



REDEMPTION

MAKING MUCH OF JESUS

James 1:19-27

Be Doers of the Word

5/24/2020 - 5/30/2020

MAIN POINT

God's people not only hear God's Word, but also obey God's Word.

INTRODUCTION

As your group time begins, use this section to introduce the topic of discussion.

What reveals more about a person: actions or words? Why do you say so?

When have you seen someone's actions match up with their words, even when doing so was difficult?

A primary emphasis in the book of James is the daily expression of one's faith in action. Evidently, James was dealing with some who tried to separate being a Christian from demonstrating one's faith in everyday life. In James 1:19-27, James stressed the vital connection between hearing the Word of God and living it.

UNDERSTANDING

Unpack the biblical text to discover what the Scripture says or means about a particular topic.

| Have a volunteer read James 1:19-21.

How are James's three commands in verse 19 related to one another? What is the root issue James warned his readers against with these commands?

**What do we communicate to other people when we don't listen well or talk too much?
What happens when these negative traits enter into our relationship with God?**

Why is anger a danger for believers?

Christians can pretend to obey God without truly listening to His commands. The readers of James's letter knew the transforming power of God's Word, the gospel. James urged them to demonstrate this change, particularly in their speech. He challenged them to be quick to listen, slow to speak, and slow to become angry. The commands probably refer both to our relationships to one another and to God. We are to be quick to hear and slow to talk both toward other people and toward God. The command to be quick to listen calls for an eagerness to hear and obey God's message. The appeal to be slow to speak demands silence until we have understood and applied the message. It is a call for restraint lest we produce hasty, ill-timed reactions. The challenge to be slow to become angry warns against hostile, bitter feelings. We cannot hear God if we remain distracted with resentment, hatred, or vengeful attitudes. Being attentive and obedient to the Scripture and processing it carefully before speaking will curb any tendency toward wrath.

| Have a volunteer read James 1:22-25.

Why do we often "hear" and not "do" when it comes to Scripture? What does this say about our faith?

In what area of your life could you do a better job applying God's Word rather than just listening to it?

James was concerned that believers persevere in living out God's Word. James maintained that just listening to God's Word was insufficient. When one hears the Word and does not act on the admonitions contained in it, that person really is engaging in self-deception. Simply listening to the message is not enough. For James, genuine religion and daily life could not be separated. He had little patience with those who claimed to be pious or religious but gave no evidence of inward change by their daily conduct.

During His Sermon on the Mount, Jesus taught the importance of being doers of the Word of God. Read Matthew 7:24-27. How important is putting the teachings of Scripture into practice, according to Jesus?

What do we risk happening when we are hearers only?

| Have a volunteer read James 1:26-27.

What is genuine religion? How can believers develop a genuine faith that positively affects people around them?

What three actions does James identify as evidences of genuine religion in verses 26-27?

Why do you think James singled out caring for orphans and widows as an example of faith in action? What do you imagine their plight was in James's day? What is it like today?

True religion expresses itself in loving service and in holy living. Put another way, true religion includes both social ethics and personal ethics. Orphans and widows were some of the most helpless members of society, and by taking care of them the church put God's Word into practice. Both aspects of religion brought together in this verse indicate that we are to be in the world rendering service to others, yet we are not to succumb to the evil of the world. Jesus perfectly modeled this balance for us during His time on earth. Jesus also went so far as to secure our adoption by God in the ultimate example of sacrificial, loving service.

What truths of Scripture are we putting into action when we meet the needs of others? Read Matthew 25:35-40 for Jesus' teaching on this matter.

Why is meeting the physical needs of the hurting and helpless so important for the Christ follower?

How is it that by serving people, we love them and show them Jesus?

James reminded us how God's righteousness is formed in us so that God's love reaches through us to others. God's shaping tool is His Word. Reading it and studying it are not enough. We must obey it through the power He supplies. Then God's righteousness begins to be evident.

APPLICATION

Help your group identify how the truths from the Scripture passage apply directly to their lives.

In what area of your life could you do a better job at applying God's Word rather than merely listening to it? What help do you need from God in this area?

What do you spend more time on—your spiritual growth or active ministry? What needs to change for you to have more balance between the two?

What impact do personal disciplines such as Bible study, prayer in the Spirit, and remaining obedient have on how you treat others?

Why is it such a struggle for us to look beyond ourselves to the hurting and helpless, such as the widows and orphans James mentioned? How can we as a small group help hurting people see Jesus in their everyday lives?

PRAYER

Ask God to open your eyes to the opportunities around you to put your faith into action.

COMMENTARY

| James 1:19-27

1:19. James called his readers to three forms of self-discipline (v. 19). First, be quick to listen. Second, be slow to speak, a phrase meaning that we should be slow to begin speaking. Third, be slow to become angry or have slowness to speak up when angry, a self-discipline that helps to curb anger.

1:20. An angry spirit blocks the development of a God-pleasing righteous life, the goal that James held up throughout his letter (v. 20). Such human anger may take the forms of nursed grudges, a poisonous bitterness, or a settled hatred, all possibly stemming from real or perceived offenses in the past. All have the power to block spiritual growth.

1:21. Here James used the metaphor of removing soiled clothing (see Romans 13:12; Ephesians 4:22). We must eliminate everything in our lives that is contrary to God's Word and prevents righteous living. In order to experience personal transformation, we should receive the teachings of God's Word humbly rather than defensively or negatively. An humble attitude will provide an open door for God's wisdom to penetrate our minds and hearts.

1:22. James was concerned that believers persevere in living out God's Word (v. 22). The word "doers" refers to believers who hear the Word taught, read, or preached and put it into action in their lives. The term "hearer" describes someone who hears the words of Scripture without really listening to them. That person takes no actions as a result of attending a session in which the Bible is read and taught. People who do not act on God's Word cheat themselves of the full, meaningful, and useful life God intends for them.

1:23. One who is content to listen to God's Word and take no action is self-deceived because that individual has no clear, precise, lasting perception of self. James drew an illustration from everyday life to drive home this point (vv. 23-24).

1:24. James compared the person who listens without taking action with a man looking at his own face in a mirror but neglecting to do the needed grooming the mirror reveals.

1:25. In contrast to the person content to be a hearer of God's Word without acting on it, James presented a doer who acts (v. 25). This person looks intently into the perfect law of freedom. The law to which James referred is perfect because it gives freedom. James probably had in mind the gospel, God's message of salvation in Christ and the implications of redemption for daily living. It is this message of grace that sets people free.

1:26-27. Verses 26 and 27 paint three excellent portraits of genuine Christianity. Together they frame the essence but not the totality of "pure and undefiled religion" (v. 27). James gave practical aspects of following Christ to warn against self-deception. James painted the first portrait in negative terms. One who supposes he or she is religious, without controlling his tongue, is self-deceived. Evidently James identified a person who incorrectly assumes he or she is genuinely religious with a hearer who fails to act on God's Word (see v. 22). No matter how industrious we are in performing religious acts, if we are not disciplined in our speech, our religion is useless—ineffective, fruitless, or empty.

Two positive, compelling portraits present pure and undefiled religion before God. Again, these snapshots were not intended to give a complete picture of a person's relationship with God through Christ; they emphasize practical expressions of genuine discipleship. The first positive portrait of genuine religion shows believers as they look after orphans and widows in their distress. James's second positive portrait of genuine Christianity depicted personal moral purity. Believers are to keep themselves unstained by the world. The term "world" refers to unredeemed people's way of life. It is the sphere ruled by evil and thus opposed to God. Moral purity is evidence of a genuine relationship with Christ.