

Three Areas of Management

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[0 : 00] Let's turn for a wee while this morning to James chapter 1 and verse 19, page 1215, James 1 and verse 19. Know this, my beloved brothers, let every person be quick to hear, slow to speak, slow to anger.

For the anger of man does not produce the righteousness that God requires. Therefore, put away all filthiness and rampant wickedness and receive with meekness the implanted word which is able to save your souls.

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 you think about work, there are two ways in which a person can work.

[1 : 26] You can either do one job at a time. You do one job and you start it and you finish it. Then you move on to the other job, the second job. You start that one and you finish it.

And then you move on to the third job. You start that and you finish it. You can call that a sequential way of working. Some people work like that. But there's another way of working as well.

And that is to start one job and then go away and start another job. And then go away and start a third job. Remembering all the time that you've started the first job and come back to it and finish it. That way you can get maybe three or four or five different tasks finished in a lot quicker and a lot sooner than if you work doing one thing at a time.

One of the things that women say about men sometimes is that men can only do one thing at a time. Whereas they claim that women can do more than one thing at a time.

[2 : 22] Now that may or may not be true. But it's called multitasking. That's what you call it. When you're able to do, say, five jobs or five things at any one given moment.

And you're always remembering what those five things are. And you're remembering to keep up to date with them. You have to keep your ears and your eyes and your senses open so that you're able not to forget.

You're on the watch. You're on the go all the time. Whether you're a man or a woman. That's what is called multitasking. The Bible requires Christians to multitask.

There's always. There's not just one thing to be aware of. There are several things to be aware of. Duties to perform. Things to be getting on with. Things to watch. Watching, listening, sensing.

All the time. Keeping your eyes and your ears and your brain open. All the time. And ready to react to any given situation. Because you don't know what's going to happen at any one given time.

[3 : 19] And that's what James is. James is a real multitasker. If you ever read through the letter of James. I hope you've read it several times. It was the most practical book probably in the Bible.

With all kinds of practical information and instruction and advice as to how to live the Christian life. In fact, it was such a practical book that it was only in the fourth century that it was accepted into the Bible.

Everyone in the church accepted the letter into the Bible in any case. In fact, even at the time of the Reformation, Martin Luther was highly suspicious of the book of James because it was so practical. And for Martin Luther, of course, his liberating discovery was that it was by faith that a person was saved. It was only by trusting in Jesus Christ and what he has done for us on the cross that a person was saved.

That's what changed Martin Luther's life. But when he came on to the book of James, James lays stress, so much stress on how to work out the Christian life.

[4 : 27] That Martin Luther believed that one contradicted the other. In actual fact, they don't contradict one another. A person can only be saved by faith in Jesus Christ.

That's true. That's the central teaching of the Bible. There's no other way to be saved other than trusting in what Jesus has done for us and accepting his death on the cross.

But the way to live the Christian life is to listen to God's word and to put it into practice. Not because we have to in order to be saved, but because as a result of what God has done in a person's life, we want to serve God.

We want to obey him. We want to put God in the first place. And we want to do everything to the glory of God. Now, how do you do everything to the glory of God? You open your Bible and you find out what the Bible tells us about how to live to the glory of God.

And James tells us in no uncertain terms what we need to be aware of. And of course, there are other places in the Bible that tell us exactly the same thing. But James concentrates. He knows that the people to whom he's writing are falling by the wayside.

[5 : 34] They're getting involved in activities and things that they shouldn't be as Christians.

They're going to bring real harm to their Christian lives. And they're going to, you know, of course, as well, that when a Christian goes astray, that other people see it.

And they say, well, how can that person be a Christian? Look at what he's doing. Look at the way he's living his life. And James was aware of all that. And he says in verse 4, he's got some pretty harsh things to say about some of the things that they were doing in front of others.

He was saying, well, how can this accord with what you're professing? You say on the one hand that you love Jesus and you're following the Lord. On the other hand, your lifestyle proves the opposite. And that's always something we've got to be taking the very first instance, isn't it?

As the Lord's people, if you're a follower of Jesus today, you put the Lord first. And that means you watch what people see about the way you live your life.

Your attitude, your selfishness, your speech, your conduct, everything about you, people are watching because you're a witness to the Lord. Now, that doesn't mean you don't stumble.

[6 : 34] Of course you do. We all stumble from one point to another. And yet, the objective, the multitask is to keep God at the center of our being and to live and to do everything to his glory.

Now, here are three areas I want us to focus on. We could focus on many more. But just in the time that's left, I want to focus on three areas of management in our multitasking.

Three areas that we have to be aware of all the time, every day. And three areas that will help us, I hope, if we understand what James is telling us, that will help us to live our lives consistently and to serve God in everything that we do.

Three areas of management. And we're not to think that we start one and finish it and then move on to the second and finish it and then move on to the third and finish it. You can't do that.

You've got to manage these all at the same time. And the Lord can give us the help and the strength to do so. First of all, the first area is anger management.

[7 : 39] Verse 19. Know this, my beloved brothers. Every person be quick to hear, slow to speak, and slow to anger. For the anger of man does not produce the righteousness that God requires.

That's the first thing. Anger management. Anger management. The second area that James wants us to concentrate on is waste management.

I'll call it that because I think that gives it a kind of a contemporary feel. It goes on in verse 21. Therefore, put away all filthiness.

Now that's what I regard as waste management. We all know what that means. He's not talking about waste in the kitchen. He's talking about waste in here, in my heart. But put away all filthiness and rampant wickedness and receive with meekness the implanted word.

The third area is information management. Again, that's a word that we all know. Information. He's not talking about general information. He's talking about specific information.

[8 : 41] The information that God gives us in his word. And the question is, what do we do with that information? How do we listen to it? And how do we respond to what God is saying to us?

Three areas of management. The first of these is anger management. Now there's not a single person in here today. Maybe I'm wrong. I don't think. No, no. I'm not wrong. There's not a single person here today that doesn't know what the emotion of anger is.

It's all of us. Now that's not to say that we all get angry the same way. And it's not to say that we all get angry at the same things. Nevertheless, we all at some point in our lives have become angry.

Some people get angry a lot. And there's all kinds of theories as to why that might be. Some people, it takes a lot for them to get angry. They're very patient. Some people have a nature that is a patient nature.

Some, even people who don't love and follow the Lord have a patient nature about them. I don't know. It's an interesting thing, isn't it? What makes a person the kind of person that they are?

[9 : 53] And everyone has got different natures. Even people who haven't heard the gospel have got. And it's an awful shame, isn't it? When I, who claim to follow Jesus, have a worse temper than someone who's not Christian.

That is really a very bad indictment on me as a Christian, isn't it? But here he's saying, here the apostle is saying that every one of us needs to be aware of our inclination of how suddenly someone can.

He's not talking about the kind of anger that is righteous. There are places in the Bible where there is righteous anger. Even the Lord Jesus himself was righteously and properly angry.

Like when he went into the temple and he saw the money changers trying to make money, trying to make a killing off the poor people that came to the temple. He rightly became angry and he overturned the tables.

But let's face it. When you and I get angry, it's not righteous anger. It's always stained and polluted by sin. We don't allow it. When you and I get angry, it's either at the wrong thing or it's too quickly.

[11 : 07] Because we've responded too quickly to a given situation. And we always conduct ourselves in the wrong manner. Either by flying off the handle. And you end up saying something that goes way beyond what you mean.

You end up saying things that you'd never planned in the first place. And once you say them, you think, I wish I could turn back the clock and reverse what I said because I went far too far.

And you have to go and apologize. And don't ever, I've said this before, don't ever hesitate. When you know you need to apologize to somebody for something you've said, you go to them and you say it to them and get the thing cleared.

How many disputes could be solved if we simply tackle them at the time? Instead of leaving them to simmer and boil and get worse and worse and the bad feeling sets in and bitterness set in.

And what happens is you don't respond to a situation as you should. Now here's where the Christian needs to always be aware of his own weakness and his dependency on the Lord.

[12 : 13] And we need to be aware that frequently we stumble. And part of that stumbling is when we say the wrong thing to someone. And we need to right away, we need to come to the Lord and say, Lord, I know I said the wrong thing there.

And I need your forgiveness. Right away, I need your forgiveness. And you know that when you come to the Lord in meekness and repentance, God will forgive. That's the great thing about being a Christian, isn't it?

That day by day we come back to the Lord and we know that the blood of Jesus Christ continues to cleanse us from all sin. Isn't it marvelous?

Isn't it absolutely wonderful that you can continuously come to Jesus, not using it as an excuse. You don't say, oh, well, I can do anything in my life I like because I can always go back to the Lord every day and ask his forgiveness.

That's not the way we are at all, I hope. But when we do stumble, when we fall and fail, we go back to the Lord right away, don't leave it. And we come knowing that the blood of Jesus Christ cleanses us from all sin.

[13 : 15] But knowing that we also have to be on the alert and we have to adopt that spirit of wisdom. And when, as we become wise and experienced in the Christian life, do you know what happens?

We learn to say less and listen more. That's what James is saying. Know this, be quick to hear and slow to speak.

He's not saying don't speak at all. He's not saying just listen and don't speak. He's saying ask God to give you that balance in which you learn to listen to what's going on around you and listen to what other people are saying and analyze it and absorb it properly and use that wisdom of experience and knowledge as a Christian to be able to know how to react and how to respond.

And in case you do something, it's going to make a situation far, far worse than it is. I would ask you today, and I'm asking myself to, I'm starting with myself to ask the Lord to give me wisdom.

The kind of wisdom that knows how to listen and is prepared to listen and says less. Less. Says less.

[14 : 38] And is prepared to leave things in the hand of the Lord and ask that the Lord will give me a life that will be less angry.

And less reactive. And less likely to bring shame upon my own character and my own savior who expects me to be patient and gentle.

The meekness, says Paul, and gentleness of Christ needs to characterize my life. So, anger management.

Secondly, our second task is waste management. And each one follows on from the one before. Look at what he says in verse 21. Therefore put away all filthiness and rampant wickedness and receive with meekness the implanted word.

[15 : 42] Now, it strikes me that the way that James describes it is so similar to our everyday tasks in our homes of putting out the rubbish.

It's a real problem, isn't it, nowadays? People putting out rubbish and the amount of stuff that accumulates underneath our sink or in our kitchen bin. It's like you take a bin liner and you take a full one out.

You tie up the top. You put it in the bin. You put a fresh bin liner in. And you think, well, that's it for another week. And then within the day, it's full again.

I'm sure you have that experience as well. It's amazing, isn't it, that from one week to the next, our bins, these massive great wheelie bins outside our houses get filled with a waste that we produce, that you and I produce in our kitchens and in our homes.

It's a real problem for those who have to know how to do, how to deal with them. And what do they do with them? And what about the stuff, the amount of stuff that doesn't get absorbed into the ground?

[16 : 49] Most of it is not biodegradable, so therefore we have to separate out one from the other and the recyclable to the non-recyclable and all these things have become a very confusing exercise now, hasn't it?

But it's a real problem, isn't it? And the problem arises because of the sheer amount of waste that any household produces, rubbish that accumulates in our homes as a result of normal, everyday living.

And James is saying the same is true for you as a Christian. There is an accumulation of rubbish. Why? Because following Jesus does not equal a perfect life.

Please remember that whenever you're criticizing someone who's a Christian and you can see the faults in them, I know you only need to, you can, I can look at myself and I can see so many faults and so much, so many bad habits.

So many things that I just fall into time and time again. The same things are accumulate. And what James is saying here is that you have to develop the discipline just the same way as you do in the house of putting out the rubbish.

[18 : 00] Putting out the rubbish. We've seen programs on TV sometimes about people who have obviously a problem with putting out, they've got some kind of psychological condition where they have to keep their rubbish.

You know that there is something terribly wrong with such a person. It's unnatural. Something that is just, it's something that no one should do.

It's unhealthy. It's awful. And the same thing is true for a Christian. That we need to keep an eye all the time on the wrong things, the wrong habits, the wrong, the things that we allow to accumulate in our hearts.

The things that which are against God's word. How do you do that? James tells us. He tells us that here by, by receiving the implanted word.

Now that's really important. Because it tells us, first of all, that we can't do these things by ourselves. We need the word. Now what's the word? The word is the Bible. The living message of God.

[19 : 00] That's what we have in our hands. From Genesis to Revelation. In which God reveals himself. And he makes, and I'm going to see this in a few moments time. And he makes himself known to us.

There's only one way to deal with the filth in our lives. And as God's Holy Spirit dwells within us, one of the things he shows us is where we go wrong.

And he shows us how, how, the kind of things that we do in God's eyes. The problem is that we look at too much of our lives as we see things.

And what we need to come to the Lord and ask him is to show us ourselves as we, as he sees us.

And then to mold us and to fashion us and to change us by evicting all of these things.

We can't do it ourselves. We need his word to dwell within us. And that brings me on to the third area of management. Which is this. The management of information.

[20 : 00] Information management. We've looked at anger management. We've looked at waste management. And we've looked at, and we're now going to look at information management.

Verse 22. Be doers of the word. And not hearers only. Deceiving ourselves. For if anyone is a hearer of the word and not a doer, he's like a man who looks intently at his natural face in a mirror. And so on. All the way through this letter is the theme of God's word. God's word. And all the way through the Bible.

We saw this on Wednesday evening. All the way through the Bible is the theme of the God who speaks. The famous writer Francis Schaeffer wrote a book called, He is there and he is not silent. That is the nature of God. God is a speaking God. He does things through the word of his power.

[21 : 02] Right back in Genesis chapter 1. First thing God does. He said. God said, let there be light. And there was light. You see, the word of God is synonymous with the action of God.

When God speaks, something happens. And the whole thing, it goes all the way through Genesis chapter 1. God does everything. All of creation is done.

It's carried out by his word. His speaking. Because it's living and active and immense. All the way through the Bible. God, even after Adam and Eve fall and bring the world into a state of sin.

God continues to speak. Speaks to Abraham, Isaac, Jacob, Moses. All of the people. Of these people who were close to him in the Old Testament. And he promises them. And he fulfills his promise in the person of Jesus Christ.

Who is the word made flesh. So James is capitalizing on this theme. And he's telling us how important God's word is.

[22 : 04] His message for us. Now the question is this morning. What do we do when we listen to God's message? How do we respond when we hear the voice of God speaking to us?

And that's a basic fundamental question that we continually lose sight of. One that we must come back to Sunday after Sunday, day after day.

What do we do when we hear God's word? Now you can hear it in various forms. You can hear it preached like what we're doing this morning. We're all listening to the explanation of God's word. And in so far as I'm explaining God's word. God is speaking to me. And he's speaking to you. Now the question is this. What do you do with it?

Do you even remember it? Can you remember what Kenny I preached last Sunday? Can you remember his text? Can you remember any of the points he made?

[23 : 09] More importantly, what have you done with it? Every time we listen to God's word, God is showing us something that needs to be changed in us.

Do we go out the door and just forget everything that we have heard? Or has it taken effect on us as we say to ourselves, right? Even if I'm not going to do anything else, there's one thing there I need to attend to.

Two weeks ago, we're looking at Ephesians chapter 1 at night time. Do you remember the three things that I said God wants us to know, every one of us to know?

Do you remember what they were? I said that they were absolutely, definitely three things that God, and the reason I can be so sure of that, is because it's in God's word. It's in Ephesians. Paul's praying for it.

He's saying that you should know the hope of his calling, the riches of his inheritance, and the exceeding greatness of his power. And I said that even if you don't understand what these things, will you go and pray that God will give you these?

[24 : 10] Did you do it? Did you do it? You see, you go in our rich tradition, where we are so used to listening to sermons.

Quite rightly so. We have emphasized and focused very rightly on the centrality of preaching in our tradition. It's quite rightly so. But is it not true also that when you do that, you lose sight of what you

need to do?

You tend to listen to sermons and not do anything about it. And the same is true about the Bible. We're so accustomed to reading our Bible. We all have Bibles.

And again, in our tradition, many of you have grown up with a Bible, as I have. We know it so well. Is it true that it has lost its impact as the living word of God on our lives?

And is it true that while we know it, it has very little impact on the way in which we live? Continuous, living, changing impact on the way you live your life.

[25 : 17] Know what James says? It's like going to a mirror, looking at yourself. We've all done it. We probably did it today at some point before coming out to church. You look at yourself. You see that there's a bit of fluff on your lapel or your eyeliner is not on correctly or your hair is not straightened or it's not combed or whatever.

And then instead of doing something about it, you forget about it. James is saying that doesn't make sense. What's the point in having a mirror if you're not going to do anything, if you're not going to do what the mirror is telling you?

Now, what we need to do is this. We need to have a completely different view of the Bible because all too often people say, well, I'm never going to understand this anyway.

It's too complicated. It's only for theologians. It's not. The Bible was written for ordinary people like you and I. And the biggest mistake you can make is to think I can never understand the Bible.

So I would like us to have a completely different view of the Bible. The Bible is God's message to us. And when you're reading it or when you're listening to it, there are three questions that God wants us to ask ourselves.

[26 : 22] Number one is this. In what way is God showing himself to me? Because the first thing that the Bible shows us is God. It's a revelation of God himself.

So as we've read this passage, for example, as we've read this passage, what is it that God is telling me about himself? The second question is this.

What does this passage tell me about myself? What does it reveal in me? And the third question is this. What does this passage tell me I must do about myself?

How can I put this passage into practice in my life? Now, it may only be one thing. That's fine. One is better than zero. Will you please and will I?

And I'm talking to myself as well. If you find this challenging, believe me. I'm in the same position. I'm just as guilty as anyone of all the things that I'm talking about.

[27 : 21] Will we please ask ourselves these three questions whenever you read your Bible? And I hope you do every day. When Mary and I got married in 1980, the minister who married us was a minister called Murdo McCauley.

Now, the young ones will not remember Murdo McCauley. The older ones my age and up will remember him as a very formidable, powerful preacher. And he married us. And there's one thing. I should remember the whole thing, I suppose. But it was a long time ago. There's one thing he said that I've never forgotten. And he said this. Never go through a day without reading your Bible. And that was something he emphasized so much. It's because the Bible, he was such a good preacher because he loved the Bible so much. And he said this.

I would rather go without my breakfast than go into the day without reading my Bible. I've never forgotten that. It's just a simple thing.

[28 : 33] I've never forgotten that. Why is the Bible so important? Because God is revealing three things. He's telling us three things. First of all, he's telling us something about himself. And you can't go anywhere in the Bible without God telling you something about himself.

It's the same with telling us about ourselves. He tells us, secondly, he reveals something about us. You and I. It's like a mirror. And thirdly, there is the Bible always challenges us.

And of course, the greatest challenge of all, the very first challenge of all, is what we're going to do with Jesus. And perhaps the reason you've never done anything with what you've heard is because you know that the very first thing you need to do is to listen to Jesus inviting you to himself.

And come to him in faith and trust in what he has done at Calvary for the forgiveness of your sins. There's no point going any further until we come to that point, that step of faith in which we listen to the voice of Jesus. So for some of you today to be a doer of the word is to just come and put your trust in Jesus.

[29 : 47] To turn away from sin in your life and just to trust and rest in what Jesus has done. And then it's when we come to that point that all of a sudden God's word takes a different dimension altogether.

And we begin to really live by it. There's these three areas then. What did we say? We said anger management. We said waste management.

And we said information management. Let's make sure that we multitask every day. Doing various things for the Lord.

Making sure we keep an eye on every area. And making sure that we put into practice everything that he tells us to. Because we love him so much. Let's pray. Father in heaven, we are conscious that we cannot do any of these things without the help of the Holy Spirit.

The leading and the guiding of the Holy Spirit. We ask, Lord, that your spirit will continue to guide us. And continue to make known the areas in our lives that we need to attend to.

[30 : 55] And we want to do it because we want to see you glorified. We want to be living creatures. We want to be spirit-filled Christians. We want to make an impact in the world that we live in.

And we want to bring glory. We're only here for a short time. And we pray that we will redeem the time. Because the days are evil. Be with us now, we pray. Watch over us throughout the rest of this day.

Bless it to us in Jesus' name. Amen. Amen. Love you. Amen.