
Into Thy Word Bible Study in James

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James 1: 21-27: “Becoming Doers of the Word!”

General idea: James uses more word pictures and illustrations to show us the necessity of putting the Word of God into our life, in how we feel and how we are, and then allow it to transform us into how we treat others. James is telling us in order to be a “doer of the Word,” which means to put into practice the precepts of our Lord, we have to rid ourselves of the rotten filth in our lives. That is, the evil in us must go before we can sincerely be humble and obedient to the Lord and grow in Him. Just listening to the Word and then doing nothing with it is total foolishness. It conveys the stupendous stupid-ness of our mindsets. We will be missing out on what God has for us and replacing it with foolishness at best, and with unadulterated evil at worst. In either case, we are being disloyal to God, throwing out prime opportunities, and wasting what He gives us. The solution to the problem of evil and willful disobedience, as well as to a meaningless life is to receive His Word. We must be willing to let God’s Word affect, as in influence us deeply, our achievements and purposes because of who He is and what He is doing in us! When we are receiving His message, we are more likely to obey Him and live a life of Christian distinction and purpose, and to give God the glory.

Vs. 21: God’s Word is the powerhouse and platform for our salvation. His Word conveys His Truth and precepts for living and doing the Christian life. Yet, it can easily be thwarted simply by our refusal to acknowledge Him as LORD, and allowing our human waste of sin to be in the way of His Way! God’s Word is strong enough, but God usually does not override our will once we are saved (our will is overridden from His Spirit testifying about Jesus so we will have faith to revive the faith: John 3:3-6; Rom. 5:4-5; 8:14; 8:26-27; 1 Cor. 12:3).

- *Filthiness* means earwax; it needs to be cleaned. You cannot hear well if your ear is full of wax. This is also a colloquialism for *evil*; it is a form of adultery! It is adultery by our hidden motives and willful, moral rebellion against God. It is literally cheating on Him with our desires, lust, and sin from what He has called and planned for us. It is us, as humans, seeking what is contrary to His will such as hatred and bigotry (Isaiah 14:12-15; Matt. 15:18-19; Rom. 3:23; Eph. 2:3; Rev. 21:4). God calls us to strip it off like filthy clothing.
- *Wickedness* refers to unrighteous anger, where our anger is invalid and/or out of control, such as people who are just bitter in life, easily angered, or never satisfied.
- *Receiving* refers to listening, as in hospitality and welcoming. In context, it is applying truth, putting into action the precepts we hear, then being obedient to them.

- *Meekness* is not weakness or a lack of strength, rather, it is being humble and gentle toward God and others (Ex. 32:19-20; 30-34; Num 12:1-3; Psalm 37:11 Matt. 5: 3-12; 11:29). In this context, it refers to being nonresistant to God and His work in us. Meekness produces a desire and effort seeking to please God and submitting our will and aspirations to His will and what is best. Meekness enables us to endure being personally attacked by keeping our focus on Christ with humility.
- *The Implanted Word* is the message of God conveyed through His Bible. In Stoic philosophy, this is called “innate reason,” meaning either we are born with it or we can reach within ourselves for it. For the Christian, it means we all have His Word in our hearts and we reach for it as it comes from God (Psalm 119; John 17:17; Rom. 1:2; Eph. 1:11-14; 1 Thess. 2:13; 2 Tim. 3:15-17; James 1:18; 2 Pet. 1:20-21). The call is to take His Word, allowing Him to plant it in us just like a gardener would plant a tree, then allow our efforts in Him and the work of the Spirit to grow the tree of our faith in order to produce the Fruit in our lives that will impact others around us (2 Pet. 1: 3-11).

James uses the illustration that looking in a mirror and then forgetting what we look like is foolish, as is reading the Bible and not doing anything about what it says. James is telling us that an effort and determination is needed to apply the precepts of our Lord into a life that is Christian. The word “Christian” means more than just a professing belief; it means following Christ; it means being like Christ, manifesting His qualities which are demonstrated, when we are like Christ, by our obedience and what we do. Saved? Yes, perhaps; but as James will say later, what good is that faith if we do nothing with it?

Vs. 22-25: God’s Word gives us our spiritual birth and reason in life (Col. 3:16; 1 Pet. 1:22-23). Who am I? What am I here for? What is the meaning of life? It is all wrapped up in who we are in Christ, and our allowing Him to empower us. God calls us to put our faith in action; we do this by listening to Him and then doing what He says. When we hear the Word of God, the proof text that it is working will be that it affects and impacts us and we are able to make a response to it. If we do nothing with it, we are like the man in the Parable of the Sower (Matt 13:1-23). The concept, *Do what it says*, is essential for our growth as well as our societal influence and betterment.

- *Doers.* When we really hear God’s Word without putting up any barriers, it will impact us existentially (change us internally) down to the depths of who we are in personality, thinking, and attitudes, then it will lead to godly actions. It will model and show a loving concern for others and His precepts in concert. We have to be willing to hear before we can practice it. If we do not practice it, it becomes useless. This does not mean doing something without the knowledge to do it right, or going off without purpose or direction.

- *Hearers only* is a statement that characterizes self delusion and hypocrisy. In contrast, some Jews at the time believed they were only required to memorize the Law (Word of God), but did not need to practice it. The value was only in the learning; the practicing of it was considered with contempt. James is using the stoic philosophy and tweaking it to attack the complacent Jews. (Ezek. 33:30-32). Complacency is deadly to a church, as it will fall swiftly and hard into utter worthlessness and eventual closure.
- *Mirror* was a handheld piece of polished bronze and was very expensive; only a rich person would have one (1 Cor. 13:12). The image is that the Bible is a mirror to our souls—who we really are in motivations, desires, outcomes, and character!
- *Perfect law* means sacred Scripture (Psalm 19), and, along with *mirror*, means how the Word of God reflects our character. The purpose of a mirror is to show what we really look like so we can improve ourselves. It is the examiner of what is plainly seen, not by us, but by others. It is the same with the Bible. God's Word examines us and gives us the information to "comb the hair" of our faith, to make us worthy of going out in public, and being practical and appealing to others. The Bible helps us see ourselves so we can fix, with the Spirit's empowerment, what needs attention and improvement or whatever is needed.
- *Liberty* means God's Law does not enslave us, but rather sets us free (John 8:36; Rom. 8:2; Gal. 5:13)!
- *Forgetful*. To be a person who does not desire to improve himself or who does not care James plainly says is stupid behavior to be that person! Philosophers, at that time, believed knowledge freed them from worldly care; thus, having knowledge meant you did not have to deal with it. James is attacking that apathetic concept that was creeping into the Church then, and has taken deep root in the Church today!

God's Word sets us free; it does not bind us to traditions and meaningless rhetoric; it liberates us into joy and contentment; it brings out our best and gives us purpose and real, authentic meaning. The application of this is in how we control what we say and do, as we are called to do. Our words reflect what is in our heart as do our actions. Serving the needy is our character and maturity in action.

Vs. 26-27: These are the principle verses for us as sincere, authentic Christians who are responsible to do something with our Christian life. We are not called to just be pretty; rather, we are called to get dirty! This is implied in all that we do and believe (Prov. 19:17).

- *Does not bridle his tongue.* God calls us to control our words (Psalm 141:3; Prov. 10:19; 16:24; Matt. 5:9; 12:34; Eph. 4:29)! We are not to divorce our tongue from our mind and heart!
- *Useless.* Here comes the practical application, the essential quality that shows who we are in Christ, as our words reflect our faith and character. When we are careless with our words, we are being careless with our Lord and call. James calls us to wake up and get real with our faith and work. God hates it, literally hates it when we do not take care to what comes from our lips (Psalm 5:9; 12:3; 52:2; 109:2; 120:2; Prov. 17:4; 27-28; 25:23; 26:20; Jer. 9:8; James 3:1-12; 3 John 9-12)!
- *Pure and undefiled religion* refers to obedience that is pleasing to God—doing something with our faith.
- *Orphans and widows.* These are the powerless ones in society. They have little to no resources or rights, and were often thrown away as many cultures do with them today. The Jews did a fair job of taking care of them, and the Romans only took care of the orphans of its citizens. Even though it was a very small percentage, most other cultures did nothing. True Christianity involves defending and providing for the helpless and needy! God's call is powerful, purposeful, and clear; take care of them! Period! No *ifs*, *ands* or *buts*; no excuses or getting lost in committee. We are to take care of them (Ex. 22:20-24; Deut. 10:18; 14:29; Psalm 9:18; 68:5; 146:9; Isa. 1:17; Ezek. 22:7)! A church that does not care for its helpless is a useless and worthless church deserving a bulldozer (James' language is far more emphatic than mine!)

God's Word is the seed that is implanted in us to grow our faith and make our life impacting and worthwhile. His Word cannot be planted in our hearts when all the room is taken up by our pride and personal, evil agendas! God's Word must be an active participant in us; His words must transcend our soul and will so that they take root in us in a deep and personal way so all we do will be the result of what God has impacted in us. We are never to divorce our Christianity from God's Truth or His call! Allow yourself to receive His reconciliation and Truth for your life and ministry!

We are not called to be perfect all of the time. We still have His forgiveness when we mess up, but we are called to put forth an effort and have a caring heart' in whatever we do, we must do it with excellence for His glory. Listening is extremely important and James will expand on it later, but just listening and doing nothing is useless! If a person went to a police officer and said a burglary was in progress, would the police officer be doing a great job by just being a great listener? Perhaps the police officer did all of the earnest, proper listening skills, paid close attention, and took the time to carefully listen—perhaps even writing it down. But, if he never responded to the burglary by

calling it in, or trying to stop or investigate it himself, his job would be of no value to the community.

God's Word will lead to godly action when it is received by a person who is rooted in Christ, whose life has been transformed. If not, we are self deluded as James states in verses 23-27 and Ezekiel in Ezek 3:30-32. Thus, the Bible must be read, it must be adhered to, it must impact us. Then, a visible and viable result will occur as our faith development increases, and our purpose is set with a life that is worth living and that leads others to Him. Further action is taking our faith to the streets of life and actually helping others in a real, authentic way.

The Essential Inductive Questions (for more Inductive questions see [Inductive Bible Study](#)):

1. What does this passage say?
2. What does this passage mean?
3. What is God telling me? How am I encouraged and strengthened?
4. Is there a sin in my life for which confession and repentance is needed?
5. How can I be changed so I can learn and grow?
6. What is in the way of these precepts affecting me? What is in the way of my listening to God?
7. How does this apply to me? What will I do about it?
8. What can I model and teach? What does God want me to share with someone?

Additional Questions:

1. How do you use a mirror? What do you look for?
2. According to this passage, what is the solution to the problem of evil?
3. Why is it a necessity to put the Word of God into your life? Have you considered how it affects how you feel, how you are, and how it transforms you in how you treat others?

4. God's Word is the powerhouse to the Christian life. How has this been so for you? How can it be more for you as you put into practice the precepts of our Lord?
5. How can the implantation of God's Word in you be easily thwarted? What blocks you from adhering to God's truths? Why, at times, are we not willing and able to receive them? How does putting up barriers slow down or stop our growth in Christ? What are the barriers for you?
6. Have you considered there is *filthiness* and *evil* in you (Rom. 3:23)? How is evil a form of adultery?
7. Read 2 Pet. 1: 3-11. God calls us to take His Word and allow Him to plant it in us just like a gardener would plant a tree, then allow our efforts in Him and the work of the Spirit to grow the tree of our faith in order to produce the Fruit in our lives to impact others around us. How can this transpire more effectively in you?
8. Read Col. 3:15-17: How does God's Word give you a spiritual birth and reason in life? Consider the age old philosophical questions: Who am I? What am I here for? What is the meaning of life?
9. Do you fully believe when the Bible has impacted us, we will make a response to it? How have you done this? How can you do this better?
10. What would your church look like if more people were "doers of the Word?"
11. How has the Bible been a mirror to your soul?
12. When we are careless with our words, we are being careless with our Lord and call. What can you do to be a better Christian by controlling what you say and how you say it? True Christianity involves defending and providing for the helpless and needy! What can your church do to make this more of a priority?

I desire to do Your will, O my God; Your law is within my heart. Psalm 40:8

For more insights on who the Bible is important see:

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