



[James 1:5-8](#)

(5) However, if anyone lacks wisdom, let him ask of God, Who gives to everyone freely and does not reproach *the one who asks*; and it shall be given to him. (6) But let him ask in faith, not doubting at all because the one who doubts is like a wave of the sea that is driven by the wind and tossed *to and fro*. (7) Do not let that man expect that he will receive anything from the Lord. (8) *He is* a double-minded man, unstable in all his ways.

A Faithful Version

Our Creator promises us wisdom—but only under the condition that we do not waver or be double-minded. I have sweat plenty over these verses through the years, having had to battle indecision. Likewise, when I pray, I have problems concentrating. I have battled doubts and fears when I have asked to be anointed.

But is simple mind-wandering or normal doubts the subject of James' reprimand? Or is it something else? Perhaps mind-wandering, indecisiveness, and doubting are more symptomatic than the actual causes of double-mindedness.

The apostle Paul writes that anyone who comes to [God](#) must believe that He is and diligently seek Him ([Hebrews 11:6](#)). If we are in a conference with a human being, it is rude to tune him out, fall asleep on him, or become distracted. Some of my students have done that to me—giving me an insight on how God must feel when our minds wander when we pray, study, or meditate. Inattention and mind-wandering, although they are related to double-mindedness, do not seem to be what James had in mind.

The anguished father in [Mark 9:24](#), who says, "Lord, I believe; help my unbelief!" might be accused of being double-minded, but he is not. He desperately wants to believe, and he asks for help. He is not of two opinions.

The Greek word translated "double-minded" in [James 1:8](#), *dipsuchos*, in its literal sense means "double-souled," like having two independent wills. The words "with no doubting" in verse 6 are translated from the Greek words *meedén diakrinómenos*, which describes one divided in mind, who wavers between two opinions.

Some may wonder whether the apostle Paul, when he complains, "For the good that I will to do, I do not do; but the evil I will not to do, that I practice" ([Romans 7:19](#)), was exercising double-mindedness. This state of struggle that goes on in all of us is not the same as double-mindedness. Paul's mind, he goes on to explain, is focused one way, in one direction (verse 22), but inherent in the flesh of every human being is an innate enmity toward God and His law ([Romans 7:23](#); [8:7](#)). Just like Paul, we also fail to keep God's law perfectly because we have human nature in us that is perpetually at war with God's Holy Spirit in us.

All of us have a deep-seated desire to be at one with ourselves. We will not realize this desire until we are totally composed of spirit. Until then, we can expect a spiritual tug of war to go on perpetually. As more of God's Spirit flows through us, renewing our minds and displacing our carnality, we will find it easier to keep our carnal nature in check. All of us, I trust, can point to certain areas in our lives that are now under control—but which at one time were not under control. The spiritual struggle occurring in all of us between our spiritual and carnal natures is not double-mindedness.

Double-mindedness is literally having two separate minds holding contradictory thoughts. Double-mindedness occurs in a church member when he has an implicit or explicit knowledge of God's law, yet deliberately harbors a [sin](#), choosing to conceal it, repress it, or ignore it.

James supports this explanation of double-mindedness in [James 4:8](#): "Draw near to God and He will draw near to you. Cleanse your hands, you sinners; and purify your hearts you double-minded." Anything one willingly does or does not do that is contrary to God's law (verse 17) makes one guilty of

double-mindedness. Double-mindedness depends on a knowledge of and a willful intent to reject God's law, as the psalmist writes in [Psalm 119:113](#): "I hate the double-minded, but I love your law." On the other side, being synchronized with God's law is equated with singleness of purpose and leads to [peace](#) of mind and a feeling of wholeness. The same psalmist writes, "Great peace have those who love Your law, and nothing causes them to stumble" ([Psalm 119:165](#)).

God's law itself is the vehicle of wisdom that the petitioner requests in [James 1:5](#). It would be absurd for someone to ask to be filled with the spirit of the law and simultaneously be determined not to keep it. Sometimes we inadvertently do this when we ask a minister or counselor for advice on a problem—but have already purposed in our minds to do it our own way. Then when the minister tells us something that goes against what we have purposed to do in our inner being, a highly uncomfortable state of dissonance emerges.

Harboring any secret sin puts a tremendous strain on the nervous system. Psychologists have a name for this emotional/psychological turmoil: *cognitive dissonance*, literally "inharmonious thought."

People who have left the truth often report that they feel more at peace with themselves now than at any time they were in the church. This should not surprise us. When they—anyone, for that matter—tries to submit to God's law with a carnal mind, unbearable cognitive dissonance occurs. The nervous system plunges into a tailspin until it achieves a sense of equilibrium or wholeness. Carnal nature does not feel comfortable in the light of God's law: "Because the carnal mind is enmity against God; for it is not subject to the [law of God](#), nor indeed can be" (Romans [8:7](#)). The easiest way to find equilibrium is to reject the beliefs that send them into a spiritual dither.

— David F. Maas

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