without reproach** or **without criticizing**. Sometimes human fathers, when you ask for something, will bring up your past mistakes, and pick apart everything that is wrong with you.

“You disobeyed here, and you did that thing wrong, and you lied to me that other time – and now you think you deserve this thing you’re asking for?”

They might eventually give you what you are asking for, but not before running you through a major shaming process. God is not like that. He does not find fault. You don’t have to sit through a big speech about what a failure you are every time you ask Him for something.

Does that mean God doesn’t even know about your faults? Or that He is unaware of them? No – God knows and is aware of everything. He knows all your faults. The point here is that He doesn’t bring them up against you when you are asking Him for something. When you sin, God has a provision for that. You repent, and He forgives and credits Jesus’ perfect record to your account. And after that, He does not hold it against you.

It is an insult to God if we go to Him with our requests, cowering in fear that He is up there looking at you with disgust, or that He is sick of hearing your requests. God loves it when you come to Him in the way a child would come to a wise, loving, gentle, gracious, forgiving father.

So James takes all three of those truths about God and jams them all together in one, long title for God. He is the giving simply, and giving simply to anyone and everyone, and doing that without finding fault or losing patience God. Is that how you think about God? If someone asked you what God is like, would any of that spring to mind? This is the truth about God’s nature.

Our Faith

Reason for the Description

Now think about that for a minute. Why do you suppose James describes God that way in this passage? James’ style is that he is brief and concise and succinct. He does not give long explanations or a lot of extra verbiage like Paul in Romans. He tends to just make a general, proverbial statement with very few words and then move on. So why doesn’t he just keep it simple here and say, “If anyone lacks wisdom, ask God and it will be given to him.” Why the big, long description of God? The answer is this – it is because you have to think of God that way in order to get your prayer answered.

6 But when he asks, he must believe and not doubt, because he who doubts is like a wave of the sea, blown and tossed by the wind. 7 That man should not think he will receive anything from the Lord

The point of that is not so much that you have to believe God is going to answer your prayer. Faith is not just believing what you want to happen is going to happen. That is the world’s idea of faith. Biblical faith is trusting God – trusting Him to be good, trusting Him to be wise, trusting Him to be loving, trusting Him to do what is best for you. You have to have an attitude toward God that says, “I can totally rely on You. Whatever You do in response to this prayer – that is what I want and nothing else. I want whatever You have in mind more than I want what I have in mind because I trust You more than I trust myself.” You must have that kind of attitude when you come to God in prayer, otherwise, don’t expect God to listen. The only people God ever promises to listen to are people who have that attitude.

“So how do I get that attitude?”

It is impossible unless you think of God as being the **giving simply to all without finding fault God**. He is generous. He is eager to give. He is forgiving. He is not nit-picky. He is kind. He loves saying yes. If you have that kind of conception of Him, then you will tend to have a trusting attitude when you come to Him in prayer. And that is required in order to get a yes answer from God when you pray for wisdom.

Contradiction?

Now, if you are paying attention to the passage, you might be a bit perplexed about how all of that can be reconciled with the next verse. He just got done saying God gives simply, freely, generously, without distinction, without finding fault – and now he says if you doubt then don't expect God to give you anything. Isn't that a contradiction? If God says no to your prayers because of doubting, isn't He finding fault with you?

“Oh – you doubted. Nothing for you today. Next!”

How can that be harmonized with verse 5? Some of you read this verse, and to you it sounds like it is saying this: “God will listen if you ask in faith, but if your faith is almost perfect, all bets are off.” And so for you, when you read verse 6, you think, “Verse 5 doesn't apply to me at all. I'm always the guy in verse 6, so God will never listen to my prayers.”

That is not what James is saying here. He is not saying, “If you ever have a lapse in faith, if you ever stumble – don't expect any kindness from God ever again.” I can assure you that James did not intend verse 6 to negate the promise of verse 5 so that it becomes meaningless for everyone who isn't perfect. The reason the people in verse 6 don't get wisdom is not because God is an irritable, fault-finding, critical father who wants to punish you every time you fail. The reason God withholds wisdom from the people in verse 6 is because it would not be loving to give wisdom to those people.

Wisdom Defined

We will find out later in this book that there is good wisdom and bad wisdom – wisdom from heaven and wisdom from hell. And the difference has to do mainly with how you use it. And that becomes clear when you understand what wisdom is, so let me give you a definition. Wisdom, very simply, is knowing what to do. Education is knowing what is true - having lots of knowledge. It is possible (in fact, quite common) to have education and not wisdom. You can have lots of knowledge and still not know what to do in hard circumstances. You can be in the middle of a crisis, all kinds of things are going wrong, there is this potential disaster if we go this way and that potential disaster if we go that way, but if we do nothing then there is another threat – the wise person knows exactly what to do. The educated person can tell you that in 1492 Columbus sailed the ocean blue. Or $E=MC^2$. Knowledge is knowing what is true; wisdom is knowing what to do in a hard situation. You must have knowledge in order to have wisdom, but just having knowledge is no guarantee that you are wise. Many, many educated people are absolute fools.

The Hebrew word for wisdom is the same as the Hebrew word for skill. Wisdom is basically skill at living. It is when you are good at making decisions. All day long you have to make hundreds of decisions that the Bible does not give direct statements about. If you have to spank your child, in this case should it be two swats or five? Should you take a second helping of mashed potatoes or not? Should you read a psalm this morning, or the Sermon on the Mount? You are at the store and you notice a dozen roses, but finances are tight. Should you buy them for your wife? Or would it be better to use that money to hire a babysitter and take her out? You only have 45 minutes – should you mow the yard or chip away at cleaning the garage?

The wise person knows enough about how life tends to go that he is able to predict outcomes. When you have been around the block enough times where you can say things like, “If I confront that person right now, given the circumstances, he's not very likely to receive it well. But if I wait until tomorrow, when he isn't upset, it's much more likely that he will be able to receive it well.” That is wisdom. You understand life well enough to be able to predict how things will turn out if you choose one option or the other, and that gives you skill at making good decisions. You can weigh all the factors, assess likelihood of various outcomes, and pick the option that is most likely to be the best choice. That is wisdom.

This whole trials and suffering and perseverance thing is a process of change. Remember? The definition of a trial is it is an event that causes pain sent by God *to change you*. It is a process of change. And if at some point in the process you don't know what to do – you need wisdom.

Everybody Wants Wisdom

For the most part, our culture does not even pursue wisdom. The last 10 times you listened to a news broadcast, how many times did you hear the word “wisdom” mentioned? When is the last time you heard it mentioned in a movie or TV show or reality show or radio talk show or documentary? Contrast that with how many times we hear the word “information.” The information industry in our culture is a multi-billion dollar industry. The wisdom industry barely exists.

People don’t talk much about wisdom, and yet it really is something they want. Almost everyone – Christian or non-Christian, wishes they knew better what to do in order to get the results they want. Everyone would love to be able to know which decisions will be likely to get which outcomes. And here’s why: everyone wants happiness, and they have an idea of what would make them happy. And wisdom enables you to navigate life in a way that enables you to reach your objectives so you can get that thing that you think will make you happy.

Good and Bad Wisdom

So you can see that wisdom, in the wrong hands, becomes a bad thing. For the man who lives for money – if he gets wisdom, he will use it to get as much money as he can. If he lives for attention from people, he will use his wisdom to cause everyone to be impressed with him. If he lives for earthly pleasure, he will use his wisdom to find ways to maximize earthly pleasures. If the thing that rules in his heart is comfort he will use wisdom to maximize his comfort. Why would God give wisdom to those people? They are chasing after false gods – why would God enable them to succeed in something that is going to destroy them? If you said, “God, I’m robbing this bank. Please help me not get caught” – would you expect Him to answer that prayer?

When you are praying for wisdom, but your heart is not solidly on God’s side, so it is a question mark whether you will use it for God’s glory or your own glory – God’s kingdom or Satan’s kingdom – it would be unloving for God to answer your prayer. And if you don’t have perseverance, then like it or not, that’s you. Even if right now you are 100% on God’s side, if you don’t have perseverance then there is no telling what direction you will go when trials hit. You will be double minded – trying to ride the escalator both directions at once, and that doesn’t work. God waits until you are fully on the up escalator before He gives you things like wisdom.

Unloving to Give Wisdom to the Unstable

Wisdom is a powerful thing, and in the wrong hands it can do a lot of damage. God does not give wisdom to unstable people for the same reason you wouldn’t give a loaded gun to an unstable person. If you were in a war, and someone asked for a loaded weapon, wouldn’t you want to find out first if they are on your side or the other side? Or if they are suicidal? If it is not really established which side you are on, don’t expect God to give you wisdom because wisdom is something that enables you to achieve your goals. And so if your goals are for building your own kingdom instead of God’s, why would God equip you for that? It would be unloving for God to enable you to have greater success in digging your own grave. In the wrong hands, wisdom can do great damage.

Answered Prayer

And that same principle goes for any kind of prayer – not just prayer for wisdom. If you don’t pray with a trusting attitude toward God...

7 That man should not think he will receive anything from the Lord

Why? Same reason. It would not be loving for God to grant any of your requests if there is a big question mark on how you will use it. If you ask God for good health, why would God grant that request if there is a question mark on how you are going to use that good health? If you don’t have perseverance –

you are a wave at sea blown and tossed by the wind, patchy, on-again-off-again trust in God – if that’s you, and God answers your prayer for good health, you might use that good health to serve God or you might use that good health to run faster into sin. If you say, “God, please, let me get this job!” but you don’t have stable loyalty to God, you might use that paycheck to buy things that will do nothing but spiritual harm.

“God, please give me a wife/husband.”

How certain is it that you are going to use that marriage to glorify God?

“Let us conceive a child” – is that child going to be for God’s kingdom or for yours?

James returns to this idea in chapter 4.

James 4:3 When you ask, you do not receive, because you ask with wrong motives, that you may spend what you get on your pleasures. 4 You adulteresses!

If you are supposed to be the bride of Christ but you are carrying on a love affair on the side with the world, and you ask God to supply you with something to help you pursue that love affair, you are committing adultery against God. Why would He grant that request? That would be like a wife saying to her husband, “Can you please give me \$100 so I can get a hotel room for me and my boyfriend?” Why would the husband finance that?

And yet so many of our prayers are like that. Everything we pray for should be for God’s glory. If it’s not, then it would actually be unloving for God to say yes to our prayer.

Proverbial

So whatever you do, don’t read this passage in a way that makes you think of God as a stingy, reluctant giver. Some of you read this passage and to you [it](#) is not one bit encouraging. You read it and think, “Man, if I waiver at all in my faith then all bets are off!²” And so instead of coming away impressed with how generous and eager God is, you come away thinking He is tightfisted and stingy. The thing you have to realize is that this is a wisdom principle – like a proverb. It is not like your faith has to get above a certain level and God will suddenly start answering your prayers, but below that line He won’t. Think of it as a sliding scale. The stronger the faith, the more God responds to it. The more we waiver in our loyalty to God, the more it hinders our prayers.

God’s Answer

How God Answers This Prayer

So what if you do have perseverance? Then how does this work? Just ask God, and you immediately know exactly what to do? What about those times when you asked God for wisdom, made a decision, and it turned out to be the most foolish thing you could have done? It just seems like there has to be more to it than this – especially given what the rest of the Bible says about wisdom.

Proverbs 2:2 [If you] turn your ear to wisdom and apply your heart to understanding, 3 and if you call out for insight and cry aloud for understanding, 4 and if you look for it as for silver and search for it as for hidden treasure, 5 then you will ... find the knowledge of God.

Proverbs 4:7 Wisdom is supreme; therefore get wisdom. Though it cost all you have, get understanding.

So in Proverbs, in order to get wisdom you have to roll up your sleeves and study hard and seek and search like you are looking for hidden treasure, and it is so hard that the whole ordeal might cost you everything you have. Is James contradicting all that here? Now there is no effort involved at all – you just say, “Wisdom, please,” and suddenly you are King Solomon and you know exactly what the best decision is? I think a lot of people think that way. They have a hard decision, they close their eyes and say, “God,

show me what to do,” and then they look up and wait for an impulse in one way or the other, and they assume that impulse is the Holy Spirit guiding them. They say, “I prayed, then this is what I had peace about doing, therefore that’s wisdom.”

Condensed

None of that is what James is saying here. James is written in a very condensed form. He does not give long, detailed explanations like Paul. He just states things in concise, abbreviated forms. So James is not telling us everything there is to know about receiving wisdom from God. Nor is he overturning the rest of what the Bible says about wisdom. Everything in the book of Proverbs and elsewhere still stands. What James is doing is assuming you already know all that, and he is just giving you one more principle for understanding it. James does that a lot. That is why in this whole book, there is not one mention of the cross. He never mentions the death of Jesus, or the resurrection of Jesus. I have had people tell me that I should never preach a whole sermon without mentioning the cross. But the Holy Spirit inspired an entire book of the Bible that doesn’t mention the cross. Why? Because the cross isn’t important? No – it is essential. It is important, but it is not the only thing that’s important. Everything in the Bible is important. And sometimes, in order to make progress, you have to move on from the milk and get to the meat. Or move on from the meat you are already familiar with and move on to some other meat that you are not as clear on.

How to Get Wisdom

So all that to say, when you read something in James, don’t assume that is the comprehensive teaching of Scripture on that subject. James starts by assuming you understand the rest of Scripture, and he takes you on from there. So the normal ways of getting wisdom still stand. Very often when we pray for things, God answers the prayer in a way that requires us to do something to receive it. If a husband and wife are praying for a child, and God answers their prayer, there is still something they have to do to conceive the child, right? If a student says, “God, let me get an A on this exam,” God might answer that prayer, but that doesn’t mean you can just stay in bed that day. You still have to get up out of bed and go to class and actually take the test. And if you pray for wisdom, and God says yes, you still have to do something to receive that wisdom.

You have to search and dig and seek in the book of Proverbs and the other wisdom books in Scripture. The wisdom books are the ones in the middle of your Bible – Job, Psalms, Proverbs, Ecclesiastes, and Song of Songs. Search the wisdom books in the Bible, seek advice from wise people, and interpret life through the lens of Scripture.

Prayer

Those are the basic ways of getting wisdom. So where does prayer come in? Prayer is what determines whether those methods work or don’t work. If you do not pray with persevering faith, you can study Proverbs until you are blue in the face and you won’t become wise. God never wants us to forget – wisdom comes from Him. The phrase **let him ask** in verse 4 is in the imperative mood, which means it is yet another command. Pray for wisdom. And the more you let perseverance do its work and bring you to stable, solid, unwavering trust in God’s goodness and wisdom, the more God will make your quest for wisdom successful.

Benediction: Isaiah 30:18 Yet the LORD longs to be gracious to you; he rises to show you compassion. For the LORD is a God of justice. Blessed are all who wait for him!

Application Questions (James 1:25)

1. When you ask God for things in prayer, does it feel to you like you are talking to Someone who is eager to give generously and freely? If not, are you willing to believe what James says in verse 5?
2. If God were to grant the requests you are making right now, is there a question mark on whether you would use those things for His glory?
3. Of the basic ways of obtaining wisdom (studying the wisdom books, seeking wisdom from wise people, observing how life tends to go from a biblical standpoint, and praying for wisdom), which needs the most attention in your life right now?