

JAMES

MARK IT UP

James 1:5-8 **LEADER'S** Discussion Guide

Week of 2/20/22

Select 2-3 questions from below for your discussion. Feel free to modify the question if you need to!

Icebreaker: How would you define wisdom? What situation in life has caused you to feel like you really needed more of it?

If you want to be a nerd, the same Greek lexicon cited in the footnote of question 3 defines wisdom as “the capacity to understand and function accordingly.” A simpler way of putting it might be to say that it’s knowing what to do and then doing it.

Getting Started: Read James 1:1-8 and 3:13-18 as a group.

We’ll be highlighting Calvary’s Shaping Values as they show up in the book of James. These values describe what’s most essential to us as Christ-centered communities. Here’s this week’s focus:

Prayer in Faith: We believe God accomplishes His will through our prayers.

1. Why do you think James raises the issue of wisdom after what he has said in verses 1-4?

James has just called us to consider trials a joy...because of what trials can produce in us over time. That’s not the kind of perspective most of us find natural, so we need wisdom from God to be able to see life from this perspective.

2. Where do people look for wisdom in our day? What do these verses tell us about the true source of wisdom?

People consult all kinds of sources...gurus, life coaches, horoscopes, social media, books, celebrities, billionaires, etc. Not all of these are inherently bad, but all true wisdom can be traced back to God.

Application: What do you think it looks like for us to exercise our Shaping Value of Prayer in Faith when it comes to asking for and receiving wisdom from God? If you have an example from your life, please share it!

Most clearly, prayer is how we ask of God. We pray because we believe by faith that God is the source of all wisdom. On the receiving end of wisdom, though, there can be various forms. We find wisdom in God’s Word, from past experiences in life (either our own or others’), and from asking for input (especially from other believers). Under the banner of “all truth is God’s truth,” we should realize that while all wisdom comes from

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fully devoted to loving God and loving others.*

God, not all wisdom comes exclusively from God's people. Non-Christians may have counsel that is truly wise, but we should always ask whether the counsel we receive aligns with God's Word.

3. How does James describe the nature of God's giving in verse 5?¹

It is generous and without reproach. Altogether, the description is that God is eager to give. He's not stingy or reluctant. He's not cautious or hesitant. He wants us to have it!

Application: What examples can you share of God's generosity in your life? You could think of everything from sunrises and sunsets, to clothing and food, to more unique and specific ways God has blessed you.

4. Asking God for wisdom suggests that some doubt already exists in a person's life. What do you think it means, then, for James to say that this person must "ask in faith, with no doubt"?

This one's a bit more abstract, but the main point here is that, while a person might doubt what to do in life, we should not doubt that God is the ultimate source of the wisdom we need.

Application: Why do you think we might doubt God's ability or willingness to give us wisdom?

There could be many answers here, but here are a couple to include. First, we might simply feel like God is distant. We may think God is unconcerned or unaware of our situation. Similarly, we may have prayed for wisdom but haven't yet perceived a response from God.

5. James' vivid imagery in verses 6-8 describe someone who lacks faith that God is the ultimate source of wisdom. In what sense is such a person "double-minded" or "unstable" in life?

Such a person knows that he or she needs wisdom but isn't convinced of where to find it. So, (in an extreme example) imagine a person facing a decision who decides to pray to God for wisdom, but also consults a fortune teller and any other source of "wisdom." One person may give the counsel, "just follow your heart," while another suggests leaving emotions out of it altogether. Still another might point the wisdom-seeker to the latest self-help book that just hit the best-seller list. Over time, we can see how a wisdom-seeker would be tossed around by conflicting ideas, values, and advice.

Application: Can you think of a time or situation in your life where you fit the description of these verses? What happened?

6. What can we learn about the signs, or "fruit," of wisdom from 3:13-18?

¹ *Reproach* means "to find fault in a way that demeans the other...revile, mock, heap insults upon as a way of shaming." This is what God does NOT do when we ask! (A Greek Lexicon of the NT and other Early Christian Literature, 710).

These verses are pretty clear about what true wisdom produces and of what we should observe where wisdom is found.

Application: How can these descriptions help us diagnose true wisdom in a world of counterfeits?

Ideally, we should be able to use what's described in this passage to help us tell the difference between what is true wisdom and everything else that claims to be "wisdom."