



Living in the good of what we believe: practical pointers from James

Follow up on Session 2: Living wisely

In his letter, James has the following things to say about wisdom:

“If any of you lacks wisdom, you should ask God, who gives generously to all without finding fault, and it will be given to you.” (James 1:5)

“Who is wise and understanding among you? Let them show it by their good life, by deeds done in the humility that comes from wisdom” (James 3:13)

“... the wisdom that comes from heaven is first of all pure; then peace-loving, considerate, submissive, full of mercy and good fruit, impartial and sincere.” (James 3:17)

But what is wisdom? In his introduction to James’ letter in *The Message* Eugene Peterson suggests that, “Wisdom is not primarily knowing the truth, although it certainly includes that; it is skill in living. For, what good is truth if we don’t know how to live it? Or – in my paraphrase of Peterson’s words, “Wisdom is increasingly knowing what Jesus would do and being able to do it. In all of life; not just the ‘spiritual’ bits.”

To consider...

As for Session 1, I have listed some ways that you might like to follow up on the material from Session 2 and, as before, I suggest that you focus on just one or two rather than planning to touch on all of them. My God bless you richly as you wait on him!

1. As I asked the break out groups during the session: In which aspect of your life would you especially like to grow in wisdom? It might be in your work (your *work* is what’s on your job list, whether or not you are paid for doing it!), in your household, in family relationships, in your friendships, regarding your health or handling your finances, for example. Or perhaps you would particularly value more wisdom as you navigate the current challenges of dealing with Covid-19. Spend some time sharing that aspect of your life with God and ask him to give you wisdom, as per James 1:5. Take some time now – and at future times – to listen out for what he may want to say to you on the matter.

2. Try this thought experiment. Imagine wearing a webcam that records all that you do and say over a day, and then reviewing the recording. As you review the day in your imagination, can you identify two or three specific contexts where you really could have done with greater wisdom in discerning what best to do. Offer them to God and ask him to help you to grow in wisdom in those contexts, both in advance and as they come up again.
3. Read “The Practice of the Presence of God” by Brother Lawrence (around £4 from Amazon) and resolve to grow in practicing the presence of God as you go about your daily work. What do you suppose the benefits of growing in doing that might be? To you? To those around you?
4. Read the LICC booklet, “The one about...”, in which eight Christians describe their experiences of “discovering God in their everyday lives”, and ask God if there are ways in which he would like you to discover him more in your everyday life. I will happily send you a copy of the booklet for free if you ask me. If you’ve read it before, read it again, prayerfully!
5. Bev Shepherd (LICC) has written very helpfully about the challenges that Covid-19 has posed – and is posing - for us. She says, “When change is signalled (by which she means such things as an increase in lockdown restrictions), we often think that our greatest need is a clear destination and route map for how to get there. We want to be in control. It is **as we pause and wait on God** that a new awareness of our true needs emerges. These may be trust, comfort, healing, energy, or the patience to await God’s timing. By his Spirit, God guides, comforts, strengthens, and equips us. That guidance is rarely a detailed map with a marked route – it is more often a lamp to our feet (Psalm 119:105), showing us the next step. Obedience to that step then leads to a further step or pause. Gradually, as we are guided through this phase of disorientation, we notice our focus shifting from arrival at a destination to how we journey; from achievement to purpose; from status to identity. As Henri Nouwen notes, ‘Our lives are not problems to be solved but journeys to be taken with Jesus, our friend and finest guide’. And so, let our confidence be in the one who journeys with us.” If this ‘chimes’ with you, why not set aside some time for “pausing and waiting” on God and ask Him to speak to you and grow you in wisdom regarding these matters?
6. The better you know someone (including God!) the easier it is to know how to please them. Is God asking you to make a move to get to know him better? Might it be through prayer? Why not create and use a prayer diary or establish a new habit of prompted or conversational prayer? Why not ask two or three fellow Christians to share their prayer experience with you as you plan?
7. Many Christians find that having a regular time of bible reading and prayer each day (often helped by the bible notes that many organisations publish) is a great way of getting to know God better. If that’s not currently your practice – or what you currently do has become rather dry – why not make a fresh start. Again, ask two or three folks you think may already do this to share their experiences as you make your plans.