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Oaks Early Risers Bible Class

The Oaks Baptist Church
Grand Prairie, Texas

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FOOD FOR THOUGHT

THOUGHT FOR THE WEEK:
Learn to doubt your doubts and believe your beliefs

POEM FOR THE WEEK:
When faith grows weak and doubts arise, Recall God's love and tender care; Remind yourself of all He's done And of those times He answered prayer.
—D. De Haan

SCRIPTURE FOR THE WEEK:
And Thomas answered and said to Him, "My Lord and my God!"
(John 20:28 NKJV)
(from "Our Daily Bread", Aug 12, 2012)

Series: Many Faces of Wisdom

UNIT: Faith and Wisdom in James

NEXT WEEK

Hearing and Doing (James 1:19-27)

Faith and Wisdom James 1:1-11

Lesson Background and Introduction

Tradition has taken the author of the book of James to refer to James who was the half-brother of Jesus (Galatians 1:19). Along with the other brothers of Jesus, James did not believe in Jesus during Jesus' lifetime (John 7:3-5). But when the Day of Pentecost arrived after Jesus' resurrection, they had come around (Acts 1:14). Paul indicates that James himself had been a witness of the risen Christ (1 Corinthians 15:3-7). James had become a leader in the Jerusalem church. His exact role is not specified, but Paul associates him with the apostles on at least one occasion (Galatians 1:19). Paul also lists James among the "pillars" of the church (Galatians 2:9); James was a leader in a group that included apostles and elders (Acts 15). We see James's impact on the first-century church in the account of what is called the Jerusalem Council as he gave the final, decisive word on the matter at hand (Acts 15:13-21). The opening lines of the book of James set us up for our study of the letter as a whole. These themes are the reality of trials, the need for wisdom, and the reality of economic privation. The trials we face produce the need to ask God for wisdom and can involve economic considerations. Above all, James impresses on us our need for God's wisdom and our inability to live faithful lives apart from it. Only by seeking God wholeheartedly will we continue to be formed into the kind of people He desires us to be.

(Adapted from the NIV Standard Lesson Commentary)

Expect Problems - The Book of James was likely written by Jesus' half-brother James, who wrote this letter to the new and now persecuted Christians in the Roman world. Some call James the Proverbs of the New Testament because it outlines several practical principles for living a wise Christian life, especially in the face of difficulty. James started by saying to expect adversities and struggles. They may come because of personal circumstances, sickness, injuries, or persecution from your commitment to Christianity, Jesus Himself said, "In the world ye will have tribulation" (John 16:33, KJV).

Rejoice: God Is in Control - However, James said you can experience joy amid troubles. How is that possible? James outlined several ways. Joy is produced when the individual is convinced of the sovereignty of God. The Holy Spirit can give confidence in an extremely challenging situation that God's truth and strength will be shown. When James says to "count it all joy," he is using a financial term. It means to evaluate, to set new goals and priorities. The spiritual aspect of one's life becomes more important than the creature comforts. Trials bring about endurance and patience. When we allow God to work in us, it develops our maturity in Christ.

Wisdom from Heaven - James also advised the suffering believer to ask for God's wisdom in the middle of problems. That wisdom begins with reverencing God, committing to following His instructions no matter what and seeing Him and Him alone as the source of true wisdom. We also must not listen with one ear at heaven's door and the other tuned to the world: nothing but confusion will result. It is better to be rich with the wealth of God's wisdom because it cannot be lost or taken away. God is always ready, available and ever-present when we request His wisdom.

(Adapted from the Echoes Commentary)

NOTES AND CROSS-REFERENCES

Wisdom in Trials (James 1:1-4)

Trials are not temptations (1-2)

- Trials are to purify (Job 23:10)
- Trials are to influence obedience (Ps 119:67)
- Trials are to aid in achieving eternal glory (2 Cor 4:17)
- Trials are to be expected in this life (1 Peter 4:12)

Testing of faith to strengthen (3)

- Testing refines (Ps 66:10)
- Testing proves faith genuine (1 Peter 1:7)
- Testing aids in receiving God's inheritance (Heb 11:8)
- Testing to know what's in the heart (Deut 8:2)

Enhances patience (3)

- Patience to receive what has been promised (Heb 10:36)
- Patiently waiting on God (Ps 40:1)
- Patience through God's Word (Rom 15:4)
- Patience that should be pursued (1 Tim 6:11)

Character development (4)

- Character development as a goal (Phil 3:12-14)
- Character development through God's Word (2 Tim 3:16-17)
- Character development through God's establishment (1 Peter 5:10)
- Character development through waiting on God (James 5:7-8)

Seeking Wisdom (James 1:5-8)

Need and promise of wisdom (5)

- Wisdom that comes from the fear of the Lord (Prov 3:7-8)
- Wisdom to be obedient to God's Word (Ps 119:34)
- Wisdom that comes from God (Prov 2:6-7)
- Wisdom that keeps and preserves (Prov 4:5-7)
- Wisdom that delivers (Prov 28:26)

Conditions for receiving wisdom (6)

- Receiving wisdom through belief (Matt 21:22)
- Receiving wisdom through prayer (1 Tim 2:8)
- Receiving wisdom through faith (Heb 11:6)
- Receiving wisdom through steadfastness (Heb 10:23)
- Receiving wisdom through asking with the right motives (James 4:3)

Role of doubt in faith (7-8)

- Faith without doubt causes things to be moved (Matt 21:21-22)
- Whatever is not from faith is sin (Rom 14:22-23)
- Doubt causes condemnation (John 3:18)
- Unbelief and doubt means that we are not one of Jesus' sheep (John 10:26)
- Doubt causes unbelief (John 20:24-29)

Wisdom in Handling Wealth (James 1:9-11)

Handle with humility (9-10)

- Humility that puts hope in God versus wealth (1 Tim 6:17)
- Humility that considers others better than ourselves (Phil 2:3)
- Humility that comes from being one of God's chosen people (Col 3:12)
- Humility that should be shown toward all men (Titus 3:2)

Handle as temporary (11)

- Handle as temporary because wealth will perish (Ps 49:12)
- Handle as temporary because wealth cannot be taken beyond death (Eccl 5:15)
- Handle as temporary because wealth cannot be depended on (Luke 12:20)
- Handle as temporary because wealth is earthly and will pass away (1 Cor 7:31)
- Handle as temporary because wealth will not last forever (James 5:1-2)