

When Common Sense Isn't Enough
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James 1:2-18 (New International Version)

What would you say is the difference between “common sense” and “wisdom”?

Harriet Beecher Stowe:

Common sense is the knack of seeing things as they are, and doing things as they ought to be done.

Emerson said:

“Common sense is genius dressed in its working clothes.”

Voltaire (French Philosopher and Writer):

“Common sense is not so common.”

What about wisdom?

- There is the wisdom that comes through experience in life.

Lincoln said

“I do not think much of a man who is not wiser today than he was yesterday.”

- Common sense will get you through the day to day “stuff” of life. But when times are tough and the stakes are high we need WISDOM.
- A HIGHER level of wisdom that is a GIFT OF GOD.
- Wisdom that comes through the experience of asking and trusting Him for it.

Proverbs 9:10 (New International Version)

¹⁰ "The fear of the LORD is the beginning of wisdom,
and knowledge of the Holy One is understanding.

- The book of James like the book of Proverbs is a book of WISDOM
- The first kind of Wisdom in Chapter 1 is: Wisdom For Trials

James 1

²Consider it pure joy, my brothers, whenever you face trials of many kinds,

- Joy in trials? Seriously?

- The word JOY means to be GLAD – James is saying “be glad” (not the same as “happy”). Can you think of some real life “painful” experiences that you weren’t “happy” to go through but you were GLAD you did?
 - Child birth – Though I have no personal knowledge...doesn’t look like fun to me! But oh, the payoff at the end!
 - Education – The rigors of attending a “tough” school
 - Fitness – Running in the Texas heat
 - Medical treatment – Taking your child to the doctor for treatment/shot
- Notice the word “whenever” you face trials. Not IF but WHEN. The old saying is “There’s nothing sure in life but (death and taxes) add two more: TRIALS and TEMPTATIONS.
- The word TRIALS means an experiment or proving – Proving the purity or strength of something or someone.
- We might think of the refining of gold...they use heat and chemicals and pressure
 - Have you ever seen a picture of UNREFINED GOLD? What does it look like? Not very pretty...some shiny spots...but a lot of “junk” too.
 - God tests us to bring out the BEST. Satan tempts us to bring out the WORST.
 - If we allow God to do His work of refinement we can be PURE GOLD
 - Satan encourages us to bypass the process and pain...he whispers: “You don’t have to be PURE gold. You can have some shiny spots and not go through the pain and heat. You can just be shiny on Sunday!”
- Look at verse 3:

³because you know that the testing of your faith develops perseverance. ⁴Perseverance must finish its work so that you may be mature and complete, not lacking anything.

- That word “perseverance” in verse 3 or “patience” in some translations is not PASSIVE but ACTIVE. We are not just to sit and sulk but ACTIVELY focus on God and what He is doing through the trial.
- Verse 4 – Perseverance when finished = maturity and completeness
- The story of a man; a cocoon; and a dead butterfly
- God uses the challenges of life to make us STRONGER
- We need to be careful not to “waste” them but submit to God and embrace his refinement process

Adrian Rogers said The pressure of trials and temptations play another important role: They are what “keeps us close to God.”

⁵If any of you lacks wisdom, he should ask God, who gives generously to all without finding fault, and it will be given to him.

- My “standard” prayer request: WISDOM. It covers SO MUCH!
- Basically we’re asking WHAT HE WANTS US TO DO in this situation
- There is a command (ask God) and a promise (and it will be given)

John MacArthur puts it this way:

"If any of you lack wisdom, let him ask of God," that is a command for us to pray, "let trouble drive you to God, let trouble drive you to prayer." And may I suggest this to you? If you are going through some deep trouble in your life and it has not enriched your prayer life and has not driven you to the throne of grace, then maybe the trouble will keep going on until you finally wake up and begin to do that. The source of wisdom is there if we will go there.

- There is Biblical precedent for asking God for Wisdom:
 - In 1 Kings 3:5-12 As Solomon became King of Israel God offers him anything he desires. What does he ask for?

⁹ *So give your servant a discerning heart to govern your people and to distinguish between right and wrong. For who is able to govern this great people of yours?"*

¹⁰ *The Lord was pleased that Solomon had asked for this. ...¹² I will do what you have asked. I will give you a wise and discerning heart, so that there will never have been anyone like you, nor will there ever be.*

God is pleased when we ask for WISDOM. But it's not just asking...verse 6:

⁶But when he asks, he must believe and not doubt, because he who doubts is like a wave of the sea, blown and tossed by the wind. ⁷That man should not think he will receive anything from the Lord; ⁸he is a double-minded man, unstable in all he does.

- What are we questioning when we ASK God and THEN DOUBT He'll come through?
 - God's very character and the truthfulness of His Word.

Oswald Chambers (just this week!) My Utmost...July 16

Fill your mind with the thought that God is there. And once your mind is truly filled with that thought, when you experience difficulties it will be as easy as breathing for you to remember, "My heavenly Father knows all about this!" ...God is my Father, He loves me, and I will never think of anything that He will forget, so why should I worry?

- Next James teaches us about: Wisdom About Wealth
- Look at verses 9 - 11

⁹The brother in humble circumstances ought to take pride in his high position. ¹⁰But the one who is rich should take pride in his low position, because he will pass away like a wild flower. ¹¹For the sun rises with scorching heat and withers the plant; its blossom falls and its beauty is destroyed. In the same way, the rich man will fade away even while he goes about his business.

- Reminds us of the Sermon on the Mount doesn't it? In Matthew 6 Jesus said:

¹⁹"Do not store up for yourselves treasures on earth,... ²⁰But store up for yourselves treasures in heaven, ... ²¹For where your treasure is, there your heart will be also.

²⁴"No one can serve two masters... You cannot serve both God and Money.

- If wealth is your focus then it's a problem whether you have a lot or nothing!
- James tried to neutralize class distinctions by taking the focus off wealth for both rich and poor
 - If you're poor James said you should be saying "my poverty doesn't make me LESS, I'm a child of the King!"
 - If you're rich your boast should be "my riches don't make me MORE, what makes me MORE is that I'm a child of the King!"
 - And oh by the way, even if I have riches...they can be gone just like those dried up hydrangeas in my garden! Can you say RECESSION? Can you say 401K becomes 201K?
- Our own Pastor shared this "Thought of the Day" on Twitter this week: "Epicurus - Add not to a man's possessions but take away from his desires",Genuine givers are genuinely grateful for what's been given"

- Next James focuses us on: Wisdom for Temptations. Look at verses 12-15:

¹²Blessed is the man who perseveres under trial, because when he has stood the test, he will receive the crown of life that God has promised to those who love him.

¹³When tempted, no one should say, "God is tempting me." For God cannot be tempted by evil, nor does he tempt anyone; ¹⁴but each one is tempted when, by his own evil desire, he is dragged away and enticed. ¹⁵Then, after desire has conceived, it gives birth to sin; and sin, when it is full-grown, gives birth to death.

- This is a different kind of "trial" than in verses 2-4. In verse 13 it is "specific enticement to sin."
- Look at the progression of TEMPTATION to SIN in verses 13-15

¹³When tempted, no one should say, "God is tempting me." For God cannot be tempted by evil, nor does he tempt anyone; ¹⁴but each one is tempted when, by his own evil desire, he is dragged away and enticed. ¹⁵Then, after desire has conceived, it gives birth to sin; and sin, when it is full-grown, gives birth to death.

- God doesn't tempt us...he cannot and still be God!
- Our temptation starts with our own "evil desires"

- We're always looking to blame someone else aren't we? It goes back to our first "dad and mom" in the Garden of Eden. Can't you hear 'em?
 - "It wasn't ME it was HER!"
 - "It wasn't ME it was that SNAKE!"
 - "And the snake said, it wasn't ME it was GOD!"
- Ever since that day we've all been driven by the temptations of our evil nature
- And look at the imagery in verse 14: THEN we are "dragged away and enticed" I think of the description of the "adulteress" in Proverbs 7:

¹⁰ Then out came a woman to meet him,
dressed like a prostitute and with crafty intent.

¹¹ (She is loud and defiant,
her feet never stay at home;

¹² now in the street, now in the squares,
at every corner she lurks.)

¹³ She took hold of him and kissed him
and with a brazen face she said:

¹⁴ "I have fellowship offerings ^[a] at home;
today I fulfilled my vows.

¹⁵ So I came out to meet you;
I looked for you and have found you!

¹⁶ I have covered my bed
with colored linens from Egypt.

¹⁷ I have perfumed my bed
with myrrh, aloes and cinnamon.

¹⁸ Come, let's drink deep of love till morning;
let's enjoy ourselves with love!

¹⁹ My husband is not at home;
he has gone on a long journey.

²⁰ He took his purse filled with money
and will not be home till full moon."

²¹ With persuasive words she led him astray;
she seduced him with her smooth talk.

- ²² All at once he followed her
 like an ox going to the slaughter,
 like a deer ^[b] stepping into a noose ^[c]
- ²³ till an arrow pierces his liver,
 like a bird darting into a snare,
 little knowing it will cost him his life.
- ²⁴ Now then, my sons, listen to me;
 pay attention to what I say.
- ²⁵ Do not let your heart turn to her ways
 or stray into her paths.
- ²⁶ Many are the victims she has brought down;
 her slain are a mighty throng.
- ²⁷ Her house is a highway to the grave, ^[d]
 leading down to the chambers of death.

- Temptation is the “adulteress” who is trying to seduce you and I to be unfaithful to our first love: Jesus Christ!
- I’m not just talking about sexual temptation...James uses words like “entice” and “dragged away” as a metaphor for ALL TEMPTATION to the ultimate infidelity: unfaithfulness to God through SIN.
- Then as if James hadn’t painted a vivid enough picture for us he shifts to the imagery of conception and birth.
- If we let temptation turn into CONCEIVED SIN that goes FULL TERM and is BIRTHED and then allowed to become FULL GROWN it’s a BIRTH that leads to what? DEATH. Another reason God couldn’t tempt us...he’s not the “author of death” but the “author of life”
- Wow! Intimidating stuff! But there’s good news!

Though I prefer quoting great Christians over Greek philosophers, this one is good:
 Aristotle said

“I count him braver who conquers his desires than him who conquers his enemies; for the hardest victory is the victory over self.”

- The victory over self is so hard that we can’t do it apart from God’s power!
- As I said last week finishing Galatians, we serve a Savior who understands our temptations and is there to help us.

Hebrews 4:15 (New International Version)

¹⁵For we do not have a high priest who is unable to sympathize with our weaknesses, but we have one who has been tempted in every way, just as we are—yet was without sin.

- Jesus was just as much man as if he hadn't been God
- But he was ALSO just as much God as if he hadn't been man
- Though he was sinless...he was tempted in his humanity just as we are!
- By the way, in case you didn't know, It's not a sin to be tempted!
- The sin comes when we YIELD to temptation. And the good news is in...

1 Corinthians 10:13 (New International Version)

¹³No temptation has seized you except what is common to man. And God is faithful; he will not let you be tempted beyond what you can bear. But when you are tempted, he will also provide a way out so that you can stand up under it.

- Finally, James gives us Wisdom About God's Gifts in verses 16-18

¹⁶Don't be deceived, my dear brothers. ¹⁷Every good and perfect gift is from above, coming down from the Father of the heavenly lights, who does not change like shifting shadows. ¹⁸He chose to give us birth through the word of truth, that we might be a kind of firstfruits of all he created.

Here it is in the New Revised Power Translation:

- Don't let anybody fool you...GOD ONLY WANTS TO GIVE YOU WHAT'S GOOD!
- And even better, HE NEVER CHANGES and HE'LL NEVER ABANDON YOU
- And even better than that...HE CONSIDERS YOU HIS PRIDE AND JOY! THE BEST STUFF HE MADE!
- Do you need JOY IN TIMES OF TRIAL? ---- ASK HIM!
- Do you need TO UNDERSTAND THAT YOUR WORTH IS NOT ABOUT YOUR BANK ACCOUNT? ---- ASK HIM!
- Do you need DELIVERANCE FROM TEMPTATIONS? ---- ASK HIM!
- He's YOUR DADDY! JUST ASK!

Gerald Crabb wrote a song we hear a lot here at FBCW. And every time it is sung the response is dramatic because it resonates with the whole congregation. You know it. The chorus reads like this:

*He never promised that the cross would not get heavy
 And the hill would not be hard to climb
 He never offered our victories without fighting
 But He said help would always come in time
 Just remember when your standing in the valley of decision
 And the adversary says give in
 Just hold on, our Lord will show up
 And He will take you through the fire again*