

Sunday Bible Study: James 1:19-27

May 24, 2020

James 1:19 sets up an outline for the rest of the letter. He writes that the believer needs to be _____, _____, and _____.

When we are “quick to hear,” we are actively listening; and listening is an art. Have you ever participated in an activity in which you were paired with another person and given the task of listening intently and silently to what the other person was saying, and then repeating back to the person what you heard? The activity requires concentration and focused attention. When we are quick to hear, our attention is focused on God’s Word, and our hearts are open to instruction from Him. When we are “slow to speak,” we are quiet, able to concentrate, and willing to meditate on God’s Word. **What reason does James give in 1:20 for being “slow to wrath?”**

In your own words, what does **verse 20** mean? _____

Verse 21 tells us to lay aside _____ and _____; and to **receive** _____.

First, James tells us to put aside all **filthiness**. The word is used for dirty, filthy clothes; but it comes from a root word *rhupos* that refers to *wax in the ear*. What he is saying is get rid of any dirty wax in your ear that keeps you from hearing the Word of God. Quite an illustration! Second, James tells us to receive the Word with meekness or humility. In Greek, the word **receive** carries the connotation of having an eager and earnest desire to receive the Word and to fully embrace it, and make it part of ourselves. If you have ever received a message from a loved one in the form of a letter, a card, or a poem; you know how dear those words can be. David Jeremiah says, “God’s Word should be welcomed in the heart, received with anticipation like a love letter, and read with a desire to put its words and commands into practice.” Note that we receive the word with humility—a teachable spirit, and that the Word becomes implanted—deeply rooted and able to bear fruit.

Read verses 22-24 to discover the two types of people who hear the word of God. There are those who hear and do, and those who hear only. James uses a mirror as an illustration of the difference between the “doers of the word” and the “hearers only.” Picture yourself getting up in the morning and looking in the mirror. The mirror reveals that you need to do some grooming. However, imagine that you turn away from

the mirror without taking any action; and you go on about your day as if you had not looked in the mirror at all. Such is the person who hears the Word of God and takes no action to apply the Word to his or her life.

In verse 25, how does James describe the person who hears the Word and becomes a doer of the Word. _____

James says that the doer looks **intently** at the perfect law. (Your translation may have “looks into,” or “looks carefully.” The Greek word is the same word used in the Resurrection accounts when Peter, John, and Mary looked into the empty tomb with a fixed and steadfast gaze (John 20:11). We are to approach the Word of God with that same intensity and longing to know and understand. We can form a habit of reading God’s Word and meditating on it. The more we ponder God’s Word, the more we internalize God’s truths; and the more we become “doers” that act, and not just “hearers” of the Word.

In **verse 25**, James refers to the law as the “perfect law” and the “law of liberty.” The law is perfect because it not only tells us what to do, but it gives us power to do it. Jesus Christ is our pattern, and He said, “If you love me, keep my commandments” (John 14:15). God’s Word gives us clear instructions as to how to live, and the Holy Spirit enables us to keep those commandments. Furthermore, we are set at liberty when we walk within the limits of that gospel; and we are free in obedience; free from being ruled by our own lusts. **To summarize:** in verses 22 and 25, James tells us to be “doers of the word and not hearers only.” **To put it another way, show me a life. If it obeys the Word, it is of God; if it does not, it is not of God.**

In **verse 26**, how does James describe a person who thinks he is religious, but is not? _____

James will expound on verse 26 in the chapters that follow.

In **verse 27**, what does pure (**genuine**) religion look like?

James gives us two ways to measure genuine religion. Orphans and widows represent all the needy and oppressed in the community and James indicates the responsibility of caring for them. A person with genuine religion is meeting those needs. The second example of genuine religion is personal righteousness (unstained by the

world). A person with genuine religion is living a life that reflects the values of Christ and not the ways of the world.

Going deeper: In chapter one, we looked at what authentic faith looks like, and we mentioned meditating on God's Word. If you are not sure how to meditate on God's Word, here are some guidelines:

- Remember that the Holy Spirit will guide you into all truth and show you how to apply God's Word in your life. **Read John 16:13–15.**
- Find a quiet place, and set aside some time. Prepare your heart before you read so that you can focus on how God is speaking to you through his Word. Begin with prayer: "Father, as I read and ponder this Scripture, help me to listen for your Holy Spirit. Please help me to have an open heart to understand what you are saying to me."
- Read the verse or passage.
- Respond to God as He Teaches you. As you meditate, don't be discouraged if you have to go over the passage several times before insights begin to come to mind. As God reveals an insight to you, pray it back to Him and ask Him for the grace to apply that truth in your life. If the Holy Spirit convicts you of sin in your life, confess it to the Lord and be forgiven. For example, based on today's Scripture, you might pray: "Father, help me to be quick to hear. Please clean out my ears and cleanse my filthiness. Help me to soak up all you have to tell me in your Word. Show me how to apply this passage to my life. I am willing to be a 'doer' of your Word, so please show me opportunities to help the needy in my community. Help me to have a pure heart so that I may be genuine with you and with others. Help me to avoid any bait that Satan would use to try to lure me away from your will and your way. I truly long to have your Word implanted in my heart. Please forgive me for..."
- Choose a verse or a portion of Scripture to memorize. Write it down and refer to it all during the day. Say it over to yourself, and think of its meaning. Apply to your life the insights you gain through meditation on Scripture.
- The quiet moments of preparing for sleep offer an ideal setting for contemplation and fellowship with the Lord (if you're not too tired). The thoughts that are on your mind as you go to sleep will be in your subconscious mind all through the night. They will strongly influence your attitudes the next day, consciously or subconsciously.

