

## Wisdom From Above

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### James 1:5-8

On Faith and Wisdom

Pastor Dean VanEvery

Grace to you and peace from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ.

In case you were out last week, we are taking a break from our Psalm series, and we will be spending about fifteen weeks, Lord willing, working through the book of James. That will take us to about the end of July. So, this is our second week in James.

The big issue for James is wisdom.

James is a part of what is called the Bible's *wisdom literature*. There are some books in the Bible that are primarily historical in nature, like Samuel, or Acts that tell us what God has done. There are some books that are primarily doctrinal in nature, like Isaiah, or Romans, that tell us what God and his purposes are like. Then, there are a collection of books that focus on wisdom, *how to live* in light of God's nature, God's purposes, and God's acts in history. James is the wisdom book of the New Testament, and Proverbs is the main wisdom book in the Old Testament, though you could certainly include others.

No part of the Bible should be read in total isolation from the whole, but this is even more urgently the case for the wisdom books. There is a reason that the wisdom literature is in the back half of the two Testaments. You are supposed to read Genesis and Deuteronomy before you get to Proverbs, and you are supposed to read Matthew and Romans before you get to James. Biblical wisdom literature assumes and explicitly relies on Biblical history and Biblical doctrine.

Let me give you a definition of Biblical wisdom. I've described wisdom a bit so far, but I haven't given you a definition yet. I'll give you two complementary definitions then I'll explain them a bit.

The first is the simple definition. Wisdom *is skill in living a good life*. Wisdom is more than just knowledge, it's not just knowing the good life, but actually having the skill to live one. But it's also not *just* skill. It's not just running fast but running in the right direction. It's both practical, and theoretical, skill and knowledge. Wisdom is skill in living a good life.

The second definition agrees with the first, it's just a bit more unpacked. Wisdom is the product of *true* theoretical knowledge and *good* practical knowledge held together by the fear of the LORD.

We see this in Proverbs 9:10, "**The fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom**, [there's the practical side] **and the knowledge of the Holy One is insight** [there's the theoretical]." If you want insight into what is good, you need to know God. If you want skill in living well, you need to fear God.

We see the same language in the Psalms. Psalm 111:10, "**the fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom; all those who practice it have a good understanding.**" Notice both the practical and theoretical aspects. Those who *practice* wisdom – practical – have a good *understanding* – theoretical.

Or in the New Testament, we see this in Romans 12:2. He doesn't use the language, but note the concepts, the mingling of the theoretical and the practical. Paul says, "**Do not be conformed to this world [practical], but be transformed by the renewal of your mind [theoretical], that by testing you may discern what is the will of God, what is good and acceptable and perfect.**"

Godly wisdom, Biblical wisdom, the wisdom from above, is the mingling of true theoretical knowledge and good practical knowledge in the fear of the LORD.

We can break that down a little further in a way that might be helpful. Theoretical knowledge is made up of two parts: simple knowledge, and insight. And practical knowledge is also made up of two parts: skill and prudence.

On the theoretical side, *simple knowledge* is just the knowledge of discrete facts. This is more or less the data points of knowledge. God created the World. Adam ate a fruit he shouldn't have. God brought Israel out of Egypt. Jesus rose from the dead. Every sentence has a subject and a verb. Two plus two equals four. The 13 colonies declared independence in 1776.

Then *insight* penetrates beyond this simple knowledge into knowledge of things themselves and their relationships. What does it mean to be a creature? Why is Adam's sin relevant to us today? What is grammar and why does it matter? What is the difference between the American revolution and the French revolution?

Simple knowledge pertains to facts. Insight pertains to natures, value, and meaning.

On the practical side, *skill* is the ability to successfully complete a task. Build a table, cook a meal, make a presentation, deliver a presentation, design a powerline, balance a budget.

Then *prudence* is the ability to order tasks in the best way to get the best results. Given five tasks, skill is the ability to do each task, and prudence is the ability to determine which task comes first, which task gets the best energy, and which tasks get the leftover time and energy.

Prudence is what that guy is missing who is a genius in his line of work, the best engineer out there, but he can never hold down a job, because he can never order his work well. He has no skill in balancing his design work, and his client interactions, and his coworker interactions, and his budget management. He has tons of skill, but no prudence.

Skill pertains to accomplishing a task, and prudence pertains to ordering tasks well.

Wisdom then is the harmonious fusion of *insight* – understanding of things and relationships – and *prudence* – ability to order tasks well – in the fear of the LORD.

Wisdom is prudence directed by true insight into God, the world, the gospel, and human life. Prudence knows how to have a happy marriage simply because an unhappy marriage would be unpleasant. Wisdom knows how to have a happy marriage because marriage is a picture of Christ and the church. Prudence knows how to order tasks well to have a good career simply as an end in itself. Wisdom knows how to have a good career because work is God's ordained way to cultivate the earth and care for his image bearers.

Wisdom is prudence illuminated by insight, and insight made forceful by prudence. Wisdom is the sword of prudence set on fire by insight wielded in the fear of God.

Last week I said that James speaks well into our present cultural moment because our culture is weighed down by a heavy sense of despair and directionlessness. The need of the hour for our world is true godly wisdom.

Despair is a result of insight divorced from the knowledge of God. And directionlessness is a result of prudence divorced from the fear of God.

The knowledge of God gives insight a 'so what,' and the fear of God gives prudence a 'why.' If you have no 'so what' (no knowledge of God) and no 'why' (no fear of God) eventually you end up with nothing but 'who cares?' and 'why bother?' In other words, despair and directionlessness. Insight with no meaning. Prudence with no purpose.

Wisdom then, true, godly wisdom from above, is founded on the knowledge of God, and directed by the fear of God. True insight, and good prudence.

### *Recap and roadmap*

James spells out these two components of wisdom over the course of this first chapter. The first 18 verses spell out the theoretical side of wisdom, insight into the nature of God. Then 19 through 27 spells out the practical side of wisdom, being a doer of the word.

In these first 18 verses James is making one extended argument about how godly wisdom responds in the face of trials. Specifically, he is making an extended argument about how godly wisdom thinks about God in the middle of trials.

These 18 verses all build off what we saw last week. Really, it's all just unpacking verse 2. **"Count it joy when you meet trials of various kinds."** Everything that follows explains this command, answers the why, the how, and gives some examples of what that looks like, and lands, in verses 17 and 18, with some pretty deep theology about God's unchanging nature and sovereign will.

We got into this argument a bit last week. Godly wisdom is not a pious ignoring of reality – acting like you don't have any trials – but neither is it a surrender to the ups and downs of life. Godly wisdom begins with a commitment to bless the Lord, to praise the Lord, no matter what comes. Godly wisdom begins with a high view of God's sovereignty and a high view of God's goodness, coupled with a clear-eyed view of the role of trials in the life of his children. That was last week.

### **Exegesis of James 1:5-8**

Turning to today's text, verses 5 through 8, James continues the same basic point. And this is really important to notice. James isn't here bringing in some random disconnected idea from what he just said. This is very much a continuation of the previous point. In the previous three verses he said, "count it joy when you meet trials, God is using them for his glory and your good." Then in these verses, he says, "that's a hard thing to do: God is good, and he will help you to do that, if you trust him, and ask him."

That's today's big idea. I'll say it again. God is good, he will help you, if you trust him, and you ask him.

There's a doctrine: God is good.

There's a promise: he will help you.

And two conditions: first, if you trust him. Second, if you ask him.

Let's jump in. Look at verse 5, **"<sup>5</sup>If any of you lacks wisdom, let him ask God, who gives generously to all without reproach, and it will be given him."**

I think this is an extremely helpful little passage. Here he's saying, 'I just gave you a pretty hard instruction. There are times where it is going to be very difficult to count your trials as joy. I know that. So, when that's hard, ask God for wisdom. He will help you.'

Here, he's not just talking about lacking wisdom in general life circumstances. You're thinking about where to go to college, what job to accept, who to marry, whatever. Those kinds of things aren't what James is talking about here. Now, certainly, pray for wisdom in those decisions, but that's just not what James has in mind. He's talking about the wisdom it takes to count trials as joy. The wisdom that it takes to think, to talk, and to act rightly in the face of trials.

Trials, enduring trials faithfully, counting our trials as joy and living accordingly, and talking accordingly, takes a great deal of wisdom. What James is saying is that when you are in those trials, and you get to the end of your wisdom, you don't know what to do, you don't know what to think, don't despair, ask God for more wisdom.

Two quick observations about wisdom. First, in a normal Christian life you will often find yourself needing more wisdom than you have. God will often push us beyond our own resources to teach us all the more to rely on him. This is normal. The Christian is in a constant process of learning to depend on God for wisdom, strength, and grace. God will never take you to the point where you no longer need his help.

Then second, wisdom comes from God. God can give you more wisdom because God gave you the wisdom that you already have. It all comes from him.

That is the main instruction of these verses: if you lack wisdom, ask God for more. Then the rest of the passage builds off this. The rest of verse 5 is the enticement and the grounding. Then verses 6, 7, and 8 are a warning and an explanation of the warning.

The grounding, the baseline, fundamental reason why you should ask God for this kind of wisdom when you are facing trials is that God will give it to you! That's how you get it!

James mentions prayer in one way or another a few times throughout this book, and I so very much appreciate the simplicity of his approach to prayer.

Again, you don't need to have a sophisticated, nuanced answer to the riddle of reconciling God's predestining sovereignty with the effectiveness of prayer. You just need simple faith and obedience to believe that God is in control, and that God answers prayers offered in sincerity and faith. James 4:2, **"You do not have, because you do not ask."** James 5:16, **"the prayer of a righteous person has great power as it is working."**

Ask for wisdom to think and act faithfully in the face of trials, because God has promised that he will give it to you.

Pray for your circumstances, ask for God to solve your problems, relieve your distresses, take away the hardships. Pray for these things. He may or he may not do so, even the Apostle Paul got a 'no,' from God about the thorn in his flesh. But he has promised to give you wisdom. He might not take away your hardship, but he won't leave you alone in it. He will give you wisdom if you will ask for it.

He might not make you understand it all. He might not make it all make sense to you. He might not let you see all the reasons why he's allowing it to happen; he might not let you see exactly what he's doing in it and through it. But he will give you insight into his own goodness. He will help you believe that he is good, that he is strong, and that he loves you. And he will give you prudence to know what faithful obedience looks like one day at a time. Ask for wisdom, and he will give it. **"Ask, and it will be given to you; seek, and you will find; knock, and it will be opened to you."**<sup>1</sup>

Before we move on, notice the enticement, that little phrase in the middle of verse 5, **"who gives generously to all without reproach."** He could have easily just said, "if anyone needs some wisdom, ask God, and he'll give it to you." That would have been great. That would have been one of the sweeter promises in the Bible. But James makes it even sweeter: this God you are approaching, this God to whom you are drawing near to ask for wisdom is a generous and patient God. When you draw near to God to ask for wisdom you will not find a God who is stingy, impatient, and exasperated, but a God who is generous, and who eagerly gives more and more.

Why does he say, "without reproach?" What would it mean to give, "with reproach?" He's probably touching on that all too common experience where either we help someone, or we ask someone for help, and there's a willingness to help, but it comes with a little bit of irritation, a little bit of condescension, or exasperation.

Someone comes to you for help, and you go, "Are you serious? You need my help *again*? Seriously? You can't do this yourself? You haven't figured this out yet? Didn't I show you how to do this already? Alright, if you can't do it, I'll help you again."

But that is not the way of God! That is not how God gives! He isn't stingy in his giving. He isn't irritated in his help. He is eager to help. He is overflowing generosity and kindness.

Here's a principle from this verse. What you think about God shapes whether and how you approach God in prayer. Do you think that God is basically stingy and irritated to answer your prayers? Or do you think that God is generous and patient? Eager and willing to gladly give you fresh wisdom over and over and over? God gives generously, and without reproach, without scolding, without condescending sighs! He is generous and patient, he is kind and good.

So that's the big idea, the main concept. If you lack wisdom, particularly the wisdom to think and act rightly in the face of trials, ask God, he will give it to you. He is glad and eager to do so.

That's most of the main point for today. God is good, he will help you, if you ask.

The next three verses spell out a caveat, the second condition that I mentioned before. He will help you, if you trust him.

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<sup>1</sup> Matthew 7:7.

Basically, he is saying that this promise, ask and he will give, applies to those who ask in faith, not to those who ask apart from faith. He's saying that this applies to the prayer, "I believe, help my unbelief," but not the prayer, "I don't believe, convince me."

Look at verse 6 there, just the first part, "**But let him ask in faith, with no doubting.**" These are a couple pretty important phrases to get right. What does he mean by faith? The Bible doesn't always use faith in exactly the same way every time. Sometimes it simply means correct knowledge of God. Sometimes it means saving faith. Sometimes it means faith for a miracle, like when the centurion believed that Jesus would heal his son. And sometimes it is used in the sense of "the faith" as in the body of beliefs that we profess.

If we look at how James uses the idea of faith in this book, it seems like he has three things primarily in mind. There's a theological aspect, a trust aspect, and an obedience aspect.

First, this faith believes in God as he really is. This follows from what he just said about the generosity and patience of God. The faith that James is talking about believes that God is all good, all powerful, and all wise. In chapter two, we'll see that James emphatically insists that faith has to be more than this, faith has to be more than just head knowledge about God, but faith does need to include this knowledge of God.

Second, this faith trusts God's love on the grounds that your sin has been forgiven in Christ. We see this hinted at in a few places in James, but most immediately we see this in James 1:16-18, where we see that we are called God's beloved, and that we are brought forth by the word of truth, which in the New Testament is a synonym for "the gospel."<sup>2</sup> We've been brought forth by the gospel. So, this faith that James is talking about rests in the love of God because of the finished work of Jesus Christ.

Then third, for James, faith always produces a willingness and eagerness to actually obey the will and word of God.

He's not talking about perfect, sinless obedience, James himself will say that we all stumble in many ways, but the faith that James is talking about always leads us to genuine seriousness about obedience to the will of God.

So, to ask in faith means first to ask in confidence that God is good, that he is in control, and wise, and all the rest. And second it means to ask in confidence that God has forgiven you for the sake of Jesus Christ. And finally, it means to ask with willingness to obey whatever he should require of you.

Or again, the prayer that James is talking about, asking in faith, means to say, "I know you are good, I know you love me and have forgiven me, I will do whatever you require of me, so please, help me, grant me more wisdom to think and to act faithfully in this trial."

This faith, honors God as God, it believes in Jesus as savior and Lord, and it lays down obedience on the front end.

Psalm 143:8 is a favorite of mine that gives us an example of these last two aspects. Psalm 143:8 says, "**let me hear in the morning of your steadfast love, for in you I trust. Make me know the way I should go, for to you I lift up my soul.**"

This is an example of exactly this kind of prayer for wisdom. It's a prayer from a position of trust, asking for help. "Let me hear in the morning of your steadfast love, for in you I trust." Remind me of your love, help me remember your love shown on the cross, and your kindness shown every day of my life, help me remember your love, because I trust you.

And it's a prayer from a predisposition to obedience. "Make me know the way I should go, for to you I lift up my soul." Tell me what you want me to do, my soul is yours, I belong to you, just let me know what you would have me do.

It's trust asking for encouragement, and obedience asking for direction.

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<sup>2</sup> Cf. Colossians 1:5, Ephesians 1:13.

Ok, so he says, **“but let him ask in faith, with no doubting,”** honor God, trust Jesus, lay down your obedience on the front end. Then he continues in verse 6, **“for the one who doubts is like a wave of the sea that is driven and tossed by the wind.”**

Now, through the end of the passage he’s describing the opposite of this faith. This is the person who is undecided about God, who is undecided about Jesus, and who is undecided about obedience.

What James is talking about here is the guy who whenever some new difficulty comes up, some trial, some genuine personal tragedy, he starts to doubt God’s goodness, or his providence. Or he starts to doubt the effectiveness of the cross of Christ. He starts to wonder if maybe he needs to add something else to get peace with God. This is what it means to be driven by the winds.

Or whenever God lays some hard obedience on him, he quickly starts to justify his disobedience and unwillingness to obey. “It isn’t fair. Other people have it easier. My situation is unique.” This is what it means to be unstable.

Verse 7, **“For that person must not suppose that he will receive anything from the Lord.”**

What he’s saying here is that this promise, ‘ask and I will give you wisdom’ just doesn’t apply to this person. He’s not saying, ‘I won’t do anything good for him at all.’ Even the most hardened, anti-Christian, God-hater in the world receives a thousand gifts of God’s kindness every single day.

What he’s saying is he shouldn’t *suppose*, he shouldn’t *presume*, he shouldn’t take for granted that God will answer his request.

He’s saying that he’s making a promise to a certain set of people. Those who are decided about God, those who are decided about Jesus, those who are decided about obedience. For them, there’s a promise, ‘ask and I will give you wisdom.’

Now, I want to circle back to pick something up that may have fallen out. Remember, this promise is to people who actually need help, not those who don’t need help in the first place. This promise is for those who lack wisdom. Doubt is not the same thing as being confused, weak, disoriented or just unsure what to think or to say or to do.

He’s not saying that you need to have all of your questions answered before he will help you with any of your questions. He’s not saying that you need to be walking in perfect obedience before he’ll help you walk in obedience. He’s not saying that you need to no longer need help before he will help you.

True faith can be faith that lacks wisdom, faith that needs wisdom.

This promise is for those who can say, “God, I know that you are good, but help me reconcile that with this thing in my life, or that thing happening in the world, or this thing in my friend’s life. You are good, help me understand, or give me peace. I believe, help my unbelief.”

There’s a mile of difference between, “I know you’re good, but this thing is hard, help me,” and “I’m not sure if you’re good until you convince me to my satisfaction.”

There’s a mile of difference between “I’m holding on to your goodness, please help me keep holding on,” and “convince me.”

Then verse 8, **“he is a double-minded man, unstable in all his ways.”**

Now again, he’s not talking about the hardened unbeliever here. James is talking about the guy who is all for God in the sunshine, but when the storm comes, he waffles. When things are good, he thinks God is good, sovereign, and wise. But when hardship comes, he starts to doubt. When it’s convenient, he walks the walk. But when it gets hard, he’s gone. Double-minded. Sometimes faithful, sometimes not.

This is like the rocky soil that Jesus talks about in the parable of the four soils. Some seed falls on rocky soil, where the plant springs up, but has no roots. So as soon as a hot day comes, the plant withers and dies. In other words, they receive the Word when it’s easy, but bail when times get tough. Double-minded, unstable.

## **Doctrine: The Blessedness of God**

Ok, that's the text. Here's the summary again. God is good, he is generous and patient, and he will give you wisdom to think and act faithfully, if you 1) ask him, and 2) trust him.

This text is pretty application forward, but before we look at application, I want to pause and reflect on one doctrine a bit. There is one doctrine that I think both helps us understand this text, and drives the application of it.

This is a big one. The doctrine we need to reflect on is the blessedness of God. Or, in somewhat simpler terms, the happiness of God.

In 1 Timothy 1:11 Paul mentions, **“the gospel of the glory of the blessed God.”**

In 1 Timothy 6:15 Paul describes God as **“the blessed and only sovereign, the King of kings and Lord of lords.”**

It is somewhat oversimplifying, but in those two cases, 'blessed' could be translated as 'happy.' To be blessed means to possess what's good. God is the source and fountain of being, God is the source and fountain of goodness. God doesn't merely possess the supreme and infinite good. He is the supreme and infinite good. He is the source and fountain of happiness. He is infinite, unblemished happiness.

So, in Paul's words, we proclaim the gospel of the glory of the happy God. We serve the happy and only sovereign, the King of kings, and Lord of lords. We worship the happy God, we trust the happy God, we obey the happy God.

This is so important. Do you know that God is happy? Do you realize that God is perfectly, infinitely happy? Take all the happiness that you have ever experienced, all the beautiful moments, all the hard-won victories, all the moments of deep love and acceptance, all the joys and delights, and squish it into one moment. Take all the happiness of everyone that you've ever met, and squish it into one moment. Take all the happiness of everyone who ever has lived and ever will live, and squish it into one moment. Then take all the happiness that all the angels have ever experienced, who behold the face of God in sinless perfection, so, that's a lot of happiness, and squish it into one moment. Then add all of that up. Multiply it by ten. And that is a blip, a speck, compared to God's infinite happiness at any given moment.

God is not stingy. God is not irritable. God is not exasperated. God is not dour, and starchy. Holiness is not a frozen living death. Holiness is the fullness, the perfection of life. Holiness is the perfection of vitality and vibrancy. Holiness is laughter that shakes the mountains.

Beloved, this is so important for you. Do you believe that God is happy? Whether or not you do affects how you receive the gospel. It affects how you think about obedience to God. If God is happy, then obedience to his will means becoming happy like he is happy. If God is dour and tight, then obedience to his will means becoming dour and tight. And relevant to our passage today, whether or not you believe God is happy shapes whether and how you approach God in prayer. Is God happy? Or dour? Is God overflowing life and vitality? Is God generous and patient? Or stingy and close-fisted?

Christian, when you pray, do you realize that God is happy? And eager to make you happy just like he is happy?

I put together a little catechism for my kids. It's mostly questions from the Baptist catechism, simplified a little, and I added a few as well. One of my favorite questions in there is question number 6. "What is God like?" Ok, this is a window into my thought process. What do I want my two-year-old to know about the nature and attributes of God? "What is God like?" The answer that I have them memorize – "Good, strong, wise, and happy."

Christian, you need to know that God is good. You need to know that God is strong, no one turns back his hand. You need to know that God is wise, he knows what he's doing. And Christian, you need to know that God is *happy*. He gives generously to all without reproach.

## Application

Before we close out, there are a couple application points.

The first is simple. Pray. I touched on this before. But James is very straight about prayer. Don't forget to ask. He doesn't say, "if anyone lacks wisdom, it will be given him." He says, "if anyone lacks wisdom, *let him ask God*, and it will be given him." Sometimes we don't have simply because we don't actually ask. We think about it. We theologize about it. But we don't actually ask.

And let me just say this, praying while you're driving, or mowing the lawn, is great, there's nothing wrong with that. I encourage you to do that.

But make sure you actually take time to just pray while you pray. There should be a time in your day, every day, where all you are doing is praying. No distractions, no hurry, just prayer. Lifting your heart to God, lifting your needs to God. Doesn't have to be a long time. I think if you're trying to make sure that you pray for a certain amount of time, you're kind of missing the point, but there should be enough time that you're not rushed. Just say thank you for things, confess your sins, and ask for help.

If you pray through the Lord's prayer, Jesus' example of a good daily prayer, if you pray through the Lord's prayer, meaningfully, applying it phrase by phrase to yourself, adding in your own sins, and your own needs, what is that? Ninety seconds? That's a good daily prayer.

The practical teaching of the New Testament on prayer could be summed up in three main principles. 1) Prayer matters. If you pray, God does stuff, if you don't pray, then there are things that God won't do. 2) Prayer should be simple and to the point, not flowery or repetitive. 3) Prayer should be persistent. Don't give up after one prayer, or one month, or one year. Be patient, be persistent.

James says, if you need wisdom in the face of your trials, and you often will, ask God for help, and he will help you. Pray for your circumstances to improve, absolutely, that is good and right to pray for. But also pray for wisdom to think, talk, and act faithfully in the face of your hardship.

In other words, pray for your circumstances, but also pray for your sanctification.

The first application is prayer. The second application is to engage your doubts head on. If you're hearing this, and you're thinking, man, I think I'm the doubter, I'm the tossed to and fro by the waves guy, the unstable guy. One week, I'm all in, but then the next I'm sunk by some other issue.

One encouragement and three instructions for you.

The encouragement. You may very well be the doubter today (you might not be), the unstable guy today. But that just doesn't have to be the end of your story. That doesn't have to be the final word on you. Your story is far from over.

Now, three instructions.

First, don't fake it till you make it. With some issues you can just kind of move on. Sometimes you can just say, "I don't know what to do with this. Well, I don't need to understand everything." That's great, that's just humility. You don't need to make mountains out of molehills. But if you're consistently getting tripped up by some issue. Some concept or issue that's tempting you to doubt God's being, or goodness, or truthfulness, or love, whatever. Then don't just ignore it. Talk to someone. Talk to your parents, talk to your gospel life group leader, talk to me, or pastor Michael, or the other elders.

There's nothing wrong with having questions. And if you have doubts, there's nothing wrong with asking for help. And besides your own needs, there will be people who come behind you, who will one day come to you asking for help with their issues and doubts. You will only be able to actually help them if you deal with your doubts head on now.

Second, don't expect to have all of your questions answered to your full satisfaction. As you are talking through your doubts with someone, as you're working through things, you'll find that your issues will fall into one of two categories. Issues that the church has been thinking about for thousands of years that have good answers.

And issues that the church has been thinking about for thousands of years that just don't have good answers, but that a lot of helpful things have been written about anyway.

So first off, just as an exercise of intellectual humility, don't expect to have all your questions fully answered. God is God and we are creatures. He never promised to explain everything to us to our full satisfaction.

But also, just out of practical necessity. If you are seriously wrestling with God, the Word, the world and life, you'll never get to the end of your questions. So, at some point, you just need to say, "I don't know everything, I still have questions, and I am still going to investigate these things, but I know enough. I'm in."

Don't fake it till you make it. Don't expect to get all of your questions answered to your satisfaction. And third, don't think that you're the only one. Once you start opening up to others, you'll be surprised to find how many people have wrestled with the exact same question, or similar issues.

I've said it before, but I would guess, I could be wrong, but I would guess, that if you are losing sleep over some issue or some question, I personally have probably lost sleep over that same question too. You are not the only one. You are probably not the only one in *this room* to have wrestled with that question.

Talk to someone, approach it with humility, and don't think you're the only one.

## Conclusion

Wisdom begins with knowledge of God. **"The fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom, and knowledge of the Holy One is insight."** Wisdom flows out of faith.

Are you decided about God? Is he good? Is he wise? Is he in control? Is he happy? Or are you still on the fence?

Are you decided about Jesus? How will you have peace with God? Will you be justified by faith in Christ? Or are you trying to add something to his work?

Are you decided about obedience? Can you pray like Psalm 143:8, **"Make me know the way I should go, for to you I lift up my soul"**? Or do you functionally pray, "make me know the way I should go, and I'll take it into consideration." (I'll think about it, I'll weigh my options.)

Wisdom flows out of faith. God is good, he is happy, he is generous, he will help you, he will give you wisdom, if you will ask him, and if you will trust him.