

- a. We all lack wisdom. Verse 5 makes it clear that we don't know how we should live in a trial. We read the verses that preceded these and they hit our minds like ping-pong balls against a granite wall: bounce right off.

Pain and difficulty reinforces our blindness to godliness. To do what Christ did – endure to the end – is hard to fathom at times, much less do. It could be the first step in your perseverance if you admit that you need wisdom. If you admit that you don't endure well.

This verse beckons you to remember in Christ, a lack of wisdom doesn't condemn you. And, in Christ, it doesn't have to be a permanent condition.

- b. "Ask God" is prayer. It is not uncommon for us to be prayerful in trials and difficult times. The question is: what are we praying for?

Clearly James intends us ask for enduring wisdom, persevering insight, understanding of our God and our times so that we can endure.

Pick a trial that you're in now: write down what you think wisdom in that situation looks like. Share it with a significant other and then pray over it.

- c. "Ask in faith" is a remarkable command. It makes sense that we should do this. But the hardest time to have faith is when we're under great pressure and we know that God put us there and wants us to endure until the end.

Hebrews 11:6 says, "And without faith it is impossible to please Him for whoever would draw near to God must believe that He exists and that he rewards those who seek Him."

He commands us to ask but knows our hearts: we'll ask for what we think is best for us. God is better to us than we are to ourselves by telling us to ask what He commands and then believe that He is:

Our Rewarder (Hebrews 11:6)

Our Father (Hebrews 12:7)

Our Perfecter (James 1:4)

The One who promised us a crown (1:12)

- d. God gives simply, single-mindedly, and He expects us to ask in the same way. "Without doubting" (1:6) and not "double-mindedly" (1:8). Can you think of a time when you prayed this way?

What does that look like? *Poutiness; down cast face; sleeplessness; quick irritability*

Sound like? *I prayed, but...; Lord, pleeeeeeeze...;*

When our prayers look and sound like that, we are saying to God that He doesn't really care about us or that He really can't bring about our joy. Is it any wonder He fails to answer these prayers?!

Write down all the ways – large and small – that God has been good to you. Let His historic goodness renew your prayer.

- e. When we doubt in our prayers, here's typically what happens:

God sends a trial our way (1:2)

We grow weary of persevering quickly (1:4)

We know we should endure (1:3)

Our prayers change into ones that are half-faith and half-doubt (1:6,8)

God doesn't answer (7)

We grow bitter / angry that we didn't get our way¹

Do you find yourself most bitter, irritable, or angry in a trial? Is it because instead of asking for wisdom you asked for something easy? Is it because you have demanded and not asked in prayer?

- f. Changed circumstances are the world's answer to difficult times. Or, at best, the world would tell us to persevere to get "mine." "I know it's hard, but just think of how many companies will want to hire you after you've gone through this?" Or some such line of reasoning.

Is that sometimes true? Of course. But God's aims in a trial are quite different.

Look at some:

Romans 5:5

2 Corinthians 3:18

Romans 8:29

2 Corinthians 1:4

2 Corinthians 4:17

1 Peter 4:12-14

Think about how small and weak prayer for changed circumstances really is in comparison to what those verses tell us. Think about that.

¹ James addresses this specifically in chapter 4.