

**HOW TO MAKE UP YOUR MIND**  
**Developing a Faith That Works - Part 3 of 15**  
**James 1:5-11**  
**Rick Warren**

James 1:5-11

Immediately after speaking about problems (vs. 2-4), James dealt with the matter of decision-making. The quality of your life will be determined by the wisdom or foolishness of your decisions.

**I. THE PROBLEM:** \_\_\_\_\_

*"A doubleminded man is unstable in all his ways." (vs. 8 KJV)*

"DOUBLE-MINDED": "two-souled"

Indecision causes ...

\* Unstable \_\_\_\_\_

\* Unstable \_\_\_\_\_

\* Unstable \_\_\_\_\_

**II. THE PRESCRIPTION:** \_\_\_\_\_ (vs. 5-6a)

James suggests 3 practical steps:

STEP ONE: \_\_\_\_\_

*"If any of you lack wisdom ..." (vs. 5a)*

Definition of Wisdom:  
("sophia")

*"When pride comes, then comes disgrace, but with humility comes wisdom." Prov. 11:2*

STEP TWO: \_\_\_\_\_

*"... he should ask God ..." (vs 5b)*

*"It is the Lord who gives wisdom; from Him comes knowledge and understanding."*  
Prov. 2:6 (GN)

STEP THREE: \_\_\_\_\_

*"But when he asks, he must believe and not doubt ..." (vs. 6)*

*"And without faith it is impossible to please God, because anyone who comes to him must believe that he exists and that he rewards those who earnestly seek him."*

Heb. 11:6

### **III. THE PROMISE: GOD WILL GIVE IT!**

*"... Ask God, who gives generously to all without finding fault, and it will be given to him."*  
(vs. 5c)

How God gives:

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I want us to look at what James has to say on "How to Make up Your Mind". Life is full of decisions and life is basically a series of choices we make every day. We have to evaluate, decide, draw conclusions. Frank Borham said, "We make our decisions and then our decisions make us." The quality of your life will be determined by the kind of decisions you make in life. Some of them we regret, some of them we feel good about.

A young businessman went to an executive one day and asked for his wisdom, "What is the secret of business success?" The man said, "Wise decisions." "How can I learn to make wise decisions?" "Experience." "How do you get experience?" "Dumb decisions!"

The fact is, because we are human we all have a great possibility for error. We wait too long, we pay too much, we say the wrong thing. Some of you are making difficult decisions this very week. Some of you don't know it yet but you'll have a major decision tomorrow. Life is full of choices.

James talks about how to make decisions. How do you make up your mind? He gives us the problem, then he gives us the prescription, then he gives us the promise from God.

## **I. THE PROBLEM: INDECISION**

v. 8 "*A doubleminded man is unstable in all his ways.*" In Greek, the word "double-minded" literally means "two-souled" -- pulled apart in different directions, divided loyalties, divided priorities. James makes up the word, but we've all felt that way -- when you're trying to do two things at the same time. You're not really sure what you want.

Story by Dr. Seuss:

The Guy who Couldn't Make Up His Mind

Did I ever tell you about the young Zoad  
Who came to two signs in the fork of the road  
He looked one way and the other way too  
The Zoad had to make up his mind what to do.  
Well, the Zoad scratched his head,  
And his chin, and his pants.  
And he said to himself,  
"I'll be taking a chance.  
If I go to Place One, that place may be hot  
So how will I know if I like it or not.  
On the other hand, though, I'll feel such a fool

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If I go to Place Two and find it's too cool  
In that case I may catch a chill and turn blue.  
So Place One may be best and not Place Two.  
On the other hand, though, if Place One is too hot,  
I might get a terrible earache and die.  
On the other hand, though, if Place Two is too low,  
I might get some terrible pain in my toe  
So Place One may be best."  
And he started to go.  
Then he stopped and he said,  
"On the other hand though,  
On the other hand, other hand, other hand though...  
For thirty-six hours and one half that Zoad  
Made starts and made stops at the fork in the road  
Saying, "No, don't take a chance. It may not be right.  
Then he got an idea that was wonderfully bright.  
"Play safe," cried the Zoad, "I'll play safe, I'm no dunce.  
I'll simply start off to both places at once."  
And that's how the Zoad who would not take a chance  
Went no place at all with a split in his pants.

Sometimes you've got to make a decision. Double-mindedness is devastating, debilitating. It makes you unstable. The word is translated "confused" in many parts of the Bible. It's used to describe a drunk who's staggering, reeling, unstable in all his ways. He's saying, "If you can't make up your mind it produces an unstable lifestyle. All your ways will be unstable. Constant turmoil."

Three ways indecision makes you unstable:

Unstable emotions. It's a strain when you can't decide. You worry and strain, you're confused. You can't sleep and can't eat. You wonder, "Did I do the right thing?" It creates emotional instability in your life when you can't make up your mind. Guy goes to a psychiatrist. The psychiatrist says, "Are you indecisive?" Guy says, "Yes and no." "What do you mean by that?" "I used to be but now I'm not sure." William James said, "The most miserable person in the world is the person who is habitually indecisive." It causes unstable emotions.

Unstable relationships. Lack of commitment destroys marriages. When you can't decide. Do I want in or do I want out? I can't get on with it, I can't get out of it, I can't get with it. What am I going to do? Instability in relationships. When you're unstable on the job and switching back and forth between careers. When you're a parent and say one thing then you say another thing. We give double messages to our kids. It causes instability. You can't decide in a relationship. Am I going to get out of it or am I going to get on with it? I've discovered many times it takes more energy deciding than it does to do it. Once you do it, it's a snap, but the key is deciding.

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Unstable spiritual life. V. 7 *"That man will not think that he'll receive anything from the Lord."* It blocks your prayers. Indecision keeps God from giving and you from receiving what God has to offer. Some of you say, "Why doesn't God answer my prayers?" Maybe you're not specific enough. Maybe you've never really decided what it is you want and you don't have a clear-cut goal.

Double-mindedness can lead to a double life, a spiritually schizophrenic Dr. Jekyll/Mr. Hyde. In *Pilgrim's Progress* it talks about a man named Mr. Facing-Both-Ways. That's when you want to do your will and God's will at the same time. When you know what's right but you do wrong anyway. When you're trying to live for two people. On Sunday you come and sing "Onward Christian Soldiers" and Monday you go AWOL. Double-mindedness produces a double life. It causes instability in all of your ways. It produces an unstable life style.

The problem is indecision. What's the solution? James says, "Get 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 him."* Then he gives three practical steps. You admit, you ask, you anticipate.

1. Admit your need. v. 5 *"If any of you lacks wisdom..."* I detect a little sarcasm in that statement. "If any of you don't have it all together." James is the book of wisdom in the New Testament like Proverbs is the book of wisdom in the Old Testament. We all lack wisdom. It is universal. We all lack wisdom. Wisdom is different from knowledge. Wisdom is knowledge put into practice. Wisdom is seeing life from God's point of view. Wisdom is making decisions the way God would make decisions. The word for wisdom in Greek is the word "sophia". "Phila - sophia" equals "philosophy" -- the love of wisdom. Wisdom means practical application of knowledge. The Bible talks a lot about wisdom, but all we're interested in is knowledge. The world is impressed with knowledge. God is impressed with wisdom. What do you do with your knowledge? Do you put it into practice and make use of it? Wisdom is the ability to make decisions the way God would make decisions.

Proverbs 11:2 *"When pride comes then comes disgrace. But with humility comes wisdom."* Pride blocks wisdom. You can't learn anything if you think you know it all anyway. One of the reasons why we never learn wisdom is we think we have it all together. He's saying, admission of the lack of wisdom is the beginning of wisdom, "I don't have it all together. I don't have all the answers." For some of you that may be hard for you to go home and say to your wife, "I was wrong." When was the last time you said, "I was wrong." That shows how wise you are. The admission of lack of wisdom is the beginning of wisdom. For me, that's never been too hard, because I know myself it's been very easy to admit that I don't have all the answers. I don't even know all the questions. But the key to wisdom is to start by saying, "I don't know, God. What do You want me to do?" Admit that you don't have all the answers. Admit your need.

2. Ask. Ask for wisdom. Pray to God. Talk to Him. *"If any man lack wisdom he should ask God."* How do you get wisdom? By listening to Phil Donohue? By reading Cosmopolitan magazine? By watching TV? By taking smart pills? The Bible says you get wisdom by asking God. That's where wisdom comes from -- God. So you talk to Him about it and you ask for wisdom. Proverbs 2:6 *"It is the Lord who gives wisdom, from Him comes knowledge and understanding."*

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If God were to come to you one day and say, "I'm going to give you one wish. You can ask for anything in the whole world. You can have one wish." What would you ask for? A guy got a chance at that one time. In the Old Testament, God came to Solomon and said, "You're the king of Israel. I'm going to grant you one wish. What do you want more than anything else in life?" Solomon thought it over and said, "I'm so inadequate as a leader. I don't know what to do with these people. More than anything else I want wisdom. I want to be able to think the way You think, to see things from Your point of view, be able to make decisions the way You would make them. I don't want to make mistakes. I don't want to look back on my life later and have regrets. I want wisdom." The Bible says that God was pleased with that request. He granted it to him, just like God always gives wisdom to those that ask for it. He said, "Solomon, because you asked for wisdom, I'm going to give you the other things too: wealth, fame, long life." Solomon not only became the wisest man, but he was the wealthiest man, a famous person, and he lived a long life.

If God came to you and said, "What do you want in life more than anything else?" If you could have one wish from God, what would you ask for? Would you ask for wisdom? He says, that's how important wisdom is. Proverbs says, "If you don't get anything else, get wisdom." The reason we don't have wisdom is we don't ask. James 4:2 *"You have not because you ask not."* Twenty times in the New Testament it says, "Ask, and it shall be given." This word in the Greek literally says, "keep on asking, be persistent, be continual." As your pastor, I wouldn't dare presume to lead our church without continually asking God for wisdom. I pray this prayer every single day of my life. Some days I might ask God 50 times for wisdom. That's not an exaggeration. Some of you might call me at the office and before I pick up the phone I say, "God, give me wisdom as I speak to this person." My secretary will buzz me to tell me I have an appointment. Before I open that door I'll say, "God, give me wisdom as I speak to that person." On the land decision, every step of the way we've prayed, "God, give us wisdom. We want to go as far as You want and no further." I wouldn't presume to try to lead our church otherwise. It's not my church or your church. It's His church. The spiritual responsibility of the Shepherd is to discover what God wants to do in His body.

3. Anticipate it. Expect an answer in faith. You anticipate an answer. *"When you pray, if any of you lacks wisdom he should ask of God who gives generously to all without finding fault and it will be given to him. But when he asks he must believe and not doubt."* Circle "not doubt". If you want wisdom -- first you've got to ask the right person. Then you've got to ask the right way -- in faith, believing, not doubting. This means the key to wisdom is prayer, the condition is faith.

Have you ever prayed a prayer then later while talking to someone say, "But I knew I wouldn't get it." You set yourself up! God says, If you can't believe you're going to get it, don't even waste the time praying. Pray in faith, believing, thanking God in advance. Doubt is debilitating. It hinders God from working in your life.

Remember Peter. Peter's in the boat one day and Jesus comes walking on water. Peter jumps out and starts walking toward the Lord. (If you want to walk on water you've got to get out of the boat. You've got to take risks in life if you're going to live by faith. It doesn't require any faith to stay in the boat. You've got to jump out of the boat and take that step of faith and then God will take care of you.) He starts walking across the water. He's got his eyes on the Lord. All of a sudden he looks down and

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thinks, "I'm not supposed to be able to do this." Instant sink. The moment you get your eyes off the Lord and onto the circumstance, you're dead! Some of you have a major problem you have to make a decision on this week. The reason you don't have wisdom is because you're looking at the problem and not the Lord. "This giant problem! How will I ever solve it. I'm backed into a corner. It's impossible!" God specializes in the impossible! Get your eyes off the problem, off the circumstance. Get your eyes on the Lord. If you have your eyes on the problem, you're going to sink! You must believe and not doubt.

*"He who doubts is like a wave of the sea, blown and tossed by the wind."* A lot of Christians are like corks in the ocean, blown around, back and forth. They are victims of their circumstance. Some of you are blown away right now because you haven't been asking for wisdom. Eventually you pray, as if prayer is the last resort. That ought to be the first option.

Hebrews 11:6 *"And without faith it is impossible to please God. Anyone who comes to Him must believe [circle "must believe"] that He exists and He rewards those who earnestly seek Him."* If you want to receive anything from God you've got to believe in advance you're going to get it. That's faith. If you thank God after you've got it, that's not faith. Faith is thanking God in advance.

### III. THE PROMISE: GOD WILL GIVE IT!

*"If any man lacks wisdom he should ask God, who gives generously to all without finding fault, and it will be given to him."* God wants to give you wisdom. He is eager. Just like it pleased God when Solomon asked for wisdom, it pleases God when we come to Him and say, "I haven't the foggiest idea what I'm supposed to do. ..." Ask God. It is God's nature to give. God is a giving God. Look how God says He'll give wisdom:

Continually. *"Ask God who gives..."* In the Greek that is in the continuous tense. He keeps on giving. He doesn't run out of energy. He never wears out.

Generously. His resources are unlimited. He has enough resources for everybody. He's got plenty.

Without finding fault. God gives cheerfully. Have you ever received a gift from someone you knew was giving it to you grudgingly and it took the joy out of it? They knew they had to and there wasn't any joy in it. The Bible says God does not give wisdom that way. He loves to give. It's His nature to give. You never need to feel embarrassed. There should never be any hesitation. God does not resent your asking for wisdom. He is pleased when you ask.

Aren't you glad it's God's nature to give? God is our model for giving. If we want to be like God, we need to become giving people. God wants us to give continually, generously, and cheerfully. That's what giving is all about. He says, "You give because I give."

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Where do you need wisdom right now? What's the big decision in your life? Is it a career decision? Marriage? Kids? Church membership? An investment? It's interesting that James, in 5-8 and 9-11, gives us a practical application of where we need wisdom. Of all the areas that James could have chosen to give as an example, he chose money. Why? More people make unwise decisions and foolish choices regarding their finances than almost anything else in the world. More people are double-minded and unstable when it comes to dollars than any other area. I see so many Christians in financial bondage, because they are violating God's principles. The point James is making in these verses is that regardless of poverty or prosperity we all need to realize that wealth is temporary and won't last forever. Jesus said you can't serve two masters. You can't love God and money at the same time. We need to decide. Have we made up our mind what we're going to save, to spend, tithing, giving, those kinds of things?

This is a fantastic promise here and all we have to do is claim it. A couple of things James is saying about decision-making:

1. God does not want to make the decision for you. It doesn't say, "Pray and ask God to make the decision for you." Otherwise, you'd never mature. God wants you to grow up. When God made man, Genesis 1, He made him in His image. Part of that image is free will. God gave you a lot of responsibility when He gave you the freedom to choose. He didn't give you the freedom to choose and then override it to make all the decisions in your life. He wants you to make the decisions, but based on His wisdom. He does not want to make the decision for you.

Many times I've heard genuinely sincere Christians say, "I don't know what to do so I'm going to leave it up to the Lord." That sounds spiritual. Sometimes that's exactly what you need to do. Sometimes that's exactly what God will tell you to do. But a lot of times the phrase "I'm going to leave it up to the Lord" is a cop-out. It's saying, "I'm scared to death. I'm a poor decision-maker. I don't know which way to turn, therefore I'm going to accept whatever happens and call that God's will."

The fact is, God's will is not always done. Everything that happens is not necessarily God's will. That's why we're to pray like in the Lord's prayer, "*Thy will be done on earth as it is in heaven.*" In heaven, God's will is done perfectly. But it is not done perfectly here on earth. A lot of things are done that are not God's will because we made the wrong decision. We just let things go. Sometimes passivity is the exact opposite of what God wants you to do. He wants you to get on your knees and pray for wisdom until you know the right thing to do. He wants you to make the decision. He will not make it for you because He wants you to grow up. Maturity in the Christian life is making decisions the way Jesus would. Don't blame God for indecision.

2. God's wisdom is found in God's word. If I want wisdom I've got to get into His book. I get on my knees and pray, "God, tell me what to do! Give me wisdom. Teach me principles that will apply in this situation." Then I need to read, study, memorize, meditate on this book. God's wisdom is found in God's word. We need to be reading through the Scripture continuously. The Bible says in Psalm 119:105 "*God's word is a lamp unto my feet and a light unto my path.*" It shows the way.

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I was in Israel and I brought back a few of these foot lamps. In New Testament times they didn't have high beam flashlights with Eveready batteries. How did they walk in the dark? They had little tiny lamps that would not slosh out the oil. They would light them and tie them to the front of their feet. As they would walk, each step they took, the way would be lit that far. The Bible says, "*God's word is a lamp unto my feet.*" It gives me guidance. It's not a high beam that shows me everything that's going to happen in my life in the next 20 years. God doesn't want you to know that. He wants you to take life one day at a time. His word is one step at a time. He lights the path. He says, "I'll give you wisdom for the next step". As you take that step in faith your way is lit. That's why you've got to pray in faith, not doubting but believing.

What is James saying? You will live your life either by chance or by choice. Either based on the circumstances where you're a victim of the circumstances and let everything batter you back and forth or you will choose to make choices. The quality of your life is determined by the decisions and choices you make and the wisdom that is behind those decisions and choices. James is saying that when we do not trust God it produces a lifestyle of instability in our lives. The cause of all the frustration in my life is not my indecision over the job, the marriage, my kids, my health, although those are important. There is a deeper issue and that is my inability to trust God and lay it all in His hands and ask for wisdom.

Where are you double-minded? Where have you been wavering and trying to live two different ways, trying to live for the Lord on Sunday and then downplaying it during the week? That produces instability.

I want to talk to you about life's greatest decision. The greatest decision you'll ever make in life is this: Who's going to be number one in your life? Are you going to be number one? Is your job going to be number one? Is your family going to be number one? Is money going to be number one? There is only one thing that will produce stability in your life. That's when God is number one in your life. No man can serve two masters, Jesus said. You'll hate one and love the other. The most important decision you can ever make is to make Jesus Christ number one in your life. "Lord, you call the shots. You're the Chairman of the Board. I'm going to check in with You on a regular basis. You guide my life. I want to find the niche for which I was created."

I made a decision like that years ago and it was the smartest thing I ever did. It changed my life. Not instantly but that was the starting point of a long journey. I look back now and think, "Why didn't I make that decision sooner?" The smartest decision you'll ever make is to put Jesus Christ number one in your life and get in tune with God's plan. Jesus Christ came to earth to teach us a few things. He came to say you're not here by accident. God made you for a purpose. He loves you. There's a niche for you. The problem is, the Bible says, that we've all gone our own way, done our own thing, made foolish choices, made decisions where we didn't consult God but did what we wanted to do. The Bible calls that sin. We choose to do what we want to do rather than checking in with the Lord. As a result we're separated from God. God feels far away and distant. Jesus Christ came to be the bridge. He died on the cross to make a way back to man. You will only need to make one major decision in your life: Who's going to be number one? I challenge you to put Jesus Christ on the throne of your life. It will produce incredible stability and as you lean on Him moment by moment you'll find guidance.

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Prayer:

Some of you have got an important decision to make this week. Some of you don't even know it but you've got an important decision coming up about your future. But the most important decision is not about your marriage or your business. The important decision is where are you going to get your wisdom? Where are you going to get your instructions for life? Would you stop and regardless of your background and who you are, would you pray a prayer like this in your heart, "God, I want Your wisdom. I need Your wisdom. I admit that I have made choices without consulting You. I've made bad decisions. I've sinned. I ask You to forgive me." The Bible says He will, just like He promises to give us wisdom, He promises to forgive your sins. "I ask You to forgive all of those bad decisions I made. Help me to put them behind me, to look to the future. Jesus Christ, as much as I know how, come into my life. I want You to call the shots. I want You to give me guidance. I want to live for You and be the person You want me to be. Help me to fulfill the purpose for which You made me." Would you pray that in your heart? Say, "As much as I know how, I want You to come into my life and save me. Whatever all that means."

Lord, I want to thank You today for those who have been honest and said, "This is the day. This is the day I'm making the big decision of who's going to be in control." Lord, I thank You that they, today, are opening their hearts up to You and even now I sense that You're coming into their lives and You're going to give them a new sense of joy and peace and wisdom and purpose. Lord, help us as a church to help them grow, to understand it more everyday. Protect them from the bad decisions the devil will try to get them to make. Help them to grow.

Others of you are already Christians, but you have a major decision that you're struggling with. Lord, I pray for wisdom. You won't make the decision for us, but You have promised -- Your word says -- that You will give us wisdom. Help us to trust You to believe that the answer will come and then to get into Your word, the Bible. Lord, there are some here that need to join a small Bible study. There are some here that need to begin reading through their Bible on a regular basis and memorizing so we can have the wisdom that comes from Your word. Thank You for Your word today. In Jesus' name. Amen.