

Andy Anderson, Asking God for Wisdom
Reading: James 1:1-18

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Over the years one of the characteristics of being a Christian that I've often thought that I did not really struggle with was in the area of pride. I never felt like I was better than others at things. I like to do my best at whatever I'm doing but have never thought that I was the best at certain things or I was the best at everything. Whenever I've gotten acknowledgment for something in my work life, I try to make sure I give credit to whoever else was involved and to the Lord, and also tend toward the mindset in that setting of well, that's what I'm being paid to do; that's why you pay me is to take care of that. I realize that whatever things that I have been able to accomplish is because the Lord has given me the abilities to accomplish those things. So aside from what I have stated in the last minute or so here, I never thought that pride was a big problem for me. This may sound a little funny because right now it sounds like I'm proud, but I'm not, that I don't have pride. But I just wanted to say that to kind of set the tone for what I'm going to talk about this morning, the point of my lesson for today. I want to thank Jerry for reading the passage for us this morning in James chapter 1. We will be focusing primarily for our lesson on verses five through eight. James chapter 1 verses five through eight and I'm going to go ahead and read those again real quickly. Just the four verses, James 1:5-8: "If any of you lacks wisdom, let him ask of God who gives to all liberally and without reproach, and it will be given to him, but let him ask in faith with no doubting, for he who doubts is like a wave of the sea driven and tossed by the wind. For let not that man suppose that he will receive anything from the Lord. He is a double minded man, unstable in all his ways."

We started off with that passage "if any of you lacks wisdom, let him ask of God." As I've been studying lately, I have come across this idea a couple of times or several times in those studies and have come to a realization about myself. I probably do not ask God to give me wisdom as often as I should in my life, and the more I think about that and ponder why that is, I can only come to the conclusion that it is because I think I already have the wisdom I need to do whatever I need to do on my own. I tend to think I've got this. I'm okay, I can handle this. I don't mean to say that I do not study often or I don't pray to God, but I don't find myself asking God to provide me with his wisdom as I ought. I am a husband and father, son, brother, brother in Christ, an employee, a neighbor, a citizen, and many other things. I don't within me by myself of myself have the necessary wisdom to perform all of the tasks and duties of these various roles as God would have me to do. I need the wisdom of God in order to live as God wants me to live to do in all my various roles that I just mentioned, all of these roles that I have throughout my life. I need the wisdom of God to help me to perform these according to his will, these different areas. And I think everyone in our audience today also needs the wisdom of God to live their lives according to his will. The reason I started off talking about pride is only to relate why this topic struck me at this time. And pride is not our topic today rather is the aspect of my life that has perhaps caused me to give consideration to this topic today. Apparently pride has been enough of a problem for me that I have not thought, often enough, to humble myself to God in a manner to ask for him to grant me the wisdom that I so greatly need to perform my tasks on this earth, to

do the things that I need to do, to take care of things that I'm responsible for. I do often go to him asking his help in dealing with certain things in my life, but I don't ask for the wisdom which he can grant me, only he can grant me, to deal with these things. It is always better for us to just admit we need the wisdom of God to help us out all the areas of our lives, various aspects of our lives, that we need godly wisdom in order to perform those functions as he would have us to do . So in looking at my thoughts for today, at the end of our lesson I want us all to leave here with a few things in our minds- with the knowledge that we should be asking God for his wisdom to help us out in our everyday lives. We should be asking God to provide his wisdom in order for us to better serve him in all that we do. I want us to leave here knowing that our asking God for his wisdom pleases him and makes him happy as long as we have his will in mind. The wisdom of this world, leave here this morning realizing the wisdom of this world will do us no good. There's nothing worthwhile in the wisdom of this world, only the wisdom of God.

As we all know, the person that we look to in the word and discussing God granting wisdom is King Solomon. Turning over to I Kings chapter 3, I'd like to read a little bit of that. We read about Solomon and him asking God for wisdom, I Kings chapter 3, beginning with verse 5. I Kings 3:5:"At Gibeon the Lord appeared to Solomon in a dream by night and God said 'Ask what shall I give you?'" We have God appearing to Solomon. Solomon is sleeping; Solomon's dreaming and God opens the door for him. What do you need? What can I do for you? Continuing on, verse six: "And Solomon said, 'You have shown great mercy to your servant David my father because he walked before you in truth and righteousness and uprightness of heart with you. You have continued this great kindness for him and you have given him a son to sit on his throne. As it is this day now O Lord my God, you have made your servant king instead of my father, David, but I am a little child. I do not know how to go out or come in and your servant is in the midst of your people whom you have chosen, a great people, too numerous to be numbered or counted. Therefore give your servant an understanding heart to judge your people that I may discern between good and evil for who is able to judge this great people of yours?" So God opened the door, and Solomon made his request. Solomon's request was he wanted an understanding heart so he could judge between good and evil in order to better rule God's people, God's chosen people, the Children of Israel. Solomon wanted wisdom. Why did this request by Solomon please the Lord? Continuing on, verses 10 and 11, why did this request please God? "The speech pleased the Lord that Solomon had asked this thing. Then God said to him, 'Because you have asked this thing and have not asked long life for yourself, nor have asked riches for yourself, nor have asked the life of your enemies, but have asked for yourself understanding to discern justice.'" This pleased the Lord because Solomon did not make a selfish request. He wasn't looking for something for himself, but he asked God for spiritual wisdom in order to help others, specifically to help the Children of Israel, God's chosen people. He wanted to be able to discern good and evil, so that he could help them out, help them to follow God. So it was because it was not a selfish thing but a spiritual thing. God's answer to Solomon's request follows in the next three verses, verses 12 through 14: "Behold, I have done according to your words. See, I have given you a wise and understanding heart, so that there has not been anyone like

you before you, nor shall any like you arise after you, and I've also given you what you have not asked, both riches and honor so that there shall not be anyone like you among the kings of all your days. So if you walk in my ways to keep my statutes and my commandments as your father David walked, then I will lengthen your days." Because of Solomon's humble request for wisdom to judge God's people and not great wealth or great power or something else for himself for selfish reasons, God granted Solomon so he would have wisdom unlike anyone who ever lived before him or anyone who would ever live after him. We often hear it said here that Solomon was the wisest man who ever lived.

God will always be pleased with us, if we ask for wisdom in order to act in the Christian manner that God wills for us in whatever area that we are seeking wisdom in. Much like Solomon, we would be asking for the ability to act as God would have us act if we are granted wisdom that we seek to be able to discern good and evil just as Solomon asked. Just like Solomon wanted to be able to discern between good and evil to rule the children of Israel, so will God grant us willingly wisdom if we seek it to discern good and evil in our endeavors in our earthly walk. So the speech pleased the Lord. Not only was God willing to grant the wisdom that Solomon had asked for, but this was something that pleased God. This is something that pleases God today when we ask him for his wisdom to perform his will in our lives, not for selfish reasons, but for spiritual reasons--so that we can be the man or woman God wants us to be, so that we can be the husband/wife that God wants us to be, the father/ mother, son/ daughter that God wants us to become if we only ask him for spiritual wisdom. All the things that I find in the Bible that are said to please God are spiritual things, things that show God that we are striving to live a life according to his will. In Hebrews chapter 13 and verse 21: "Make you complete in every good work to do his will, working in you what is well pleasing in his sight, through Jesus Christ, to whom be glory forever and ever. Amen." So he is pleased when we are striving to do his will, that we are obeying him pleases him, when we are obeying him. I Samuel 15: 22: "so Samuel said as the Lord has great delight in burnt offerings and sacrifices, as in obeying the voice of the Lord. Behold, to obey is better than sacrifice and to heed is better than the fat of rams." So he is pleased when we obey him. He is pleased when we fear him. Psalms 147:11: "The Lord takes pleasure in those who fear him and those who hope in his mercy." He takes pleasure when we have faith in him. 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." It pleases God that we want his wisdom in order to better live our lives for him, to make better decisions in our lives that will lead us closer to him, and lead others closer to him also.

If we want to please God, and I know that we do, we will ask for his wisdom to direct our lives. As we can read about in the Sermon on the Mount in Matthew chapter 7:7-8: "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; any who seeks, finds and to him who knocks, it will be opened." God is pleased when we ask for spiritual things from him. He wants to provide us with the tools necessary to make our walk with him as profitable as possible. As long as he knows that the intent of our hearts are to use the wisdom that we ask for

to help ourselves to better perform for him as a Christian, to help lead others to him, to live our lives as a sacrifice for him. Then he will give us what we ask for; he is pleased by that request.

What is the wisdom of God worth? Once we have the wisdom that God can give to us and wisdom that God gives is certainly greater than any wisdom that we can acquire of our own volition. First Corinthians chapter 1, verse 25: "Because the foolishness of God is wiser than men, and the weakness of God is stronger than men. Even the foolishness of God is wiser than the wisdom of man." So certainly the wisdom of God is far above anything that man can offer. Also in Proverbs 21:30 along the same line, "There is no wisdom or understanding or counsel against the Lord." If worldly wisdom is against God's wisdom, then it is not real wisdom. It is a false wisdom. Wisdom that cannot stand up against the wisdom of God is false. Also in I Corinthians chapter 3 verses 18-20: "Let no one deceive himself; if anyone among you seems to be wise in this age, let him become a fool that he may become wise. For the wisdom of this world is foolishness with God, for it is written, he catches the wise in their own craftiness and again the Lord knows the thoughts of the wise, that they are futile." Again, the wisdom of this world is foolish compared to the wisdom of God. There's never been anyone who lived who could argue worldly wisdom in any way against God that is superior to God's wisdom. It is not possible. Also in Job, chapter 28, speaking of what the wisdom of God is worth-- Job chapter 28:12-13 and then verse 15: "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. It cannot be purchased for gold, nor can silver be weighed for its price." As we know, God's wisdom is priceless; it cannot be purchased with gold or silver or any other currency. In fact, it is not even for sale. God gives it to us willingly if we only follow him and ask and seek his wisdom.

How do we obtain this wisdom that we request of God? Proverbs chapter 2, verse 6: "For the Lord gives wisdom; from his mouth come knowledge and understanding." Also in Colossians 2:2-3: "that their hearts may be encouraged, being knit together in love, and attaining to all riches of the full assurance of understanding to the knowledge of the mystery of God, both of the Father and of Christ, in whom are hidden all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge." And finally in Ephesians 1:17: "that the God of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of glory, may give to you the spirit of wisdom and revelation in the knowledge of him." We gain this wisdom of God by obtaining knowledge of him. The more knowledge we have, the more opportunity for our godly wisdom to grow.

How can we understand or comprehend this wisdom of God? I Corinthians 2:6-16. I'm not going to read all this. I'm going to read a couple of verses, but this is a good passage for this question. In this passage we read about the wisdom of God, not the wisdom of this age or the wisdom of man, but the wisdom of God, which is far superior than any wisdom that man can offer. As we see in verses 12 and 13, "Now we have received, not the spirit of the world, but the Spirit who is from God, that we might know the things that have been freely given to us by God. These things we also speak, not in words which man's wisdom teaches but which the Holy Spirit teaches, comparing spiritual things with spiritual." It is through the spirit of God, the Holy Spirit, that we are

able to understand the knowledge that builds to wisdom that God supplies to us. We need to have the Holy Spirit in order to fully understand the wisdom that we are asking God for, in order to discern good and evil. God has supplied us with a portion of the Spirit when we follow him and are baptized. Now if we ask God for wisdom, we have the Spirit within us to attain that wisdom, to help us understand the words that God gives us.

And we've already answered this question, but where can that wisdom be found? As we see in II Timothy 3:16-17: "All Scripture is given by inspiration of God and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness, that the man of God may be complete, thoroughly equipped for every good work." Of course we must go to his word to gain the wisdom that he has to offer to us. During the time of King Solomon, I think God possibly bestowed upon him supernaturally, if you will, a great level of godly wisdom. They didn't have the complete word at that point; he had some of the older books certainly, but not the complete word. During our time in order for us to attain the wisdom that we ask God, we must go in search for that wisdom and it can only be found in one place, certainly, and that's in his word, in the Bible. All the wisdom that is necessary for us to live a godly life on this earth is contained in his word. God assists us with attaining, with gaining this wisdom through prayer for said wisdom and much studying, assisted by the Holy Spirit, but God gives it upon our baptism. Hebrews 4:12: "For the word of God is living and powerful, sharper than any two-edged sword, piercing even to the division of soul and spirit, joints and marrow, and it is a discerner of the thoughts and intents of the heart" and will help us to discern good and evil and will help us to apply God's wisdom to our lives. We need the word of God to help us to understand how to discern the good and evil as we seek to do God's will in all things.

If we ask God for his wisdom, he expects us to use that wisdom for his good. He expects us to seek out his wisdom in the word and use that wisdom for spiritual things for good, to help lead others to follow him. When we seek the wisdom of God, it is not for us to then discard that wisdom and go with our own wisdom, for the wisdom of the world. We are to follow the wisdom of the Lord. We are not to be unstable in our ways. We are not to use the wisdom of God when it feels right and switch back and forth to the wisdom of man as we see fit. Whenever we think we can find a better way, whenever we think "I've got this. I can handle this." When we ask for the wisdom of God, we are to do as we are told in James 4:8: "Draw near to God and he will draw near to you. Cleanse your hands, you sinners, and purify your hearts, you double minded." As we seek out and utilize wisdom of God in our lives, we are drawing nearer to God and God, in turn, is drawing nearer to us. We need to do this continuously, constantly throughout our lives. It is not a one-time thing; it's going to be an everyday thing. We should not be double minded, drawing closer to God in his wisdom for a time and then drawing near to the wisdom of man when it suits us. In Matthew 6:24: "No one can serve two masters for either he will hate the one and love the other, or else he will be loyal to the one and despise the other. You cannot serve God and mammon." It's much the same thing; we cannot serve God's wisdom and man's wisdom. We've got to make our choice. We need to serve God's wisdom; we need to follow God's wisdom. We

cannot follow the wisdom of man; we must always follow the wisdom of God. Seek out God's wisdom; serve the wisdom of God, not the wisdom of man.

Looking back at this passage in James chapter 1 that we started off with--the specific reason that James was telling the brothers to ask for the wisdom of God was because in the first few verses, it talks about the various trials that they were going through. This is certainly the times when we are fervently praying to God for assistance and how to deal with different issues we have going on in our lives, times of trial, when the various trials are going on-- whether it's problems at work, situations at home, or issues we are dealing with in our kids' lives, we need to ask God for wisdom he has in abundance in order to help us out with the situations. God will grant us the wisdom we need based on the insights that the Holy Spirit can provide us as we meditate upon the word of God. And as we read there, he will give this to us liberally or generously, as mentioned in verse five and without reproach. God knows our hearts and he knows that we are coming to him out of a dutiful and obedient heart. He will help us. He wants to help us. It pleases him to help us in this manner as we discussed earlier.

As we prepare at this time to bring our thoughts to a close, I want us all to leave here today, as I mentioned earlier, with the knowledge that we should be asking God for his wisdom in our everyday lives. We should be asking God to provide his wisdom in order for us to better serve him in all we do, to better show him through our example to our children, to those around us in the world--our neighbors, our coworkers. I want us to leave here this morning knowing that our asking God for his wisdom pleases him and makes him happy as long as we have his will in mind. What better thing can we strive to do than that which pleases the Father? The wisdom of this world will not do anything good or worthwhile for us, only the wisdom of God. But also going back to Solomon as we close here, let us also remember the lesson of Solomon. It's said in the word that Solomon was the wisest man that ever lived, but did Solomon always use that wisdom? No, we know the story of Solomon well, and Solomon followed the wisdom of man. He had all the wives that led him down different paths, and he did different things that he shouldn't have been doing throughout his life. So that kind of tells us not just asking God for wisdom once, it needs to be a constant thing. We always need to be going to God. I'm never going to have enough wisdom of myself to be able to do what I need to do. I will always need God to help me out in anything and everything I do in this life. As we read in verse six of James chapter 1, "but let him ask in faith with no doubting, for he who doubts is like a wave of the sea driven and tossed by the wind." If there is anyone here this morning who wants to put their faith in the wisdom of God, and not in the wisdom of man any longer, we invite you to come forward as we stand up and sing the song of invitation.