

James

Practical Principles for Life

Zoom Bible Study | Lesson Two

November 14, 2023

Chapter 1:19-27 (ESV)

James 1:19 – 21:

Know this, my beloved brothers: let every person be quick to hear, slow to speak, slow to anger; ²⁰for the anger of man does not produce the righteousness of God. ²¹Therefore put away all filthiness and rampant wickedness and receive with meekness the implanted word, which is able to save your souls.

Quick to Listen, Slow to Speak

A continual talker will not hear what anyone else says, including God.

Proverbs 10:19: When words are many, transgression is not lacking, but whoever restrains his lips is prudent.

Proverbs 18:13: If one gives an answer before he hears, it is his folly and shame.



Do you listen twice as much as you talk?

Mark 9:2 – 7:

And after six days Jesus took with him Peter and James and John, and led them up a high mountain by themselves. And he was transfigured before them, ³and his clothes became radiant, intensely white, as no one on earth could bleach them. ⁴And there appeared to them Elijah with Moses, and they were talking with Jesus. ⁵And Peter said to Jesus, “Rabbi, it is good that we are here. Let us make three tents, one for you and one for Moses and one for Elijah.” ⁶For he did not know what to say, for they were terrified. ⁷And a cloud overshadowed them, and a voice came out of the cloud, “This is my beloved Son; listen to him.”

Matthew 12:36:

I tell you, on the day of judgment people will give account for every careless word they speak...

Listening to Jesus

John 10:27: My sheep hear my voice, and I know them, and they follow me.

How do you listen to Jesus?

Listening to God begins with a deep desire. You want to hear his voice. Then you have to set aside time to spend in his Word.

Psalm 62:5 (NKJV): My soul, wait silently for God alone, for my expectation *is* from Him.

One way he talks to us is through the written Word of God. We need to spend time just letting the Bible talk to us.

1 Corinthians 2:16: “For who has understood the mind of the Lord so as to instruct him?” But we have the mind of Christ.

What does it mean that “we have the mind of Christ”?

Slow to Become Angry

Note that James doesn't say it's wrong to be angry, but that quick anger is the problem. That's what we call a quick temper.

However, managing anger is not easy.

Proverbs 14:17: A man of quick temper acts foolishly, and a man of evil devices is hated.

Proverbs 15:18: A hot-tempered man stirs up strife, but he who is slow to anger quiets contention.

Human anger is self-centric—it's all about ME.

Ephesians 4:26 – 27: Be angry and do not sin; do not let the sun go down on your anger, ²⁷and give no opportunity to the devil.

Psalm 4:4: Be angry, and do not sin; ponder in your own hearts on your beds, and be silent.

Uncontrolled anger opens a door for the devil to mess with us.

Ephesians 4:31: Let all bitterness and wrath and anger and clamor and slander be put away from you, along with all malice.

James tells these new believers to get rid of moral filth and evil and Paul says to put evil away from you. The writer to the Hebrews put it this way:

Hebrews 12:1: Therefore, since we are surrounded by such a great cloud of witnesses, let us throw off everything that hinders and the sin that so easily entangles. And let us run with perseverance the race marked out for us.

So, how do you “get rid of” and “put away” and “throw off” the sin that so easily entangles?

How can you learn to be slow to anger—to manage your anger?

- Identify what triggers you to anger.
- Pray in advance for the power to be “slow to anger.”
- Pray for the people who make you angry.

Proverbs 14:29: Whoever is slow to anger has great understanding, but he who has a hasty temper exalts folly.

Justified Anger

We know that all anger is not sin because God, who cannot sin, displayed anger in several different instances.

Judges 3:7 – 8: And the people of Israel did what was evil in the sight of the Lord. They forgot the Lord their God and served the Baals and the Asheroth. ⁸Therefore the anger of the Lord was kindled against Israel, and he sold them into the hand of Cushan-rishathaim king of Mesopotamia. And the people of Israel served Cushan-rishathaim eight years.

Identify what made God angry.

When is your anger justified?

What is the evil in our culture that we should stand against—that should cause us to be angry?

How do we take a stand against this and other evil?

Do you plant God's Word in your heart?

That is your secret to overcoming human evil and standing against the evil that angers God.

James 1:22 – 25:

But be doers of the word, and not hearers only, deceiving yourselves. ²³For if anyone is a hearer of the word and not a doer, he is like a man who looks intently at his natural face in a mirror. ²⁴For he looks at himself and goes away and at once forgets what he was like. ²⁵But the one who looks into the perfect law, the law of liberty, and perseveres, being no hearer who forgets but a doer who acts, he will be blessed in his doing.

Self-deception

How do we deceive ourselves?

- Verse 22 - We deceive ourselves by merely listening to the word and not obeying.

What are examples of “merely listening” to the Word of God?

People deceive themselves into thinking they are believers.

Matthew 7:22- 23: On that day many will say to me, ‘Lord, Lord, did we not prophesy in your name, and cast out demons in your name, and do many mighty works in your name?’ ²³And then will I declare to them, ‘I never knew you; depart from me, you workers of lawlessness.’

How do we avoid self-deception? James says we have three responsibilities toward God's Word:

1. Receive it.

Matthew 13:1 – 9:

That same day Jesus went out of the house and sat beside the sea. ²And great crowds gathered about him, so that he got into a boat and sat down. And the whole crowd stood on the beach. ³And he told them many things in parables, saying: “A sower went out to sow. ⁴And as he sowed, some seeds fell along the path, and the birds came and devoured them. ⁵Other seeds fell on rocky ground, where they did not have much soil, and immediately they sprang up, since

they had no depth of soil, ⁶ but when the sun rose they were scorched. And since they had no root, they withered away. ⁷ Other seeds fell among thorns, and the thorns grew up and choked them. ⁸ Other seeds fell on good soil and produced grain, some a hundredfold, some sixty, some thirty. ⁹ He who has ears, let him hear.”

1. Birds came and ate it up – a hard heart
2. Shallow soil; no root – springs up fast but dies quickly – a shallow heart
3. Thorny ground – seed was choked by the thorns – a crowded heart
4. Good soil - produced 100, 60 or 30 times more – a fruitful heart

We deceive ourselves when the word that we hear falls on shallow soil or hard soil or among thorns.

2. Practice the Word
 - First mistake is to take a very quick look in the mirror of God's Word.
 - Second mistake is to forget what we see.
 - Third mistake is to fail to obey what the Word tells us to do.

Looking into God's mirror requires time, attention and sincere devotion. No quick glances will do. Jesus said:

John 13:17: If you know these things, blessed are you if you do them.

3. Share the Word

Do you want to be blessed?

Here's how: *But whoever looks intently into the perfect law that gives freedom, and continues in it—not forgetting what they have heard, but doing it—they will be blessed in what they do* (James 1:25).

Continue doing what God's Word exhorts you to do. You will be blessed!

James 1:26 – 27:

If anyone thinks he is religious and does not bridle his tongue but deceives his heart, this person's religion is worthless. ²⁷ Religion that is pure and undefiled before God the Father is this: to visit orphans and widows in their affliction, and to keep oneself unstained from the world.

James says that controlling our tongues is an indicator of true religion.

Have you noticed how often your tongue can just get going – like a runaway horse? We need to keep a tight rein on our tongues and allow the Holy Spirit to say “Whoa! Don't go there!”

Matthew 15:18: But what comes out of the mouth proceeds from the heart, and this defiles a person.

Then James transitions from worthless religion to pure religion, which is:

- Look after orphans and widows in their distress
- Keep oneself from being polluted by the world.

You will be polluted by the world unless you are consciously and intentionally KEEPING YOURSELF from being polluted.

- What do you look at?
- What do you read?
- What do you talk about?
- Where do you allow your thoughts to go?

Name some of the pollution that is all around us every day.

Romans 12:2: Do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewal of your mind, that by testing you may discern what is the will of God, what is good and acceptable and perfect.

Matthew 22:37– 40: And he said to him, “You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind. ³⁸This is the great and first commandment. ³⁹And a second is like it: You shall love your neighbor as yourself. ⁴⁰On these two commandments depend all the Law and the Prophets.”

John 14:15: “If you love me, you will keep my commands.”

And when we love others as we love ourselves—and we all love ourselves pretty well—then we will care about others.

Martin Luther said “A religion that gives nothing, costs nothing and suffers nothing, is worth nothing.”

Conclusion

Proverbs 4:23 (NIV): Above all else, guard your heart, for everything you do flows from it.

This passage from James teaches us to do a heart check regularly:

- Do you fail to listen to God and others as you should? James says be quick to listen and slow to speak.
- Is your heart apathetic toward God’s Word? Do you “merely” listen to what God says? James says to practice what you know.
- Is your heart prone to “human anger”? James says put it away from you.
- Are you harboring some known sin in your heart? James says put it away.
- Are you self-deceived? Is your tongue out of control? Keep a tight rein on your tongue.
- Make sure your religion is pure and not worthless. Love God; love others.