

James Chapter 1 Lesson 2

Verses 19-21 (Receive the Word)

James gets his inspiration from his brother's teaching on the parable of the sower.

Jesus said the seed is God's word and the soil upon which it falls is the people's hearts.

In verse 21 James says accept the word God has planted in your heart. In other words, receive the word of God. And in order for God's word to grow in our lives, we have to receive it in the right way.

James gives us three ways to properly receive it.

1. **Be swift to listen.** This command means more than just merely listening intently. There are two kinds of listening: Listening to hear and listening to understand. Jesus often complained about the hypocrites in His day, because they kept hearing, but never took the effort to understand.
2. **Be slow to speak.** It's hard to hear what God has to say, or anyone for that matter, if we're talking the whole time. It's also not just a matter of speaking too much, but often we argue with God—whether it be from our minds or our mouths.
3. **Be slow to anger.** God's word can be offensive and sometimes His truths hurt. And if we are not in place to receive it, we will rebuke it and become angry about it. James says this anger does not produce the righteousness of God. This unrighteous anger is the opposite of the patience God wants to produce in our faith. The righteous anger we should all possess is an anger towards sin of the devil, not the sword of God.

Real faith requires work and effort on our part. Before we can receive the truths God wants to give us, we must **prepare** the soil of our hearts.

1. Confess our sins and ask for forgiveness
2. Contemplate on God's grace and goodness
3. Communicate an attitude of humility

Verses 22-25 (Realize the Word)

Many Christians have the false belief that hearing a good message, or attending a Bible study is what makes them grow and receive the blessings of God. But growth and blessings come from doing, not hearing.

Resources: Swindoll's Living Insights New Testament Commentary James 1 & 2 Peter; The NIV Application Commentary James; The Wiersbe Bible Commentary, The Pillar New Testament Commentary The Letter of James; NLT Parallel Study Bible; The Jeremiah Study Bible; www.biblegateway.com; www.biblehub.com; www.ministry127.com

We can mark our Bibles, take notes until our hearts content, but if those marks and notes never leave the page and become the mark of Christ in our lives and in the lives of others, we are only fooling ourselves.

The definition of the word realize in this sense is to make use of something or put it into practice.

Real faith produces real works, or real fruit. There should be evidence of our faith.

Our actions can give evidence of genuine faith to others, but it's our hearts, our motives, our attitudes, behind our actions that God looks at to determine the genuineness of our faith.

The purpose of a mirror is to be able to see ourselves the way we really are.

There are Christians that glance into the mirror of God's word and sees those things that aren't attractive or becoming in their faith or character and are content to walk away and leave well enough alone.

There are other Christians who glance into the mirror of God's word, reading a little bit at a time, but then quickly forget what God said about their condition. They believe they're spiritual, because of their time spent in the word. But they are only fooling themselves.

There are Christians that spend their time gazing into the mirror of God's word, giving careful attention to it. They meditate on it, willingly obey it with the right attitude and motives, abiding in His will. And the more they gaze into this mirror, and allow God to speak and work, a miraculous thing happens. It's no long themselves they see, but the glory of God. The imperfections they once saw have now become a thing of beauty.

Verses 26-27 (Reveal the Word)

Our two main goals as Christians should be to know God and make Him known.

To know God is to receive and realize the Word, and to make Him known is to reveal the Word.

Twice, James uses the word religion in these verses. The word for religion refers not to one's personal convictions or beliefs, but to the involvement of a well-defined religious group or organization. He's referring to Christianity as a whole.

If one person is involved with a group and does something uncharacteristic of that group, it not only reflects on the person who committed the act, but it also reflects on the whole group.

When it comes to Christians as a whole, when one person's fruit tastes bad, it gives the impression that the whole batch is bad. And James is saying you might as well count it as a loss, because their appetite, if any for God, is now gone.

By the time you have received the Word and realized the Word, it should become a part of you and who you are. The Word of God and who He is should just naturally speak through you, becoming a pleasing aroma to God and those around you.

Tucked in these verses are three ways we can reveal the Word of God, spreading the knowledge of Christ.

1. **Speech.** Jesus speaks of this truth in Matthew chapter 12. He reminds us that what we say reveals what is in our hearts. So in order for God's goodness and His truths to come from us, we have to remove what is in our hearts that defiles us. Those things that make our religion impure and worthless. Words can ruin our witness in a heartbeat.
2. **Serving those in need.** All throughout Scripture, God tells His people to care for the poor, lonely, sick, and the forgotten people in society. But that doesn't mean our serving is limited to that of orphans and widows and such. We can help whoever and wherever there is a need.
3. **Staying Salty.** Jesus told His disciples to be the salt of the earth. James in a sense tells us to stay salty that your religion doesn't become worthless. Salt acts like an antiseptic killing bacteria and keeps things from going bad. Be salt, refusing to let the word corrupt you and bring a sense of life to what's dead around you. Being salt preserves the word of God in us, and at same time keeps the world out of us.

Homework Questions

Why is it dangerous to go through the motions of our faith?

Explain why spiritual reality only comes from a right relationship with God through His Word.

How in tune are you with God's voice? Do you hear Him the first time He speaks, or does He often need to repeat Himself before you get His message?

When it comes to God's word, describe the difference in listening to hear versus listening to understand.

Why does real faith require effort?

Describe a time God's word struck a nerve. How did you respond? Was there a correlation between the condition of your heart and your response?

Why is unrighteous anger the opposite of the patience God wants to produce in our faith?

What are some things that might hinder God's truths from taking root in our lives? Are any of these in your heart right now? Pray and ask God to reveal anything in your heart that needs digging up.

Why does our actions both inwardly and outwardly matter in our faith? And why should they both rightly align with God's word?

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If we don't receive the implanted Word of God and implement it in our lives, we are only fooling ourselves. Explain why this is true.

Read Matthew Chapter 7: 15-20 and Matthew 12: 33-37. What truths do you learn from Jesus' words about the correlation between trees and their fruit **and** the things we say and do and our hearts?

Explain how and why both growth and blessing come from doing God's word, rather than hearing God's word.

Have you ever thought of God's word as a mirror? Why or why not? And what thoughts come to mind when thinking about God's word from this perspective.

When it comes to the Word of God being that of a mirror, do you typically glance at it or gaze into it? Why or Why not?

In verse 25, why does James call the perfect law, the law that sets you free?

In what ways can our words ruin our witness in a heartbeat?

Why is it important to have the holiness of God along with the humanness and grace of Christ?

Our serving isn't limited to that of orphans and widows. What are some other ways we can help those in need? Share and discuss to inspire each other of ways to show the love of Jesus to someone today.

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What does being salt look like in your Christian walk?

How does being salty keep the fruit we bear fresh and from tasting bad?

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