

August 9, 2020

Lesson 10

# HEARING AND DOING THE WORD

ADULT/YOUTH

ADULT/YOUTH ADULT TOPIC: "Talk Is Cheap"  
YOUTH TOPIC: Be a Doer, Not Just a Hearer

CHILDREN

GENERAL LESSON TITLE: Hearing and Doing  
the Word  
CHILDREN'S TOPIC: Hear and Do

DEVOTIONAL READING  
1 Corinthians 1:26-31

ADULT/YOUTH

BACKGROUND SCRIPTURE: James 1:19-27  
PRINT PASSAGE: James 1:19-27  
KEY VERSE: James 1:22

CHILDREN

BACKGROUND SCRIPTURE: James 1:19-27  
PRINT PASSAGE: James 1:19-27  
KEY VERSE: James 1:22

## 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.

## James 1:19-27—NIV

19 My dear brothers and sisters, take note of this: Everyone should be quick to listen, slow to speak and slow to become angry,

20 because human anger does not produce the righteousness that God desires.

21 Therefore, get rid of all moral filth and the evil that is so prevalent and humbly accept the word planted in you, which can save you.

22 **Do not merely listen to the word, and so deceive yourselves. Do what it says.**

23 Anyone who listens to the word but does not do what it says is like someone who looks at his face in a mirror

24 and, after looking at himself, goes away and immediately forgets what he looks like.

25 But whoever looks intently into the perfect law that gives freedom, and continues in it—**not forgetting what they have heard, but doing it—they will be blessed in what they do.**

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.

26 Those who consider themselves religious and yet do not keep a tight rein on their tongues deceive themselves, and their religion is worthless.

27 Religion that God our Father accepts as pure and faultless is this: to look after orphans and widows in their distress and to keep oneself from being polluted by the world.

**UNIFYING LESSON PRINCIPLE:** People read and talk about doing good but find it difficult to help the most vulnerable in society. How is righteousness accomplished? According to James, righteousness is achieved by hearing and doing the Word of God.

## LESSON OBJECTIVES

*Upon the completion of this lesson, the students will be able to do the following:*

1. Understand that the proof of wisdom is not merely in what one says but in what one does—especially in what one does for those who are in need.
2. Feel compassion for those who are most vulnerable and desire to act on their behalf.
3. Engage in ministry that demonstrates a “religion that is pure and undefiled before God.”

## AGE-LEVEL POINTS TO BE EMPHASIZED

### Teachers of ADULTS and YOUTH

- Verse 19 is a proverb that James coins to provide the structure for what follows. Verses 20 and 21 expand on the third part of the proverb, verses 22–25 on the first, and verse 26 on the second.
- The word *anger* here does not refer simply to the emotional reaction to wrongdoing or injustice, which can be helpful (cf., occasions when Jesus was angry). Here, it seems to represent the unregulated, hurtful words people shout at others when they are angry.
- The Greek word translated “sordidness” in verse 21 is used nowhere else in the New Testament. A form of the word appears later in James (describing the poor man’s “dirty” clothes [James 2:2]),

and another form appears in 1 Peter (describing the “dirt” on the body that baptism does not remove [1 Peter 3:21]).

- James’s insistence that pure religion looks out for the most vulnerable (verses 26-27) reflects the same concept as Jesus’ teaching of the sheep-and-goat judgment (see Matthew 25:31-46).
- James’s insistence that we be doers of the Word and not mere hearers finds a parallel in 1 John 3:18 (NRSV): “Little children, let us love, not in word or speech, but in truth and action.”

### Teachers of CHILDREN

- James gives advice about listening and speaking, but also about anger.
- Although James warns not to judge what believers think, say, and do, his warning does not ignore injustice and sin.

—We are encouraged to honor God and Jesus with our lives.

—Not only must we hear God’s Word, but we must also do what God’s Word says.

—James is very critical of believers who do not care for others, especially those who have no one to care for them or have very limited help.

—Persons who only listen to the Word are deceiving themselves.

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## THE CHRONOLOGICAL SETTING OF THE LESSON

James the Just, the brother of Jesus, is credited with the authorship of the epistle of James (see Matthew 13:55; Mark 6:3). This James was very prominent in the New Testament church and is mentioned first as being esteemed as a pillar of the church (see Galatians 2:9). Although he grew up with Jesus, he was only converted after Jesus’ resurrection (see John 7:3-5; Acts 1:14; Galatians 1:19; 1 Corinthians 15:7). He immediately began associating with the apostles and became the presiding elder of the Jerusalem church.

The book of James is considered by many to be among the Wisdom Literature of the Bible. According to the historian Josephus, this book is probably the oldest book of the New Testament, having been written as early as AD 45 before the first council of Jerusalem in AD 50. James’s teaching was focused on the works that exemplified justification with God. He was writing to Jewish Christians to encourage them to continue growing in their newly found Christian faith; he constantly emphasized that good actions will naturally flow from those who are filled with the Spirit and questioned whether someone has saving faith if the fruits of the Spirit are not evident in the person’s life.

Sixty obligations are presented in 108 verses of the book, and focus is placed on the truths of Jesus’ words in the Sermon on the Mount. This book of the Bible gave instructions for the Jews well beyond the Jerusalem church and charged them to stay connected to the body of Christ. James provides biblical methods for praying, having faith, controlling the

tongue, pulling through suffering, connecting works to salvation, chastising the rich, comforting the poor, showing how to rightfully apply wisdom, and understanding the true nature of being a Christian. The purpose of this book is all-encompassing with emphasis being placed on the Christian faith.

## THE GEOGRAPHICAL AND CULTURAL SETTING OF THE LESSON

The book is addressed to Jewish Christians scattered abroad and was written primarily to those dispersed throughout the Roman Empire during a time of intense persecution (see James 1:1). The book makes no mention of any Gentile controversy and thus was probably written before that controversy broke out and the Jewish church came to be divided between the faithful and the Judaizers. The setting of this book of the Bible is such that the meeting of the church is referred to as the “synagogue,” and this has prompted the belief that the book was written early before AD 49. This book encompasses the detail of the relationship between faith and works; followers of Christ are challenged to put in genuine effort in all their endeavors.

The book of James outlines that godly works comes through genuine religion, genuine faith, and genuine wisdom. The information contained in this book of the Bible is reflected in Jesus’ Sermon on the Mount in Matthew 5–7. The first chapter of this book begins with a description of the general traits of a believer’s walk in faith. Subsequent chapters of this book discuss social injustice and faith in action. Also, the comparison is made between worldly and godly

wisdom, and admonition is given to desist from evil and draw closer to God. The concluding part of this book encourages believers to pray fervently, be patient in suffering, and care for one another while supporting their faith through fellowship.

James 1:19-27 begins with three exhortations: “Be quick to listen, slow to speak, and slow to become angry.” James desired that these exhortations be applied as the Christian’s response to the Word of God. This passage of the text teaches believers to have a teachable spirit and be ready to receive instructions from the Word of God; believers are equally urged to be cautious in blurting out their opinions concerning the Word of God without careful study, and equally to be patient with those who disagree with us concerning the Word of God.

## PROMINENT CHARACTER(S) IN THE LESSON

**James:** the author of the book of James. He was a brother of our Lord, Jesus.

## KEY TERMS IN THE LESSON

**Angry (verse 19)**—**Greek:** *orgé* (or-gay’): to have anger, “wrath” (KJV), passion.

**Mirror (verse 23)**—**Greek:** *esoptron* (es’op-tron): a mirror; looking-glass; “glass” (KJV).

**Righteousness (verse 20)**—**Greek:** *dikaioné* (dik-ah-yos-oo’-nay): justice; justness; the condition acceptable to God.

**Slow (verse 19)**—**Greek:** *bradus* (brad-ooce’): not quick; slow of understanding.

**Speak (verse 19)**—**Greek:** *laleó* (lal-eh’-o): to talk; to speak or say.

**Word (verse 21)**—**Greek:** *logos* (log’-os): words; speech; divine utterance.

## TOPICAL OUTLINE OF THE LESSON

### I. Introduction

- A. Hearers and Doers
- B. Biblical Background

### II. Exposition and Application of the Scripture

- A. Avoid Anger  
(James 1:19-21)
- B. Be a Doer of the Word  
(James 1:22-25)
- C. True Religion  
(James 1:26-27)

### III. Concluding Reflection

## I. INTRODUCTION

### A. Hearers and Doers

The book of James was written by the servant of God to the twelve tribes in the Dispersion—that is, to the Jewish Christians who did not live in the Jewish homeland; here in this context the phrase symbolizes all God’s people. The entirety of this book admonishes believers to stand firm in times of adversity, trials, and tribulations. James encourages readers not to doubt God regardless of the happenings. The specific Bible text of James 1:19-27 teaches believers to be both hearers and doers of the Word of God. James stresses that real faith produces authentic actions. For James, faith is not some abstract theological concept that is only good for dissection and debate among clerics. Faith is best constructed when it puts on work clothes and is hammered out through interactions with people in the vicissitudes of life.

## B. Biblical Background

James 1:19-27 is deeply rooted in the practices of true religion. The true religion here is established to be one that is pure and faultless and takes care of less-privileged persons. Believers are charged to be true to their belief and desist from self-deceit. Disciples are to rid themselves of moral filth and evil and to be humble in all their dealings. It has been said that the book of James is similar to the Old Testament book of Proverbs but just dressed up in New Testament clothes. This

attribution is made because the book of James is focused on practical acts of faith and ways in which one's relationship with God can be lived out in the everyday aspects of life. There are some who seem to feel that a life of holiness is a state of living that is either impractical or unachievable. However, the book of James establishes that holiness is the standard for the believer. Anything less than a life of holiness is unacceptable for one who claims to have been redeemed by the blood of Jesus and empowered by the indwelling Holy Spirit.

## II. EXPOSITION AND APPLICATION OF THE SCRIPTURE

### A. Avoid Anger

(James 1:19-21)

**Wherefore, my beloved brethren, let every man be swift to hear, slow to speak, slow to wrath: for the wrath of man worketh not the righteousness of God. Wherefore lay apart all filthiness and superfluity of naughtiness, and receive with meekness the engrafted word, which is able to save your souls.**

Rather than holding God responsible for allowing things to go wrong in our lives, it is much better to maintain an open mind and heart to be able to seek and discern God's purpose for our pain and God's direction through our difficulties. Never waste a painful experience. God often uses crisis and conflict to clarify our character and to develop our spiritual maturity. When we run away from problems, we often prolong our pathway toward progress.

Our listening should be to God and to one another (verse 19). One of the chief fuses that lights the dynamite of conflict is the fuse of an angry tongue. Short emotional fuses produce volatile, interpersonal situations that often do much more harm than good. One effective

question to ask when experiencing difficulties is, "Lord, what are You trying to teach me through this situation?" A quick listen and a slow response lead to a calm atmosphere. But a slow listen and a quick response lead to a chaotic atmosphere. Anger is actually a surface emotion which is often the tip of a much deeper and larger iceberg. Beneath and behind anger are at least three possible elements and causation factors: hurt, fear, and frustration. As we faithfully practice scriptural principles, we will experience relational success.

Human anger and holy righteousness do not coexist well together (verse 20). We are implored in Scripture to be angry and not sin. Giving in to anger is often the beginning of giving place to the devil. Ephesians 4:29 and verses that follow implore us not to allow any corrupt communication to come from our mouths but only edifying words that extend grace to the hearers. Bitterness, anger, clamor, and evil speech are all to be rejected and replaced with kindness, tenderheartedness, and forgiveness, because this is the type of response

that God has displayed toward us. When Jesus became angry with the buyers and the sellers in the Temple, His response was not one of personal offense. His reaction was an expression of righteous indignation in response to the unholy misuse of that sanctified space.

Galatians 5:19-21 identifies the acts of the flesh (verse 21) as sexual immorality, impurity, and debauchery; idolatry and witchcraft; hatred, discord, jealousy, fits of rage, selfish ambition, dissensions, factions, and envy; and drunkenness, orgies, and the like. This exhortation to totally dispense with moral filth and evil may be a tall task for some people. This purging is not possible through sheer human willpower alone. Our part is the personal, honest confession as is noted in 1 John 1:9. God responds with the power and presence of the Holy Spirit who cleanses us from all unrighteousness. God washes us with the water of the Word and empowers us to override the temptations of the flesh and the distractions of the world.

## **B. Be a Doer of the Word**

**(James 1:22-25)**

**But be ye doers of the word, and not hearers only, deceiving your own selves. 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: for he beholdeth himself, and goeth his way, and straightway forgetteth what manner of man he was. 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.**

The chasm between just hearing God's Word and both hearing and doing God's Word is a vast one (verse 22). What would make one want to complete only the first half of the process of spiritual obedience? One reason might be that the hearing of the Word is the

easy part, but the doing is the more challenging part. We experience this principle in early childhood when our parents make a rule or give an assignment and we only complete half of it. It is possible for the hearer-only persons to deceive others and themselves because they portray a semblance of spiritual maturity but without adequate follow-through.

Very common imagery is used to convey the concept of seeing but failing to see. The mirrors in the East (verse 23) were not made of glass but of polished steel. The irony here is that the purpose of the mirror is to inform the looker of obvious, necessary corrections and enhancements to the image that appears. When someone sees the need and ignores the need, the whole purpose of looking into the mirror then becomes inconsequential (verse 24). Biblical commentator Matthew Henry contended, "Mere hearers are self-deceivers; and self-deceit will be found the worst deceit at last. If we flatter ourselves, it is our own fault." Sometimes when we gaze into the mirror of the Word, our reflection reveals blemishes, defects, and deformities. When this occurs, our reaction should not be to run away from the mirror or to cover the craters with makeup but to seek the help of God's mighty power to transform our messes into miracles.

The visual imagery in verse 25 presents a picture not of someone who takes a casual glance at the law of the Lord. A casual glance would fail to advance the believer toward a state of spiritual maturity. Casual Christianity is a troublesome disease that affects and afflicts a great deal of Christians who are a part of the average church today. Casual Christianity occurs when God becomes a low priority in issues of everyday life. When we become

guilty of seeking *first* the kingdom of God instead of seeking it first, we cannot expect anything else godly to be added to us. Casual Christians think that a head knowledge of God and periodic attendance in church is good enough for them. Casual Christians subsist on spiritual milk rather than the solid food of the deeper things of God. Casual Christians are easily angered, are easily disappointed, and easily give up and take their toys home. Casual Christians do not have a daily quiet time or devotional time with God. They would rather get a religious dose on Sunday morning and generally take over the rest of the week for themselves. Casual Christians are also usually carnal Christians who do not respond well to critique or correction because they think they already know what they need. Casual Christians are not usually tithers or great givers, and if they do give they want public recognition and praise for their efforts. Casual Christians do not have a lot of time for extended prayer and deep study of the Scripture. True worship is not a priority to them because they do not usually have the time to devote to actions and exercise through which they do not see tangible or immediate results.

### C. True Religion

(James 1:26-27)

**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. 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.**

James makes a direct connection between spiritual maturity and verbal acrobatics (verse 26). The words that we speak serve as

an accurate indication of the contents of our hearts. Proverbs 23:7 reads, “For as [a man] thinks in his heart, so is he” (NKJV). Luke 6:45 (NRSV) concurs: “The good person out of the good treasure of the heart produces good, and the evil person out of evil treasure produces evil; for it is out of the abundance of the heart that the mouth speaks.” The need to keep a tight rein on the tongue is necessary because of the condition of the heart—as is explained by Jeremiah 17:9 (NIV), which states, “The heart is deceitful above all things and beyond cure. Who can understand it?” The tongue can be compared to a wild stallion that must be broken and disciplined in order to be rendered useful. Our words can be tools to inspire or weapons to destroy. That is why we must feed our minds quality food so that the fruit of our lips will not come out spoiled.

Control of the tongue must be applied constantly because one moment of neglect could turn into a lifetime of regret. Speaking harsh words can happen so rapidly as a knee-jerk reaction to just the “right” provocation. Consequently, we must remain on guard in order to be mindful of every “opportunity” to bring dishonor to almighty God. All of this requires practice and intentionality as is reflected in the words of Psalm 19:14—“Let the words of my mouth, and the meditation of my heart, be acceptable in thy sight.” When we start with a pure heart and we practice what we preach, then our video will begin to match our audio.

There is a possibility for verse 27 to be misunderstood with the usage of the term *religion*. A contemporary definition of the general word *religion* might be that religion is humanity's effort to reach up to God, as opposed to having a relationship with Jesus

Christ which represents God's effort to reach down to humanity. External religion falls far short of the ultimate mark due to humanity's inadequate capacity to fulfill every need. A better translation of the term *true religion* would be "true worship." The writer has taken the time to outline what is false in merely surface spirituality, and now he uncovers that which is true. The two general characteristics of true worship are active sacrificial love and personal inner holiness. More specifically, the assistance of orphans and widows would entail affiliation with and assistance of two groups of people who would probably be unable to return any material or social benefit. Consequently, the will to assist orphans and widows would most likely stem from a pure motive. These two groups of individuals are not the only ones who deserve charitable consideration. They are merely representatives of people who typically have great needs through no fault of their own and also those who have no means to be of direct commercial benefit to those who show love to them. True worship is never one-sided

and displayed only externally (publicly) or felt only internally (privately); it is balanced by being both.

### III. CONCLUDING REFLECTION

There are those who have said, "Put your money where your mouth is." But as this lesson has illustrated, in the spiritual realm it is important to realize that people usually put their mouths where their hearts are. It does little good to talk right without living right. It is not so much about the conversation as it is about the application. God is calling us to be doers of the Word and not hearers only. When we hear the Word and do the Word, we fulfill the will of God, who desires us to become the hearts that love, the hands that heal, and the lips that speak words of edification and redemption.

### PRAYER

*Lord, make us instruments of Your peace and enable us to play in the key of love. In Jesus' name we pray. Amen.*

## HOME DAILY BIBLE READINGS

**(August 3-9, 2020)**

### Hearing and Doing the Word

**MONDAY, August 3:** "Impartial Relationships with One Another" (Leviticus 19:13-18)

**TUESDAY, August 4:** "Praised for Steadfast Faith in Persecution" (2 Thessalonians 1:3-5, 11-12)

**WEDNESDAY, August 5:** "The Poor Blessed; the Rich Criticized" (Luke 6:20-26)

**THURSDAY, August 6:** "Suffering for Doing the Right Thing" (1 Peter 3:13-19)

**FRIDAY, August 7:** "God's Choice—the Foolish, Weak, Lowly" (1 Corinthians 1:26-31)

**SATURDAY, August 8:** "Treat the Rich and Poor Impartially" (James 2:1-7)

**SUNDAY, August 9:** "The Wise Hear and Do Good" (James 1:19-27)