

Hearing and Doing the Word (James 1:19-27)

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[0:00] Amen. Amen. You may be seated. Children, we are ready for Children's Church at this time. So you can make your way to the back. And man, what a joy it is to see all of those kids running back, eager to learn about Jesus.

So thankful for Savannah and Justin and their heart to teach these kids about the Lord. As we get started today, parents, have you ever noticed that some of the things that you tell your kids are the same things that your parents told you?

Some of the things that you end up finding you telling your kids are the same things that your parents told you as you were growing up. But it's amazing to think about how that plays out because I don't know what happened from the time that I was 18 to the time I was 25.

My parents got so much smarter. It's like in seven years, they gained a whole lifetime of wisdom. And so all of a sudden, those things that they told me as a child that really didn't make very much sense to me, all of a sudden they started making sense.

And now I find myself saying some of those same things to my kids that my dad and my mom said to me years ago. For example, I can remember growing up, I didn't mean to was not a legitimate excuse.

[1:14] It wasn't a legitimate excuse to say it was an accident or I didn't mean to. That wasn't a legitimate excuse. My dad would often say, well, sometimes you have to mean not to. And meaning that, you know, you have to make sure that you don't put yourself in a situation to do something by accident.

And so I find myself saying this to my kids. And one time I said it to my wife. That didn't go over very well. Works much better with kids than a spouse. But some of these things that we find ourselves saying, whenever I would fight in early bedtime or get back late from a date, I would oftentimes hear my dad tell me this advice.

He says, son, you can't hoot with the owls and soar with the eagles. I was like, okay, thanks, dad. Didn't make any sense to me at the time. But now I've said it to my kids.

I've said it to my kids a few times. Clint told me this when he says, he says, dad would often tell him, he says, if you lie with dogs, you will get fleas. And I said, you must have hung out with a different crowd than I did.

Because dad didn't have to tell me that very, very much. I don't remember that. But one that I remember every single time, leaving as I would go out somewhere, he would say, son, remember whose son you are.

[2:26] And I would have to respond to him, okay, I'm your son and I'm God's son. And he just, as a reminder, as I would leave, he would always make me say that just to remember whose son I am.

I was not only his son, but more importantly, I was God's son. And I don't know what to think right now. Some of you are taking more notes right now than you are during the message. But all of these things are important things that we must remember.

We spend a lot of time with someone, especially a parent. When you do that, those things that are important to them oftentimes become important to you as well.

In our passage today, James is saying many of the same things that Jesus said in his ministry. Many of the things that Jesus emphasized in his earthly ministry here on earth that we read about in the Gospels.

Many of those things that he said are the same things that James is telling us today. It's almost like they grew up in the same house or something. It's almost like these things were something that were a part of who they were growing up.

[3 : 30] And so what we see is this being played out in James' passage here. So if you have a copy of God's Word, I want to invite you. We're going to finish up James chapter 1 this week.

We're going to be in verses 19 through 27. And so if you have a copy of God's Word, I want to invite you to turn there with me and listen as we read these words. James says this.

He says, And so this morning as we look at this passage, we finish up James chapter 1.

I want us to be able to clearly see how God's Word directly and clearly affects us in our actions.

There's honestly like this progression that is being made as we work our way through this, as we are growing in our spiritual maturity, as we're growing in our sanctification.

But to begin with this morning, the first thing that I want us to see is that we are to receive the Word.

We're to receive the Word. Verses 19 through 21.

[5 : 40] It says, The Word shows itself as the main focus in this section, especially in verses 21 through 25.

But here, starting in verse 19, James is grabbing our attention. He's saying, Know this. It's almost like he's changing and trying to bring everybody in and say, Know this, my beloved brothers.

What I'm about to tell you is very important. And then he goes on to tell us that we must be quick to hear, slow to speak, and slow to anger. Now, at first glance, this honestly just seems like some good advice, right?

This is like some advice that you would find on any self-help book. You know, hey, make sure that you are quick to hear and slow to speak and slow to anger. And that just seems like some good general advice.

You know, God gave us two ears and one mouth so that we should hear, listen twice as much as we talk. And just some good practical advice that we should have in our lives. But here, James is not making a public service announcement here.

[6 : 58] He is writing to help Christians sincerely live out their faith. So let's begin putting these verses together. We must be quick to hear.

You know when it's difficult to be quick to hear? When you're talking. It's really hard to be quick to hear, to be quick to listen when you're constantly talking.

When you're constantly trying to have things going on, you're constantly the one in charge and dominating a conversation. It's really difficult to listen to what anybody else has to say. But also kind of following that train of thought that James is going on here.

You know when it's really difficult to be quiet and to not talk? When you're angry. Because when you're angry, what you want to do is you want to make sure your voice is heard above anything else.

You want to make sure that if anybody's going to have a chance to talk, it's going to be you. You feel offended and so you want to make sure your voice, your perception of reality, your opinion is heard. And many times we do that by dominating a conversation.

[8 : 00] Either with the sheer number of words that is coming out of our mouth. Or by the volume of the words that is coming out of our mouth. But as followers of Jesus, we must be slow to speak and slow to anger.

And you may say, well, Brett, didn't Jesus get angry? Doesn't the Bible tell us that there are times when Jesus got angry? Yes, and I'm glad that you asked that because it's a wonderful example for us to follow when it comes to responding to things in this world.

Sam Albury notes, he says, The gospel writers did not hide the fact that he was angry on occasion. At times it was because of the pompous behavior of his disciples or the callous attitude of religious leaders.

When he cleared the temple, it was because it looked more like a shopping mall than a house of prayer. And on such occasions, get this, he says, Jesus was right to be angry.

We know that such anger was justified. And we know it was slow in coming. This is what we call righteous anger. But before you start using this as an excuse to be angry and start saying, Well, I'm angry, so I'm just being like Jesus here.

[9 : 11] Let's take one of these examples and look at it a little closer. Jesus overturning the tables in the temple. Jesus' anger was rooted in the fact that money changers were making it difficult for people to come and worship God.

They were making it difficult for people to be able to come before God. It wasn't the fact that something was being sold in the temple. It wasn't the fact that just there happened to be something

being sold there.

Because back in Deuteronomy 14, we realized that there's special instructions given to those who are traveling from great distances. Those who are traveling from great distances coming to the temple, they were said that they could sell their possessions where they were and travel to the temple and then buy those things once they got there to make their offering before God.

So it wasn't just the fact that something was being sold, but it was the fact that people were making it difficult for people to come to a relationship with God, making it difficult to come before God.

He says, you've turned it into a house of robbers here. So people were taking advantage of other people. They were overcharging and making it really difficult for people to come to and before God.

[10:21] And so this is what Jesus is getting angry at. And he gets angry at any time that somebody gets in the way of someone coming to him. And so what we see here is that Jesus was angry at this particular thing, just like he would be angry at anything that prevented someone coming to him.

And let me add another word of caution right here. Righteous anger becomes unrighteous anger very quickly when we act unrighteously in it.

See, righteous anger, anger can start off in the right reasons, but it can become unrighteous very quickly when we sin in that anger. When we start acting unrighteously in that anger, even if it started off as righteous, it can become unrighteous very quickly.

So we must control that. Which all of this ties right into what James is telling us to put off next. He says, put off all filthiness and rampant wickedness, and then we are to receive with meekness the implanted word, which is able to save our souls.

And so how do we do all of this? We become good listeners. We learn to listen to God well. When it comes to listening to God, we must become good listeners.

[11:40] And part of being a good listener is paying attention to what is being said. I think Catherine would tell you that if I'm intentional, if I'm thinking about it, if I'm trying to be intentional, I'm a pretty good listener at times.

But I've developed some bad habits in our relationship. I've developed some bad habits where sometimes I go into autopilot a little bit. She'll call and she'll be telling me all the things that's going on at work, and I'm trying to respond to an email or finish a train of thought that I'm working on with a sermon or any number of things, and I'm distracted and I start going into autopilot.

And you may recognize some of these things. If your wife, if your husband starts saying, mm-hmm, okay, sure, yeah, mm-hmm, if that becomes the response in the conversation, he's not listening.

And so we'll have a whole conversation of me just kind of being on autopilot where I'm not paying attention, and then all of a sudden, days later, she's telling me we have to be somewhere. I'm like, what are you talking about?

This is the first time that I have ever heard about this. And then she starts replaying the whole conversation for me. And I'm like, I think I would remember if you told me that I had to, that you had to be somewhere.

[12:52] And I was responsible for picking up the girls from school and getting them a snack before dance, dropping one of them off at dance, taking the other to the doctor, trying to get the other one's homework done, and then picking one up from dance and teleporting myself to the football field to pick up Jacob from football practice because they have to be picked up at the exact same time.

I think I would remember this conversation. And she goes, no, no, I told you this whole thing. And I said, are you okay with it? And you said, mm-hmm. And I'm like, well, maybe I did say that.

Maybe I did. But as we think about it, so often when we come to a situation like that, we're reminded that we must pay attention. Part of being a good listener is actually listening to what God says.

There's nothing wrong with my ability to listen, but we must be intentional on listening. And the same is true when it comes to our relationship with God. We must be intentional on removing distractions and focusing on what God is teaching us through His Word.

Every time we open the Bible, it matters that we listen well. Every time we open God's Word and begin reading, it matters that we listen well to what God is telling us.

[14:11] Fundamental to what we know about God is that He speaks. Is that He speaks to us. And the primary way that He speaks to us is through His Word.

He created the universe by His words. By speaking it into existence, out of nothing, everything was formed. And now He brings spiritual life to His people by His Word.

James tells us to be quick to hear. In other words, hurry up and listen. Listen to what God is saying. Make sure that you're slow to speak.

Come to God's Word humbly and open. And all too often when we come to God's Word, we already know what we want it to say. We already know what we want God to be telling us. And we'll try to flip through and find a verse that just tells us what we want to hear.

But that cannot be the case. When we come to the Word, we must be open to what God is going to share with us. Take those verses in context. Read through it. Study it. And begin thinking through what God is trying to tell us.

[15:15] In a nutshell, to receive the Word is to listen to God rightly. We need not only to hear His Word, but also to accept it and to obey it.

May we be quick to listen and also quick to obey. Which brings us to our next observation. And that is this. We must do what the Word says.

It's one thing to hear the Word, but we also must do what it says. Verse 22, it says, But be doers of the Word and not hearers only, deceiving yourselves. For 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.

For he looks at himself and goes away and at once forgets what he was like. But 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.

If anyone thinks he is religious and does not bridle his tongue, but deceives his heart, this person's religion is worthless. When we as parents say that we want our kids to listen to us, to be good listeners, we are meaning something far more than just saying, we want you to understand the words that I'm saying.

[16:34] If I'm telling my kids to make sure that you're a good listener to listen to me, I'm meaning far more than just saying, make sure you know what the words are that are coming out of my mouth.

Make sure that you know them and then do them. Put them into action. Ultimately, we want them to hear the words and then do the words. James is telling us the same is true when it comes to our heavenly Father.

God did not give us his word just as a great work of literature, just as a great list of words and commands for us to do, but he gave it to us to transform our lives.

It was never God's intention to give us the word to be something that just imparts knowledge to us. Although it does this far greater than anything else in this world, but it also was intended to be life-changing.

It was intended to be applied to our life. It's not just that we receive these words and we hear the words and we understand them, but it's that we actually do them. Paul, writing to Timothy, says, All scripture is breathed out by God.

[17:43] He says, All of it is breathed out by God. But then he goes on to tell him what it is good for. And he says this. He says, All scripture is breathed out by God and profitable for teaching, for reproof, for correction, and for training in righteousness, that the man of God may be complete and equipped for every good work.

The Bible wasn't written just to make you a more knowledgeable sinner, but it was written to change your life. It was written to be understood and applied to our life.

James shows us the importance of not only hearing God's word, but doing it with the illustration of someone looking in a mirror and immediately forgetting what they look like after they walk away.

The picture here is of someone who looks intently at his face in a mirror and then walks away forgetting what he looks like. Someone who gazes at his own face in a mirror, but then seconds later couldn't pick himself out of a police lineup if he had to.

That doesn't make sense. That doesn't make sense for us. When we look at ourselves, we understand what we look like and we're not going to forget it. So when we see a picture of ourselves, we can easily pick ourselves out in a crowd.

[18:55] We can easily know what we look like when we look at that. So, for example, when we see this and examine ourselves in a mirror, we must look at ourselves and do something about it.

We must remember God's word and then do what it says. Who in here looks at a mirror when they get up in the morning? Okay. Some of you may want to start doing that.

Okay. There's not a lot of hands that are going. I'm joking. But here's the thing. When you look at a mirror, what you're doing in the morning is you're assessing the situation. You're like, wow, that was a rough night of sleep.

I look pretty rough this morning. But it's one thing to assess the situation, to know what needs to be fixed. But then it doesn't make sense for us to do that and then do nothing about it. It doesn't make sense for us to see what needs to be changed and fixed and then to walk away and do nothing about it.

James is saying here that this is the same way when it comes to our relationship with God. God's word is to show us our life and what needs to be changed. And it doesn't make sense for us to see that, to understand it, and then do nothing about it.

[20 : 02] You see, so many times, especially in the church today, we love to have Bible studies and talk about the instruction that God has given us, but then we don't do anything about it.

Based on some of those quotes I shared with you that my dad told me earlier, can you imagine if as a child, my dad came to me and my brothers and gave us a list of chores to complete.

He came to Blake and said, Blake, I want you to do the laundry today. Brett, I want you to cut the grass today and Clint, I want to make sure you take all of the trash out today. And then he goes off and he goes to work and then he comes home and he says, all right, boys, come in.

Let's hear how it all went today. Did you do what I asked you to do? Can you imagine how it would go if said, no, we didn't do it, dad, but I want you to listen to what we did. We studied it.

We memorized what you told us to do. You told us to cut the grass. You told me to cut the grass and I have memorized that. I've said it over and over today. Cut the grass, cut the grass, cut the grass.

[21 : 04] I've got, you know what? I can even say it in Greek. You want to listen to me say it in Greek? And not only this, Clint comes and says, look dad, I came up with a list of strategies of the best way to take out the trash.

You can do it this way, this way, or this way. And we have all of these lists of strategies to take out the trash. He says, in fact, I studied how people used to take out the trash and I thought through those different ways as well.

And we come to this and can you imagine how that would go if this is what we told dad when he says, did you do what I asked you to do? I can tell you it wouldn't go great.

In fact, this makes me a little nervous even just saying this right there. I'm just glad there's a lot of people in between me and my dad right now. Dad doesn't like me to say that. He says, people won't think I beat you when you were growing up.

And dad did not beat us much. But when we come to this and we start thinking through this word, we see how ridiculous this scenario is.

[22 : 04] Yet this is often how we live the Christian life. Now, let me be very clear on this. I am pro-Bible study. I love Scripture memorization.

I think it is incredibly important to read and to know God's word. But if that is where it stays, then we're missing the point.

We're missing the point if this is where it stays. It is my prayer that we as a church, that we are a church who not only takes God's word seriously when it comes to teaching. I pray that we are a church who takes God's word seriously as we teach from the pulpit, as we teach in our Sunday school classes, in our life groups.

I pray that is something that we are. But I also pray that's not where it stops. But we are people who take God's word seriously when it comes to putting it into practice in our lives.

To help us understand this, James gives us a real life, practical example of what it means to put this into practice. And so the final observation that I want us to make for us today is this.

[23 : 10] To show the word to those in need. We are to receive the word and we are to do what the word says and we are to show the word to those in need.

Starting in verse 27, it says this, 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.

See, when James wrote this letter, there was no life insurance a husband or father would leave to a widow or his children. There was no government-run programs to provide for them.

To get an idea of what it would be like for a widow at this time, someone who had just lost their spouse, you can go back to the Old Testament and read the book of Ruth. And as you look at that and you see the struggles that are taking place there at the beginning of Ruth, you can see the difficulties that widows would face at this time.

Widows and orphans were desolate and destitute. What James is saying here is that religion that is pure and undefiled before God is helping the most vulnerable in society.

[24 : 25] Those where there is no chance that you will be able to be repaid for your services. Those that you're going to help, not because there's something that you can gain from this, but because you love ultimately God first and because of that you see the needs that are right around you and you want to meet those needs as best you can.

You see, this passage really hit me in a way that I wasn't expecting when John Lefevers and I went to Africa earlier this year. Going into that trip, I was probably the most excited about doing the pastor training.

They told us all about these things that we're going to be doing, working with, 140 something pastors and working with them and equipping them to be able to serve their churches and I was really excited about this.

But one of those other ministries that they kind of threw in there says we're also going to be doing these things and these things and these things. One of those was a widow's ministry and I wasn't prepared for what spending basically two hours with a room full of widows was going to mean and how it was going to put this verse into context for me.

You see, verses James 1, 27, it says, religion that is pure and undefiled before God, the Father is this, to visit orphans and widows and their affliction. And this visit is more than just a hey, how are you doing?

[25 : 49] This is meeting them where they are, going to them and seeing those needs and ultimately trying to meet those needs the best that you can. But when I went into this room full of ladies that were anywhere from their early 20s all the way up, I was seeing what it means to live out James 1, 27.

These ladies, when they had lost their husbands, quite literally lost everything. Peter, who was over the ministry there, he told us, he says, widow ministry is something that's vitally important in our country and it's vitally important wherever you go.

Of course it is. But he says, in our country the way that widows are taken care of is that the husband's brother will take in the widow as their wife and take them and start meeting those needs as best he can.

But he says, but a lot of times, especially the Christian ladies, if they are not wanting to enter into a polygamous relationship, then they are shunned. They're kicked out. Not only do they lose their husband, but they lose all of his possessions because the husband's family takes these.

And they are quite literally left on their own without anything. In a moment, they become some of the most vulnerable people in their communities.

[27 : 06] And all of a sudden, this verse became alive to me. And that became one of the most meaningful parts of the trip for me. You see, in order for the helpless, in order to help the helpless, we must become more and more selfless in our actions.

looking after orphans and widows is not an option for the church. It's an obligation that we must have a part of our ministry.

It's not something that you can just kind of take or leave and say, you know what? We may do this or we may not. No, this is what we're called to do. We have an obligation to care for those who are most vulnerable, to care for those widows and those orphans.

And it is sad to say, but sometimes it is easier to do ministry in a different context than it is to do it right here in our community. And I'm not exactly sure of why this is, but I think it has to do with the fact that when you go on a mission trip, what we're doing is we're being very intentional about living on mission.

When you go on a mission trip, you're saying that, all right, I'm doing missions now. Now it starts and then when you get back, okay, I'm done doing missions, but that's not how we are to see scripture.

[28 : 20] That's not how we are to see our lives. It's not that we care for people that live somewhere else other than Stevens County more. It's not that we care about people in Mexico more or Clarkston more or Boston more or Kentucky or Alaska or Africa or Nicaragua or anywhere

else that we've been in the last 10 years.

But when we go to all of these places, we're being very intentional about living on mission. What if we decided to be intentional here in our everyday lives?

What if we decided to take this very seriously and to not only hear God's word, not only to know what to do, but to begin to do it and begin to take it very serious where we live lives that are on mission for God, to open our eyes to opportunities that are right around us.

Today in Sunday School, you will have an opportunity to sign up to be a part of a wonderful ministry that we're relaunching called Shepherd Staff. Much of this ministry that Shepherd Staff will be doing is James 1.27.

Caring for those who are no longer able to get out, many of whom are widowed. You want a really quick way to get plugged into a ministry that is pure and undefiled before God?

[29 : 38] Sign up to be a part of Shepherd Staff. Commit to making contact with one or two people each month that would love a call, that would love a visit, or even a card in the mail.

Be a part of meeting those needs. See, church, this is one of those passages that's pretty easy for us to understand. In fact, much of the things that James is saying here are the exact same things that Jesus tells us over and over again.

He tells us to not only be hearers of the Lord, but be doers of it. To look around, see needs that are right around you and seek to meet those needs. This is a passage that is really easy to understand, but yet all too often hard for us to put into practice.

What you see in this passage is a progression of spiritual maturity. And I want you to be honest with yourself today. Where do you land on this progression? Where do you find yourselves right now in your walk with God?

For some of us, we may need to start by receiving God's Word. The extent of our Bible intake is coming together and listening to God's Word preached for 30 minutes or sometimes 35 or 36 minutes each Sunday and hearing God's Word.

[30 : 53] That's the extent of it. That's not enough. That's not what God requires. God wants us to love His Word for it to be sweeter than honey, for it to be something that we take and we love and we meditate on and we read and we hear those things.

Maybe where you need to start with this progression is removing some distractions from your life and diving into God's Word. We have many opportunities for you to be able to do that and we'd love to plug you in with those.

Ladies, if you want to hear a lot about them, stay for the brunch today. All of those will be discussed and talked about and you'll be able to get plugged in very quickly. For others of us, maybe we have done a great job of diving into God's Word.

We're involved with several Bible studies. We started a reading plan but now we need to realize we need to do what it says. We need to do what we're reading about. We need to, and they don't, they're not just words on a page but they're life to us.

They're to be applied to our lives. We need to realize that it doesn't make a lot of sense to know God's Word and then to not obey it. If we really believe this book is God's Word, if we really believe the God who spoke the world into existence, the God who left the glory of heaven and lived a perfect life and died the death that we deserve so that we could have a relationship with Him, if we really believe this is His Word, then we're not only going to read it but we're going to do it.

[32 : 20] We're going to apply it to our lives. Still for others of us, we have been reading God's Word and maybe started to dabble a little bit with applying it.

We've gone on a few mission trips and at times are very intentional in obeying what the Bible says but we need to start seeing our whole life, every part of it, as on mission for Him to begin showing the Word to those in need in all over the world but also right here in our community.

And so I don't know where you find yourself on this progression today. Maybe you've never placed your faith and your trust in Jesus and that's where you need to begin today by saying, Lord, I know that I'm a sinner.

I know that I'm quick to anger. I know that I have not even begun to start putting away filthiness and rampant wickedness but I'm ready to today.

I'm ready to make that commitment and I know that I need you to do that. I realize this isn't something that I can do on my own. I'm ready to do this but I know that I need you to make that happen.

[33 : 29] Maybe today is the day that you give your life to Jesus. But I want to encourage you to be honest with yourself today. Figure out where you find yourself in this progression and begin growing in your relationship with God.

Begin growing in your walk with Him. Begin growing in that sanctification. But it starts with you being honest with where you are right now. So let's go to the Lord in prayer and ask Him to help us do that.

Father, thank You so very much for Your Word. Thank You for what it teaches us not only about You but what it reveals about ourselves. And so Lord, I pray that as we think through this passage that we're reminded of several really important things.

The importance of diving into Your Word, of receiving the Word, of hearing Your Word. Lord, because we know Lord that it has the power to save our souls when we believe it, when we give our life to it.

But Lord, I pray that it's not just something that stays in this accepting this knowledge. And I pray that it's not something that we just take for granted, that we read these words, but then Lord, we take it and we apply it to our life.

[34 : 39] We give our life to it and say, Lord, this not only is wonderful words for us, but it's wonderful words for us to apply to our lives, to begin doing what it is that You've called us to do.

And Lord, I pray that we take this Word and we show it to those in need. We begin living this out in a way that it affects others around us. That we begin seeing needs right around us.

That we open our eyes to seeing those needs right here in our community and around the world.

And we say, God, how can I meet those needs? Because God, we know looking at Your life, reading through the Gospels, there was no one better who opened their eyes to look around at the needs around them and see how they can start meeting those needs other than You.

So God, help us to be like You. Help us to know these words. Help us to apply it to our lives. Help us to open our eyes and see the needs that are right around us. And Lord, I pray that if there's somebody here today that needs to know You as their Lord and Savior, that today they would see that.

They would realize that they're nowhere near, anywhere in this process, but they want to be. So Lord, make it very clear to them that the only way to have a relationship with You is through Jesus.

[35 : 59] And so Lord, there's somebody here today that needs to go from death to life. To have an eternal change in their destiny, Lord, I pray that You would give them the boldness and courage to ask someone.

to step out in faith and say, I need Jesus. Please show me how to follow Him. Lord, we love You. We thank You for all that You do.

And we ask this in Jesus' precious name. Amen. I'm going to invite you to stand. We're going to sing a song of invitation. And if God is speaking to you this morning, won't you respond as we stand together and sing?

Amen. alguém alguém alguém alguém Thank you.