



Serman Study Guide

When You Need Wisdom – James 1:1-8

February 6 & 7, 2016

Opening Question

In your mind, take a snapshot of your life right now. Imagine there is space at the top of that photo to write a label. Would you label your life as “My **easy** life” or “My **difficult** life” right now? Why?

Read Together

Read **James 1:1**. As we begin our study of James, you should know a few things about this book. First of all, as you can tell from its opening words, it is a letter. Its author is James, the half-brother of Jesus. He is writing to “the twelve tribes – Jewish believers scattered abroad.” These are Jewish Christians who have been forced to flee Israel for their lives, spreading across the Roman Empire. James wrote this letter to encourage them and to teach them how to live wise lives in the face of difficulty. The year this letter was written was likely just before 50 AD. It is the earliest of the New Testament letters. Now read **James 1:2-8** as a group.

Big Idea

When troubles come, live your life to demonstrate the value of belonging to God.

Discussion Questions

1. James was one of several brothers of Christ, probably the oldest since he heads a list given in Matthew 13:55. Prior to Christ’s resurrection, James did not believe Jesus to be the Messiah. He even challenged and misunderstood his mission in John 7:2-5. But later all that changed. What do we know about James from the following verses? 1 Corinthians 15:7; Galatians 1:19 and 2:9; Acts 12:17; Acts 15:13. As well, the historian Eusebius tells us that James was martyred in AD 62.
2. Read verses 2-5 again. In what ways do you read what James writes as being countercultural?
3. What happens when our faith is tested and troubles come our way?
4. How are perseverance and completeness developed in us by the troubles we face?
5. Why would it be that we need to ask for wisdom when we are going through troubles?
6. Under pressure, how does the person described in verses 5 and 6 contrast with the person described in verses 6 through 8?
7. Is it possible to do what James asks us to do when we go through painful and difficult times? Is this possible as a human being? If so, how?
8. Think back to a recent time of trouble or difficulty in your life. Did you respond in the way James advises? If so, how were you able to do this? If not, how might you be able to do so in the future?

Challenge

In these verses, James teaches that we can experience joy when we’d normally focus on our pain, we can experience growth when we’d normally focus on surviving and we can experience the desire to ask God for wisdom when we’d normally ask God to make our pain disappear. But we can only enter into those experiences by the power of the Holy Spirit. When we do, though, our lives communicate to those around us that there’s great value in belonging to God. Which one of those three experiences is most difficult for you and thus, most important for you to focus on this week? How will you do that?

continued on the next page

Prayer

Pray in two directions as you close. First, pray for persecuted people around the globe who are in the same spot as these first century Christians. This is a huge problem today. More followers of Christ died in the 20th century because of their faith than died in the 19 centuries previous. Read Hebrews 13:3 and then pray for our persecuted brothers and sisters around the world (for more info go to *Voice of the Martyrs*)... Second, take time to pray for each other regarding what James 1:1-8 teaches us. Have each group member share an area of needed wisdom when it comes to difficult time and pray for one another.

Next Steps

This week, take time to read through James' letter a time or two. Everyone at RockPointe is being encouraged to ingest this letter – to read it, listen to it on **YouTube**, work through it paragraph by paragraph, read it through in a variety of translations at www.biblegateway.com and even to memorize it. This week, take some time to ingest it on your own and allow this tiny book to invade your life.