
HEARING AND DOING THE WORD

Lesson Scripture: James 1:19-27

Focus Scripture: Same

*Key Verse: Be doers of the word, and not merely hearers who deceive themselves.
James 1:22 (NRSV)*

JAMES 1:19-27 (NRSV)

19 You must understand this, my beloved: let everyone be quick to listen, slow to speak, slow to anger;

20 for your anger does not produce God's righteousness.

21 Therefore rid yourselves of all sordidness and rank growth of wickedness, and welcome with meekness the implanted word that has the power to save your souls.

22 But be doers of the word, and not merely hearers who deceive themselves.

23 For if any are hearers of the word and not doers, they are like those who look at themselves in a mirror;

24 for they look at themselves and, on going away, immediately forget what they were like.

25 But those who look into the perfect law, the law of liberty, and persevere, being not hearers who forget but doers who act—they will be blessed in their doing.

26 If any think they are religious, and do not bridle their tongues but deceive their hearts, their religion is worthless.

27 Religion that is pure and undefiled before God, the Father, is this: to care for orphans and widows in their distress, and to keep oneself unstained by the world.

JAMES 1:19-27 (KJV)

19 Wherefore, my beloved brethren, let every man be swift to hear, slow to speak, slow to wrath:

20 For the wrath of man worketh not the righteousness of God.

21 Wherefore lay apart all filthiness and superfluity of naughtiness, and receive with meekness the engrafted word, which is able to save your souls.

22 But be ye doers of the word, and not hearers only, deceiving your own selves.

23 For if any be a hearer of the word, and not a doer, he is like unto a man beholding his natural face in a glass:

24 For he beholdeth himself, and goeth his way, and straightway forgetteth what manner of man he was.

25 But whoso looketh into the perfect law of liberty, and continueth therein, he being not a forgetful hearer, but a doer of the work, this man shall be blessed in his deed.

26 If any man among you seem to be religious, and bridleth not his tongue, but deceiveth his own heart, this man's religion is vain.

27 Pure religion and undefiled before God and the Father is this, To visit the fatherless and widows in their affliction, and to keep himself unspotted from the world.

KEY TERMS

- **Law** – A force or influence impelling to action.
- **Sordidness** – Filth, moral defilement.
- **Save** – Deliver into safety.
- **Rank Growth** – Abundance.
- **Anger** – Full of, swarming with unsettled opposition.
- **Wickedness** – Malice, ill-will, desire to injure.
- **Implanted** – Placed in, which enables something to develop.

all after loving God with all our being is to care for others, especially the lowest among us. This is how people will identify us as believers — by the love we share with and show to others. If we are honest, we do not always follow this command as we should.

TELLING THE BIBLE STORY

James began this chapter by encouraging us to press through the trials we face, for they are necessary in developing our whole being. Not only do our trials make us whole, they help us to reach our full capacity in order to be effective in the kingdom.

So, it is no surprise that James ends the

chapter by telling us how we are to handle difficult situations: we are to be ready to hear what is being said. By listening intently, we leave very little room for snappy or quick responses. It also keeps us from swelling with anger. This positions us to use what we've learned to bring freedom and salvation to others, which we are commanded to do.

“Not only do our trials make us whole, they help us to reach our full capacity in order to be effective in the kingdom.”

INTRODUCTION

The Bible is filled with many laws, rules, and commandments that believers are to follow. There are commandments about how we are to care for our homes and the resources with which God has entrusted us. There are instructions about work life, taxes, tithes, etc. and information about spreading the gospel and praise and worship. The greatest commandment of

We are not only to listen to God's Word, but also follow the Word's commands.

SANKOFA

“Does the practice of our religion reflect the God we serve?” – Ken Pell

1954 was the year *Brown v. Board of Education* was finalized. The case was named after Rev. Oliver Brown, an AME pastor. The United States rendered laws establishing segregation in public schools unconstitutional. It was concluded that the separate schools were not equal, and states needed to be intentional and deliberate about ending the separation. However, southern states were not pleased with the ruling and ignored the judgment of the Supreme Court. Some white southerners boycotted their schools which were forced to segregate, while others lined up in droves and boycotted black southerners who dared oblige the ruling of the court.

In New Orleans, Louisiana, and

Little Rock, Arkansas, despite the straightforward and non-negotiable command, white southerners opted not to be doers. They proclaimed to be Christian, but their actions and words presented an uglier, hateful side. As a result, the villainous behavior of those against segregation rang loudly. Pictures and audios of their evil towards black students are forever part of their history.

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Their unrighteousness and refusal to uphold the command tempted them to keep black students in the bondage of unequal educational settings. But, with the help of the National Guard and federal government, the students were liberated, and the schools integrated.

“There's a lot of people who talk about doing good, and a lot of people who argue about what's good and what's not good, but there are other folks who just put their lives on the line for what is right.” – Robert Coles, *The Moral Life of Children*

CASE STUDY

“If you don’t want your child separated, then don’t bring them across the border illegally.” – Former U.S. Attorney General, Jeff Sessions.

In 2018, the “zerotolerance” immigration policy publicly went into effect, separating children from their adult family members who tried to enter the United States by way of the Mexican border. After an investigation revealed that the children were being held in terrible conditions, it was also released that the practice was in effect for over a year. Despite the immigrants’ only crime being the desire for a better life, they were treated as criminals. Parents and guardians were imprisoned, and children were housed in cages and small spaces. The scene was horrific. Who was at the forefront? Those who proclaimed to embody the name of Jesus, Christians. Despite James’ command to “be doers of the word, and not merely hearers who deceive themselves... (and) to care for orphans and widows in their distress, and



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to keep oneself unstained by the world,” some Christians did not act nor respond in the way of Christ. Yes, statements were written, and some even spoke out against it. Very little action was taken to protect one of the most vulnerable groups in the world. To date, more than 5,000 children remain separated from their families, which is unfathomable, considering the number started at 700 and a policy was written to reunify the families. How will the church respond?

LIFE APPLICATION**Who Are You? A Hearer or a Doer?**

James 1:23-24 is often interpreted as a statement of physicality. It is taught that being a hearer and not a doer is like someone looking into a mirror, but not able to picture their face once (s)he is away from the mirror. But, that is not the total truth. Verse 24 ends with the phrase “forget what they were like.” It does not say *look* like. It says *were* like, bringing attention to the person’s manner or quality of being.

This phrase goes beyond the

traditional interpretation of a mirror as a looking glass to observe one's physical nature. In this context, the mirror is a metaphor for reflection; taking a look at oneself, observing, soul searching, having a revelation about the character one exudes, whether good or bad, and seeing oneself as one is. As soon as that period of reflection is over, one forgets everything that was revealed to her/him.

(S)he forgets the flaws that were exposed, or on the opposite end, forgets the gifts that were highlighted. (S)he forgets her/his character, temperament, and even what initially led to the meditation. (S)he is sensitive, and open in the moment, but once the moment passes, it's back to business as usual. No conversion. No transformation. No repentance.

That is what it is like when we hear the Word, but don't do the Word. It goes in one ear, stays for a few minutes (depending on how long we're in the Word), and then comes out the other. We must be careful. We have to make sure we are listening to the right Word. We must put

the words of those we follow to the test, proof-checking them with the Word of God. We cannot just depend on a Word preached on Sundays and midweek Bible study teaching. We have to read God's Word for ourselves, in its entirety, and in context so that we are not deceived by over-highlighted passages and half-truths. The right Word pricks our heart, motivates us to change, and inspires us to be better. We have to move past just hearing and start to take action.



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QUESTIONS

1. Verse 21 says the Word has the power to save our souls. How does the Word save our souls?
2. Verse 25a says the Word will liberate us. How?
3. Verse 25b says the Word will open the doors for blessings. Explain how the Word opens doors for blessings?
4. The lesson highlights the history of desegregation in U.S. schools and the current U.S. immigration policies and how some Christians

have responded to these as actions that do not match God’s Word. Are there other examples in current events that demonstrate how believers’ actions do not match God’s Word? Share and discuss.

of your doing need to be stronger, and if it is your desire, pray that God strengthens your action in these areas.

Remember, “Those who look into the perfect law, the law of liberty, and persevere, being not hearers who forget but doers who act – they will be blessed in their doing.” James 1:25

CLOSING DEVOTIONS

“What does being a doer look like?”

Over the next few days, take the time to look through today’s text and identify all the ways we are to be doers. Write your list below. Take time each morning (or evening) and ask yourself: Am I a doer in this way? How so?

Ask God to reveal to you which areas

HOME DAILY BIBLE READINGS

August 3 – August 9

Monday	Leviticus 19:13-18 (Impartial Relationships with One Another)
Tuesday	2 Thessalonians 1:3-5, 11-12 (Praised for Steadfast Faith in Persecution)
Wednesday	Luke 6:20-26 (The Poor Blessed; the Rich Criticized)
Thursday	1 Peter 3:13-19 (Suffering for Doing the Right Thing)
Friday	1 Corinthians 1:26-31 (God’s Choice—the Foolish, Weak, Lowly)
Saturday	James 2:1-7 (Treat the Rich and Poor Impartially)
Sunday	James 1:19-27 (The Wise Hear and Do Good)