

A. \_\_\_\_\_ (19-21)

1. Be quick to \_\_\_\_\_.

2. Be slow to \_\_\_\_\_.

3. Be slow to \_\_\_\_\_.

4. Get Rid of \_\_\_\_\_.

B. \_\_\_\_\_ and \_\_\_\_\_ (22-25)

C. Pure \_\_\_\_\_ (26-27)

## Homework

- **Read James 2:1-13.**
- **Read Max Lucado's "Lesson 4: Equality in the Church"** (pp 35-46).
- **Reflect on these questions posed by Lucado.**
  1. What situation was occurring in the congregations that James was addressing?
  2. Why does James say it is wrong to consider some in the church as being better than others?
  3. How does James say that partiality makes a person an "unjust judge"?
  4. How does showing favoritism indicate you are not keeping the royal law found in Scripture to "love your neighbor as yourself" (verse 8)?
  5. How does God treat the poor and powerless?
  6. What are some of the ways a believer in Christ can show mercy to others?
  7. In what ways is your church like "a family on summer vacation"?
  8. What are some of the causes of tension in your church?
  9. What are some general examples of favoritism or prejudice you see in the church today?
  10. How does remembering that you and other believers are all part of the same family—and all serve the same Lord—help you to deal with favoritism or prejudice?
  11. Who are some people in your world who might feel uncomfortable in your church?
  12. What would happen if Jesus brought some of those people to your church next week?
- **Bonus Journaling Question:** How can you really keep the "royal law" found in Scripture and not show favoritism to others?

Introduction

1. Do you remember playing “Simon Says” as a child or perhaps with your children?
  - a. Let’s do it now. Simon says, touch your head; Simon says, touch your nose; Simon says, touch your shoulder; Touch your nose.
  - b. Some of you only played in your hearts, but I caught a few of you with that last command.
  - c. How are you successful in this game? You listen carefully and do only what is properly commanded.
  - d. The same thing is true when it comes to God’s word.
  - e. God never tries to trick us into doing something we shouldn’t. Whatever he tells us to do is best.
2. We must hear God’s word and do what it says.

3. **Read James 1:19-27.**A. **Speaking** (19-21a)

1. We want to do God’s good and perfect will, but in order to do what God says, we must first prepare ourselves to hear from Him.
2. In the past, I have worked as a painter on the side and have painted my own home many times.
  - a. For me, the hardest work in painting is the preparation: filling holes, sanding, vacuuming, priming.
  - b. The better the preparation, the better the paint sticks and the longer it lasts.
  - c. We must properly prepare our hearts to hear from God so that we will be ready to do his will.
3. Some people may say, “God is not speaking to me!” That is incorrect. God is always speaking, but often we are not prepared to hear him. We are so busy talking that we can’t hear from God.
4. James shares four actions that we must take in order to hear from God.
  - a. **Be quick to listen** (Gk., *akousai*)” (19a)
    - 1) We often don’t hear what God says because we’re not listening.
    - 2) God speaks to us through his word, his Spirit, other believers, and the circumstances of life.
    - 3) We need to be reading and meditating on God’s word in the Bible, praying, and listening for his guidance to us by his Spirit and other members of the Body of Christ.
    - 4) The Pharisees of Jesus’ day felt that they knew God’s word, but they did not truly hear God’s word even when he spoke it directly to them in the flesh.
    - 5) No one knows it all. We must be quick to listen to God even when what he says does not conform to all we think we know about him. God is consistent, but he often speaks in unexpected ways.
    - 6) Be quick to listen to each other and to God’s word (v. 21).
    - 7) Really listening means hearing others without pre-judgment or thinking of our counter-arguments.
    - 8) Listening is a lost art. We listen long enough to hear something we don’t like so we can speak.
  - b. **Be slow to speak** (Gk., *lalesai*)” (19b)
    - 1) Sometimes we don’t hear God because we are busy talking ourselves or because there is so much noise in the world around us.
    - 2) A young man approached Socrates and asked him to teach him to speak. The young man babbled on until Socrates placed his hand over the young man’s mouth and said, “I will have to charge you a double fee . . . First how to hold your tongue, and then, how to use it.”
    - 3) We must learn to quiet our minds, our wants, our interests, and tune in to what God is saying.
    - 4) Yes, God is interested in hearing from us, but he is also interested in speaking to us—sometimes about the very things we are babbling on about in prayer.
    - 5) We must quiet our inner voice and open ourselves to hear God speaking to us.
    - 6) Don’t engage in reactive verbal confrontations with others. The recent book *Christians in the Age of Outrage* by Ed Stetzer provides excellent counsel in this area of speech.
    - 7) Do not curse but respond with gentleness and peace.
    - 8) “A gentle answer turns away wrath, but a harsh word stirs up anger. The tongue of the wise adorns knowledge, but the mouth of the fool gushes folly” (Pr 15:1-2).
    - 9) James will return to the important topic of our speech, our tongue, in chapter 2.

c. **Be slow to anger** (Gk., *orge*)” (19c)

- 1) Sometimes when God or others speak to us and what we hear is not what we want to hear, we may respond with anger.
- 2) Anger is not necessarily bad.
  - a) We be righteously indignant, as Jesus was when he cleared the Temple of money changers.
  - b) God is big enough to hear our complaints and our frustrations.
- 3) However, when our anger causes us to reject what God is saying, to stop listening, and to go our own way apart from God or even against him, then we sin.
- 4) The Pharisees could not respond to the words Jesus spoke in answer to their tricky questions. So, they stopped listening to him and started plotting a way to kill him.
- 5) This is the same strategy that we see in play in our angry world today. If we don't agree, then let's silence our opponent by any means possible.
- 6) Hear this, our unbridled “wrath” (Gk., *orge*) does not produce “justice” (Gk., *dikaioisynē*).
  - a) James uses “justice” much in the same way that Jesus uses “kingdom of God.”
  - b) We do not build up God's kingdom by spewing forth angry speech to or about others.
- 7) We must be quick to listen to God and others and slow in speech, especially angry speech.

d. **Get rid of filth** (Gk., *ruparia*) (21)

- 1) “moral filth” (Gk., *ruparia*) is a Greek medical term for wax in the ear.
  - a) When I wasn't listening carefully and doing what my father wanted, he would say to me, “Boy, get the wax out of your ears and listen to me.”
  - b) We must get rid of the things in our lives that block us from hearing God clearly.
  - c) If we have sin in our lives, then it blocks us from hearing from God.
- 2) We need God's help in each of these four actions, but we need it especially with this one.
  - a) We must humbly “get rid of” (Gk., *apothemenoi*), reject, repent, turn from our sin.
  - b) Like a dirty child, we must strip off our filthy clothes outside the back door of the house before we can enter into God's presence to hear his word.

**B. Hearing and Doing** (22-25)

1. **Hearing** - Once we are prepared to hear, then logically we must hear.

- a. The prior verse counseled, “. . . accept the word planted in you, which can save you” (21).
  - 1) The word “accept” (Gk., *deksasthe*) is not one of passive assent but of active welcome.
  - 2) The word “planted in” (Gk., *emphuton*) us is not just the word written in the Bible but also the Living Word that is planted in our hearts by the Spirit of the Resurrected Christ Jesus.
- b. When God's truth knocks at your heart's door, you must throw the door open and welcome it in with great hospitality and acceptance.
  - 1) We must realize that God's will is not always our will but his will is always best.
  - 2) We must realize, unlike the Pharisees, that God does not always come to us as we expect or answer our questions as we would like.
  - 3) We are not God. He is.
  - 4) When God speaks, whatever he says, we are to welcome it with joy and immediately act upon it.
- c. Warren Wiersbe said, “Too many Christians mark their Bibles, but their Bibles never mark them!” (*Be Mature*, 61)

2. **Doing** - In the Hebrew mind obedience was the logical completion of hearing. One had not really heard until one acted by doing.

- a. Obedience to God's word is not just hearing but also must include doing what God says.
  - 1) As we are constant in hearing from God, we must be constant in doing what he says.
  - 2) Hearing and doing go together like love and marriage, like a horse and carriage.
  - 3) Hearing is the horse that pulls the cart of doing.
- b. “Do not merely listen to the word, and so deceive yourselves. Do what it says” (22).
  - 1) Jesus said, “Blessed . . . are those who hear the word of God and obey it” (Lk 11:28).
  - 2) Jesus also said, “You are my friends if you do what I command” (Jn 15:14).
  - 3) Furthermore Jesus warned, “Not everyone who says to me, ‘Lord, Lord,’ will enter the kingdom of heaven, but only the one who does the will of my Father who is in heaven (Mt 7:21).
  - 4) Paul echoed Jesus when he said, “It is not the hearers of the law who are righteous in God's sight, but the doers of the law who will be justified” (Ro 2:13).

c. James presented the parable of the mirror to illustrate his point (23-25).

- 1) The mirror in the parable is the word of God.
- 2) We must not look into God's word and forget what it says, when we face the trials and temptations of life. We must not just glance but take a long look into God's word.
  - a) This is why God commanded Joshua to "meditate on [my law] day and night" (Jos 1:8).
  - b) The law of God is no longer external but has been placed in our minds and written on our hearts by God as we come to him in the new covenant (cf., Jer 31:31-33) written in Christ's blood.
- 3) The word of God is the glass or mirror in which we see our spiritual reflection.
  - a) We may not like what we see in the mirror each morning, but we spend time gazing into the mirror to wash, brush, comb, and fix our image to be presentable in the world.
  - b) Likewise, we may not like what we see as we gaze into the spiritual mirror of God's word, but we must look at our image as it is and with God's help transform it into the image of Christ.
  - c) Wiersbe writes, "When the child of God looks into the Word of God [the glass, the mirror], he sees the Son of God, and he is transformed by the Spirit of God to share in the glory of God!" (*Be Mature*, 65).

### **C. Pure Religion** (26-27)

1. These verses serve as a summary not only of chapter 1 but also of the ethical position of the entire letter.
2. Pure and faultless religion is not one of outward acts of worship but acts of obedience to God evidenced by doing what he says.
  - a. There are four possible responses to God's word.
    - 1) We do not hear, and we do not do. (Lost/sinful)
    - 2) We do not hear, but we do. (Good but ignorant/unfulfilled)
    - 3) We hear, but we don't do. (Deceived, empty, hypocritical)
    - 4) We hear, and we do. (Excellent = "pure and faultless religion")
  - b. We each give evidence that we have heard from God or not by what we do and don't do.
    - 1) When we reach out to others, especially the helpless (e.g., widows and orphans), with godly, self-sacrificial love, then we are doing what God commands.
    - 2) When we do not do the evil which the world would have us to do, then we are doing what God commands.
3. "Wiersbe wrote, "Pure religion means practicing God's Word and sharing it with others, through speech, service, and separation from the world" (*Be Mature*, 66).
4. How is God speaking to you today?
  - a. Have you prepared yourself to hear him by being quick to listen; slow to speak; slow to anger; and by getting the wax out of your spiritual ears by confessing your sins?
  - b. Have you heard him and accepted the word he is speaking to you in the Bible, by the Holy Spirit, through other believers, and in the realities of the circumstances of your life today?
  - c. Have you taken a long look at yourself in the word of God and allowed it to transform your image to that of Christ Jesus?
  - d. Remember that God's living Word stands with you and in you as you obediently do all that he speaks.
  - e. We do not hear and do on our own. We hear and do in relationship with God through Christ Jesus.
5. Will you hear from God today? Yes, you can! Now, what will you do?