



# CALVARY

*“Cross” or “Crossroad”*

*This is the junction where God meets man to deliver the opportunity to experience a redeemed and reconciled life.*

## LESSON 5

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## CALVARY – *The Intersection of Divine Intent and Human Will*

Last week we reviewed Jesus chose to isolate Himself for times of solitude and in that we noted He did it for a time of prayer.

- That is motif we would like to explore a little further
- If Jesus felt it necessary to spend time in prayer, how can we do otherwise?
- The urgency of His decisions compelled Him to pray.

How much more should earthly people spend time in prayer, for we do not have the perfection that Jesus had.

As we make decisions, we should ask God for the wisdom from above that only He can give

- **James 1:5-8** If any of you lacks wisdom, let him ask of God, who gives to all liberally and without reproach, and it will be given to him. <sup>6</sup> But let him ask in faith, with no doubting, for he who doubts is like a wave of the sea driven and tossed by the wind. <sup>7</sup> For let not that man suppose that he will receive anything from the Lord; <sup>8</sup> *he is* a double-minded man, unstable in all his ways.

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- ❖ We can't slide by the important implication that *sophia* ("wisdom") is the critical to remedy for something
- ❖ The idea of "lacking wisdom" references anyone who is not able to share the community's perception rooted in a common knowledge
- ❖ This wisdom is practical rather than theoretical, enabling not only true perception, but also proper action in the world.
- ❖ James says the source of this wisdom is God **"ask of God"**
  - *This is axiomatic* for the Jewish tradition which only finds it in God:
    - Prov. 9:10 "The fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom"
    - Prov. 8:22-31 for wisdom was with God from the beginning.
    - This cosmic wisdom "from above" found its expression also in the law which Moses commanded us, so that God can declare of His commandments and statutes
    - Deut. 4:6 "keep them and do them, for that will be your wisdom and your understanding in the sight of the peoples."

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- ❖ It was natural, then, to “ask God” for wisdom, but no figure more exemplified this instinct than Solomon, whose “asking” for a discerning heart was answered generously by the Lord (1 Kings 3:5–15).
- ❖ And James says if we ask God for this wisdom, *who gives to all* [The adjectival emphasis of “who” identifies the giver as God]
- ❖ The statement is presented in a tense and voice which describes a progressive action; thus, God gives and keeps on giving.
- ❖ Most startling is the assertion that God does not restrict giving only to those who make request, but simply gives “to all.”
- ❖ In 1:17, James will again identify gift-giving as the essential attribute of God.
- ❖ God gives “liberally” (*haplōs* signifying both simplicity as opposed to complexity; by extension it suggests openness with a lack of calculation (generously))

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- ❖ The nature of this wisdom as a measure for behavior is spelled out in 3:13–18  
“**Who is wise and understanding** among you? Let him **show by good conduct** that his works are done in the **mEEKNESS OF WISDOM**.<sup>14</sup> But if you have bitter envy and self-seeking in your hearts, do not boast and lie against the truth.<sup>15</sup> **This wisdom does not descend from above, but is earthly, sensual, demonic.** <sup>16</sup>For where envy and self-seeking exist, **confusion and every evil thing are there.** <sup>17</sup> But the **wisdom** that is from above is **first pure, then peaceable, gentle, willing to yield, full of mercy and good fruits, without partiality and without hypocrisy.** <sup>18</sup> Now the fruit of righteousness is sown in peace by those who make peace.

In the context of James, asking for wisdom in faith means committing oneself to obey what God reveals (James 2:14-26)

When confronted with a major decision, it is wise to accompany our prayer for wisdom with a period of fasting (Isaiah 58:8-9).

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“Then your light shall break forth like the morning, Your healing shall spring forth speedily, And your righteousness shall go before you; The glory of the LORD shall be your rear guard. <sup>9</sup>Then you shall call, and the LORD will answer; You shall cry, and He will say, 'Here I *am*.' "If you take away the yoke from your midst, The pointing of the finger, and speaking wickedness,”

In the text of Isaiah 58, God told Isaiah to make a loud announcement with a voice like a trumpet and denounce the sins of the nation.

The people regularly attended the temple, obeyed God’s laws, fasted, and appeared eager to seek the Lord; but their worship was only an outward show.

- Their hearts were far from God (1:10–15; 29:13; Matt. 15:8–9).

Whenever worship is offered to God because it is the popular thing to do, and not because it is the right thing to do, then that worship becomes hypocritical.

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The Jews were commanded to observe only one fast on the annual Day of Atonement (Lev. 16:29–31), but they were permitted to fast personally if they wished.

- They complained that nobody seemed to notice what they were doing.
- Perhaps they were trying to “buy God’s blessing” by their fasting.

Worshiping God involves more than observing an outward ritual; there must be an inward obedience and submission to the Lord.

- **Matt. 6:16-18** "Moreover, when you fast, do not be like the hypocrites, with a sad countenance. For they disfigure their faces that they may appear to men to be fasting. Assuredly, I say to you, they have their reward. <sup>17</sup>But you, when you fast, anoint your head and wash your face, <sup>18</sup>so that you do not appear to men to be fasting, but to your Father who *is* in the secret *place*; and your Father who sees in secret will reward you openly

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If in our religious duties, we do what pleases us, and if doing it does not make us a better person, then we are wasting our time; and our worship is only sin.

- Fasting and fighting do not go together!

Yet how many people walk piously out of church at the close of a Sunday worship service, get in their cars, and proceed to maintain attitudes of hostility and unforgiveness.

- True fasting leads to humility before God and ministry to others.
- Genuine humility promotes self-deprivation and open sharing with others for God's glory

If we fast in order to get something for ourselves from God, instead of to become better people for the sake of others, then we have missed the meaning of worship.

- It delights the Lord when we delight in the Lord.

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In the Gospel recorded in Mark 3:13-19 and Luke 6:12-19, Jesus needed to make an important decision about which men He should choose to become his Apostles.

- **Luke 6:12**, "In these days he went out to the mountain to pray, and all night he continued in prayer to God." Before Jesus made a big decision such as choosing his 12 disciples, he first prayed all night.
  - There were practical decisions to be made—Which men? – How many should He send? -- How should he prepare them for their mission?
  - Jesus certainly considered the different traits of His disciples.
  - Would it be His closest disciples had been with him the longest and were most loyalty?
  - Were there some that He could depend on more than others?
  - Who had the strongest faith in him?

The man Jesus had a lot of things on His mind, but He didn't sort through the decision-making process all by Himself.

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The example of how Jesus handled this very important decision, is probably the best advice we could ever receive, on the right way to make good life decisions.

Why do we go to so many different people, like our family members, friends or coworkers, to ask their opinion on what we should do?

The very first place we should turn to is God in our prayers, and yet He is often the last one to be consulted.

- No one, no-where is more qualified to give us advice
- Who else can give an honest, unbiased opinion without any ulterior motives of their own?

Without the vantage point of God, most advisors will have to operate out of their own experiences, personal agenda or some perspective of a person of high stature or position

- God our Father, always wants what is best for us.
- He always wants the right thing for our ultimate good.

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Did you notice that the text in Luke 6:12 said that Jesus spent *the entire night* in solitude and prayer?

- How often do we use the excuse that we don't have time to pray?
- Jesus made prayer the *first* priority in His life.

But, prayer is often the last thing on our mind when we have a problem, or need to make a decision about something.

- We work through it on our own, resulting in everything being so much harder.
- Then we second guess ourselves, wondering if we are really doing the right thing

When our important decisions are made on the spur of the moment, without consulting God at all, it should cause us consternation, because God wasn't included in the process.

In **Luke 6:13**, after spending the entire night in prayer, and the first thing He did was choose His twelve Apostles.

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- In V 17 a large crowd gathered to hear Him and to be healed of their diseases.
- The gospel said that: *“Everyone in the crowd sought to touch him because power came forth from him and he healed them all.”*

Even though Jesus was both human and divine, it seems like God also strengthened Jesus with extra graces during the solitary periods He spent in prayer.

This was true after John the Baptizer was beheaded in prison (Luke 6:10) and was also true during His prayers in the agony in the garden (Luke 22:41).

- **Miracle:** After retreating hearing of His cousin’s death, He ended up performing two miracles that day (a) He fed 5,000 men with the five barley loaves and two fish, and (b) He walked on the water to join His Apostles in a boat on the lake.
- **Miracle:** After praying in the Garden of Gethsemane, He re-attached the severed ear of one of the servant’s ear (Malchus by name)

The source of Christ’s power already originated within Him (Acts 1:8; Luke 1:35), but Jesus appears to have received extra strength, grace and support during the solitary times of prayer that He spent with his Father.

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- It is interesting that as soon as He received the Spirit, He began to do miracles: healing, casting out demons, etc. (Luke 4:33-41).
- Even the strength to face death came through the Holy Spirit, for in Heb. 9:14 we read, "...how much more will the blood of Christ, who **through the eternal Spirit** offered Himself without blemish to God, cleanse your conscience from dead works to serve the living God?"
- Jesus was also raised from the dead by the power of the Spirit (1 Peter 3:18, Rom. 1:4 and 8:11).
- After the resurrection, He continued to minister by the power of the Holy Spirit. For example, Acts 1:2 refers to "the day when He was taken up, after He had by the Holy Spirit given orders to the apostles whom He had chosen."
- His life and all major decisions on His own, although He had every right to do so.

God His Father guided His decisions and strengthened Him with the grace to accomplish the tasks that lay before him. Will He do no less with us?

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We also have the ability to make our own decisions in life, but they turn out so much better when we carefully consider the facts of the situation, and seek God's guidance *first*.

Every day and every hour, we need God's grace and His strength, to see us through the challenges and difficulties we face in life.

- Without God's grace, our best laid plans could fall apart if it wasn't His will

It is best to start laying our plans, in accordance with the purposes of God from the start, as we:

***A. Pray for God's will*** "...nevertheless not my will, but thine, be done" (Luke 22:42).

- We should start our prayers seeking the forgiveness of the Father for our sinfulness and selfishness of always – asking Him to allow His will to prevail over our will in every of my actions.

***B. Pray for a humble spirit*** "The meek will he guide in judgement: and the meek will he teach his way" (Psl. 25:9).

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- Praying for a humble spirit, equates to depending totally on God for all of your life decisions.
- God's commitment is to lead the humble in what is right and teach them His way.

**C. Pray for discernment** *“But the natural man receives not the things of the spirit of God: for they are foolishness unto him: neither can he know them, because they are spiritually discerned” (1 Cor. 2:14).*

- In seeking God's guidance, our prayer is that He opens our eyes to see whatever might hinder us from attaining spiritual progress.

**D. Pray for His instruction** *“I will instruct thee and teach thee in the way which thou shalt go: I will guide thee with mine eyes” (Psl. 32:8).*

- This prayer is not to necessarily choose what we want to do, but what He wants us to do and it will always be the right decision.
- Following His direction we will be guided so that we do not stray

In summary, Jesus proved that the reasons behind prayers for guidance in decision making is that **God is the foundation of all wisdom.**

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- **He alone has the ability to view your life in a comprehensive standpoint.**
- **We see a portion of the picture, but God sees it all.**
- **Involving Him in our prayers as you go through life decision will assure our lives success.**
  1. So that God can help us **understand our choices** more clearly, and then decide which is best for us to choose.
  2. So that we can **seek God's will** and **divine plans** before taking a major decision that will affect our lives.
  3. It's **because God loves us**, He wants what is best for us and He wants to guide us.
  4. Since God is Omniscience, Omnipotent and Omnipresence – it means **His ways are always best**. So we need His best plan to help us through our decisions.
  5. So that we **will not fall prey to Satan's deceit** in making the wrong decision that might look so correct in our eyes.

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Prayers for guidance in decision making, goes a long way in helping us act the mind and will of God for our lives.

Through our prayers, the Holy Spirit our Counselor, Who is ever with us, bids us to bring our decisions before Him.

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