



REDEMPTION

MAKING MUCH OF JESUS

James 1:5-8

Seek Wisdom

5/3/20 - 5/9/2020

MAIN POINT

We can stand firm in the face of trials, knowing God is purifying our hearts.

INTRODUCTION

As your group time begins, use this section to introduce the topic of discussion.

What is the last major lesson you learned in life?

What types of life experiences do you feel you learn the most from? Why?

God uses our experiences in life to mold and shape us. Yet most people will admit that the harder circumstances in life end up teaching and stretching us the most. Just as a goldsmith must heat the precious metal to extreme temperatures to skim all impurity off the surface, the trials we experience in our lives help us focus on what really matters. Trials help us look beneath the surface into our hearts. Through trials, we discover a wisdom and a hope that we might have never found otherwise.

UNDERSTANDING

Unpack the biblical text to discover what the Scripture says or means about a particular topic.

| Have a volunteer read James 1:5.

Why do trials in our lives increase our dependency upon God? What do we need and receive from God in trials that we may be hesitant to ask for without the presence of hardship?

What encouragement can we find in the Scriptures when we are going through trials and are unsure of God's purpose? Think of specific Scriptures or examples. Who else wrestled with similar issues?

Trials put us in a place where we have nowhere to look but up. In the middle of struggle, we are able to feel our own weakness in a way that we could have never felt it before. The grace that comes to us in those moments is that our focus is narrowed to God. Trials make us appeal to God because we don't feel like we can look anywhere else. Characters of Scripture like David, Job, Habakkuk, Jeremiah, Paul, and others also experienced trials that they did not fully understand from their limited perspectives. But these hardships caused them to cry to the One with unlimited perspective.

What did James tell the church to do if they lacked wisdom? Essentially, what is James telling us to do?

What is it about the nature of God that makes Him worthy of appeal in the middle of confusion and trials?

James told the church in the first century (and the church today) to appeal to God when trials come. We can ask Him for what we need and appeal for His help. The examples listed earlier show us that we should feel comfortable asking God why we are going through trials. But why do we ask God about our suffering? Have you ever thought about that? When you talk to a friend about something that is troubling you, you do it because you feel that they have some wisdom or understanding to lend you. They have a perspective that is different than yours. We ask God because His wisdom is unlimited, and His understanding is unsearchable. God's perspective is the only one we need. True wisdom is found only in God.

What are some lesser sources of wisdom that you look to before you look to God? Why do we often look to these places first?

| Have a volunteer read James 1:6-8.

Have you ever gone through a period of time when you didn't pray to God much at all? What lies do we believe when we live this way? What is going on in your heart and mind when you aren't praying?

How do trials have a way of breaking habits of prayerlessness?

Read Luke 8:22-25. How did the disciples respond to this crisis? How similar is our response to that of the twelve disciples?

Why did Jesus allow this to happen to them? What was He trying to teach them? What lesson is there for us in our trials?

What have you learned about God from a trial that you would not have learned any other way?

When life is going well, it is easy to fool yourself into thinking that you don't need God. Why would you? Everything is fine! When we think about God this way (consciously or unconsciously), we reduce His power and Lordship to a small corner of our lives. We are more like the disciples than we realize. We flock to Jesus when the pressure is on. To be clear, this is where we should turn in trials, but Jesus also told them their faith should've carried them through the storm. The faith we have in Jesus is sharpened and developed through trials as we learn that He is enough to supply our needs when we are at our neediest.

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APPLICATION

Help your group identify how the truths from the Scripture passage apply directly to their lives.

How do we get ourselves to the place where we look for wisdom from God all the time and not just in the middle of a trial?

What role do members of this group have in pointing one another to God's wisdom? Do you feel the freedom within the group to give and receive this wisdom?

When the people around you who do not know Jesus experience trials, they have nowhere certain to look. How might you be able to step into a situation like this and point them back to Jesus? Can you think of any specific opportunities at this time?

PRAYER

Praise God for using our trials to point us back to Him and the wisdom and strength that is only available in Him. Thank Him for His abundant goodness and grace. Ask Him to help you trust Him at all times in good, bad, and everywhere in between.

COMMENTARY

| James 1:5-8

1:5-8. These verses outline our resources for facing trials and explain how to get them. Christians need wisdom and faith as they encounter trials. We are encouraged to pray for wisdom and to pray with faith. Jewish Christians should understand wisdom. To James and to Jews, wisdom was much more than knowledge and intelligence. Judaism emphasized that “the fear of the Lord” was the starting point of wisdom (Prov. 1:7). Wisdom was a spiritual trait which developed from a wholehearted love for God’s ways. James will later contrast divine wisdom with earthly wisdom (3:13-18). Earthly wisdom is unspiritual and demonic. Divine wisdom is pure; . . . peace-loving, considerate, submissive, full of mercy and good fruit, impartial, and sincere (Jas. 3:17). With wisdom Christians can understand how their trials merged into God’s plan for their lives. They have the commitment to his will necessary to assure that they follow God and not wander from the path of his plan. But how do Christians get this wisdom?

They must ask God for it. Four facts about God encourage us to ask for this wisdom. First, God is a giving God. Giving to those who ask from him is natural for God. Second, God gives generously to all. He has no favorite recipients of his gifts, but gives to all classes, races, and types of people. Third, God gave without finding fault. God does not give in such a way as to humiliate us. He does not chastise us for our failures or hold our unworthiness against us. He is always ready to add new blessings to old ones without finding fault in us for our many shortcomings. Finally, God promises to answer those who come seeking wisdom. A request according to his will receives his answer (1 John 5:14-15).

Such wisdom helps us understand how our troubles fit in with God’s plan. It assures us that God has not forsaken us. God’s gift of wisdom allows us to understand how God is involved in life’s daily events. Instead of serving as a hindrance, trials present a marvelous opportunity to become wise!

Verses 6-7 deal with the need for faith in prayer. Whoever asks God for wisdom must believe and not doubt. Faith is a complete commitment to God in trusting obedience. Two reasons to

encourage faith are presented. First, a doubting person is spiritually unstable like a wave of the sea, blown and tossed by the wind. Our prayers for wisdom must not alternate between faith and unbelief. We must endure in the confidence that God will answer our request according to his will.

Second, doubters should not even imagine that God will answer their prayers. Faith alone opens the door to God's limitless treasury of wisdom. Unbelief receives God's rejection slip which reads, "Request denied due to insufficient faith."

Let us be careful not to make light of our hesitant faith. Doubting God is serious business! Such doubt implies we have a low view of God. To receive answers from God, you must come to him with the conviction that he gives rewards to those who diligently seek him (Heb. 11:6). Diligence is a trait we all need desperately.

Verse 8 provides an additional description of the spiritual makeup of a doubter. The doubter is a double-minded man, unstable in all he does. Doubters display no stamina in their commitment to the Lord. One moment they are inclined to obedience; another moment, they follow their own ways. Failure to endure with faith in prayer is an indicator of the doubter's general character.