

“How Teachable Are You?”

James 1:5-7

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When I was a student at Southern Seminary, I received several evaluations. Two stand out vividly in my mind.

One was succinct and painful. A professor looked at me and said, “You are not very teachable. You seem to know it all.” The other occurred a few years later when I was taking a doctoral seminar. The professor looked at me and said, “You remind me of a light bulb. You light up when ideas are discussed and get so excited. You are a very teachable person.”

I think both assessments were accurate. While I have always hungered to learn, there were times when a “know-it-all” attitude got in my way. That first evaluation served as a wake up call and helped me to make some needed changes. How grateful I was for an honest professor. Ever since he told me the truth in love, I have tried to listen to others with an open mind.

I have also tried to listen to God. While wisdom is learned from others, the ultimate source of wisdom is God. To approach Him with a teachable spirit delights and pleases Him. He is eager to teach us what we need to know about living in this world and preparing for the next. Listen to James 1:5-7.

“If any of you lacks wisdom, he should ask 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, because he who doubts is like a wave of the sea, blown and tossed by the wind. That man should not think he will receive anything from the Lord; he is a double-minded man, unstable in all he does.”

This is one of the most reassuring passages in scripture. Who among us does not lack wisdom? The older I get, the more I know I don’t know. How comforting it is to know that God is aware of my need and wants to supply it. As a matter of fact, He will generously supply wisdom and never look for reasons to withhold it.

Giving advice is a normal part of parenting, isn’t it? How many times have you been frustrated, though, because your advice was ignored or forgotten? Parents can reach a point where they withhold advice because they think giving it will be in vain.

This is not so with God. According to James, He “generously gives advice without finding fault.” He does not withhold advice because previous attempts have been ignored and terrible mistakes have been made. Neither does He refuse to grant wisdom when someone asks repeatedly for the same advice because he or she is a slow learner. Too much is at stake for Him to be impatient.

What must a person do to obtain wisdom from God? There are two things. You must open your mind and your heart.

First of all, open your mind. James said a person seeking wisdom should ask God for it. He must acknowledge his need and open his mind to God’s truth.

Secondly, he should open his heart. He must believe that there is no higher authority than God’s, that God’s way is the best way to live and that God will grant this request. In addition, he must be willing to follow wherever the Lord leads. This kind of

confidence and faith in God, which is a teachable spirit, enables God to respond to a request for wisdom.

Immediately after becoming the king of Israel, Solomon had a vision. The Lord appeared to him and said, "Ask for whatever you want me to give you" II Chronicles 1:7. Do you recall his response? "Give me wisdom and knowledge that I may lead this people, for who is able to govern this great people of yours?" II Chronicles 1:10.

That's an example of a teachable spirit. Solomon's mind and heart were open and ready to receive God's guidance. That's what James was writing about to his readers.

How teachable are you? Are your mind and heart open and ready to receive God's wisdom? I certainly hope so because I know He is eager to teach you how to live in this world and prepare for the next one.

By the way, when I get to heaven, I hope I hear Him say, "Bob, you remind me of a light bulb..."