

CCC HOW TO MAKE UP YOUR MIND P3

Developing a Faith That Works - Part 3

James 1:5-11

I want us to look at what James has to say on "How to Make up Your Mind". See, life is full of decisions and life is basically a series of choices that you and I make every day. We have to evaluate things, decide things, draw conclusions, and just as God's word says, "You will become what you surround yourself with... God word also says to us in a nut shell, "We make our decisions and then our decisions make us." In other words the quality of your life will be determined by the kind of decisions you make in your life. Some decision we regret, some decision we feel good about.

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 or the next day. And why is that because Life is full of choices. The Book of 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 to stand on and act on. So what is the problem and James says

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. We've all felt that way -- when you're trying to do two things at the same time and you're not really sure what you want.

Video: Neil Sanders

Sometimes you've got to make a decision. God's word, the Bible says that Double-mindedness is devastating, it's debilitating to you. Double-mindedness makes you unstable in all your ways. The word is actually translated "confused". The word used in God's word, the bible actually describes a drunk who's staggering, unstable in all his ways. God's word is saying, If you can't make up your mind it will produce an unstable lifestyle and in all of your ways you will be unstable and in constant turmoil for your life.

There are three ways that indecision will make you unstable. **1.** You will have **Unstable emotions**. When you can't decide... it puts a strain on you. 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.

The most miserable person in the world is a person who is habitually indecisive. Another way indecision will make you unstable. Is you will have:

Unstable relationships. What I mean when you can't decide, the best example sorry to say we see in many marriages today...you're living your life thinking... do I want in or do I want out? What am I going to do? And that indecision... and that lack of commitment can destroy a marriage; it produces instability in that relationship.

Let me speak to the parents here for just a minute. Parent when you say one thing then you say another thing, and then do one thing and then acting out something different. You are giving a double message to your kids and it will cause instability in their lives. Another thing that indecision in your life will do is it will make you have:

Unstable spiritual life. What I mean is if you are unstable as to who God is, what God can do, is the bible what it claims to be... God's word has something for you to consider. It comes from James V. 7 *"That man will not think that he'll receive anything from the Lord."* Indecision with God... keeps God from giving and you from receiving what God has to offer. Some of you here today maybe asking the question to yourself, "Why doesn't God answer my prayers?" Let me just say to you, Consider this: "Maybe you've never really decided what it is you want and you don't have a clear-cut goal. Maybe you don't really believe God is who He says He is and what He can do.

Double-mindedness can lead to a double life, it can lead to spiritual schizophrenic, a spiritual Dr. Jekyll/Mr. Hyde. That's when you want to do your will and you want

to God's will at the same time. When you know what's right to do but you do wrong anyway, that double-mindedness produces a double life... you're trying to live for two people and God's word says, It causes instability in all of your ways. It produces an unstable life style.

So the question is now, "What's the solution?"

What's the prescription: 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 think James when he wrote this was talking tongue in cheek when he said, *"If any of you lacks wisdom..."* We all lack wisdom, if you have a belly button you lack wisdom. It's a universal thing, we all lack it.

Wisdom is different from knowledge. Wisdom is knowledge put into practice. For the Christian, wisdom is seeing life from God's point of view. Wisdom is making decisions the way God would make decisions. Wisdom means practical application of knowledge. The Bible talks a lot about wisdom, but in today's world all we hear about is knowledge. People are impressed today with knowledge, but remember, that's the world, that doesn't impress God. God is impressed with wisdom, and 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.... But the key to wisdom is to start by saying, "I don't know, God what is it You would have me to do?" Admit your need. The second step is:

2. Ask for wisdom. Pray to God. Talk to Him. The bible says, *"If any man lack wisdom he should ask God."* How do you get wisdom? By listening to Dr. Phil, Not? By reading Cosmopolitan magazine, Not? By watching TV reality TV, Not? The Bible says you get wisdom by asking God, by talking to God. That's where wisdom comes from God. Pr. 2:6 *"It is the Lord who gives wisdom, from Him comes knowledge and understanding."*

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."* The third step is:

3. Anticipate it. Expect an answer by 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, God. Then you've got to ask the right way -- in faith, believing, not doubting. This means the key to wisdom is prayer and 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." If you can't believe you're going to get it, you won't get it. Pray in faith, believing in faith, and thank God in advance in faith. Doubting is debilitating it only hinders God from working in your life.

Some of you have a major problem in your life today and you have to make a decision... Remember who God is... He specializes in the impossible! He specializes in Miracles. Get your eyes off the problem, off the circumstance and get your eyes on the Lord. If you have your eyes on the problem, you'll sink, just like Peter did after he got out of the boat and walked on the water. ! You must believe and not doubt.

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 and excepting whatever.

III. THE PROMISE: GOD WILL GIVE IT!

Here is what we read, *"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 to give you wisdom. It pleases God when we come to Him and say, "God, 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.

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.

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."

Let me ask you a question? Where do you need wisdom right now? What's the big decision in your life? Is it your, Marriage, maybe a relationship, your kids, whether to become a member here at Calvary, whether to be baptized in a few weeks... maybe your decision is to serve in our children's church, with the youth? Whatever it is. 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 He would override it to make all the decisions in your life. He wants you to make the decisions, and to base those decisions 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 very spiritual and 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 really only a cop-out.

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. He wants you to mature in the Christian life 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.

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 made a decision like that 27 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 and wonderful 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 24/7 and get in tune with God's plan for your life. Jesus Christ came to earth to teach us a few things. He came to say you're not here by accident that God made you for a purpose. He loves you. There's a purpose 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.

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 most 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 make that decision and
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.