

James #2 - Hard Life, Good God

- You are listening to audio from Pastor Mark Driscoll. To find more helpful content like this, as well as daily devotions, ask Pastor Mark videos, resources for leaders and much more visit <https://www.markdriscoll.org>. While there you can also make a donation that'll help support the ministry and subscribe to continue getting Bible-based teaching. If you live in or visiting the greater Phoenix Valley, please feel free to come and see Pastor Mark at the Trinity Church in Scottsdale, Arizona. Thank you for listening and being a part of Mark Driscoll Ministries and remember, it's all about Jesus.

- All right, how did he do it? How did Jesus live the life he lived? How did he do it? Have you ever read the gospels and wondered how did he do it? Every time he was tempted he said no to sin. Every time Satan opposed him he held his ground steadfast. Every time a critic came against him he endured and weather that storm. How did Jesus do it? How did he know what to say and what to do without denying his emotions? There are times that he grieved. There are times that he wept. How did he do it? I wanna know how he did it. I want you to know how he did it. I want us to know how he did it so we would not just admire his life but we would enjoy his life. That we'd follow in his life. That we'd have a life patterned after his life. I have got something wonderful to share with you. It's in Luke chapter two, verse 40. It tells us how Jesus did it and it gives hope for all of us today. Here's what it says in the child Jesus. So the picture here is that he's young. He's not yet a full grown man. This is at the beginning. This is where it all started since he grew and became strong as you and I must grow and become strong and that's my hope and my prayer for you today filled with wisdom. That's what it's going to take to live a life like he lived is to live by the wisdom that he had. And where did it come from? Where did he get his wisdom for his life? Where do we get our wisdom for our life? And the favor of God was upon him and this is Luke's language for the Holy Spirit. That the person in the work of the Holy Spirit is the source of wisdom in our life. Jesus is God. Jesus is the second member of the Trinity. God became a man. He set aside the continual use of his divine attributes and he lived humbly as we must live. He had to grow as we grow, he had to learn as we learn, he had to endure as we endure. Jesus never cheated. He lived the perfect human life. God did that. God became a man to identify with us, to set an example for us and to empower us to become like him. And he does that by the power of God the Holy Spirit. The question is for you and I, how do we not just be absolutely overwhelmed and astonished by his life but experience and follow in his life? We can grow. We can grow in wisdom because the favor of God is on the people of God through the Spirit of God. And I am really excited to teach you today in one of the most practical sections of the Bible and it's written by Jesus' little brother. James was there when no one was there. Before the disciples were there, before the critics was there, James was there. James was there as Jesus' little brother to see him learn, to see him grow, to see him resist temptation, to see him overcome trial. And James learned from his big brother, Jesus. And then James became a pastor, an author of the Bible. And by the power of the Holy Spirit he is going to teach you and he's going to teach me about how his big brother endured, not just the best days but the worst days, not the easy days, but the hard days, not the joyful days, but the

painful days. And he started in James chapter one, verse one basically telling us my name is James, I serve Jesus and any Christians, wherever they are. And then in verse two he immediately leaps forward for you and I starting at the book of James on the hard days, the dark days, the difficult days, the painful days. And I love that he starts here. He says, Christianity works when you need it most. Jesus works most when you need him most. The Holy Spirit works when you need it most. And there are certain days that we need God like we've never needed him and what happens on those days? What do we lean into on those days? Where do we look on those days? And that's what we find in James chapter one beginning in verse two. He starts by telling us that life is sometimes hard. How many of you, if you're not even a Christian you're like, "I agree with that first point. I agree with that one. I don't know about the rest of this sermon but life is sometimes hard," and we don't do a good job sometimes as believers telling nonbelievers that sometimes even with Jesus, life is hard. We tell them, "Life is hard. Give your life to Jesus, go to heaven." We forget to tell all about the middle. Okay. Let's call it life. Life is hard, you meet Jesus it'll get harder and then it gets better when you see him. The Christian life is the best life but it's not the easiest life. And sometimes the closer you are to Jesus the more resistance you receive just as Jesus did. I don't wanna lie to any of you and I love that James starts here. He's a pastor and a pastor is somebody who loves people and wants to take the truth of God and apply it to the people of God for their good. I love you. I'm your pastor. I really wanna help and love and serve you today and I'm so excited because this section of scripture was a particular gift to me this week. It's incredibly practical, insightful, and helpful. And I love that James starts realistic. Life is sometimes hard. So don't be shocked when you have a bad day, hard day tough time, why, why guys like I wrote a book, it's in there. I told you it's coming. In fact I put it in verse two. I wasn't sure you're gonna read the whole thing so I put it up front so you couldn't miss it. Okay, here's what he says. Count it all joy. Don't say it like that one. What a... joy. Count it all joy.

- Joy.

- Okay, my brothers that includes the sisters, it's God's people. When you meet trials of various kinds for you know, we need to know something that the testing of your faith produces steadfastness and let steadfastness have it's full effect. Don't quit too quick that you may be perfect and complete lacking in nothing. Life is sometimes wonderful, sometimes painful. Now let me say what he's not saying because when trials come, here's the theme today, trials and wisdom through the trials. When trials come, we can feel more than we think. And we need to feel what we are feeling but think about what God is saying. Before we examine what God is saying through James I wanna examine what you might be feeling in the midst of your trial. Are you in a trial now? How many of you are in a trial right and I say, tough season, hard season, difficult, dark, devastating, discouraging season? When those seasons come our emotions tend to be very elevated and escalated. We feel sometimes more clearly than we think. And I wanna tell you first of all what he's not saying then we'll return to the text to see what he is saying. Here's what he's not saying. When life is hard, God is punishing you. True or false, it can feel like that. Hard day, God must be punishing me. You look back in your life, okay, what did I do? I must've done something wrong. God is going to punish me to pay him back for what I have

done or failed to do. That's a lie. It's not true. You may feel it, but don't feed it. God does not punish his people because he's already punished his son. Jesus went to the cross, took upon himself all of the sin of all of his people and suffered and died in their place for their sin. It would be unjust for God to punish Jesus and you much like sending two people to prison for the same crime, it's injustice. We reap what we sow. We make bad choices. We live with the implications and complications of our own folly but God never punishes his people for their sin, he's already punished Jesus. I need you to believe that. Number two, God is not feeling you. God you said he loved me, it doesn't feel like it. God said you provide for me, I'm not seeing it God. There's some promises from you but they don't come true in my life. You are failing me, you may not say it like that but you may feel it. How many of you have truly been in or are in a season where it feels like God's failing? Now he's not failing them. You can look over the fence into someone else's life and say I think God's certainly good for his promises there but not over here. God is not failing you. God may not be done with you, but God is not failing you. God is not without power and God is not without a plan. And when you're hurting, you need to grow in trusting and that's what faith is. Number three, when life is hard it does not say that God has abandoned you. It's easy sometimes to believe that God is near when times are good and it's hard to believe that God is near when times are hard. You need to take out of his word. Jesus says, I'll never leave you. I'll never forsake. I'll be with you always. That's one of the last things he tells us before he returns to heaven. He sends the Holy Spirit so the presence and the power of God is available to us through the person of the Holy Spirit. God has not abandoned you. You are not an orphan. God is not a father who looks at you and says, "Well, good luck kids," and walks out the door. Perhaps even like your own earthly father did, your heavenly father is not like that. He doesn't abandon you. Number four, God is not acting evil toward you. When sometimes when evil comes upon you it can feel like God is acting evil toward you. It can feel like that. You can get there theologically very quickly, very erroneously by thinking in this way. God is sovereign. Everything that happens must be his will. Evil happens, and we go, "God is evil." Not true. There are things that happen that grieve God, that break the heart of God, that a rebellion, folly and sin against God. Not everything on the earth is as God intends. Genesis records the days when everyone did what was only evil all the time and it grieved God in his heart. Jesus shows up and he cries. He weeps at what he sees. God is not smiling and pleased with everyone in everything. There is much that breaks his heart in addition to breaking his law. God is not evil. God doesn't do evil. God is not like the Eastern religions would teach us or like the more animistic and native and pantheistic and pantheistic religions would teach us, good and bad. God's only good, God's always good. And God is dealing with the evil and the evil is not representative of God, it's war and rebellion against God. But it can feel this way. In addition, when life is hard it is not saying that God will make it all better for you. Some of you have more of a greeting card Christianity than a biblical Christianity. And the greeting card Christianity is this, it's hard. It's gonna be great. Just wait, okay? How many have you been waiting a while? You're like, "All right, it's not going now." It's not getting better. God doesn't promise that things will change, God promises that you can change. God doesn't promise well life's hard, just wait. It'll get better. Maybe not. It might get worse. And when life is hard, it does not say that God will answer every question for you. When life gets hard, a trial, a test, a storm comes, it's easy to have a list of God okay, I've got questions. Why, how come, where I don't understand this,

reconcile, please explain, clarify, I need to see. God says live by faith not by sight. Look to me, don't look to the answers. You're not going to get all your questions answered in this life. I promise you. Many of them, most of them are answered in God's word but some of them you're going to need to wait for. Paul tells us that we see in part not in full. And he says until we see the face of Jesus we're not gonna have all our questions answered. It doesn't say that when life is hard, God is punishing you, God is failing you, God has abandoned you, God is evil toward you, God is gonna fix it all for you or that God needs to give an answer to you. What does he say? Back to the text. James chapter one verses two through four. What he does say is that life is sometimes hard. Count it all joy, count it all joy. My brothers when you meet trials of various kinds for you know that the testing of your faith produces steadfastness, you're gonna see that word twice here, it's a big, important word. And let steadfastness, there it is again, have its full effect that you may be perfect and complete lacking in nothing. Three things he says, when trials come, he doesn't say if, how many of you were hoping for if? Like man I was hoping for if. If like, what's the over-under in Vegas that I might get a trial? What are my odds? Hundred percent you're gonna get trials. Hundred percent. New Christians don't be shocked by this. Oh my gosh a trial came. Christianity isn't working. No, it's working. James starts there, right? Welcome to 101. It's gonna hurt. Oh really? Okay, okay then I guess I expect it's gonna hurt. When trials come so point number one, when trials come so when trials come don't say, "God, how come? Where or why? I don't understand why, I had no idea. Had I known this I would've..." God says no, I told you They're coming. Some of you are in them right now. Some of you see the clouds on the horizon. Number two he says, when the trials come, know this, so it's very strong, know this, don't forget this. Hold this truth in your hand, cling to it. Here's your life vest, right? Like keep it close. Know this when a trial comes, it's a test. A test can be a good or a bad thing. It depends on how good you are taking the test. If you pass the test, it's actually really encouraging. How many of you have taken a test maybe even in school? You're like I took the test, it was a little stressful, I got a good grade, that's pretty awesome. Life is filled with tests, spiritual tests. A trial is a test. Here's what it means. It's an opportunity. It's an opportunity to prove who you are in Christ. To see who you're becoming in Christ. When it first hits a trial feels like an attack and he says, "I want you to know this, it's a test." It's a test. And you need to know this, that the trials are various kinds. Financial, emotional, physical, spiritual, mental, relational, marital, vocational, various, he says various kinds of trials. You know what this means? You don't know where it's coming from next. It could be coming from anywhere. Any aspect of your whole life a trial could come from there. And they don't always come one at a time. How many of you have noticed that? Ouch, ouch, ouch. Hey. Various kinds of trials and sometimes what happens is you get through a trial in one area of your life like, "Glad that's over," and then there's a trial in another area of life. I got my finances in order and then my relationship fell apart. Now I'm in another trial. So here's what I don't want you to do, I don't want you to compare trials with other people. See some of you, you have great wisdom and experience in other areas. Conversely other people have other wisdom and other experience in other areas. So some of you let's say financially, you've got a massive capacity. If a financial trial comes into your life you have some wisdom on what to do with that. Some of you you're like, "I don't know. Once I get past 10, I take my shoes off and try and count but I'm not good with numbers. So when it comes to balancing a budget and setting my finances I feel very overwhelmed very

quickly." Well it's not fair for this person to say, "That's not a big deal. That's a little trial." It's a big deal to them. Conversely this person might have an enormous emotional bucket and capacity for relationships and trauma drama. And this other person might have a thimble, an emotional thimble, right? Like two strained relationships and they're in the fetal position reading Lamentations, right? They're done, all right? Well it's not fair for this person to say, "Well come on, just roll with it. You need to be more emotionally present and compassionate." They're like, "Ah, numbers. I like numbers, not people." We're all different. We get various kind of trials and God doesn't cause evil to come upon us but he'll use evil for our good and his glory and sometimes God allows a trial to come in in our area of weakness. And so what's hard for you is easy for someone else and the same is true conversely. So he's telling us the trials will come, we need to know that they are a test and that we shouldn't compare our trials to others and ultimately if we'll avail ourselves to them it can produce two things, steadfastness and maturity. Steadfastness is this perseverance, this fortitude, the Bible uses the language elsewhere of stand firm. It's like a command to a soldier, hold your post. Steadfastness. You endure, you persevere, you weather the storm. You make it through. You don't give up. You don't give in. And he says, if you will receive it as a trial and a test and an opportunity and produce steadfastness then it'll result in maturity. What this means is you'll become more godly. You'll become more like Jesus that the trial will be used to transform you. How many of you wanna be more like Jesus? How many of you want a trial? Just so you know, they're the same question. Right? It's like I wanna be buff without working out. I wanna learn a lot without reading books. Doesn't work that way. Cause-effect, reap-sow. Steadfastness produces maturity. The reason why some of you are immature is 'cause you have no steadfastness. You have no steadfastness so relationship, I'm so excited. I'm speaking faster than my mouth. And for me, that's quite a thing. But I really love you and I'm really excited and I really wanna help you and I really think this is God's word to you today. In fact I'm sure of it. But if you have a hard relationship and quit and have another hard relationship and quit and have a hard job and quit and have another hard job and quit and go to a church and have a conflict and quit and go to another church and have a conflict and quit, you know what you don't do? Mature because you don't have steadfastness. Paul says it this way, perseverance produces what? Character. James is saying the same thing. Steadfastness produces maturity. Same thing. Same thing. What that means is your godliness is not in spite of your problem or around your problem, it's what God will do in and through you through your problem. And he says I need you to know this, so that when you're in the middle of it you receive it as an opportunity from God and not an obstacle. And he says if all of this happens, you can count it all joy. When religious people say this word I wanna extend the right hand of fellowship in an ungodly way to religious people when they use this verse. This is like religious people's favorite verse and they use it wrong. Count it all joy, just the way they say it. And what they make it sound like is every Christian's a cheerleader. Yay, count it all joy. I'm not gonna cheer for it 'cause I'm not that flexible or encouraging but you get the big idea. Count it all, right? Like y'all you meet Jesus, get pom-poms you just count it all joy, count it all joy. I get hit by a car, at least it wasn't a bus, count it all joy, count it all joy. Religious people quote verses in ways that make you wanna do violence against them, okay? What does it mean to count it all joy? Christians will tell you there's a difference between joy and happiness and I agree with this. And they'll say, oh, well you know happiness, joy not look at least start with

happiness, yay happiness. Right? If we're voting, I'm pro happiness. Happiness is because of your circumstances. Okay? So let's say you go into work tomorrow and your boss is like, "I'm giving you a raise." Yay, happy. Right? You go in tomorrow and your boss says, "I'm quitting," you're like yay, happy, okay? Happy, happy is connected to circumstances. I'm not against happy, I'm for happy. Get happy, that's great, praise God. Like if Grace tonight comes up to me, sweetheart just put a little thought in your mind and says, "Here's a bowl of ice cream, I wanna rub your neck." Yay! Yay! Yay! Just something to pray about sweetheart. So, I'm at that moment, happy. Happy, you know why? Wonderful things have come together at the same time. Are we against happy? No. Shake your heads like this, no, okay? But what happens when you don't get happy? What happens when the doctors doesn't say you're better, he says you're sick? Your boss doesn't say you get a raise, you're fired. Your boyfriend or girlfriend doesn't say, "I wanna get married," they say, "I wanna be married to somebody else." What do you do then? That's where joy comes in. Okay. Christians and non-Christians can have happiness, joy, well that's the domain of God's people. Joy is not because of your circumstance, it's in spite of it. The Bible says this, the Holy Spirit just brought this verse to mind in Hebrews, for the joy set before him Jesus endured the cross. I can't think of anything less joyful than crucifixion and Jesus counted it, considered it, reckoned it joy. Well that ain't happiness because in the garden Gethsemane before he goes to the cross he is so distraught that he is literally sweating drops of blood. He's not happy. It's not cheerleader, pompom yay Jesus. He's emotionally present. He's hurting. He's suffering. He's grieving. He's bleeding. He's preparing to be dying. And the Bible says he had joy. Happiness is because of your circumstance, joy is in spite of your circumstances, it's that peace that surpasses understanding. It's crazy joy. It doesn't make sense. And James says that can be yours as it was my brother and he learned this looking at his brother, following his brother, seeing his brother. Jesus had joy, Jesus had joy even when he didn't have happiness. And James learned this watching his big brother and he wants you and I to share in that joy. And he says well here's the key. Tests and trials will come, know that they are opportunities for you to grow. You can become more steadfast and mature. You can rejoice not in the circumstance but in the Lord who will change you through the circumstance to become more like Jesus. Do you get that? For those of you who are hurting and suffering and struggling, I need you to trust that. And I don't wanna get into all my life and gossip about others but would you just trust that occasionally I get a trial. Somebody criticizes me or I do something wrong or make a mistake or something happens that I don't understand. I had one recently, just a couple of weeks ago studying for this and I'm studying it and then a whole bunch of things happen where like. And I was so anxious. I looked down and my hand was trembling. I knew it was my hand 'cause it was so furry. And I'm, this is a man's hand. This is a shaking trembling man's hand. Trials. You gotta know, it's a test. That test is an opportunity. You need to learn to be steadfast. Let Jesus do a work in you. And if you'll respond that way, there's joy for you 'cause God loves you. And maybe what's happening to you isn't good but God is. That's his next point. So his first point is that life is sometimes hard. And then he says, but God is always good. And this is bedrock. James 1:5 thread, if any of you lacks wisdom, let's just stop right there. All right, just stop right there. Raise your hand if you lack wisdom, okay? Anyone who didn't raise their hand really lacks wisdom. Okay? God's asking, "Does anybody need help?" You're like, "Yep, I know a guy. I know a guy needs a lot of help." Let him what? Freak out? Pick up the phone.?

Ask God who gives generously to all, that includes you and me. It doesn't matter what we've done. Without reproach and it will be given to him. There's a promise. Tether your joy to that. But let him ask him but, let him ask in faith with no doubting for the one who doubts is like a wave of the sea that is driven and tossed by the wind for that person must not suppose that he will receive anything from the Lord. He's a double-minded man unstable in all his ways. Says okay, when a trial comes it's like a storm. And so all of a sudden he wants our imagination to be set sail out on the sea. He says okay now think of a storm like the one that Jesus and his disciples were in out on the lake. What happens in a storm is the clouds roll in. It gets dark. You can't see land. You don't know where safety is because it's not mirror. And all of a sudden everything becomes very volatile and violent. All of a sudden things become unstable and uncertain and you feel unsafe. And now it feels like forces that are far beyond your control, are in control of you which means you feel out of control. Do you know what that feels like? It's anxious. It's stressful. Says when those storms come, how many of you are in a storm? Not just normal life stuff, storm. How many of you came through one not too long ago? How many of you are fearful 'cause you see one on the horizon? Says when that happens, you need wisdom. And I want you to know there's a difference between wisdom and knowledge. Knowledge is not bad, but knowledge is not enough. Knowledge is knowing the truth, wisdom is knowing what to do with it. Knowledge is theoretical, wisdom is practical. Knowledge fills your mind, wisdom guides your life. Knowledge is truthful, wisdom is useful. Knowledge provides information, wisdom provides transformation. Knowledge tells you what to believe in, wisdom tells you how to behave. You can have knowledge without wisdom but you can't have wisdom without knowledge. That's why wisdom has very little to do with your IQ. There are smart people who make dumb decisions. At the beginning I told you that Jesus grew in wisdom by the power of the Holy Spirit. What James, Jesus' little brother wants us to do here is to grow in wisdom by the power of the Holy Spirit. You think of all the Jesus faced, all the storms that came against Satan tempts him, family doubts him, friends betray them, critics oppose him, everything is against him. Perfect life, sinless life, an emotional, passionate, present, not disconnected, detached, disoriented life. How did he do it? By wisdom. By wisdom. And James is saying when the storm comes, you need to get wisdom. This is how you get your sea legs. How many of you have ever been seasick? Ever been seasick? It's horrible, isn't it? You feel unstable, that's his language. He told us steadfastness, steadfastness here he's gonna juxtapose that with unstable. What happens when you're out at sea and you don't have your sea legs and you're seasick and you're out of your element, you're unstable in all you do. You're disoriented. You're not clear. You're not planted. You're not rooted. You're not grounded. Some of you your life is like that. And I'll give you an analogy or an illustration I should say from my own life. Some years ago, many years ago I went and taught on a cruise. They said, "Do you wanna teach on a cruise?" I don't wanna teach, but I wanna be on a cruise so if that's the deal I'm in. So I got on this cruise and we set sail and we hit, in the middle of the night we hit a huge storm. So they sent us all back to our room to throw up. So I went back to our room to throw up and this cruise ship it's I mean, you look out it's just dark and clouds and storm and dangerous and stuff's falling off the shelf and just overwhelmed and it's out of your, it feels out of your control. Which for me, I don't like that. Finally, the cruise was over. Very glad about that. I've never done a cruise since then and it's not by accident. So I got off the cruise and I was, no drinking, but you couldn't tell, right? Whoa. I

literally, Grace will tell you this was me for about a year, okay? What the heck? Unstable, never, I was disoriented, never got my sea legs. It was so bad I would drive in my depth perception was off. I'm just. I got to play catch with my son he throws me the ball and then I put my glove up. Like oh, my instincts are off, okay? I went to a video store, let me explain this for you kids. It's where we used to go when we wanted to watch a movie. We would ride our pet dinosaur to this place called the video store and we rent a video. So I went to the video store and I kid you not I'm sitting at I think it was Hollywood Video I'm looking at the movies and then there was a movie like down on the bottom shelf so I looked at it and I fell over. I'm laying in the store, I'm laying in the aisle at Hollywood video, like I, and I got up I'm like, "I think something's wrong. My spidery senses are tingling. There's something wrong." I'm like, I can't walk up so I go to a bunch of doctors, specialists, like what's wrong, what's wrong. They finally bunch of tests diagnose me something called mal de débarquement syndrome. And I asked the guy I'm like, "Well okay doc, what is that? He said, "Ah, you're dizzy." I'm like, "Yeah and I'm obviously not alone." Right like you're... okay so, well, what is this thing? He said, "Well, it's very unusual." I said, "Okay, is it gonna get better?" He said, "Yeah, I think eventually it will." I said, "Well, what causes it?" He said, "Well, it's very unusual." He wouldn't really give me an answer. Finally said, "It usually only happens with middle-aged menopausal women after a cruise." No that can't be it. I think I have too much testosterone and he's like, "No." I said, "Well, I know it's not menopause. I'm sure of that." The least exciting diagnosis that I could have gotten, very humbling. I don't put it on my resume, but what it was was him explaining your body got disoriented and it doesn't know what normal is and it doesn't know how to find its equilibrium or its balance or its center. The same thing that happened to me physically can happen to any of us spiritually. We became or become unstable in the middle of the storm. You get it? So what do we do? What do we do when the storm comes? It doesn't say if, what do we do when we're feeling unstable because we will? And don't let the religious people come up and give you the verse count it all joy. No count it all joy that you can do this. You can get wisdom. And wisdom will explain okay, here's how it happened, here's what's going on, here's what you're supposed to learn, here's how you can get your sea legs, here's how you're gonna feel, here's how you find your equilibrium, here's how you're gonna persevere through this, here's how you're going to become more like Jesus. Here's how he went through it. Here's what the Holy Spirit can do in you. Okay. Now I count it all joy. Not the storm but the goodness of God in the midst of the storm. So he says to do something, he says to ask God. And I love this friends 'cause it really comes down to two options, self-help or God help. Our life is filled with self-help. You go to the bookstore, self-help, whole section. Let me just say, I don't find that encouraging. I create a lot of problems and I am here to fix them. Didn't I, was not I the one that created the problems? Anyways, you need more than self-help, right? You need God help. You need God help. This is where the teaching of the scriptures here it's unique. It's different than other religions and philosophies and psychologies and sociologies and anthropologies and histories. It's theology. You need help. You need help from God. And so what God says is, "Ask me for help." Don't you love that? God says, "Ask me for help." Here's what he says, if any of you lacks wisdom, I'll raise my hand for that, let him ask God. God says, "Hey, come ask me." Who gives what? Generously God's like, "I'll give you wisdom, that's fine. Not a problem for me." Right? Hey, not a problem for me. You come ask me, I'll give it to you. It's not a thing. Without reproach God's not

gonna look at you and say, "You're stupid. You failed. You made your mess, you pick it up." God's not gonna look at you and say, "I told you that a while ago, you didn't listen to me." Say, "I told you so. Figure it out the hard way. Do it yourself." God's not like that. See some of you don't bring your requests to God because you don't understand the Father heart of God. God's a dad who loves you. You come to him and say, "Dad, I need help." "I know. I see it. Thanks for asking." Now means you're humble and teachable. I'd love to help you. God's a dad like that. He's not gonna shame you. He's not gonna discourage or dissuade in any way. Okay, know that, all right? See a storm is coming, ask God, he loves you, he's there to help. Okay there's joy in that. And it will be given to him. This section of scripture I pray more than any section of scripture. I pray this all the time. I have my entire ministry career. In a counseling meeting, I don't know what to say. I don't know what to do. Let's pray. Let's do James one, God, we need wisdom. We don't know what to do here. Going to make a decision for my family or the church or whatever, okay God I don't know. I never been here. This is all new to me. I need help, God give me, give us wisdom. See in the Old Testament there's whole books called the wisdom literature. Job is about suffering and Proverbs is about wise versus foolish living, Song of Solomon's about love. Ecclesiastes is about the meaning of life. James is the wisdom book of the New Testament. It's what to do when a storm comes. It's really practical and sometimes the theologians will look at it and say, "Well it's not very systematized. It doesn't organize itself very well." Because it's about life. How many of you have found that life does not put itself into an organized chart very well? You're like it's kind of a mess when two things collide at once and I don't know what this is and it's a little complicated. Life is like that. Life is not a syllogism, right? Life is not an outline. Step one, step two, step three, some days it's like step infinity, it's complicated. And so the wisdom literature is talking about the complexity of life with practical solutions, who God is what he's done and now what we're supposed to do to follow in his path and plan for us and here it begins with ask God for wisdom. If you don't know what to do and here's the truth, we don't know what to do. So you need to be humble. You're not arrogant. You can't say, "Well I know what to do." Oh, you need to pray twice. First for humility and then for wisdom. We all need God's wisdom, amen? But, let him ask in faith. You've gotta believe that God's gonna hear that. You've gotta believe that God's gonna answer that. You gotta believe that God is, if I could use an analogy, he's like a dad sitting on the edge of his seat leaning forward with his ear outstretched toward you like, "Please ask." All right? He's not okay ears covered, eyes closed, leaning back, don't bother me. Not like that. With no doubting for the one who doubts is like the wave of the sea, double-minded, unstable. God helped me. I'm not sure you exist. God tell me your will, I'm not sure I wanna do it. God I know what you say but I read this book by somebody who doesn't know you, God I know that you think I should do this and the godly person said to do it but I have this knockers in front of me and they made a really good point. Any of you feel like this? The problem is with you. You lack faith. When a storm comes you can have fight, I'm gonna get tough. Flight, I'm gonna run for my life. Fright, I'm gonna freak out or faith, I'm gonna trust God. And James is staying that what that does that puts both feet on the ground. Okay, what do I need to do? How do I need to be steadfast? What is Jesus trying to change in me? How can I count this all joy if I pass this test? Do you get it? It doesn't mean it's easy, it means it's wonderful. 'Cause sometimes the hardest things are the best things. They don't feel that way in the midst of it but you do on the other side of it by the

grace of God. That's what he's saying. Some of you are very unstable. You're emotional. You're volatile. You keep changing your mind. You keep altering your life. You get wise counsel and foolish counsel and you try to integrate both. Our world is not lacking in information it's lacking in wisdom. So the question is if you pray and if you ask God for wisdom and you trust that he's gonna give it, here's what I want you to do. I want you to ask, trust, seek and write, okay? Ask God for wisdom, trust that he's gonna give it, seek the wisdom he gives and write it down so you don't forget it. That's what James does. Any wisdom he's received from his big brother and the Holy Spirit and the study of scripture and his life experience he's captured it and collected it so that he can revisit it and share it. This is what we need to do. This is where the church as we learn wisdom we could share with each other. So here's what I want you to do, I want you to know that when God gives you wisdom is so that you can make a plan. Faith is not opposite of planning, faith gives you wisdom to make the plan. And some of you, you live in a life where it's like, "I don't need a plan, I trust the Lord." Well even trusting the Lord is a plan. I hate to break it to you. I plan to trust the Lord. God gives you wisdom to make a plan so faith is trusting that God will give you wisdom then receiving that wisdom to make a plan because wisdom is about what you do. You get that? It's no good to read a book on nutrition if you don't change your diet. It's no good to read a book on financial planning if you don't change your budget. It's no good to read a book on parenting if you don't invest in your kids. It's collecting this information, making a plan so that you can obey God practically and daily. And so that's what I want you to do. And this is why in Proverbs and the wisdom literature it oftentimes talks about wisdom and a plan. So where is wisdom to be found? When God gives wisdom where should you be seeking it, looking for it? Are you saying, "Okay God, I trust you. I need wisdom. I'm in a storm. I need wisdom. Give me wisdom. I trust you to give me wisdom," then open your eyes and start looking, "Okay, God, where is it? I believe that it's there. Where is it?" And go seeking it and looking for it and expecting it. And I will share with you there are more categories but here are some that I would share with you. Wisdom is found in scripture, amen? You say, "I need to learn, God," open the scriptures, open the scriptures, open the scriptures, open the scriptures, right? The fool closes this book, the one who wants to grow in wisdom keeps it open. Spurgeon used to say that the Bible that is falling apart usually belongs to the person whose life is not. So if you're like, "God, give me wisdom!" He's like, "I wrote a whole book." Please open the book, read the book, study the book, memorize the book, get in the community group, talk about the book. There's so much wisdom here and sometimes we're looking for individual revelation rather than the scriptures that God has already given. Number two it comes through prayer and when he says ask God, that's prayer. Lord, I need wisdom. I don't know what I'm doing. I've never been here. I got no experience. I need your help. I need your help. Sometimes a good faithful, biblical prayer is this, help! God's like, "I know what you're talking about, answered." Some of you you only wanna bring your wins to God not your losses. You wanna bring your solutions to God, not your problems. God can handle it all. He loves you, you got a great dad. You're not a burden, you're a blessing. Not a burden, you're a blessing. Ask your dad. Number three, the Holy Spirit. We saw that Jesus, Luke 2:40 grew in wisdom and he did so by the power of the Holy Spirit, you can grow in wisdom by the power of the Holy Spirit. In fact when Paul writes to the Corinthians he calls the Holy Spirit, the spirit of wisdom. Saying, Holy Spirit, you gave wisdom to Jesus, bring me wisdom. I don't know what to do. I need you to teach me how to live

a life that is pleasing to Jesus and patterned after his. And the Holy Spirit always answers yes. Always answers yes. He's happy to help, he's happy to serve. Number four, general revelation. Special revelation is the Bible. It's perfect but there's also general revelation where common grace allows people who are perhaps not even Christians to have some knowledge of things and some wisdom regarding how things work that can be insightful and helpful to the Christian. Say my health is struggling, go find a good doctor. I don't feel well, go find a good nutritionist. I don't know to get myself in shape, go find a good personal trainer. I don't know how to balance my checkbook, go find a good accountant or financial planner. There are people that because of general revelation they know some stuff that could be really helpful to you. And we put everything under the authority of scripture and this is the Supreme Court and we're talking here about lower lesser courts but if they don't conflict with the highest court then consider it as part of God's wisdom gift to you. Part of God's wisdom gift to you to help you live the life that God intends for you because he loves you. Number five, obviously wisdom comes through teachers. The Holy Spirit gifts some people to be teachers. This might be a class you could take, podcasts you could listen to, it might be a curriculum you go through, it might be a book that you read, whatever the case may be. Somebody has some wisdom that they can impart to you. And let me say this, be aware of what I will call the mentor myth. The mentor myth is this, there's one person and if you listen to them you'll learn everything you need to know. Not true. It's why we have more than one author in the Bible. Not one person could teach you all the wisdom that you need to know. You're gonna need teachers, not just a mentor that you anticipate will give you all the wisdom you need for your life but teachers. Oh, well this person's got a great marriage and they're good with their health and they're good with their finances and this person really knows the Bible and this person raised great kids and this person really made an impact in ministry and this person's built a great company and great, they've got wisdom. And avail yourself to teachers in wisdom wherever you can find it. Number six, experience. You can look back in your life and ask, what did I learn there? What did God teach me there? And this is where I would submit to you that the spiritual discipline of journaling is very helpful. It's very, very helpful. Many years ago a very wise man that I've learned a lot from, he said, "You need to always carry a journal and write everything down." I said, "Why?" He said, "Cause you're gonna forget." He's right. He's absolutely correct. And as you go through life and you have experiences you're like, "Okay, what am I learning? What is God teaching me? What is he showing me? What scripture is he bringing to mind? What people has he brought in my life? what resources he put at my disposal?" And then when you hit another storm you can go back and look at your journal, your note-taking, whatever that process and system looks like. For instance okay, when I went through this last time, boy I did that wrong. Don't wanna do that. That actually was really helpful, need to do that again. Because we become very forgetful and sometimes let's be honest in the middle of the storm, we get overwhelmed, we get anxious, we get emotional, we freak out, we forget that we've learned some things in the past and we can go back to those and those can be deposits and gifts to us as well. I believe in part that's what's happening in James. He went through his storms and he learned, he saw his big brother Jesus go through his storms and he learned and he wrote it all down and now 2000 years later, you and I are being blessed and benefited by the fact that he not only applied it to himself but recorded it to share it with others. And this is what I want you to do in life and this is what I want you to do in community group. As

God teaches you something I don't want you to be hardy and arrogant and religious and when you meet somebody they're in a storm say, "Oh it's a good thing I'm here, I know what to tell you. I've got a whole chart on this. I've been there two times and I'm an expert." No, no humbly. "You know what, man, I've been there. I was on the boat. I felt sick. I threw up over the side. I know where you're at. Can I share with you some things that God shared with me so that he would be glorified and you'd be loved." There's a humility there. There's a potential for ministry there. A lot of ministry is, "I went through a storm and I learned some things that I wanna share with you in your storm because I love you." And lastly, it comes from experts. And people have expertise in different. Some of you are great with people. You're great with systems. You're great with health. You're great with finances. You're great with relationships. You're great with marriage, great with parenting, great with a state playing, various people, have various locations in their life and skills of expertise. And sometimes it's looking for that okay, they know what they're doing and they know what they're doing and it's availing yourself but what this takes friends, you gotta ask in faith and then you got to pursue in faith. You've gotta be humble. You gotta be teachable. It's not like you just sit home, lock the door and ignore the universe and expect the wisdom fairy to come knocking. Jesus talks a lot about ask and seek, that's what we're talking about here. Ask and seek. So you're in the middle of your storm, okay? Here's my two questions, are you in the middle of a storm? And if so, what wisdom do you need so that you can cease being unstable and double minded and confused and conflicted and anxious and exhausted and become steadfast? And in that there's joy. I want this for you 'cause I love you. And I would just ask you to trust me that I have failed at this. And even this week was a week where I feel that James was so helpful to me which is why I'm so excited to share James with you. Not because I figured it out but because Jesus has. And because James saw Jesus and James wants to see Jesus in us by the power of the Holy Spirit. And I want you to turn from sin and trust in Jesus and go to heaven when you die. But until that day, I want you to live a life pattern after wisdom and the power of the Holy Spirit and the example of the Lord, Jesus so that you don't just endure this life but that you can actually consider it all joy.