

BIBLE DISCUSSION GROUP STUDY QUESTIONS

In preparation for Sunday, July 10, 2011

Passage: James 1:5-8

Memory Passage: James 1:5

DAY 1 – ASK FOR INSIGHT

READ THE PASSAGE

- (a) **Read James 1:5-8.** How can one be “lacking in nothing” in v. 4 but still be one who “lacks wisdom” in v. 5? What does wisdom have to do with persevering steadfastly in trials? Should we ask for wisdom before, during, or after the trials?
- (b) Even though James writes “if,” the Greek grammar shows us that a lack of wisdom is presumed (i.e. the “if” has the sense of “since”). Would you agree with James’ presumption that everyone lacks wisdom? Do you lack wisdom? Since you do, are your ears perked and ready to listen to *and* obey what follows? What steps will you take to prepare to be an obedient listener?
- (c) What does James mean when he writes that God “gives generously to all without reproach?” What does this say about God’s character? Describe a time in which you have asked God for wisdom that you were thankful that He did not respond to you with reproach (even though you might have deserved it)?
- (d) *Family:* Gather these items: A stone, a piece of bread or a roll, a few Goldfish crackers, and a plastic snake/worm/serpent. You will need one stone & snake for each child. Then pair the items up and ask, “Pretend you are very hungry. Which would you ask me for?” Then go to each person and offer him or her in a choice of one of these pairs (stone/bread—Goldfish/snake). When they ask you for the edible one of the pair, give them the stone or snake instead and move on to the next person. After you have given everyone the non-edible item ask, “Are you full yet?” When they say, “NO!” goad them into a discussion of why they are not satisfied, while you act all along like everything should be ok and they should not still be hungry. Then **Read Matt. 7:7-11** and explain to them this passage and the great, loving, giving God about Whom it speaks.

DAY 2 – ASK FOR INSIGHT

READ THE PASSAGE

- (a) **Read Prov. 2:1-15.** What is wisdom? What is the difference between wisdom and knowledge? What is the promise to the one who is obedient to seek insight & understanding (v. 5)? From where does wisdom come and who gives it (v. 6-7)?
- (b) What blessings come to those who seek wisdom from God (vs. 7-12)? After you write each one, meditate on that particular blessing and write down several practical ways it should affect your life. For example, in v. 11 we are told that when we gain wisdom from God “discretion will watch over” us: This would be of great benefit when I have financial decisions to make, when I am having a discussion with my wife that begins to heat up, when I need to discipline my children, when I am cut off in traffic by an aggressive driver, when I am watching TV and a Victoria’s Secret commercial comes on, etc. etc. etc. The benefit would come because the wisdom God granted me would make me assess the situation as God does and make choices that honor Him and benefit me, and my sanctification would be increased, and my love for and satisfaction in Christ would begin to take a better hold of my thoughts and emotions.
- (c) *Family:* **Read James 1:5.** Remind your family of the truths you learned about God last night and His willingness to give His children good gifts, especially when they ask. Then show them that James is clear that we need wisdom to remain steadfast in trials, and that God promises to give that wisdom generously without disgracing or shaming us when we ask. Even when we are suffering trials stemming from our own sin God promises to grant us wisdom without disgracing us (“Well you should have known better than to do that so you are on your own this time!”). Then help your family apply this verse by showing them what it looks like to stop, pray, and ask for wisdom in real-life situations like dealing with anger, fighting with siblings, dealing well with punishment, honoring mom & dad, not giving in to a temptation to sin, etc.

DAY 3 – ASK FOR INSIGHT

READ THE PASSAGE

- (a) **Read James 1:5-8.** What does the “but” tell us at the beginning of this verse? How does it require us to connect what follows with what has preceded?
- (b) Since we are commanded to ask “with no doubt,” what would it look like if we asked “*with* doubt?” In other words, what would we doubt? How are asking in faith and without doubt connected?
- (c) Explain the description of a doubtful asker (v.6). What does this word picture teach us? Warn us against? How would we know if we were being tossed on waves? How would this description help you to counsel others with regard to their faith?
- (d) *Family:* Have a large tub of water (or a bathtub full of water), a fan, and a toy boat ready. Place the boat in the water, turn on the fan to blow the boat across the water, and begin to make large waves with your hand. As you do this, ask your family questions like: “Do you think the boat feels safe? What is the difference between this boat and one that is anchored or safely docked in a harbor? What kind of foundation does this boat have? Does the boat have any control over its course?” Then **Read James 1:5-6** and explain that this is how at risk a person is when they approach God for wisdom (or anything else) and do not trust in His sovereign character to be in control of not only the generous gift of wisdom but the situation for which wisdom is needed. One who asks in faith believes that Christ is the anchor need for the seas of life, whether stormy or calm.

DAY 4 – ASK FOR INSIGHT

READ THE PASSAGE

(a) **Read James 1:5-8.** What is a “double-minded” person? About what is he/she confused or torn? Why does this make a person “unstable in all (their) ways?”

(b) Who is “that person” mentioned at the beginning of v. 7? Why are they wrong in supposing that they will receive anything from the Lord? Is the “anything” limited to wisdom or does it really mean anything? Why would the Lord respond to the “double-minded” in this way?

(c) Are you asking for wisdom from God often enough? What will you do today to remind yourself of your constant need to ask for God’s wisdom? What are some strategies that will help you implement this much-needed request more often? How will you keep from living “double-minded?” (Be specific here with ways that you can avoid the trap of depending on yourself or trusting in yourself rather than God. And don’t pretend that you never live this way, because you do ☺)

(d) *Family:* **Read James 1:5-8.** After you read the Scripture, ask one of your children to get up and get something for you (a pencil, a piece of paper, a glass of water, it does not matter). When they get up to obey, have your wife command them to sit back down. Continue battling with your commands as your child is confused and does not know which of you to obey. After a few minutes have them sit down and ask them questions about how they felt, was their allegiance torn, how would they decide which of you to obey, etc. etc. Then re-read the passage and explain that this is what a double-minded person looks like: One who waffles between trusting God and themselves. A person with true faith always places their trust in God and not in themselves, so they ask for wisdom, believing that God will provide “good things” to those who ask Him in faith.

DAY 5 – ASK FOR INSIGHT

READ THE PASSAGE

(a) **Read James 5:1-8.** What lessons did you learn from Job about faith, trials, and the character and purpose of God that help you understand how to apply these verses (all of them, vs. 1-8)?

(b) In 108 verses James uses 54 imperatives (commands). James has passion to see us “do” life in a way that is empowered by & reflects an authentic faith. Are you ready to receive these commands and commit to single-minded obedience to them through the power of the Gospel? I don’t mean just the commands you like, or the commands that you really don’t struggle to obey, but every command. Spend some time in prayer right now asking God to kindle the flames of personal revival in your life as you study and obey the truths you find in James. Ask Him to show you how to keep Christ as the blazing center of your obedience, to remind you daily of what Christ has accomplished on your behalf to allow you to turn away from temptation to sin and turn toward obedience to Christ, and to reveal to you daily the beauty of Christ as you seek to live out an authentic faith. Then, on a bookmark sized piece of paper, write a one sentence purpose statement that reflects your commitment to hearing and obeying God’s word during this study and use this as your Bible bookmark to remind you daily of your desire.

(c) *Family:* **Read James 1:1-8.** Prepare a piece of card stock for each person that can be used as a bookmark and gather a bucket of crayons/markers. Ask your family if they have any questions about these verses, either concerning their meaning or their application. Answer them if you can, or tell them you don’t know but you will find out (don’t forget to find the answers by studying the Scriptures, asking a mentor or your discipleship group, or your home group!). Then tell your family that they will encounter over 50 commands in the book of James, and explain that commands are not suggestions! Have each family member decorate their bookmark with pictures, prayers, Scripture verses, etc. and tell them that they will use this bookmark throughout their study of James to remind them of their commitment to be both hearers and doers of the Word.

DATE: July 10, 2011

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Authentic Faith: Wisdom & Stability

In James 1:5-8 we are shown 2 criteria for gaining wisdom.