

## TRUSTING THE TRUTH

### James 1:5-11

Over the last two weeks we've looked at the first chapter of James and discussed the author's instructions on Triumphant Over Troubles and Tripping Up the Tempter. Today we continue in our examination of the book of James with **verses 5-11 in Chapter one**—learning how to Track the Truth and Trust it.

James bases his instruction on the realization that the average person tends to turn to God as a last resource in trying to discern truth, rather than at the beginning of the process. He writes in **verse 5**, "If any of you lacks wisdom, he should ask God, who gives generously to all without finding fault and all will be given to him." James instructs us to seek God's wisdom first in problem-solving, but we are reluctant to try the truth, or to trust the truth of God's will and way.

In a recent Frank and Ernest comic strip, one of the characters was pictured with one of those "List of Things To Do Today" forms. The first item listed was "Make list of things to do tomorrow." This is exactly our approach in asking God's wisdom to fill our hearts and minds.

The great evangelical pastor A. W. Tozer shares this insight:

**"Most of us go through life praying a little, planning a little, jockeying for position, hoping but never being quite certain of anything, and always secretly afraid that we will miss the way. This is a tragic waste of truth and never gives rest to the heart.**

**"There is a better way. It is to repudiate our own wisdom and take instead the infinite wisdom of God. Our insistence upon seeing ahead is natural enough, but it is a real hindrance to our spiritual progress. God has charged Himself with full responsibility for our eternal happiness and stands ready to take over the management of our lives the moment we turn in faith to Him." (1)**

Have you ever wondered what would have happened if Adam and Eve had gone back to God after they heard the offer from the Tempter, and said to God: "Let us tell you what the Tempter said

about you. Is it true?"

You see, James teaches us that God gives generously to all without finding fault. Now before you call Adam and Eve stupid and immature, think about the decisions you have made in your life without consulting God--and God's guidance in this book.

Let me explain it in a helpful way in a story told by Gordon MacDonald, an evangelical pastor near Boston, Mass. He shares:

"Once a foolish man built a boat. His intention was that it would be the grandest, the most talked-about boat that ever sailed from the harbor of the boat club of which he was a member. That the boat builder would come to be known as a foolish man had nothing to do with his ability to build, nor did it have to do with his capacity to work hard. It also was not a reference to his personality, for he was a most pleasant person! It was how he built his boat.

"His driving passion was to build a sailboat that would be so wonderful that it would draw the praise and accolades of his fellow yacht club members. In his quest, he paid great attention to the details of the boat that were visible, above the water line. The things that drew the oohs and ahs of others. But he reasoned, 'why spend time and money on that part of the boat that's not seen, that which is below the water line.' You know the story. Sure enough, on launch day everyone was impressed with his beautiful creation. Sails were brightly colored, brass gleamed, teakwood was luxurious. Everything was wonderful until he set sail and encountered a storm. Suddenly, his failure to give adequate regard for his keel and ballast proved his undoing. The boat capsized when others with proper ballast would have righted themselves. In his vanity and attention only to what was seen above the water line, all was lost.

“Only when the wreckage of the ‘Persona’ was washed ashore did the drowned man’s boat-club friends discover all of this. ‘Look,’ they said, ‘this boat lacks an adequate keel, and there is far more weight above the waterline than below. Only a fool would design and build a boat like this, much less sail in it. A man who builds only above the waterline does not realize that he has built less than half a boat.’” (2)

James urged the Christian church not to be foolish and build only half a church and live out only half a faith. We are not building and being a church for the applause and admiration of people. We are building it to be faithful to the awesome God we serve and love.

Remember how James already noted that trouble and temptation come unexpectedly like storms into every life. This is why we need to seek wisdom from above. We need to try and trust the truth from God, rather than from the Tempter. We can track the truth laid out in **The Holy Bible!**

You know how the American Express Card advertises itself: “Don’t leave home without it.” Well, James is saying about God’s wisdom: “Don’t build your life without it.”

Very quickly, I want to share three reasons why we need to seek wisdom from above--from God.

**First, God leads us into the light, not the darkness.**

From Isaiah 42:16 we learn:

**Here is His promise: “And I will bring the blind by a way that they knew not; I will lead them in paths that they have not known: I will make darkness light before them, and crooked things straight. These things will I do unto them, and not forsake them.”**

You see, you cannot have a foot in the camp of darkness and one in the light. You cannot have a double-mind because you are always at war with yourself. You cannot have peace. Jesus said,

"No man can have two masters; . . . you serve one and hate the other." You cannot have a foot in two different rowboats. We must choose the light over the darkness. We can't have it both ways.

Perhaps, Calvin Miller expressed it best:

**I met a man who kept two heads.  
And thus he really kept two minds.  
His heads fell into quarrelling.  
And bit each other very blind.  
He died a month thereafter.  
Where teeth and bloody faces fought.  
So all duplicity brings death.  
In quarrelling, doubled thought. (3)**

Dr. William Sloan Coffin often told the story of a clown who began his performance on a stage that was dark--except for one spotlight. The clown began to search for something that was evidently lost. Afterwards a policeman came upon the scene and asked, "Have you lost something?"

**"The key to my house," replied the clown. "If I can't find it, I can't go home tonight."**

With that, the policeman joined in the search with great intensity. Finally he asked, "Are you sure you lost it here?"

**"Oh, no, I lost it over there," said the clown, pointing to a darkened part of the stage.**

"Then why on earth are you looking here?"

**"Because there's no light over there." (4)**

James knew that to find the light, we had to seek wisdom from God--not darkness from human beings. It is God's perspective that leads us to the light. We must be willing to go. James is right in verses 6, 7, and 8: a doubting, double-minded person will never find the light while looking for the keys to life in the darkness.

**Second, God's wisdom leads us into what is right.**

Unlike riches and positions of high places, which will all fade away in our life, God's wisdom and ways will not. As Martin Luther said, "God's truth abideth still"--despite the Tempter's ability to seduce the human mind to follow other ways and idols.

Greg Laurie tells of the Temple of the Thousand Buddhas, "an unusual place of worship in Kyoto, Japan, where worshipers can literally design their own deity. The temple is filled with more than a thousand likenesses of Buddha--each one a little different from the next. Worshipers can pick and choose which they like best. Devotees of Buddha often try to find the likeness they feel most resembles themselves. Then they bow before it in worship. Isn't this a bit like many church-goers in the 90s whose search for "quick-fix" religion often ends in compromise?" (5)

You see, God does not need a makeover--God's word gives us a makeover from evil to good.

And God's word is reliable in its totality. We can't just pick and choose the parts we like. We are Christians, not Buddhists. We must be obedient to God's word, not reshape the sacred image to reflect ourselves. How can we sing that great hymn?

**Guide me, O Thou great Jehovah,  
Pilgrim through this barren land**

when we have no inclination to go and do what God has laid out in his guidebook--the Bible? We must be willing to submit and surrender all to the superior wisdom of God.

As Duffy Robbins has said:

**God has a plan,  
Man has a problem.  
The choice is up to you!**

The choice is whether or not to surrender all to God's perfect plan. When we do surrender, we have the mind of God and not a double-mind fighting and quarreling with itself.

The Bible--God's guidebook--helps us to make the right choice, to encounter the truth of God. We also are given a great teacher to help us in that pursuit--the Holy Spirit. Do you know that the highest compliment you can give God is to trust Him enough to seek His Will for your life, and to allow Him to deliver the goods?

I recently heard an insightful definition of the word "Ego." Ego stands for "**Edging God Out.**" James writes to let us know that we need to edge out our wills--not God's will.

Perhaps Oswald Chambers said it best, "Every element of our own self-reliance must be put to death by the power of God. The moment we recognize our complete weakness and our dependence upon Him will be the very moment that the Spirit of God will exhibit his power."

Did you know that once the Roman Emperor Diocletian ordered the Bible to be burned? He even built a monument and engraved the words "**Extincto Nomene Christianorum**" (meaning "The name Christian is extinguished"). Twenty-five years later, however, Diocletian was dead, and the new emperor, Constantine, ordered 50 copies of the Bible to be prepared at government expense. Others have tried to destroy the Bible as well, but like Diocletian they are gone and the Bible is still here.

God's word can never be chained--because it is the truth. The word of God never yields to anything except the truth.

I recently read these facts which make me tremble for our nation:

- \* *The National Institute on Drug Abuse reports for 1991 (the most recent year figures were available) that 6.4 million Americans are addicted to drugs.*
- \* *Nearly half of U.S. college students are binge drinkers.*
- \* *Juvenile arrests for violent crimes rose 68 percent from 1984 to 1993.*
- \* *Eighty-nine percent of those responding to a Time/CNN survey expressed fear that crime is getting worse.*

It is clear to me that we as individuals and as a nation must seek the wisdom of God--not the sinking and shifting opinions of human beings. We need the truth. In our helplessness we are sinking and we are sinking fast. However, when we reach out for a love greater than we ourselves could ever express, seek a truth deeper than we could ever articulate, yearn for beauty richer than we ourselves could ever contain--when we too cry out "Lord, save me," the God who died to make us holy does indeed transform us. We cry out for a thimbleful of help, and we receive an oceanful in return. (6) James teaches us in verse 5, "God gives generously to all without finding fault."

**Third, we ask God's wisdom in discerning new directions for our lives.**

Some of you might remember John Erlichman, who was considered the third most powerful man in the United States during the Nixon presidency. When he was released from prison he said, "I have lived 50 years of my life without ever coming to grips with the very basic question of what is and what is not important, of what is and is not right and wrong, of what is and is not valuable and worthwhile."

James wouldn't let the Christian church forget the basic questions of life. That is why this epistle is often called the Instruction Manual.

Recently, a gifted devotional writer, whose books have always provided spiritual nourishment for my journey of faith, shared his own struggle with God's will for his life. I thought, "If Henri Nouwen can be so honest, so can I." Henri writes:

**While realizing that ten years ago I didn't have the faintest idea that I would end up where I now am, I still like to keep up the illusion that I am in control of my own life. I like to decide what I most need, what I will do next, what I want to accomplish, and how others will think of me. While being so busy running my own life, I become oblivious to the gentle movements of the Spirit of God within me, pointing me in directions quite different from my own.** 7

It requires a lot of inner solitude and silence to become aware of these divine movements. God does not shout, scream, or push. The Spirit of God is soft and gentle like a small voice or a light breeze. It is the spirit of love. Maybe we still do not fully believe that God's Spirit is, indeed, the Spirit of love, always leading us deeper into love. Maybe we still distrust the Spirit, afraid to be led to places where our freedom is taken away. Maybe we still think of God's Spirit as an enemy who wants something of us that is not good for us. (7)

However, James reassures us "that we lack wisdom--God does not." God is not the enemy, but a generous giver.

God's wisdom - leads us to **light**, not darkness.

God's wisdom - leads us to what is **right**, not to fads.

God's wisdom - provides **sight** and insight.

Try **god's truth** - not the Tempter's deception.

Yes, real knowledge of the God of the Bible reveals truth to the believer, and that is better than power, position, and a full pocketbook.

The promise never fades: God's wisdom gives a clear perspective that allows us to trust the truth--and follow in the tracks of the master.

Amen and amen.

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