

October 9th Sermon

Faith that Works - Session 2

Listening and Doing- James 1:19-27

Introduction

Why do you use a mirror? What does a mirror show you?

If you are like most of us, you use a mirror to check your outward appearance. Do I have spinach in my teeth? Did I forget to put on my lipstick? Is my clothing choice appropriate for what I am doing? Is this what I want the world to see when they look at me?



But what do you do when the mirror shows you something is not quite right? Do you walk away or do you stop and fix what is wrong?

Scripture is a mirror, too. By reading and studying scripture we see where we are not quite right, where we are falling short, what we need to change. The mirror of God's laws shows when our outward life does not match the person God created us to be.

Say a short prayer asking God to show you the truth about yourself as we look into the mirror of scripture today.

Listening

Do you listen more than you talk? Do the words you speak reflect your faith? Are your actions a reflection of what you say? How do you feel when someone listens intently to your words? Do you listen to hear or listen to react?

Read James 1:19-21.

Group Discussion

- Compare verse James 1:20 to Matthew 5:21-22. How does James echo Jesus' words?

- Discuss how a quick temper or being overly talkative can affect the way someone listens.
- In verse James 1:21, the Greek words used for moral filth and evil are *rhuparia* and *kakia*. Both words refer to dirt. They can be translated as dirty, shameful, depraved, and malignant feelings and actions. How do we get rid of those kinds of things in our lives?
- The word translated as implanted or engrafted is *emphutos* which refers to something that is placed in a specific location in order to grow and flourish. How does God implant the word in us? How do you know when it is flourishing?
- W. E. Vine states that “humble people do not have a low opinion of themselves, they are not occupied with self at all.” How does this statement connect to the use of humble in verse 21? How does humility affect the way we read, study, and discuss scripture?
- According to the authors of *The Life Change Series*, the attitude of meekness (humility) that Jesus taught and embodied did not conflict with his courage, his confidence, or his concern for justice. How can we be bold and step out in faith and still be meek and humble?

Individual Study

- Look at these verses to see what they say about being slow to speak: Psalms 141:3, Proverbs 10:19 and 8:13. How can you improve your listening skills?
- Read James 1:19-27. Use the following chart to list all the positive and negative actions that James mentions in these verses.

Do this	Do not do this

The Mirror

Scripture can be used as a mirror. It allows us to look at what God wants us to be and discover where we are not in alignment with his Word. In the following verses, James gives us some advice and encouragement on how to listen to and reflect upon God's Word.

Read James 1:22-25.

Group Discussion

- Verse 22 is often called the “key” to James. Read it together aloud. Why do you think it is called “the key?” What does it tell you about how to live as a Christian? James is not the only one to emphasize this. Read Ezekiel 33:30-32 and Matthew 7:26-27 for comparison.
- How is “receiving” the Word different from “hearing” the Word? What tips would you give to someone who is reading their Bible or listening to a sermon so that they might internalize more of what they have read or heard?
- The authors of the *Serendipity* study suggest that the person who reads Scripture and then goes away unchanged is like a person who gets up in the morning, sees how dirty and unkempt they are, but then promptly forgets about it, does nothing to fix it, and goes on with their day ignoring it. Have you ever felt like that? How can we make sure that we do not fall into this trap?

In the *Aramaic Bible in Plain English*, Romans 10:4 says, “The Messiah is the consummation of the Written Law for righteousness to everyone who believes.” Look at verse James 1:25. The *perfect law that gives freedom* is Jesus. He is the example of what obeying God's laws is supposed to look like. Read James 1:25 again.

- We are supposed to look at (look intently, observe, behold) the perfect law that gives freedom. The Greek word used here is *katanoeo* which means to observe fully in order to discover and perceive. What is James saying here about our attitude when we study scripture?
- What is our reward for not just hearing but doing God's word? How does Romans 8:2-4 explain it?

Individual Study

- What is meant by the “law of liberty?” Read Psalm 19:7-13 and John 8:32. From what does God's law give us freedom? According to 1 Peter 2:16, what are we not to do with this freedom?

Pure Religion

What does being religious mean to most people? Van Wick states, in *The Evidence of Faith* study, that being religious is often described as doing visible, meticulous, ceremonious acts to demonstrate that the individual is superior—more holy. In common Jewish and Greek

usage, pure and undefiled religion is explained as being ceremoniously clean, being technically correct in temple service and actions, and following all the ritual restrictions and preparations. Let's see what James thinks:

Read James 1:26-27.

Group Discussion

- How does not controlling the tongue make a person's religion deceitful and worthless? According to Luke 6:45, what do a person's words reveal?
- What is the value of the speech of a believer (See Proverbs 12:6 and 31:26)?
- How would you contrast a worthless religion and pure religion?
- Why is it easy to listen to God's Word without doing what it says? What are some typical excuses?
- Read 2 Corinthians 9:12-13. How does Paul explain the motives one should have for serving others?
- What are some ways that the world contaminates our words, our motives, and our actions? Strategize with your group ways that Christians can keep their faith pure and undefiled.

Individual Study

- Compare what James says in verse James 1:27 with Psalms 68:5 and Matthew 25:36-40. Why do you think the directions are often for widows and orphans? Does that mean they are the only people that we need to help?

Commitment

This week I will apply what I learned from this lesson by taking the following action:
