

James 1:5-6 Commentary

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 Chart from recommended resource [Jensen's Survey of the NT](#) - used by permission
 See also [Overview Chart](#) by Charles Swindoll

JAMES

Faith for Living

Motives for Works	The Place of Works: Outward Demonstration of Inner Faith					Outreach of Works
Jas 1:1-18	Jas 1:19-2:13	Jas 2:14-25	Jas 3:1-12	Jas 3:13-4:12	Jas 4:13-5:12	Jas 5:13-19
Trials & Temptations	Word & Works	Faith & Works	Tongue	Wars	Future	Others
Faith In Testings	Fulfill Favor	Fallacy	Fountain	Factions	Faith and the Future	Faith and our Fellowship
		FAITH AT WORK				

The Theme: The Testings of Personal Faith

The trials of the believer (James 1:2–12)

- A. The proper attitude toward trials (James 1:2–4)
 - 1. The attitude commanded (James 1:2)
 - 2. The reason indicated (James 1:3)
 - 3. The outcome to be realized (James 1:4)
- B. The use of prayer amid trials (James 1:5–8)
 - 1. The need for wisdom (James 1:5a)
 - 2. The request for wisdom (James 1:5b)
 - 3. The bestowal of wisdom (James 1:5c–8)
 - a. The divine response (James 1:5c)
 - b. The human obligation (James 1:6–8)
 - (1) The necessary attitude (James 1:6a)
 - (2) The rejected character (James 1:6b–8)
- C. The correct attitude toward life by the tried (James 1:9–11)
 - 1. The attitude of the lowly brother (James 1:9)
 - 2. The attitude of the rich (James 1:10–11)
 - a. The reason for the attitude (James 1:10a)
 - b. The illustration from the flower (James 1:11a)
 - c. The application to the rich (James 1:11b)
- D. The result of enduring trials (James 1:12)
 - 1. The blessedness of endurance (v 12a)
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The nature of human temptation (James 1:13–16)

- A. The source of human temptation (James 1:13–14)
 - 1. The repudiation of a divine source (James 1:13)
 - a. The rejection stated (James 1:13a)
 - b. The rejection vindicated (James 1:13b)
 - 2. The reality of the human source (James 1:14)
- B. The consequences of yielding to temptation (James 1:15)
- C. The warning against being deceived (James 1:16)

The activity of God in human affairs (James 1:17–18)

- A. The Giver of all good gifts (James 1:17)
- B. The Author of the believer's regeneration (James 1:18)

The Test Marks of a Living Faith

Faith tested by its response to the Word of God (James 1:19–27)

- A. The reactions to the Word (James 1:19–20)
 - 1. The knowledge possessed (James 1:19a)
 - 2. The reaction demanded (James 1:19b)
 - 3. The reason stated (James 1:20)
- B. The reception of the Word (James 1:21)
 - 1. The stripping off of sins (James 1:21a)
 - 2. The appropriation of the Word (James 1:21b)
- C. The obedience to the Word (James 1:22–27)
 - 1. The demand for active obedience (James 1:22–25)
 - a. The statement of the requirement (James 1:22)
 - b. The illustration of the requirement (James 1:23–25)
 - (1) The negative portrayal (James 1:23–24)
 - (2) The positive portrayal (James 1:25)
 - 2. The nature of acceptable obedience (James 1:26–27)
 - a. The futility of activity without inner control (James 1:26)
 - b. Acceptable service with inner control (James 1:27) (from Hiebert - James Commentary)

James 1:5 But **if any** of you **lacks wisdom**, **let him ask** of **God**, who **gives** to **all generously** and **without reproach**, and it will be **given** to him. (NASB: Lockman)

Greek: [Ei de tis humon leipetai \(3SPPI\) sophias, aiteito \(3SPAM\) para tou didontos \(PAPMSG\) theou pasin haplos kai me oneidizontos, \(PAPMSG\) kai dothesetai \(3SFPI\) auto.](#)

Amplified: If any of you is deficient in wisdom, let him ask of the giving God [Who gives] to everyone liberally and ungrudgingly, without reproaching or faultfinding, and it will be given him. ([Amplified Bible - Lockman](#))

KJV: If any of you lack wisdom, let him ask of God, that giveth to all men liberally, and upbraideth not; and it shall be given him.

NLT: If you [DoubleQuote](#) need wisdom—if you want to know what God wants you to do—ask him, and he will gladly tell you. He will not resent your asking. ([NLT - Tyndale House](#))

Phillips: And if, in the process, any of you does not know how to meet any particular problem he has only to ask God - who gives generously to all men without making them feel foolish or guilty - and he may be quite sure that the necessary wisdom will be given him. ([Phillips: Touchstone](#))

WBC: But if there is one among you who does lack wisdom, let such a person ask from God who gives to all without hesitation or recrimination, and he will give it."

Wuest: And if, as is the case, anyone of you is deficient in wisdom, let him keep on presenting his request in the presence of the giving God who gives to all with simplicity and without reserve, and who does not reproach, and it shall be given him.

Young's Literal: and if any of you do lack wisdom, let him ask from God, who is giving to all liberally, and not reproaching, and it shall be given to him;

BUT IF ANY OF YOU LACKS WISDOM, LET HIM ASK OF GOD: [Ei de tis humon leipetai \(3SPPI\) sophias, aiteito \(3SPAM\) para tou didontos \(PAPMSG\) theou:](#)

- Ex 31:3,6; 36:1, 2, 3, 4; 1Ki 3:7, 8, 9,11,12; Job 28:12-28; Pr 3:5, 6, 7; 9:4, 56; Je 1:6,7; 2Co 2:16
- **Let him ask** - Jas 1:17; 3:17; 5:16; 1Chr 22:12; 2Chr 1:10; Pr 2:3, 4, 5, 6; Is 55:6,7; Je 29:12; Je 29:13; Da 2:18, 19, 20, 21, 22; Mt 7:7, 8, 9, 10, 11; Lk 11:9, 10, 11, 12, 13; Jn 4:10; 14:13; 15:7; Jn 16:23,24; 1Jn 3:22; 5:14,15
- [James 1 Resources](#) - Multiple Sermons and Commentaries

Note: Hold mouse pointer over underlined links for pop up of Scripture (which stays open and can be copied).

If (ei) does not imply doubt but to the contrary presupposes the need for it.

Hiebert explains that...

The conditional statement "If any of you lacks wisdom" does not imply doubt concerning the reality of the need. Rather it assumes the reality of the need and views it as a standing fact." The first step in gaining such wisdom is the consciousness of our need for it. "If any of you" indicates that this consciousness of a wisdom shortage must come as an individual recognition. There is no suggestion that there were individual exceptions to this need. The degree of the need may vary, but all believers have a need for this wisdom. As Burdick notes, "James speaks of a period of testing before perseverance has completed its work."

The believer needs "wisdom" to see his trials in a true light and to profit spiritually from them. James knew from Psalm 73 and the book of Job that the trials that often overwhelm the godly create struggles and require God-given wisdom to resolve them. For James, wisdom is more than wide knowledge or the mental sagacity that can express itself in subtle rhetorical distinctions or abstruse arguments. As a Jew, James viewed wisdom as related to the practice of righteousness in daily life. It is the moral discernment that enables the believer to meet life and its trials with decisions and actions consistent with God's will. Johnstone defines it as "that queenly regulative discretion which sees and selects worthy ends, and the best means of attaining them." ([D Edmond Hiebert - James. Moody](#))

Ralph Martin - The readers are facing some real problems arising from persecution, and it is the gift and application of wisdom to see these trials in their proper light and respond accordingly. (Vol. 48: Word Biblical Commentary : James. . Dallas: Word)

If any of you lacks wisdom - The wisdom in context is specifically regarding what God is accomplishing through the trial(s). James is making the point that we don't have to be perplexed by the trial and try to face it with our own natural, fallible wisdom. Instead,

James says that if we find ourselves in a trial and lack spiritual insight, our "reflex" should be to go to our Father and ask Him for His wisdom, which is the practical application of His Word to everyday situations.

Manton agrees that the **wisdom** referred to by James...

is to be restricted to the text and not taken in a general way. This wisdom is for bearing afflictions.

Alexander Maclaren observes that with his "if" introduction, as James...

gently and courteously puts, as a hypothesis, what is only too certain a fact in those to whom he is speaking; and says, not as he might have done, 'since you all lack,' but, with gracious forbearance, 'if any of you lack wisdom, let him ask of God.'

Now, it seems to me that, in this hypothetical exhortation there are three points to be noted, two of them being somewhat unlike what we should have looked for. One is the great deficiency in the average Christian character—**wisdom**; another is the great means of supplying it—**ask**; and the third is the great guarantee of the supply—**the giving God**, whose gifts are bestowed on all liberally and without upbraiding.

Lacks (3007) (**leipo**) (repeated from Jas 1:4-note) means falling short, being destitute or being in need. It pictures one not possessing something which is necessary. **James** does not want his readers to be deficient in anything that reflects Christian maturity.

Wisdom (4678) (**sophia**) is the ability to judge correctly and to follow the best course of action, based on knowledge and understanding.

Thayer makes an excellent point that **wisdom** is...

used of the knowledge of very diverse matters, so that the shade of meaning in which the word is taken must be discovered from the context in every particular case.

Spiritual wisdom is godly wisdom (contrasting with worldly wisdom - study and make a list of the contrasts in Jas 3:13, 14, 15, 16, 17, 18 and 1Co 1,2) which involves living life in the light of the revelation of God's Will in His Word and applying this knowledge to specific situations. Biblical wisdom is definable as skill for living. God's plan to redeem us destroyed the wisdom of the worldly wise men (1Co 1:19). In fact, human wisdom never could comprehend God's plan for salvation (1Co 1:21). Paul was not bound by the limits of human wisdom because the Holy Spirit conveyed spiritual wisdom through him (1Co 2:13). Human wisdom is totally inadequate to accept God's salvation (1Co 3:18,19).

Spiritual wisdom is given only by the Holy Spirit. In the Old Testament, Solomon exemplified this wisdom (Mt 12:42). When Jesus came, His wisdom also outshone the wisdom of the wisest among men (Mt 13:54). This wisdom was seen in the Lord Jesus, even when He was a small Boy (Lk 2:40,52). When leaders became necessary in the Jerusalem church, the apostles set about to select men who possessed this spiritual wisdom (Acts 6:3).

Charles Simeon - True wisdom is the gift of God—Even earthly wisdom must in reality be traced to God as its author. The persons who formed the tabernacle and all its vessels derived all their skill from God: and even those who move in a sphere which may be supposed to be suited to the meanest capacity, and spend their lives in the common pursuits of agriculture, can no farther approve themselves skilful in their work, than they are instructed by God Himself (Is 28:23, 24, 25, 26, 27, 28, 29). But spiritual wisdom is still farther out of the reach of unassisted reason, because it is conversant about things "which no human eye has seen, or ear heard, or heart conceived, and which can only be revealed by the Spirit of God." (1Co 2:9, 10, 11, 12) It is emphatically "a wisdom which is from above," (Jas 3:17) and which can "come only from the Father of lights, with whom is no variableness, neither shadow of turning." (Jas 1:17-note with Mt 16:17) The Spirit of God, whose office it is to impart it unto men, is called "the Spirit of wisdom and understanding, the Spirit of counsel and of might, the Spirit of knowledge and of the fear of the Lord;" (Is 11:2-note) and to him are we directed "to open the eyes of our understanding," (Ep 1:18-note) and to "guide us into all truth:" since it is only by the unction derived from him, that we can possibly attain a spiritual discernment. ([James 1 - Charles Simeon - The Way to Obtain True Wisdom](#))

Solomon's great prayer at the inception of his reign was for **spiritual wisdom**...

Give me now **wisdom** and knowledge, that I may go out and come in before this people; for who can rule this great people of Thine? And God said to Solomon, "Because you had this in mind, and did not ask for riches, wealth, or honor, or the life of those who hate you, nor have you even asked for long life, but you have asked for yourself **wisdom** and knowledge, that you may rule My people, over whom I have made you king, **wisdom** and knowledge have been granted to you. And I will give you riches and wealth and honor, such as none of the kings who were before you has possessed, nor those who will come after you." (2Chr 1:10, 11, 12)

In Proverbs **Solomon** wrote that...

the LORD gives wisdom; from His mouth come knowledge and understanding. (Pr 2:6)

Daniel was in a "bind" (trial) (cp Da 2:13, 16, 17, 18, 19-note) and sought God's **wisdom** which was granted, and which prompted Daniel to declare...

Let the name of God be blessed forever and ever, for **wisdom** and power belong to Him. And it is He who changes the times and the epochs; He removes kings and establishes kings; He gives **wisdom** to **wise** men, and knowledge to men of understanding. It is He who reveals the profound and hidden things; He knows what is in the darkness, and the light dwells with Him. (Da 2:20, 21, 22-note)

Wisdom is the insight into the true nature of things. Knowledge is the mental possession of powers of perceiving objects, **wisdom** is the power of right reasoning concerning them and forming right decisions accordingly.

Wisdom is the ability to judge correctly and to follow the best course of action, based on knowledge and understanding.

Wisdom is the art of being successful, of forming the correct plan to gain the desired results. Its seat is the heart, the centre of moral and intellectual decision

Sophia emphasizes understanding of ultimate things—such as life and death, God and man, righteousness and sin, heaven and hell, eternity and time.

William Barclay - see his discussion of **wisdom** (Topic "The Wrong Kind of Wisdom" and "True Wisdom" - [James 3 - William Barclay's Daily Study Bible](#)). Other comments on wisdom by Barclay...

Col 2:3 Wisdom is **sophia** (Greek #4678) and knowledge is gnosis (Greek #1108). These two words do not simply repeat each other; there is a difference between them. Gnosis (Greek #1108) is the power, almost intuitive and instinctive, to grasp the truth when we see it and hear it. But sophia (Greek #4678) is the power to confirm and to commend the truth with wise and intelligent argument, once it has been intuitively grasped. Gnosis (Greek #1108) is that by which a man grasps the truth; sophia (Greek #4678) is that by which a man is enabled to give a reason for the hope that is in him.

1Cor 12 (God's Differing Gifts) The Greek word we have translated wisdom is **sophia** (Greek #4678). It is defined by Clement of Alexandria as "the knowledge of things human and divine and of their causes." Aristotle described it as "striving after the best ends and using the best means." This is the highest kind of wisdom; it comes not so much from thought as from communion with God. It is the wisdom which knows God. Knowledge--the Greek word is gnosis (Greek #1108)--is a much more practical thing. It is the knowledge which knows what to do in any given situation. It is the practical application to human life and affairs of sophia (Greek #4678). The two things are necessary--the wisdom which knows by communion with God the deep things of God, and the knowledge which, in the daily life of the world and the Church, can put that wisdom into practice.

Ephesians 1 - There is wisdom and sound sense. The two words in Greek are **sophia** (Greek #4678) and **phronesis** (Greek #5428), and Christ brought both of them to us. This is very interesting. The Greeks wrote much about these two words; if a man had both, he was perfectly equipped for life. Aristotle defined **sophia** (Greek #4678) as knowledge of the most precious things. Cicero defined it as knowledge of things both human and divine. Sophia (Greek #4678) was a thing of the searching intellect. **Sophia** (Greek #4678) was the answer to the eternal problems of life and death, and God and man, and time and eternity. Aristotle defined **phronesis** (Greek #5428) as the knowledge of human affairs and of the things in which planning is necessary. Plutarch defined it as practical knowledge of the things which concern us. Cicero defined it as knowledge of the things which are to be sought and the things which are to be avoided. Plato defined it as the disposition of mind which enables us to judge what things are to be done and what things are not to be done. In other words, phronesis (Greek #5428) is the sound sense which enables men to meet and to solve the practical problems of everyday life and living. It is Paul's claim that Jesus brought us **sophia** (Greek #4678), the intellectual knowledge which satisfies the mind, and phronesis (Greek #5428), the practical knowledge which enables us to handle the day to day problems of practical life and living. There is a certain completeness in the Christian character. There is a type of person who is at home in the study, who moves familiarly amidst the theological and philosophical problems, and who is yet helpless and impractical in the ordinary everyday affairs of life. There is another kind of person who claims that he is a practical man, so engaged with the business of living that he has no time to concern himself with the ultimate things. In the light of the gifts of God through

Christ, both of these characters are imperfect. Christ brings to us the solution of the problems both of eternity and time.

Marvin Vincent on **Sophos** and **Sophia**

Sophia is mental excellence in its highest and fullest sense.

1Cor 1:19 **Wisdom - prudence** (σοφίαν - σύνεσιν) The two words are often found together, as Exodus 31:3; Deuteronomy 4:6; Colossians 1:9. Compare σοφοί και συνετοί wise and prudent, Matthew 11:25. For the distinction, see, as to σοφία wisdom Romans 11:33; as to σύνεσις prudence on Mark 12:33; Luke 2:47. Wisdom is the more general; mental excellence in its highest and fullest sense. Prudence is the special application of wisdom; its critical adjustment to particular cases.

Eph 3:10 **Manifold wisdom** (πολυποικίλος σοφία) A very striking phrase. The adjective occurs only here, and means variegated. It is applied to pictures, flowers, garments. Ποικίλον (poikilon) is used in the Septuagint of Joseph's coat, Genesis 37:3. Through the Church God's wisdom in its infinite variety is to be displayed - the many-tinted wisdom of God - in different modes of power, different characters, methods of training, providences, forms of organization, etc.

James 3:13 - In the New Testament **sophos** is used -

1. In the original classical sense, skilled in handicraft (1 Corinthians 3:10).
2. Accomplished in letters, learned (Romans 1:14, Romans 1:22; 1 Corinthians 1:19, 1 Corinthians 1:26; 1 Corinthians 3:18). So of the Jewish theologians and doctors (Matthew 11:25), and of Christian teachers (Matthew 23:34).
3. In a practical sense, of the practice of the law of piety and honesty; so Ephesians 5:15, where it is joined with walking circumspectly, and 1 Corinthians 6:5, where it is represented as the quality adapted to adjust differences in the church.
4. In the higher, philosophical sense, of devising the best counsels and employing the best means to carry them out. So of God, Romans 16:27; 1 Timothy 1:17; Judges 1:25; 1 Corinthians 1:25. In this passage (James 3:13) the word appears to be used in the sense of 3: practical wisdom in pious living. "Knowledge is proud that she has learned so much, Wisdom is humble that she knows no more."

Ro 11:33 - **Wisdom - knowledge** (σοφίας - γνώσεως) Used together only here, 1 Corinthians 12:8; Colossians 2:3. There is much difference of opinion as to the precise distinction. It is agreed on all hands that wisdom is the nobler attribute, being bound up with moral character as knowledge is not. Hence wisdom is ascribed in scripture only to God or to good men, unless it is used ironically. See 1 Corinthians 1:20; 1 Corinthians 2:6; Luke 10:21. Cicero calls **wisdom** "the chief of all virtues." The earlier distinction, as Augustine, is unsatisfactory: that wisdom is concerned with eternal things, and knowledge with things of sense; for gnosis knowledge is described as having for its object God (2 Corinthians 10:5); the glory of God in the face of Christ (2 Corinthians 4:6); Christ Jesus (Philemon 3:8). As applied to human acquaintance with divine things, gnosis knowledge is the lower, sophia wisdom the higher stage. Knowledge may issue in self-conceit. It is wisdom that builds up the man (1 Corinthians 8:1). As attributes of God, the distinction appears to be between general and special: the wisdom of God ruling everything in the best way for the best end; the knowledge of God, His wisdom as it contemplates the relations of things, and adopts means and methods. The wisdom forms the plan; the knowledge knows the ways of carrying it out.

Salmond - "**Sophia** is the collective moral intelligence, 'insight into the true nature of things' (Lightfoot) and in the Pauline Epistles it is this intelligence in especial as knowledge of the divine plan of salvation long hidden and now revealed; while **phronēsis** is the practical use of wisdom, the product of wisdom, 'the right use and application of the **phrēn** (the mind)' (Trench), the faculty of discerning the proper disposition or action. The riches, the abounding riches, of the grace expended on us stood revealed in the bestowal of these gifts of spiritual discernment with reference to the deep things of the divine counsel and the divine revelation " ([Expositor's Bible Commentary - Salmond - In his comments on Eph 1:8](#))

Bullock - In the Old Testament wisdom at one level describes skilled arts and artisans, like weavers (Exodus 35:25-26), architects (Exodus 35:30-36:1), and goldsmiths (Jeremiah 10:9). At a second level, wisdom was keen insight into life and ways of dealing with its problems. Solomon was associated with wisdom in this sense (1 Kings 3:1-15 ; see also 1 Kings 4:32-34), although the term used was "understanding, " which occurs often as a synonym of wisdom. At a fourth level, the terms "wisdom" and "wise" apply to men and women who represent a way of thinking and conduct that is orderly, socially sensitive, and morally upright. Thus, the major thrust of wisdom in the Old Testament was a code of moral conduct. This is especially represented by the Book of Proverbs, which

gives instruction on personal behavior from the discipline of children (Pr 22:6) to the golden-rule treatment of one's neighbor (Pr 24:29). The goal of wisdom was to build an orderly and functional society that reflected the moral requirements of God as set forth in the law of Moses. ([Wisdom - Baker's Evangelical Dictionary of Biblical Theology](#))

Harry Hunt - Real Wisdom Is the Fear of God Three basic definitions of wisdom summarize the status of the field of study very well. Note that the first two of these definitions are quite secular in nature while the third is religious. **First**, wisdom is considered by many to be simply the art of learning how to succeed in life. Apparently, ancient persons learned very early that there was an orderliness to the world in which they lived. They also learned that success and happiness came from living in accordance with that orderliness (Proverbs 22:17-24:22). **Second**, wisdom is considered by some to be a philosophical study of the essence of life. Certainly, much of the Books of Job and Ecclesiastes seem to deal with just such existential issues of life (see particularly Job 30:29-31). **Third**, though the other definitions might include this, it seems that the real essence of wisdom is spiritual, for life is more than just living by a set of rules and being rewarded in some physical manner. Undoubtedly, in this sense wisdom comes from God (Proverbs 2:6). Thus, though it will involve observation and instruction, it really begins with God and one's faith in Him as Lord and Savior (Proverbs 1:7 ; Job 28:28).([Wisdom and Wise Men - Holman Bible Dictionary](#))

Sophia is used frequently in the New Testament to describe the ability to discern and conform to God's will.

Wuest comments that **wisdom** or **sophia**

"was a great word with the Greeks. With them the word included the ideas of cleverness and skill in handicraft and art, skill in matter of common life, sound judgment, intelligence, practical wisdom, learning, speculative wisdom, natural philosophy and mathematics" (Liddell and Scott). Trench says that sophia is recognized in the NT and in Christian writers as expressing the highest and noblest in wisdom. He says; "We may affirm with confidence that sophia is never in Scripture ascribed to other than God or good men, except in an ironical sense... For, indeed, if sophia includes the striving after the best ends as well as the using of the best means, is mental excellence in its highest and fullest sense,... there can be no wisdom disjointed from goodness." Thayer says that when sophia is used of God, it refers to supreme intelligence such as belongs to God... Expositors says; "**Sophia** is the collective moral intelligence, 'insight into the true nature of things' (Lightfoot) and in the Pauline Epistles it is this intelligence in especial as knowledge of the divine plan of salvation long hidden and now revealed." (Wuest, K. S. Wuest's Word Studies from the Greek New Testament: Studies in the Vocabulary of the Greek New Testament: Grand Rapids: Eerdmans)

Wisdom is the right use of knowledge: All true spiritual wisdom is found only in Christ

Nelson's New Illustrated Bible Dictionary adds that

The biblical concept of **wisdom**, therefore, is quite different from the classical view of **wisdom**, which sought through philosophy and human rational thought to determine the mysteries of existence and the universe. The first principle of biblical **wisdom** is that people should humble themselves before God in reverence and worship, obedient to His commands. This idea is found especially in the **Wisdom** Literature: the books of Job, Proverbs, and Ecclesiastes. In the Old Testament, the best example of a "wise man" is King Solomon (1Ki 10:4,6, 7, 8). And yet the same book that heaps such lavish, warm, and glowing praise upon Solomon for his reputed wisdom (1Ki 4:29, 30, 31, 32, 33, 34) also points out how Solomon's heart turned away from the Lord (1Ki 11:1-13). ([Youngblood, R. F., Bruce, F. F., Harrison, R. K., & Thomas Nelson Publishers. Nelson's New Illustrated Bible Dictionary](#))

So clearly "spiritual wisdom" is no guarantee that one will walk worthy, but needs to be affect our heart decisions in order to be practical. How are you doing in this area? Or, are you like "wise" King Solomon, filled with "**spiritual wisdom**" and yet choosing to walk in a manner counter to God's clearly revealed will? Bible study won't do you much good unless it transforms your thinking and your walk. True spiritual wisdom must affect your daily life. Wisdom and practical intelligence must go together.

A B Simpson writes that...

Wisdom is that quality which enables us to suit the right means to the end in view. It is wholly practical and concerned not with theories and ideas, but with actual conditions and the way to meet them. It teaches us how to live, and enables us to meet every emergency rightly and successfully. It does not mean that we are infallible. It is not the wisdom of our common sense and level-headedness. It presupposes our ignorance and fallibility, and takes God's wisdom instead of our own. Even when we cannot understand His leading, faith still can trust Him that it will be right in the end. Even when we err, God's wisdom can still overrule our mistake and bring blessing out of it in the end.

Mr. Spurgeon used to tell about a weather-vane which had the text inscribed above it "God is love." When he asked the old miller why he put the verse on top of it, he said that it might speak to the people at all points of the compass and say to them, "God is love, whichever way the wind blows." So faith in God's wisdom counts upon His goodness and faithfulness in the face of all conditions and in spite of all hindrances.

John Vassar used to say that he doubted whether our so-called mistakes were mistakes always. Knocking at a door one day in quest of a woman with whom he wished to speak about her soul, a different person met him, and told him that he had made a mistake, and that she did not live there. The good man answered, "I guess it is not a mistake after all, but the Lord wants me to talk to you instead." And so tactfully breaking through the barrier of her strangeness, he reached her heart, and ended by leading her to the Savior.

The writer recalls an incident in the early history of this work through which he was strangely led to lease as his residence for a year the dwelling in which all the Alliance work began in this city. He had been offered the house by a friend who owned it, and after much prayer had decided that it was the Master's will that he should take it. But on almost the last day of the season he was informed that the house had just been sold to a neighbor, who was determined to live in it himself. All efforts to induce this man to consent to my occupying the house were vain, and the only thing left was to accept the house that the man was leaving instead, as the season was late, and moving day came within twenty-four hours. Against every inclination the writer became convinced that it was the Lord's will for him to consent to this arrangement, and after a great struggle he called to sign the lease for the unwelcome house, which was most unattractive in every way. To his surprise, however, the gentleman came out to greet him, and immediately explained that he had changed his mind, and decided to stay where he was, and that he would be glad to lease the other house that he had just purchased, as we desired. The strange reason of it all was that that very day he had attended a funeral of an old friend in the country, and that he and his wife had come home with the feeling that if they moved something might happen to them. It was a mere superstition, but God had allowed it to come in order to change his mind and accomplish the purpose to which He had been leading all the time.

There is nothing in the whole circle of our common-place life that we may not bring to God in faith, and thus find a hundred Ebenezers every day all along the path of life. ([Reference](#))

Let him ask of God - God is the Source of all wisdom. Here we see the "general's" command and the generous promise to give which parallels first John...

This is the confidence (boldness) which we have before Him, that, if we ask anything according to His will (Do not forget this important divine caveat! Otherwise you will misinterpret passages like Jn 15:7), He hears us. And if we know that He hears us in whatever we ask, we know that we have the requests which we have asked from Him (cp Ps 37:4,5). (1Jn 5:4,5)

When life knocks you to your knees, you're in a good position to pray.

Come, ye disconsolate, where'er ye languish—
Come to the mercy seat, fervently kneel;
Here bring your wounded hearts, here tell your anguish:
Earth has no sorrow that heav'n cannot heal. —Moore

Ask (154) (aiteo) means to ask in the sense of request (Mt 7:10), to ask in the sense of demand (Lk 23:23) or to ask for in the sense of a prayer (Mt 21:22). Aiteo emphasizes that the prayer is for something to be given rather than for something to be done.

Again James uses the **present imperative** with commands the reader to continually prayerfully make this request of God whenever he or she senses their need. As Rotherham renders it "Let him be asking of God." To fail to ask, is to fail to even recognize one's need. We need to continually maintain a sense of our own spiritual poverty in order that we might always be in a position to humble ourselves before God the Giver of every perfect gift.

Hiebert reminds us that...

For the Christian, divine wisdom is embodied in the Scriptures, but his study of those Scriptures must be connected with his constant prayer for divine illumination.

Of God (para... theou) literally is beside God which gives a beautiful picture of the needed wisdom as richly present "alongside of God" and ours for the asking!

Steven Cole introduces this section with an excellent illustration followed by an accurate explanation...

When I was in the Coast Guard, sometimes the skipper would ask me to steer the boat. He would tell me the compass course. My job was to keep the boat on that course. The wind and currents would cause the boat to drift, but I had to keep steering it back to the designated course. Eventually, we would come in sight of Long Beach Light, and right into the harbor. One day, we had to go out in a terrible storm to rescue a man and his daughter whose sailboat had become disabled. On that occasion, the skipper did not ask me to steer the boat, but gave the task to a more experienced man. It is relatively easy to steer the boat in calm seas, but it's an altogether different matter to steer it in sixty mile-per-hour winds and thirty-foot waves.

As a veteran shepherd of souls, James knew that it's relatively easy to live as a Christian when things are calm. But it's a much more difficult prospect when the storms of life hit with full force. At such times, it's easy to get off course or even to make shipwreck of your faith. His readers were facing various difficult trials. They were dispersed abroad (Jas 1:1), mostly due to persecution. They had suffered the loss of their homes and possessions. Many were not able to escape persecution even in the places to which they had fled. James wanted them to know how to navigate through these trials so that they could not only endure, but joyfully endure (Jas 1:2).

As we saw last time, James exhorts them (and us) to adopt a radical attitude when we encounter various trials: "Consider it all joy" (Jas 1:2). We can do this if we understand a reassuring truth, "that the testing of your faith produces endurance" (Jas 1:3). But it is necessary to submit to the refining process: "let endurance have its perfect result" (Jas 1:4). But there is a further ingredient that we need to endure trials joyfully so as to bring glory to God, namely, God's wisdom. So James tells us how to obtain wisdom from God: To obtain wisdom to endure trials joyfully, see your need, know your God, and then ask Him in faith to meet your need.

When James says, **If any of you lack wisdom**, he is not suggesting that some have it together so well that they have no need of wisdom. The Greek conditional sentence implies that we all lack wisdom when we face difficult trials. But, we don't always see our need for God's wisdom. Thus,

1. To obtain wisdom to endure trials joyfully, see your need. We need to be clear about the terms that James uses here:

A. James is talking about God's wisdom that enables us to endure trials joyfully.

When you study the Bible, it is crucial to study the text in its context, and also to understand how the words are used in Scripture. In the context of James 1, wisdom refers to the wisdom that we need to endure trials with God's joy, so that we will be "perfect and complete, lacking in nothing" (Jas 1:4). James realizes that in a time of trials, God's people often do lack His wisdom on how to endure those trials with joy. Thus he adds verses 5-8. Of course, we can ask God for wisdom in any matter in life that we face, but in the context here, it is focused on asking God for the wisdom that we need to endure trials joyfully.

Enduring trials with joy goes against our natural inclination. When trials hit, we're all prone to ask, "Why is this happening to me?" But that is usually the wrong question. Sometimes, God graciously reveals to us the reason for our suffering, but not always. Often the answer to why we suffer must wait until we're in heaven. The important questions to ask when a trial hits are, "How can I understand this trial from God's perspective? How can I navigate through this storm in such a way as to bring glory to God? How can this trial help me grow in maturity?"

Pastor Warren Wiersbe (Be Mature [Victor Books], p. 29) tells about a secretary of his who was going through difficult trials. She had had a stroke, her husband had gone blind, and then he had to be taken to the hospital where, as far as they knew, he would die. Wiersbe saw this woman in church one Sunday and assured her that he was praying for her.

She startled him by asking, "What are you asking God to do?" He replied, "I'm asking God to help you and strengthen you." "I appreciate that," she said, "but pray about one more thing. Pray that I'll have the wisdom not to waste all of this!" Wiersbe observed, "She knew the meaning of James 1:5."

It also helps to understand the meaning of the Old Testament word for **wisdom** (my sources here include, Theological Wordbook of the Old Testament [Moody Press], ed. by R. Laird Harris, Gleason L. Archer, and Bruce K. Waltke, 1:282-284; and New International Dictionary of New Testament Theology [Zondervan], ed. by Colin Brown, 3:1026-1029). James is steeped in the Old Testament.

The main idea of Old Testament wisdom is that of skill. It includes the skill of workers who made garments for the high priest and who were able to work with metal, stone and wood (Ex 28:3; 31:3, 4, 5; 36:1, 2). It also extends to those who are able to execute a battle plan (Isa. 10:13), lead in government (Dt. 34:9), and shrewdly assess a difficult situation and persuade others to take necessary action (2Sa 20:22). It refers to those who speak prudently (Ps 37:30) and use their time carefully (Ps 90:12). Rather than just theoretical understanding, biblical wisdom focuses on practical living in obedience to God's revealed will. The fool in Proverbs is not the man who is mentally deficient, but rather the man who is morally deficient. He ignores God's commandments and lives according to human wisdom. The wise man lives in obedience to God. Thus he skillfully puts together a life that is beautiful from God's perspective. Thus the Bible affirms (Job 28:28), "The fear of the Lord, that is wisdom; and to depart from evil

is understanding” (see also Ps 111:10)

So, by wisdom, James is talking about the skill that enables us to live obediently before God in the midst of trials. The result will be a truly beautiful life that glorifies God.

B. You must see your need for wisdom to drive you to God to supply the need.

By nature, all of us are self-sufficient know-it-alls: “Mother, please, I can do it by myself!” In America, it’s the spirit of rugged individualism, or the self-made man. But I’m sure that every culture idolizes the strong person who seems to have it all together by himself, because pride is endemic to the human heart.

To come to God, we must humble ourselves and admit that we do not know what we need to know in order to live joyfully in the face of trials. In fact, a main reason that God sends trials is to humble us from our pride, so that we look to Him. The proud Laodicean church thought that they were rich and had no needs, but God’s view was that they were “wretched and miserable and poor and blind and naked” (Rev. 3:17). So a prerequisite to obtaining wisdom from God is to recognize our lack of wisdom.

2. To obtain wisdom to endure trials joyfully, know your God.

Our text shows four ways in which we must know God in order to obtain His wisdom:

A. Know that God is the source for all wisdom.

To ask God for wisdom implies that He can deliver. The Bible plainly states, “For the Lord gives wisdom; from His mouth come knowledge and understanding” (Pr 2:6). It warns, “There is no wisdom and no understanding and no counsel against the Lord” (Pr 21:30). In other words, if worldly “wisdom” contradicts or goes against God, it is false “wisdom.” Only God’s wisdom stands.

I was a philosophy major in college. “Philosophy” comes from two Greek words meaning, “the love of wisdom.” But I discovered that worldly philosophers are not so much in love with wisdom as they are with their own wisdom! They are not so much interested in how to live wisely before God, whose existence they question or deny, but rather in showing how wise they are in being able to win arguments.

Writing to those who took pride in the great Greek philosophers, Paul contrasted the so-called wisdom of this world with God’s wisdom as seen in the cross of Christ (1Co 1:18-30). He sarcastically asks (1Co 1:20, 21), “Where is the wise man? Where is the scribe? Where is the debater of this age? Has not God made foolish the wisdom of the world? For since in the wisdom of God the world through its wisdom did not come to know God, God was well-pleased through the foolishness of the message preached to save those who believe.”

The point is, if you have not come as a sinner to the cross of Christ to obtain God’s mercy through faith, you do not know God and thus you cannot obtain the wisdom that comes only from Him.

But, how does God impart the wisdom that we need?

B. Know that God reveals His wisdom by His Spirit through His Word.

God’s wisdom does not come as a sudden revelation or impression that hits out of nowhere. You won’t find it in “Dear Abby” or Readers Digest, unless they accidentally say something that coincides with God’s Word. God’s wisdom comes directly from God and is revealed in His Word. It especially centers in the knowledge of Christ, “in whom are hidden all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge” (Col 2:3; see also, Col 1:9; Ep 1:16, 17). God reveals His wisdom by the Holy Spirit to those who are spiritual (1Co 2:6-16). That wisdom has to do with knowing how to apply biblical truth to particular situations in life. Thus if you are not spending consistent time learning God’s Word, you will not have the wisdom that you need when trials hit. The time to seek wisdom from God is before the calamity hits (Prov. 1:20-33). C. Know that God reveals His wisdom by His Spirit through His Word to those whose hearts are fully His. James goes on to say that we must ask God for wisdom “in faith without any doubting” (Jas 1:6), and that the one who doubts is “a double-minded man, unstable in all his ways” (Jas 1:8). The Greek word, literally, is a “double-souled” man. It refers to a man whose heart is divided between allegiance to God and the allurements of the world. In other words, he’s not sure that he wants to know God’s wisdom, because he isn’t fully committed to submitting to it. It would be nice to know God’s wisdom for his situation, but before he commits to obeying it, he needs to find out if he likes it. In other words, he’s shopping for answers that fit what he wants to do. If God’s wisdom sounds good, he’ll follow it. But if worldly wisdom sounds better, he’ll follow that. James says that such a person will not receive anything from the Lord. I have counseled with women who profess to be Christians, but they are engaged to be married to unbelievers. I always ask, “Do you want God’s blessing on your marriage?” They always say, “Yes.” I’ve never had one say no. I show them in God’s Word that He commands us not to be unequally yoked with unbelievers. This creates a trial for the young woman! She wants to marry this nice (they’re all “nice”!)

unbelieving man, but God's Word says, "Don't do it." Not only would it be very difficult to break up with him, it would also mean being single with no prospect for marriage in sight. That's a trial! The test is, "Will she obey God, or is she a double-minded woman, unstable in all her ways?"

One woman told me that she had prayed about marrying her unbelieving fiancé, and she "had a peace about it." I told her that she had sinned by praying about this situation, because God has clearly revealed His will about marrying unbelievers. She didn't

want to know God's will; she only wanted to do her will. So if we want God's wisdom in any decision or in any trial, we must be fully committed to obey Him.

D. Know that God gives generously and without reproach to all that ask Him in faith.

When verse 5 says that God "gives to all," you need to define "all" by the context (as always). God does not give wisdom to everyone in the world, but rather to every believer in Christ who asks in faith. But James emphasizes that the manner in which God gives is "generously and without reproach." "Generously" has the nuance of "simply," or "without mental reservation" (Peter Davids, Commentary on James [Eerdmans], pp. 72-73). He gives because He delights to give to His children. "Without reproach" means that He does not say, "What? You again? I just gave you what you wanted and you're back here bugging Me again?" God never makes you feel cheap or irresponsible for asking again and again. Rather, He invites you to ask for all the wisdom you need.

Some fathers are stingy and selfish. Their standard answer is, "No!" Or, if they grudgingly give you what you ask for, they never let you forget it. You have to budget your requests carefully, because if you get a yes on something, it will be a long, long time before you get another yes. I thank God that my Dad is not at all like that! He is a very generous, giving father, both with his money and his time. But if your dad was of the stingy type, you need to be careful not to view God in the same way. God is ready and willing to lavish His wisdom on His children who ask for it.

So to obtain wisdom from God to endure trials joyfully, the first thing is to recognize your need for it. Then know your God, who is the source of all wisdom. He reveals that wisdom chiefly in His Word through His Spirit to those whose hearts are ready to obey Him. He gives generously and without reproach to all that ask. That leads to the means of obtaining wisdom from God:

3. To obtain wisdom to endure trials joyfully, ask God in faith to meet your need.

There are three parts to this:

A. Ask.

The verb (Jas 1:5) is present tense, indicating that you probably will need to ask more than once to obtain what you need. But it's a simple command, "Let him ask." There is no magic formula or special incantation that you need to mutter while you sprinkle holy water on a consecrated altar. He does not say, "Let him work for or earn or buy wisdom." It's not for sale; it's a gift. Just ask.

B. Ask God.

"Let him ask of God" (Jas 1:5). Every believer is a priest who can approach God directly. You do not need to go through a priest or a pastor. I am not saying that it is wrong to go to a spiritually mature counselor, who can help direct you to God's Word for wisdom. But you don't need to approach God through any human intermediary. If you know Christ, ask God directly.

The Bible never tells us to pray to the virgin Mary or to some other saint. It never tells us to look within ourselves and decide what to do based on subjective feelings. It certainly never tells us to consult with a worldly psychologist or with Dear Abby! I find it incredible at times to read in that column of pastors asking her for advice! Actually, I did write to her once with a question, but she didn't respond. I asked her how she determines her moral standards, since she clearly rejects God's Word as the standard. She dispenses all kinds of advice on moral issues, but it's pure coincidence when her advice lines up with the Bible. But I digress!

Peter tells us that God's "divine power has granted to us everything pertaining to life and godliness through the true knowledge of Him who called us by His own glory and excellence. For by these He has granted to us His precious and magnificent promises..." (2Pe 1:3, 4a). Paul assures us (Eph. 3:12) that in Christ "we have boldness and confident access through faith in Him." So, when you need wisdom to endure a trial in a manner pleasing to God, go directly to God in prayer through the mediation of Jesus Christ. Ask Him to direct you to the wisdom in His Word that you

need. He promises to give it generously!

Some Christians make the mistake of saying, "But I'm not worthy for God to grant my request. I've sinned too many times. I've failed Him so often. So I can't go to Him and ask for wisdom."

But that's an excuse for disobedience and unbelief. Every Christian has sinned. Every Christian has failed. Every Christian is

unworthy. We do not come to God based on our worthiness. We come to God on the merit of Jesus Christ and His shed blood. Since God commands us to ask Him for wisdom, we are disobedient and unbelieving if we do not ask.

C. Ask God in faith, without doubting.

Faith is essential in approaching God, because as Hebrews 11:6 says, “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 seek Him.” It would be silly to ask something of a Being

that you weren’t sure existed. Or, if He did exist, you weren’t sure if He cared about your request or if He had the power to grant it! So to ask from God, you must believe that He exists, that He personally cares for you, and He is able to give you the wisdom that you need to endure your trial with His joy.

If you doubt God’s existence or His ability to give you wisdom for your need, James says (1:6) that you’re “like the surf of the sea, driven and tossed by the wind.” The surf has no inner power or principle to direct itself. It is totally at the will of the wind. It is completely unstable and chaotic. And, it can be a destructive force as it batters a boat or drives it against the rocks. That’s a picture of the person who lacks faith in God.

As I said, at the root of this unbelief is being double-minded. The person who doubts God is not committed to obey God no matter what. His heart is not fully surrendered to do God’s will.

He’s curious about God’s wisdom, to find out if it agrees with him, but he’s not committed to do it if it involves suffering or inconvenience. That person, James says, “ought not to expect that he will receive anything from the Lord” (1:7). So the first thing in obtaining wisdom from God is to surrender your heart to Him.

Conclusion - Joni Eareckson Tada, as most of you know, was paralyzed from the neck down in a diving accident when she was 17. She wrote this about her suffering (Joni [Zondervan], p. 154):

God engineered the circumstances. He used them to prove Himself as well as my loyalty. Not everyone had this privilege. I felt there were only a few people God cared for in such a special way that He would trust them with this kind of experience. This understanding left me relaxed and comfortable as I relied on His love, exercising newly learned trust. I saw that my injury was not a tragedy but a gift God was using to help me conform to the image of Christ, something that would mean my ultimate satisfaction, happiness—even joy.

That is God’s wisdom on how to endure a major trial with joy! She did not get that wisdom from the world. She did not make it up herself. It came from God, through His Word. If you need God’s wisdom for how to endure any major or minor trial with joy, ask Him in faith and He will give it. ([James 1:5-8 How to Obtain Wisdom from God](#))

C H Spurgeon writes...

Wisdom for the Asking - IF any of you lack wisdom. There is no “if” in the matter, for I am sure I lack it. What do I know? How can I guide my own way? How can I direct others? Lord, I am a mass of folly, and wisdom I have none. Thou sayest, “Let him ask of God.” Lord, I now ask. Here at thy footstool, I ask to be furnished with heavenly wisdom for this day’s perplexities and for this day’s simplicities; for I know I may do very stupid things even in plain matters, unless thou dost keep me out of mischief. I thank thee that all I have to do is to ask. What grace is this on thy part, that I have only to pray in faith, and thou wilt give me wisdom! Thou dost here promise me a liberal education, and that, too, without an angry tutor or a scolding usher. This, too, thou wilt bestow without a fee—bestow it on a fool who lacks wisdom. O Lord, I thank thee for that positive and expressive word, “It shall be given him.” I believe it. Thou wilt this day make thy babe to know the hidden wisdom which the carnally prudent never learn. Thou wilt guide me with thy counsel, and afterwards receive me to glory. (Spurgeon, C. Faith’s Checkbook)

When with expectancy we pray
According to God’s will,
We’ll see Him working in our lives
His purpose to fulfill. —Sper

True wisdom consists principally of two parts: the knowledge of God, and the knowledge of ourselves! —**John Calvin**

WHO GIVES TO ALL GENEROUSLY AND WITHOUT REPROACH, AND IT WILL BE GIVEN TO HIM: para tou didontos (PAPMSG) theou pasin haplos kai me oneidizontos, (PAPMSG) kai dothesetai (3SFPI) auto:

- Mt 11:20; Mk 16:14; Lk 15:20, 21, 22
- [James 1 Resources](#) - Multiple Sermons and Commentaries

Who gives to all - Vincent notes that

The Greek puts it so that giving is emphasized as an attribute of God. Lit., "Ask of the giving God," or of "God the giver.

Gives (didomi) is in the **present tense** which emphasizes that God's generous nature is that of a Father Who is continually giving! As **Blanchard** so aptly states...

It is characteristic of the unbeliever to see God with a clenched fist; it is characteristic of the believer to see Him with an open hand.

Generously (574) (**haplos**) means liberally ("with singleness of heart") here to describe God as the gracious and "liberal" Giver. When we view the nature of God as a generous Giver, we are encouraged the believer to come boldly to Him with our requests.

How "giving" is your God?

Hiebert notes that the adverb **haplous**

... occurs only here in the New Testament, but the adjective is not rare. The basic meaning of the adjective (haplous) is "simple, single," as in Mt 6:22 and Lk 11:34, where the reference is to a "single eye." Accepting this meaning for the adverb, the teaching of James is that God gives with a single motive: to further the welfare of the asker. He gives without ulterior motives, harboring no calculated desire to get something in return... He gives to all wholeheartedly and with singleness of purpose, and He also gives with a wealth of liberality. ([D Edmond Hiebert - James. Moody](#))

Ralph Martin notes that in classical Greek haplous has "the sense of "simply," "plainly," "straightforwardly," or "foolishly." Here it stands in contrast to dipsuchos (in Jas 1:8), "double-minded," and reassures us that God is not in two minds about his giving. This assurance may be expressed in the idea of being generous, but the rendering "without hesitation" stresses that there are no conditions to his giving... an understanding of God's nature and of Christian virtue that is found too in the Pauline epistles (Ro 12:8; 2Co 11:3; Ep 6:5; Col 3:22). (Martin, R. P. Vol. 48: Word Biblical Commentary: James. Dallas: Word, Incorporated)

To all - To all without exception (speaking in the context of believers). God is not partial to a favorite few but is generous to all who ask Him in faith.

Vincent has this note on **haplos** writing that it is used "Only here in New Testament. Literally the word means simply, and this accords with the following negative clause, upbraiding not. It is pure, simple giving of good, without admixture of evil or bitterness. Compare Ro 12:8, where a kindred noun is used: "He that giveth let him do it with **simplicity**." Compare, also, Pr 10:22. Men often complicate and mar their giving with reproach, or by an assumption of superiority.

Elwell writes that

as an encouragement to ask, James reminds us that God gives "simply," "with a single, unwavering intent" (probably the meaning of the Greek word here) and without holding our past failures against us (v. 5).

James describes God's gifts (which would include wisdom)...

Every good thing bestowed and every perfect gift is from above, coming down from the Father of lights, with whom there is no variation, or shifting shadow. (Jas 1:17)

Regarding **God's wisdom** (in contrast to earthly wisdom - Jas 3:15, 16) James says...

But the wisdom from above is first pure, then peaceable, gentle, reasonable, full of mercy and good fruits, unwavering, without hypocrisy. And the seed whose fruit is righteousness is sown in peace by those who make peace. (Jas 3:17, 18)

Without reproach - Continues the description of God's giving. It is (1) generous and (2) without finding fault.

Without reproach (3679) (**oneidizo** from **óneidos** = disgrace, abuse, or object of disgrace or shame) means to assail with abusive words, to insult, to hurl an invective, to upbraid, to slander, to falsely accuse or to speak disparagingly of a person in manner not justified, to find fault in a way that demeans the other, to mock, to heap insults upon as a way of shaming. The main idea is to find fault in a way that demeans the one being reproached. It means to **upbraid**, which in turn means to criticize severely, find fault with,

reproach severely or scold vehemently. In short **oneidizo** refers to especially strong verbal abuse, something God **will not do** when we ask Him for wisdom. God is willing to hear and respond to His children's call in their need, an encouraging truth well attested to by Jesus (Mt 7:7; 18:19; 21:22; cp Jn 14:13, 14; 15:7; 16:23). In Jeremiah (Jer 29:12,13) we see a similar willingness that God is ready to hear, and this should give all believers great assurance and encouragement to approach His Throne with boldness.

The **present tense** indicates that God continually abstains from this practice. As **Hiebert** says "He does not respond to our petition and then heap insults upon us for asking. He "does not offensively recall the benefits already given, or rebuke the applicant who asks for more.' He does not give in a way that humiliates the receiver. He does not scold because we have inadequately used His former gifts or rebuke us for our repeated lack of wisdom. "God's generosity is measured by what He designs and not by what we deserve.'" Rather, when we again ask His help, His gracious response makes us wonder why we were so tardy in asking Him. This does not mean that God never rebukes our sins. He never condones sin. He reprovcs us for our failure to depend upon Him in our need, and rebukes our distrust of His bounty in supplying our needs. ([Ibid](#))

It will be given to him - So instead of giving us disparaging words, God gives us divine wisdom. This is a promise from the "non-lying" God. God responds favorably when we seek Him in our need (cp Mt 7:7, 8, 9, 10, 11, Mk 11:23, 24, 25, Lk 11:9, 10, 11, 12, 13).

F. B. Meyer explained it this way:

"A bar of iron worth \$2.50, when wrought into horseshoes is worth \$5. If made into needles it is worth \$175. If into penknife blades it is worth \$1,625. If made into springs for watches it is worth \$125,000. What a 'trial by fire' that bar must undergo to be worth this! But the more it is manipulated, and the more it is hammered and passed through the heat, beaten, pounded, and polished, the greater its value."

Christian, are you wondering about the trials through which you are passing? With impatient heart are you saying, "How long, O Lord?" The heat of the flame and the blows of the hammer are necessary if you are to be more than an unpolished, rough bar of iron. God's all-wise plan, though it calls for the fire, produces the valuable watch spring of maturity. His very best for your life has behind it His perfect timing. - P. R. Van Gorder ([Our Daily Bread. Copyright RBC Ministries, Grand Rapids, MI. Reprinted by permission. All rights reserved](#))

R A Torrey - The Wisdom of God

Is one of his attributes 1 Samuel 2:3 ; Job 9:4

DESCRIBED AS

- Perfect Job 36:4; 37:16
- Mighty Job 36:5
- Universal Job 28:24 ; Daniel 2:22 ; Acts 15:18
- Infinite Psalm 147:5 ; Romans 11:33
- Unsearchable Isaiah 40:28 ; Romans 11:33
- Wonderful Psalm 139:6
- Beyond human comprehension Psalm 139:6
- Incomparable Isaiah 44:7 ; Jeremiah 10:7
- Underived Job 21:22 ; Isaiah 40:14
- The gospel contains treasures of 1 Corinthians 2:7
- Wisdom of saints is derived from Ezra 7:25
- All human wisdom derived from Daniel 2:1
- Saints ascribe to him Daniel 2:20

EXHIBITED IN

- His works Job 37:16 ; Psalm 104:24; 136:5 ; Proverbs 3:19 ;Jeremiah 10:12
- His counsels Isaiah 28:29 ; Jeremiah 32:19
- His foreshadowing events Isaiah 42:9; 46:10
- Redemption 1 Corinthians 1:24 ; Ephesians 1:8; 3:10
- Searching the heart 1 Chronicles 28:9 ; Revelation 2:23

- Understanding the thoughts 1 Chronicles 28:9 ; Psalm 139:2

EXHIBITED IN KNOWING

- The heart Psalm 44:21 ; Proverbs 15:11 ; Luke 16:15
- The actions Job 34:21 ; Psalm 139:2,3
- The words Psalm 139:4
- His saints 2 Samuel 7:20 ; 2 Timothy 2:19
- The way of saints Job 23:10 ; Psalm 1:6
- The want of saints Deuteronomy 2:7 ; Matthew 6:8
- The afflictions of saints Exodus 3:7 ; Psalm 142:3
- The infirmities of saints Psalm 103:14
- The minutest matters Matthew 10:29,30
- The most secret things Matthew 6:18
- The time of judgment Matthew 24:36
- The wicked Nehemiah 9:10 ; Job 11:11
- The works, &c of the wicked Isaiah 66:18

Nothing is concealed from Psalm 139:12

The wicked question Psalm 73:11 ; Isaiah 47:10

Should be magnified Romans 16:27 ; Jude 1:25

James 1:6 But he must [ask](#) in [faith without any doubting](#), for the one who [doubts](#) is like the [surf](#) of the [sea](#), [driven](#) and [tossed](#) by the [wind](#). ([NASB: Lockman](#))

Greek: [aiteito](#) ([3SPAM](#)) [de en pistei, meden diakrinomenos](#), ([PMPMSN](#)) [o gar diakrinomenos](#) ([PMPMSN](#)) [eoiken](#) ([3SRAI](#)) [kludoni thalasses anemizomeno](#) ([PPPMSD](#)) [kai rhipizomeno](#): ([PPPMSD](#))

Amplified: Only it must be in faith that he asks with no wavering (no hesitating, no doubting). For the one who wavers (hesitates, doubts) is like the billowing surge out at sea that is blown hither and thither and tossed by the wind. ([Amplified Bible - Lockman](#))

KJV: But let him ask in faith, nothing wavering. For he that wavereth is like a wave of the sea driven with the wind and tossed.

NLT: But when you ask him, be sure that you really expect him to answer, for a doubtful mind is as unsettled as a wave of the sea that is driven and tossed by the wind. ([NLT - Tyndale House](#))

Phillips: But he must ask in sincere faith without secret doubts as to whether he really wants God's help or not. The man who trusts God, but with inward reservations, is like a wave of the sea, carried forward by the wind one moment and driven back the next. ([Phillips: Touchstone](#))

Wuest: But let him be presenting his request in a trusting attitude, not in an expression of that hesitation which vacillates, for the person who vacillates is like the surf of the sea, driven and tossed by the wind;

WBC: Let the asking, however, be accompanied with faith, and no doubting: for the doubter is like the billowing sea driven by the wind and tossed about.

Young's Literal: and let him ask in faith, nothing doubting, for he who is doubting hath been like a wave of the sea, driven by wind and tossed,

BUT HE MUST [ASK](#) IN FAITH WITHOUT ANY DOUBTING: [aiteito](#) ([3SPAM](#)) [de en pistei, meden diakrinomenos](#), ([PMPMSN](#)):

- Ask in faith - Mt 21:22; Mk 11:22, 23, 24; 1Ti 2:8; He 11:6
- [James 1 Resources](#) - Multiple Sermons and Commentaries

But let him be asking in faith, nothing doubting (Rotherham).

Jesus declared

And all things you **ask** (aiteo) in prayer, **believing** (pisteuo), you shall receive. (Mt 21:22)

Comment: As Morris rightly observes " There are other conditions for answered prayer, of course (1Jn 5:14; Jas 4:3), but true belief would be founded upon these other conditions.

And Jesus answered saying to them, "Have faith in God. 23 "Truly I say to you, whoever says to this mountain, 'Be taken up and cast into the sea,' and does not doubt in his heart, but believes that what he says is going to happen, it shall be granted him. 24 "Therefore I say to you, all things for which you pray and ask, believe that you have received them, and they shall be granted you. (Mk 11:22, 23, 24)

But (de) (see term of contrast) introduces a qualification regarding God's promise in Jas 1:5 - "But when he asks, he must believe and not doubt." God is not a genie in a bottle or a dispensing machine into which we insert a prayer and out comes our selection. The promise of answered prayer makes its spiritual demands upon the one asking - it is not simple prayer that succeeds, but prayer with confidence. So the praying that receives answers from God is marked by faith and the absence of doubt.

Ask (154) (aiteo) is a specific word for prayer which asks for something to be given and gives prominence to the thing asked for rather than the person. **Aiteo** conveys the sense of asking with urgency, even to the point of demanding and refers to the seeking by the inferior from the superior (Acts 12:20), by a beggar from the giver (Acts 3:2), by the child from the parent (Mt 7:9-note) or by a man from God (Mt 7:7-note; cf 1Jn 3:22).

The **present imperative** is a standing command to the reader who desires God to answer their prayer for wisdom. **Aiteo** is singular rather than plural denoting that each and every individual must meet this requirement. No exceptions.

Ask in faith - Ask with full conviction and certitude. As faith is essential to spiritual life, James says there can be no prayer without faith. The writer of Hebrews echoes this basic principle of the Christian life writing that...

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 seek Him. (He 11:6-note), cp Mt 21:22; Mk 11:24)

Constable comments that...

In Scripture asking in **faith** always means one of two things. It means either believing God will do what He has promised or, if He has not promised, believing that He can do what the person requesting asks. ([James 1 Expository Notes](#))

Faith (4102)(pistis) is synonymous with trust or belief and is the conviction of the truth of anything, and in Scripture usually speaks of belief respecting man's relationship to God and divine things, generally with the included idea of trust and holy fervor born of faith and joined with it. As **pistis** relates to God, it is the conviction that God exists and is the Creator and Ruler of all things well as the Provider and Bestower of eternal salvation through Christ. As faith relates to Christ it represents a strong and welcome conviction or belief that Jesus is the Messiah, through Whom we obtain eternal salvation and entrance into the Kingdom of Heaven. Stated another way, eternal salvation comes **only** through belief in Jesus Christ and no other way.

As has been noted, **faith** in this context does not refer to the body of doctrine one believes ("the faith"), but is a

wholehearted attitude of a full and unquestioning committal to and dependence upon God, as He has revealed Himself to us in Christ Jesus. It is the proper human response to the goodness of God. When we approach God with our petitions, we must believe not only in His ability to grant our requests but also in His ability to answer in harmony with His character and purpose. Believing prayer takes its stand upon the character of God. ([Ibid](#))

Expositor's Greek Testament adds that...

Pistis as used in this epistle, refers to the state of mind in which a man not only believes in the existence of God, but in which His ethical character is apprehended and the evidence of His good-will towards man is acknowledged; it is a belief in the beneficent activity, as well as the personality, of God; it includes reliance on God and the expectation that what is asked for will be granted by Him (cp qualification 1Jn 5:14, 15). The word here does not connote **faith** in the sense of a body of doctrine. This idea of faith is not specifically Christian; it was, and is, precisely that of the Jews; with them '**emwnah/emunah** ([0530 Ed](#): key idea is faithfulness, certainty, fidelity, to remain in one place, firmness, steadiness, cp description of Moses' hands held up until sunset - Ex 17:12, describes God Himself Dt 32:4, totally dependable!) is just that perfect trust in God which is

expressed in what is called the "Creed of Maimonides," or the "Thirteen principles of faith"; it is there said:

I believe with perfect faith that the Creator, blessed be His name, is the Author and Guide of everything that has been created, and that He alone has made, does make, and will make all things.

In Talmudic literature, which in this as in so much else, embodies much ancient material, the Rabbis constantly insist on the need of faith as being that which is "perfect trust in God". Those who are lacking in faith (cp Mt 6:30-note) are held up to rebuke...

Faith therefore in the sense in which it is used in this epistle, was the characteristic mark of the Jew as well as of the Christian. (**Ed note:** Not that Jews were saved by faith in God but only by faith in Messiah)... (Doubting, diakrino) means to be in a critical state of mind, which is obviously the antithesis to that of him who has faith; it excludes faith ipso facto (cp Mt 21:21 which uses the same verb diakrino). ([James 1 - Expository Notes](#))

Without any doubting - Webster says that to doubt in the transitive sense means to lack confidence in, to consider unlikely. In the intransitive sense, to be uncertain, to waver or fluctuate in opinion; to hesitate; to be in suspense; to be in uncertainty, respecting the truth or fact; to be undetermined. As **Hooker** says "Even in matters divine, concerning some things, we may lawfully doubt and suspend our judgment."

Martin - The disposition of doubt places the character of God in question (as in Mt 21:21; Ro 4:20) and blocks our access to his bounty. (Ibid)

Vance Havner "Nothing Doubting"...

1. We are to believe without doubting "If ye have faith, and doubt not ... " (Mt 21:21). We may be tempted to doubt. We may have to pray, "Lord, I believe; help Thou mine unbelief " But we can take sides with our faith and by the exercise of it give doubt no chance to grow. Such faith moves mountains.

2. We are to pray without doubting. I will therefore that men pray every where, lifting up holy hands, without wrath and doubting" (1Ti 2:8). The man who lacks wisdom must ask of God "but let him ask in faith, nothing wavering" (Jas 1:6). The doubting man, says James, is like a storm-driven wave of the sea and he need not expect anything of the Lord.

3. We are to obey without doubting. Peter was told to go with the men from the house of Cornelius "nothing doubting" (Ac 10:20; 11:12). When the Holy Spirit sends us on a mission we are to ask no questions. Peter had his scruples on this occasion and sometimes we have to give up well-established objections if we are to help Cornelius.

Doubting means wavering, double-mindedness. Without faith it is impossible to please God (He 11:6). A man displeases God to the extent of his doubts. Doubt may assail you but do not pray, "Lord, I doubt; increase my faith"; pray, "Lord, I believe; help Thou mine unbelief."

Doubting (1252) (**diakrino** from **diá** = separation, "thoroughly back and forth" + **kríno** = distinguish, decide, judge. From root **kri-** = separation) literally means "to separate throughout or wholly", to judge "back and forth" between two which can either (positively) refer to close-reasoning (discrimination) or negatively "over-judging" (going too far, vacillating). The context indicates which sense is meant. And so the primary idea of diakrino is that of differentiating by separating (Mt 16:3). Other meanings include making a distinction between persons by evaluation (Acts 15:9, 1Co 4:7, Acts 11:12+). To make an evaluation, to judge or to pass judgment (1Co 11:31, 14:29). **Diakrino** was a technical legal term meaning to render a legal decision (1Co 6:5). As used by James, et al (Mt 21:21, Mk 11:23, Ro 14:23, Jude 1:22) in the middle voice (reflexive, initiates and participates in the action) **diakrino** means in essence to be at odds with one's self and so to hesitate or waver. One author says it is pictured by the idea of divided in one's mind. This person is the one who is vacillating between two opinions or decisions.

Diakrino is translated in the **NAS** as - decide (1), discern (1), disputed (1), doubt (2), doubting (2), doubts(2), judge (1),judged (1), made distinction (1), made distinctions (1), misgivings (2), pass judgment (1), regards as superior (1), took issue (1),waver (1).

Diakrino is used 19 times in the NT...

Matthew 16:3 "And in the morning, 'There will be a storm today, for the sky is red and threatening.' Do you know how to **discern** the appearance of the sky, but cannot *discern* the signs of the times?

Matthew 21:21 And Jesus answered and said to them, "Truly I say to you, if you have faith, and do not **doubt**, you shall not only do what was done to the fig tree, but even if you say to this mountain, 'Be taken up and cast into the sea,' it shall happen.

Mark 11:23 "Truly I say to you, whoever says to this mountain, 'Be taken up and cast into the sea,' and does not **doubt** in his

heart, but believes that what he says is going to happen, it shall be granted him.

Acts 10:20+ "But arise, go downstairs, and accompany them without **misgivings**; for I have sent them Myself."

Acts 11:2+ And when Peter came up to Jerusalem, those who were circumcised **took issue** with him,

Acts 11:12+ "And the Spirit told me to go with them without **misgivings**. And these six brethren also went with me, and we entered the man's house.

Acts 15:9+ (Peter at the Jerusalem Council) and He made no distinction between us and them, cleansing their hearts by faith.

Romans 4:20 (note) yet, with respect to the promise of God, he did not **waver** in unbelief, but grew strong in faith, giving glory to God,

Comment: Vincent says diakrino here implies a mental struggle. Robertson translates, "He was not divided in his mind by unbelief."

Romans 14:23 (note) But he who **doubts** is condemned if he eats, because his eating is not from faith; and whatever is not from faith is sin.

1 Corinthians 4:7 For who **regards** you as superior? And what do you have that you did not receive? But if you did receive it, why do you boast as if you had not received it?

1 Corinthians 6:5 I say this to your shame. Is it so, that there is not among you one wise man who will be able to **decide** between his brethren,

1 Corinthians 11:29 For he who eats and drinks, eats and drinks judgment to himself, if he does not **judge** the body rightly.

1 Corinthians 11:31 But if we **judged** ourselves rightly, we should not be judged.

1 Corinthians 14:29 And let two or three prophets speak, and let the others **pass judgment**.

James 1:6 But let him ask in faith without any **doubting**, for the one who doubts is like the surf of the sea driven and tossed by the wind.

James 2:4 have you not **made distinctions** among yourselves, and become judges with evil motives?

Jude 1:9 But Michael the archangel, when he **disputed** with the devil and argued about the body of Moses, did not dare pronounce against him a railing judgment, but said, "The Lord rebuke you."

Jude 1:22 And have mercy on some, who are **doubting**;

Diakrino is used 23 times in the Septuagint (LXX) -

Ex 18:16; Lev. 24:12; Dt. 33:7; 1Ki. 3:9; 1Chr 26:29; Esther 8:12; Job 9:14; 12:11; 15:5; 21:22; 23:10; Ps 50:4; 82:1; Pr 31:9; Eccl 3:18; Je 15:10; Ezek 20:35, 36; 34:17, 20; 44:24; Joel 3:2, 12; Zech. 3:7

The one who doubts asks the questions Edith Bunker did on the famous television show "All in the Family" - "Are you sure?... Are you *sure* you're sure?" Doubt is surely the hallmark of skeptics, but that is not who James is describing in this section. He is speaking of believers who are experiencing this nagging sensation in their soul which we call "doubt". To be sure sometimes a doubting believer is a good thing, when he or she armed with Biblical truth takes a stand against some doctrine which is biblically questionable. Such doubting is desirable in the believer. However, in the present context doubting is not desirable for optimal spiritual health. As discussed below, it is important to distinguish doubt from rank unbelief, although doubting can evolve into unbelief. We should differentiate doubting, which is common even within faith from unbelief which is not. Doubt arises from our human weakness which in itself lacks the confidence to trust fully in God especially when being fashioned by tests and afflictions.

When you experience unexpected trials, is not one of your first reactions to "listen" to the doubts which are latent in every person's soul? The next time you find yourself surrounded by variegated, multi-colored trials, consider the Great Physician's prescription for personal proclamation, as outlined in Psalm 42 and 43. Have you never preached to your own soul? Consider how the psalmist preached to his own soul -- No less than three times in these two great psalms...

"Hope in God"!

Psalm 42:5 Why are you in despair (Hebrew = "bowed down", the Greek [Septuagint] word used here = very sad, deeply grieved, afflicted beyond measure) , **O my soul** (Greek = psuche)? **And why have you become**

disturbed (Hebrew = turbulent -- emphasizing unrest or uproar in one's soul. Septuagint uses a verb which means to throw continually into complete confusion ~ profoundly disturbed, greatly vexed) **within me?** (What is the psalmist's solution?) **Hope in God**, for I shall again praise Him For the help (Hebrew = Yeshua - speaks of salvation, the name used for Jesus! Greek word = soterion - pertains to salvation -- saving, delivering, preserving, bringing salvation and by metonymy, the Messiah Himself as mediating salvation or deliverance Lk 2:30) of His presence.

6 O my God, my soul is in despair within me; Therefore I remember Thee from the land of the Jordan, And the peaks of Hermon, from Mount Mizar.

7 Deep calls to deep at the sound of Thy waterfalls; All Thy breakers and Thy waves have rolled over me.

8 The LORD will command His lovingkindness in the daytime; And His song will be with me in the night, A prayer to the God of my life.

9 I will say to God my rock, "Why hast Thou forgotten me? Why do I go mourning because of the oppression of the enemy?"

10 As a shattering of my bones, my adversaries revile me, While they say to me all day long, "Where is your God?"

11 Why are you in despair, O my soul? And why have you become disturbed within me? Hope in God, for I shall yet praise Him, the help of my countenance, and my God.

Spurgeon comments: Ps 42:5 Why art thou cast down, O my soul? As though he were two men, the psalmist talks to himself. His faith reasons with his fears, his hope argues with his sorrows. These present troubles, are they to last forever? The rejoicings of my foes, are they more than empty talk? My absence from the solemn feasts, is that a perpetual exile? Why this deep depression, this faithless fainting, this chicken hearted melancholy? As Trapp says, "David chides David out of the dumps;" and herein he is an example for all desponding ones. To search out the cause of our sorrow is often the best surgery for grief. Self ignorance is not bliss; in this case it is misery. The mist of ignorance magnifies the causes of our alarm; a clearer view will make monsters dwindle into trifles. Why art thou disquieted within me? Why is my quiet gone? If I cannot keep a public Sabbath, yet wherefore do I deny my soul her indoor Sabbath? Why am I agitated like a troubled sea, and why do my thoughts make a noise like a tumultuous multitude? The causes are not enough to justify such utter yielding to despondency. Up, my heart! What aileth thee? Play the man, and thy castings down shall turn to up liftings, and thy disquietudes to calm. Hope thou in God. If every evil be let loose from Pandora's box, yet is there hope at the bottom. This is the grace that swims, though the waves roar and be troubled. God is unchangeable, and therefore his grace is the ground for unshaken hope. If everything be dark, yet the day will come, and meanwhile hope carries stars in her eyes; her lamps are not dependent on oil from without, her light is fed by secret visitations of God, which sustain the spirit. For I shall yet praise him. Yet will my sighs give place to songs, my mournful ditties shall be exchanged for triumphal paeans. A loss of the present sense of God's love is not a loss of that love itself; the jewel is there, though it gleams not on our breast; hope knows her title good when she cannot read it clear; she expects the promised boon though present providence stands before her with empty hands. For I shall yet praise him for the help of his countenance. Salvations come from the propitious face of God, and he will yet lift up his countenance upon us. Note well that the main hope and chief desire of David rest in the smile of God. His face is what he seeks and hopes to see, and this will recover his low spirits, this will put to scorn his laughing enemies, this will restore to him all the joys of those holy and happy days around which memory lingers. This is grand cheer. This verse, like the singing of Paul and Silas, looses chains and shakes prison walls. He who can use such heroic language in his gloomy hours will surely conquer. In the garden of hope grow the laurels for future victories, the roses of coming joy, the lilies of approaching peace.

Brian Duppa - Athanasius counseled his friend, that when any trouble should fall upon him, he should fall presently to the reading of this Psalm; for there was a way, he thought, of curing by the like, as well as by the contrary: for it is observed indeed that when two instruments are tuned to the same unison, if you touch the strings of the one, the strings of the other will move too, though untouched, if placed at a convenient distance. That therefore you may try the same experiments upon yourselves, do but set your affections for a tune in the same key in which these words were spoken; if really you feel none, imagine some affliction laid upon you; when you have done so, that you may be the more fully moved, place your attention at a convenient distance, look narrowly on this holy prophet, observe how he retires himself, shuts out the world, calls his sad soul to as sad a reckoning: Quare tam tristis? O my soul! thou that wert infused to give me life; nay, says Philo the Jew, a

spark, a beam of the divinity, thou, which shouldest be to this dark body of mine as the sun is to the earth, enlightening, quickening, cheering up my spirits; tell me, why art thou clouded? why art thou cast down? ... Brian Duppa (Bishop), 1588-1662, in a Sermon entitled "The Soule's Soloquie."

Condensed from William Gurnall. - Hope thou in God. I shall show what powerful influence hope hath on the Christian in affliction, and how. First, it stills and silences him under affliction. It keeps the king's peace in the heart, which else would soon be in an uproar. A hopeless soul is clamorous: one while it charges God, another while it reviles his instruments. It cannot long rest, and no wonder, when hope is not there. Hope hath a rare art in stilling a froward spirit, when nothing else can; as the mother can make the crying child quiet by laying it to the breast, when the rod makes it cry worse. This way David took, and found it effectual; when his soul was unquiet by reason of his present affliction, he lays it to the breast of the promise: "Why art thou cast down O my soul? and why art thou disquieted in me? hope thou in God." And here his soul sweetly sleeps, as the child with the breast in his mouth; and that this was his usual way, we may think by the frequent instances we find; thrice we find him taking this course in two Psalms, 42 and 43 ... Secondly, this hope fills the afflicted soul with such inward joy and consolation, that it can laugh while tears are in the eye, sigh and sing all in a breath; it is called "the rejoicing of hope," Hebrews 3:6. And hope never affords more joy than in affliction. It is on a watery cloud that the sun paints those curious colours in the rainbow ... There are two graces, which Christ useth above any other, to fill the soul with joy -- faith and hope, because these two fetch all their wine of joy without door. Faith tells the soul what Christ hath done for it; and so comforts it; hope revives the soul with the news of what Christ will do: both draw at one tap -- Christ and his promise.

H. March - Why art thou cast down?

1 The mind, even of a holy man, may be unduly cast down and disquieted.

2 In cases of undue dejection and disquietude, the proper remedy is to expostulate with the soul, and to direct it to the only true source of relief.

3 Expostulation with the soul in times of distress, is then productive of its proper end, when it leads to an immediate application to God.

Spurgeon - Hope thou in God. Let the anchor still keep its hold. God is faithful, God is love, therefore there is room and reason for hope. Who is the health of my countenance, and my God. This is the same hopeful expression as that contained in verse five, but the addition of and my God shows that the writer was growing in confidence, and was able defiantly to reply to the question, "Where is thy God?" Here, even here, he is, ready to deliver me. I am not ashamed to own him amid your sneers and taunts, for he will rescue me out of your hands. Thus faith closes the struggle, a victor in fact by anticipation, and in heart by firm reliance. The saddest countenance shall yet be made to shine, if there be a taking of God at his word and an expectation of his salvation.

"For yet I know I shall him praise
Who graciously to me,
The health is of my countenance,
Yea, mine own God is he."

Hope is like the sun, which, as we journey towards it, casts the shadow of our burden behind us. Samuel Smiles

Psalm 43:1 Vindicate me, O God, and plead my case against an ungodly nation; O deliver me from the deceitful and unjust man!

2 For Thou art the God of my strength; why hast Thou rejected me? Why do I go mourning because of the oppression of the enemy?

3 O send out Thy light and Thy truth, let them lead me; Let them bring me to Thy holy hill, And to Thy dwelling places.

4 Then I will go to the altar of God, To God my exceeding joy; And upon the lyre I shall praise Thee, O God, my God.

5 **Why are you in despair, O my soul? And why are you disturbed within me? Hope in God,** for I shall again praise Him, The help of my countenance, and my God.

Spurgeon - Why art thou cast down, O my soul? If God be thine, why this dejection? If he uplifts thee, why art thou so near the ground? The dew of love is falling, O withering heart, revive. And why art thou disquieted

within me? What cause is there to break the repose of thy heart? Wherefore indulge unreasonable sorrows, which benefit no one, fret thyself, and dishonour thy God? Why overburden thyself with forebodings? Hope in God, or wait for God. There is need of patience, but there is ground for hope. The Lord cannot but avenge his own elect. The heavenly Father will not stand by and see his children trampled on for ever; as surely as the sun is in the heavens, light must arise for the people of God, though for awhile they may walk in darkness. Why, then, should we not be encouraged, and lift up our head with comfortable hope? For I shall yet praise him. Times of complaint will soon end, and seasons of praise will begin. Come, my heart, look out of the window, borrow the telescopic glass, forecast a little, and sweeten thy chamber with sprigs of the sweet herb of hope. Who is the health of my countenance, and my God. My God will clear the furrows from my brow, and the tear marks from my cheek; therefore will I lift up my head and smile in the face of the storm. The Psalm has a blessed ending, such as we would fain imitate when death puts an end to our mortal existence.

Richard Sibbes. Why art thou cast down, O my soul. He comes to his former remedy; he had stilled his grief once before with the same meditation and upbraiding of his own soul, and chiding himself; but he comes to it here as a *probatum est*, as a tried remedy; he takes up his soul very short, Why art thou so cast down, O my soul? and why art thou disquieted within me? You see how David's passions here are interlaced with comforts, and his comforts with passions, till at last he gets the victory of his own heart. Beloved, neither sin nor grief for sin, are stilled and quieted at the first. You have some short spirited Christians, if all be not quiet at the first, all is lost with them; but it is not so with a true Christian soul, with the best soul living. It was not so with David when he was in distemper; he checks himself, the distemper was not yet stilled; he checks himself again, then the distemper breaks out again; he checks himself again, and all little enough to bring his soul to a holy, blessed, quiet, temper, to that blessed tranquillity and rest that the soul should be in before it can enjoy its own happiness, and enjoy sweet communion with God. As you see in physic, perhaps one purge will not carry away the peccant humour, then a second must be added; perhaps that will not do it, then there must be a third; so when the soul hath been once checked, perhaps it will not do, we must fall to it again, go to God again. And then it may be there will be breaking out of the grief and malady again; we must to it again, and never give over, that is the right temper of a Christian.

KJV Bible Commentary writes that **doubting**...

suggests an anxious reevaluation, "second thoughts" about one's prayer. This type of person compares to a wave which is driven and tossed by circumstances. Christians, by faith, should persistently avow under any circumstances that God is all He claims to be.

Os Guinness has an interesting analysis on **doubt** writing that...

Contrary to widespread misunderstanding, **doubt** is not the same as unbelief, so it is not the opposite of faith. Rather it is a state of mind in suspension between faith and unbelief. To believe is to be of one mind in accepting something as true; to disbelieve is to be of one mind in rejecting it; to doubt is to waver somewhere between the two, and thus to be of two minds. This important distinction uncovers a major misconception of doubt—the idea that a believer betrays faith and surrenders to unbelief by doubting.

This twoness or doubleness represents the deepest dilemma of **doubt**. The heart in **doubt** is a divided heart. Here is the essence of the biblical view of **doubt**, which is echoed in human language and experience from all around the world. All of the New Testament words for doubt—for example, *dipsuchos*, *diakrinō*, *distazō*, *dialogizoma*, and *meteō rizomai*—have this sense of doubleness. So also do many other languages. The Chinese speak of a person with "a foot in two boats" and the Navajo Indians of "that which is two with a person."

An all-important difference exists, therefore, between the open-minded uncertainty of **doubt** and the closed-minded certainty of unbelief. Because faith is crucial, **doubt** is serious. But because **doubt** is not unbelief it is not terminal. It is a halfway stage that can lead on to a deepened faith as easily as it can break down to unbelief.

The doubleness or indecision of **doubt** can be described from the outside with high-noon clarity. But from the inside it is foggy, gray, and disorienting. The world of doubting feels like a world with no landmarks and no bearings. Thus a second tip for those who want to develop a view of doubt that strengthens faith is: Learn to anticipate and resist the confusions of doubt.

Followers of Christ are not simply fair-weather believers. They are realistically committed to truth, people who "think in believing and believe in thinking" as Augustine expressed it. They are, therefore, like experienced pilots who can fly in bad weather as easily as in good, by night as well as by day, and upside down as well as right side up. Faith's rainy days will come and go and dark nights of the soul may threaten to overwhelm, but safe flying is possible for those who have a solid grasp of the instruments (God's truth and promises) and a canny realism about the storm and stress of **doubt**.

Many common confusions about doubt can be cleared away with help. For example, **doubt** is confused with unbelief, which reinforces **doubtfulness** by adding guilt. Others divorce faith from knowledge. Knowledge becomes assigned strictly to the realm of certainty and faith to uncertainty. There is the confusion of thinking that, because God is the answer to all doubt, only answers that are theologically correct “God-talk” are sufficient. Such confusions are an aggravation of the doubt, not its real source.

The first two tips for handling **doubt** are vital but obviously preliminary. Without remembering the character of doubt, any outbreak of uncertainty can call faith into question before doubt ever specifically doubts anything. Without resisting doubt’s confusion, the symptoms can sidetrack a serious investigation of the root causes. But when these two steps have been followed the real job remains—the believer must tackle those root causes.

The third tip for those who want to strengthen faith through doubt is that they must resolve the specific challenges that underlie it.

Any attempt to draw up an exhaustive catalog of doubts would be overwhelming and depressing. But anyone who listens to doubters and studies doubt in the light of the Scriptures soon finds that there are “family resemblances” among doubts. It is, therefore, possible and helpful to discern a broad overview of the main types. Of course, these broad “families” are only generalizations. Doubting is specific, and doubts strike everyone differently. But, when used with sensitivity and compassion, the categories are anything but a straitjacket. They help people to see where they are, how they got there, and—most importantly—how they can get out.

It has been my privilege to talk to hundreds of individuals who have experienced different kinds of doubt and differing levels of pain and confusion. No one who understands the pain and perils of doubt can be blithe about it. Loss of trust in God is truly life’s ultimate loss. But such is the nature of faith in God through Christ, affirmed by countless Christians through history, that there can be a constructive side of doubt.

True, there is no believing without some doubting. But since belief strengthens as the Christian understands and resolves doubt, we can say that, if we doubt in believing, we nevertheless also believe in doubting. (If you would like more information on doubt from the perspective of some of the finest Christian minds of modern times I would strongly recommend procuring the book edited by R C Sproul [Doubt & Assurance. Page 33. Grand Rapids: Baker Book House](#))

FOR THE ONE WHO DOUBTS IS LIKE THE SURF OF THE SEA, DRIVEN AND TOSSED BY THE WIND: o gar diakrinomenos (PMPMSN) eoiken (3SRAI) kludoni thalasses anemizomeno (PPPMSD) kai rhipizomeno; (PPPMSD):

- Ge 49:4; Ep 4:14; He 10:23; 13:9; 2Pe 2:17; Jude 1:12,13
- [James 1 Resources](#)

And 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 seek Him. (He 11:6-note)

As a result, we are no longer to be children, **tossed here and there** (kludonizomai - from kludon = surge of the sea, Lk 8:24, Jas 1:6, Jonah 1:4, 11, 12) by waves, and carried about by every wind (anemos) of doctrine, by the trickery of men, by craftiness in deceitful scheming (Ep 4:14-note)

For (gar) (see term of explanation) introduces the vivid illustration of the character of a doubting supplicant. This dramatic picture is clearly intended to dissuade us from such doubt.

The one who doubts (diakrino) - Note that the **present tense** participle pictures one who continually doubts. This is their habitual practice. Recall that James as the brother of Jesus had considerable doubt regarding the identity of Jesus prior to His resurrection (cp 1Co 15:7) and so he would be well acquainted with and emphatic toward those who had doubts regarding divine things.

Hiebert - Doubting conveys the picture of a divided mind, being torn in two directions. The individual is in a state of oscillation between the competing desires within him. The **present tense** denotes that this “halting between two opinions” has become habitual, while the **middle voice** indicates that the conflict is rooted in his competing personal desires. Although he has given expression to his petition to God, he is not at rest in himself concerning what he has asked for, and then again he desires something else. His uttered request has not terminated the inner indecision between the competing desires. His inner yearnings are divided between God and the world (Jas 4:3,4). It is not

merely a state of mental indecision but an inner moral conflict. He is divided between the desire to say **yes** to his request and the desire to say **no** to it, with the inclination to say **no** gaining the upper hand. It is an inner unwillingness to rely wholly upon God. As Stier aptly remarks, "A doubting petitioner offers not to God a steady hand or heart, so that He cannot deposit in it His gift." ([Ibid](#))

Elijah gives us a picture of doubting in his address to the Israelites whose sin was not that of totally rejecting Yahweh, but of seeking to combine His worship with Baal worship...

And Elijah came near to all the people and said, "How long will you hesitate (KJV = How long halt ye between two opinions?) between two opinions? If the LORD is God, follow Him; but if Baal, follow him." But the people did not answer him a word. (1Ki 18:21)

Is like ([1503](#)) (**eoika** is the perfect tense form of **eiko** = appear, resemble) means to be like, to resemble. The perfect tense pictures the abiding truth of this comparison between doubting and waves of the sea.

Like the surf - Introduces a **term of comparison**, specifically a **simile**, the first of a number of similes James uses in his epistle (cp Jas 1:6, 10, 18, 23, 2:26, 5:3, 10). Recall that a **simile** is a **figure of speech** in which the subject is compared to another subject, for example, "You are acting **as** nervous **as** a long-tailed cat in a room full of rocking chairs".

Frequently, **similes** are marked by use of the words "**as**" or "**like**". A **simile** is a word picture that draws a comparison between two things. The idea behind figures of speech is that a picture is worth a thousand words. But remember for accurate Biblical interpretation, one still needs to interpret the figure of speech in the context in which it is found. Figures of speech are not an encouragement to let your imagination run wild. Whatever "picture" the figure of speech is intended to paint is best evaluated by a careful examination of the context.

Surf - Compares an individual's vacillation between two opinions with the action of the waves of the sea, a picture familiar to most individuals. Most readers would see James' vivid picture of the sea whipped into white-caps by the winds.

Constable comments that...

Lack of confidence in God's faithfulness or power manifests a lack of consistency in the believer's life. James compared the instability that this inconsistency produces to the surf of the sea. Something other than itself drives it. The surf corresponds to the Christian who by not submitting consistently to the will of God is driven by forces outside himself or herself rather than by the Holy Spirit within. The surf (Gr. *kludon*) may refer to the tops of the waves that the wind blows off (cf. Luke 8:24). The low and high pressure conditions of life tend to blow us around in a similar fashion. ([James 1 Expository Notes](#))

Surf (wave) ([2830](#)) (**kludon** related to **kluzo** = to wash against) from Homer onward describes a dashing or surging and thus a wave or violent agitation of the sea. *Kludon* is not just a single wave but a succession of waves, one long ridge of water after another being swept along by the wind. A billow. A stormy sea. Rough water. Raging water. A succession of waves. One Greek secular use was to picture "a sea of troubles" (we can probably all identify with that metaphor!). In medicine it was used to describe "splashing" in the stomach or in the chest (as in pleurisy, inflammation of the pleura lining the lungs).

Rotherham pictures the doubter is like the turbulent sea, "wind-driven and storm tossed".

Vincent writes...

A wave, surge. Only here and Lk 8:24; though the kindred verb occurs at Eph 4:14 (note). The word is admirably chosen, as by a writer who lived near the sea and was familiar with its aspects. The general distinction between this and the more common *kuma*, wave, is that *kludon* describes the long ridges of water as they are propelled in horizontal lines over the vast surface of the sea; while *kuma* denotes the pointed masses which toss themselves up from these under the action of the wind. Hence the word *kludon* here is explained, and the picture completed by what follows: a billow or surge, driven by the wind in lines, and tossed into waves. Both here and in the passage in Luke the word is used in connection with the wind. It emphasizes the idea of extension, while the other word throws forward the idea of concentrating into a crest at a given point. Hence, in the figure, **the emphasis falls on the tossing**; not only moving before the impulse of the wind, but not even moving in regular lines; tossed into rising and falling peaks. ([James 1: Greek Word Studies](#)) (Bolding added)

Of the sea ([2281](#)) (**thalassa**) is the **sea** a great body of water nearly enclosed by land. Seas are properly branches of the ocean, and upon the same level. Large bodies of water inland, and situated above the level of the ocean, are lakes.

Ralph Martin observes that "The point to be enforced is that the doubter is as insecure and unsteady as a boat rocked in turbulent seas."

The Expositor's Greek Testament notes that like the surf of the sea is "a very vivid picture; the instability of a billow, changing from

moment to moment, is a wonderfully apt symbol of a mind that cannot fix itself in belief."

Driven (416) (**anemizo** from **anemos** = wind, used in Ep 4:14) means to be driven by the wind and is used only here in the NT.

Notice that both **anemizo** and **rhipizo** are in the **present tense** which pictures the continuing impact of the wind upon the sea. As Martin says these two "participles are alliterative and rhythmical... (like) a squall on Lake Galilee: "the light spray whisked from the curling wave," offered as a picture of human instability"... The point to be enforced is that the doubter is as insecure and unsteady as a boat rocked in turbulent seas. The allusion draws on a familiar theme in Jewish literature, denoting the wicked or heretical or hypocritical people as those who are at the mercy of the unruly ocean (Isa 57:20) (*Ibid*).

Tossed (4494) (**rhipizo** from **rhipis** = fan, related to **rhipto** = to cast) means to stir up a fire by fanning, to move to and fro and thus to agitate as do the waves of the sea.

Vincent quips that "Anyone who has watched the great ocean-swell throwing itself up into pointed waves, the tops of which are caught by the wind and fanned off into spray, will appreciate the vividness of the figure.

Robertson comments that **rhipizo** "is a picture of "the restless swaying to and fro of the surface of the water, blown upon by shifting breezes" (*Hort*), the waverer with slight ruffling.

William MacDonald sums up this section writing "We must believe He loves and cares, and that nothing is impossible with Him. If we doubt His goodness and His power, we will have no stability in time of trouble. One minute we might be resting calmly on His promises, but the next we will feel that God has forgotten to be kind. We will be like the surge of the sea, rising to great heights, then falling back into valleys—troubled and tossed. God is not honored by the kind of faith that alternates between optimism and pessimism. He does not give divine insight to such vacillating, unstable men (Jas 1: 7, 8-see notes). In Jas 1:5, 6, 7,8, the source of wisdom is God; it is obtained by prayer; it is available to everybody; it is given liberally and without reproach; the crucial condition is that we ask in faith, with no doubting. ([MacDonald, W & Farstad, A. Believer's Bible Commentary: Thomas Nelson](#))

Hiebert concludes his comments on this section noting that "The passive voice of the participles (**anemizo** and **rhipizo**) further conveys the thought that the billows respond to forces from without. The water has no inner stability to stand against the outer forces. So also the doubter, lacking a firm inner will of his own, is deficient in his ability to attain any fixed goals. He is totally "untrustworthy with regard to gaining any end that needs determined perseverance in a certain course." This picture of the instability of the sea is one that James would be familiar with from his acquaintance with the Sea of Galilee as well as the eastern shores of the Mediterranean. Being alert to spiritual lessons from nature, James saw in this scene of instability "a wonderfully apt symbol of a mind that cannot fix itself in belief." Divine wisdom cannot dwell in a personality so unstable and unable to carry-out a determined course of action. (*Ibid*)

Gregg Laurie - IT DOESN'T HURT TO ASK

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. (James 1:5)

One of the first things that we ask when the bottom drops out, when trials come our way (and there can be so many ways they manifest themselves), is "Why Lord? Why are You allowing this to happen? What have I done to deserve such a fate?"

Maybe you've lost your job. Maybe you've suddenly become ill. Maybe you've lost a loved one. It has brought great anguish to you. It just goes on and on, and you wonder why. James 1:5 says, "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." Or, as another translation puts it, "If you need wisdom—if you want to know what God wants you to do—ask him, and he will gladly tell you. He will not resent your asking" (NLT).

When you are going through these times of hardship, there is nothing wrong with saying, "Lord, what are You trying to teach me? Lord, is there a lesson to be learned here? Because if there is, then I want to learn it. I want to get through this as quickly as possible. If this is going to go on for awhile and there is nothing I can do to change that, fine. But if there is something I need to learn that will cause this to come to an end, then tell me now, Lord."

It's important for us to know that God does have lessons He wants us to learn in times of trial. And many times, it is simply to see if we have learned the material.

Doubt—uncertainty of mind

A. Objects of, Christ's:

- Miracles- Matt. 12:24, 25, 26, 27, 28, 29, 30
- Resurrection- John 20:24, 25, 26, 27, 28, 29
- Messiahship- Luke 7:19, 20, 21, 22, 23
- Return- 2 Pet. 3:4

B. Causes of:

- Satan- Ge 3:4
- Unbelief -Lk 1:18, 19, 20
- Worldly wisdom- 1Co 1:18, 19, 20, 21, 22, 23, 24, 25
- Spiritual instability- James 1:6, 7

C. Removal of, by:

- Searching the Scriptures Acts 17:11, 12
- Believing God's Word Luke 16:27, 28, 29, 30, 31

Momentary Doubts cloud the Skies of Believers

- Abraham, as to the Inheritance of Canaan- Ge 15:8
- Gideon, as to Victory over Midian- Jdg 6:17
- John the Baptist, as to the Messiahship of Jesus- Mt 11:3, 28:17
- Martha, as to the Resurrection of Lazarus- Jn 11:39
- Thomas, as to the Resurrection of Christ- Jn 20:25
- Early Christians, as to the Deliverance of Peter- Ac 12:14, 15

Naves Topic - General scriptures concerning

- Job 4:3, 4, 5, 6; 9:16, 17, 18, 19, 20, 21, 22, 23; 23:15, 16, 17; 30:20,21; Ps 22:2; 31:22; 42:5,6; 49:5; 73:13, 14, 15, 16, 17; 77:3,7, 8, 9; Pr 24:10; Is 40:27,28; 49:14,15; 50:2; Je 8:18; 15:18; 45:3; Lam 3:8,17,18; 5:20; Ho 10:3; Mt 8:26; 14:31; 17:17; Mk 4:38,40; 9:19; Lk 8:25; 9:40; 1Pe 1:6

EXEMPLIFIED

- Ge 12:12,13; 15:8; 18:12, 13, 14; 19:30; 20:2,11; 26:7; Ex 3:11; 4:1,10,13; 5:22,23; 6:12; 14:10, 11, 12,15; Nu 11:21,22; Jdg 6:13,15; 1Sa 16:1,2; 17:11,24; 22:3,4; 1Ki 18:7, 8, 9, 10, 11, 12, 13, 14; 19:13-18; 2Ki 13:18,19; Je 1:6; 32:24,25; Mt 8:23, 24, 25, 26, 27; 11:2,3; 14:29, 30, 31; 17:14-21; 28:17; Mk 9:14-29; 16:10,11; Jn 14:8, 9, 10, 11; Ac 9:13,14