

LIFE AFTER FAITH
A STUDY THROUGH THE BOOK OF JAMES

LESSON 3 – I DON'T KNOW...BUT I KNOW WHO TO ASK – JAMES 1:5

In 1956, Pauline Phillips started an advice column under the pen name, Abigail Van Buren. Most people today know her simply as Dear Abby. The column is now written by Pauline's daughter, Jeanne, who receives over 10,000 letters and emails each week. People from all over the world write in to Dear Abby seeking advice on any number of issues in life. While there is nothing wrong with asking another person for advice, our first instinct as Christians should be to ask our Heavenly Father.

Here in verse 5, James reminds us that even when we don't know the answer, we should know Who to ask. He tells us that when we are lacking in wisdom, we should ask God and He will give us what we need.

While God desires to get us to the point where we are equipped with everything we need in order to be all that He wants us to be, He also knows that all of us are a work in progress. Until we reach that point of maturity and completion, we can go again and again to verses like this one and we can ask God to give us what we need. Notice with me two truths James points out to us that remind us of the potential and privilege we have because of our direct access to God.

Wisdom Is Something We Commonly Require

"If any of you lacks wisdom..." When you read that phrase, it sounds like James is suggesting that there are only a handful of us who might need the virtue of wisdom. The truth is, there are lots of times when we are all lacking in wisdom. It's not so much a matter of IF you lack wisdom, but WHEN you lack wisdom. Let's look at a couple of things about the wisdom we lack...

It is indispensable to us – It's important that we understand the meaning of wisdom. Don't confuse it with knowledge because they are not the same thing. Someone can have a head full of knowledge and lack the wisdom to apply that knowledge to their life.

One writer said, "Knowledge becomes baggage when we don't have the wisdom to apply it. Wisdom does the right thing in the right way."

So, the wisdom James is talking about here is more than knowledge. It is the ability to know what to do and how to do it. When a wrong step in life could prove to be disastrous and tragic for your future...when a simple decision could mean the difference between success and failure, can you think of anything more important in those moments than wisdom? When James talks about wisdom, he's describing a tool that each of us need to make it through this life.

Proverbs says this about wisdom, "She is more precious than rubies; nothing you desire can compare with her."

It is insufficient in us – When James mentions lacking wisdom, he's talking about a deficit. When it comes to wisdom, we constantly run low. Did you know that we have more college educated people than any previous generation, and yet we seem less able to deal with life's problems than our grandparents did? We have technologies designed to simplify and streamline our lives, and yet we are busier and more stressed out than ever before.

We are more educated, medicated, integrated and sophisticated...but most people still don't know what to do with their lives and the situations they face on a daily basis. The truth is...we need the wisdom that comes from above.

Wisdom Comes From Someone We Confidently Request

James tells us when we lack wisdom we "should ask God, who gives generously..." He reminds us of the loving and kind God we serve that offers us wisdom when we need it. I'm glad we serve a giving God. Aren't you?

When we come to Him and ask Him for wisdom, we can be confident that He will give us just what we need! When we need wisdom, James says we can continually ask God because He, "Gives generously to all without finding fault..."

That phrase, "without finding fault," is an interesting one. It means that God won't answer us by saying, "Didn't I just help you yesterday? Aren't you ever going to learn?" When we come into the presence of God, asking Him to give us His divine wisdom, we are not asking a greedy, grouchy God who will grudgingly pass out just a little bit at a time. James tells us that God gives to us generously and happily. And not to jump ahead in our study, but the reason God loves a cheerful giver is because He is one Himself.

James finishes verse 5 by saying, "It will be given to you." This is a tremendous promise from the Word of God. When we ask God for wisdom, He will give it to us! With this promise in our hearts, why would we ever waste another moment of our lives worrying about what we are going to do and wrestling with a lack of wisdom?

There was an interesting article published in the Huffington Post back in 2009. It had some good advice for politicians. The article was entitled, "What to do when you don't know the answer." The opening line of the article says, "When you don't know the answer to a question, just say you don't know – as simple as that."

That good advice is also good advice for Christians. Even though we like to think we know what we are doing, sometimes we must admit that we don't have a clue. James reminds us that even when we don't know, we do know Who to ask.

"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."

There's a place every believer can go...a resource every Christian can turn to when they lack the wisdom needed for the world in which they live.