

James: Where Faith Gets Real: In How We Respond
Nick Farr - September 17, 2017

Series Big Idea: James is one of the most practical books in the Bible, tackling the real life issues and struggles that all of us face: temptation, self-control, work, anger, poverty, our words, prejudice and more. The book challenges our consumeristic and complacent nature as Americans and challenges us to live out a faith that is active and makes a difference. It is a book that combines the teachings of Jesus with the wisdom of the Proverbs to show us the perfect law that gives freedom. James' whole purpose is to help us make sure our faith gets real in everyday life.

Message Big Idea: Message Big Idea: Wisdom teaches us how to respond well to difficult situations, whether they be a trial, test or temptation. We will respond to situations and to God out of either wisdom or foolishness. When things are difficult it is easy to assert our desire and respond in anger, but that will not get us to our goal of wisdom and holiness. And we all struggle with pride that seeks to pollute our soul and resist the way of wisdom. When facing challenges, wisdom seeks to first and foremost listen to God and then do or obey and follow his ways.

Main Idea: When life takes a left turn, trust that God knows the way.

Main Text: James 1:19-21

Supporting texts: Isaiah 55:8-9

Reflection/Discussion Questions:

1. Read James 1:19-21 aloud. How would you describe your ability to be quick to listen, slow to speak, and slow to become angry? Are you good at this? Where do you need improvement?
2. Pride is the root of our desire to act the opposite of James 1:19-21. Why would pride be connected with how fast we get angry or speak?
3. Read Isaiah 55:8-9 aloud. How can this scripture be a key for us dealing with pride and better live out James 1:19-21?
4. Share with the group a specific area that you need to work on in regards to living out these scriptures. What are your action steps to be successful?
5. Commit to memorizing Isaiah 55:8-9 this week. If you want a challenge, also memorize James 1:19-21.

Message:

Two weeks ago we celebrated Labor Day at our house. I was so excited because the plan for my family was to do nothing. No parties, no chores, just relaxing, taking naps, and enjoying each other. We woke up as planned and I'm sitting at the table drinking my morning coffee. Coffee always makes me a better person; you too? Right? Anyway, I'm sipping away at my coffee thinking about how glorious our day was going to be. My wife walks in the kitchen and Glory, my youngest, and I are sitting at the table. She tells me that she's going to take the girls and the dogs on a walk and says I can stay home and rest. Glory responds, "daddy please come please come please come." Not wanting to look like the I hate exercise let me sit here and rest dad, I agreed to go. Now my mindset wasn't in the best spot about our family walk. Walking our two crazy dogs and keeping track of our kids wasn't in my plan. But, we head out the door. On the way I start to sweat profusely, Glory is telling me she's tired and wants me to carry her. I tell her know because I'm already hot enough. The dogs go particularly crazy and what do I do? I start to complain. It's hot. I'm sweating. Glory is tired. The dogs are crazy. Just when we reach the end of our cul de sac, I think we're going to make a turn and head home. Nope. Laura suggests we keep walking and take a trail in our neighborhood. I begrudgingly agree. But I don't just keep quiet. I start sharing my opinion about how hot is is. How tired we all are. How the dogs are crazy. How this entire situation is crazy. My wonderful wife starts motivating all of us to keep going. She says, "we're almost there." My definition of almost there is walking up to our driveway. I don't even see our house at this point. When we finally made it home, both of our kids were in a bad mood. I was in a bad mood. My attitude had spread and infected our family. The only one happy was my wife. She loved the exercise.

Why do I tell you this story? I share this with you because so many of us make this mistake. Yeah we complain, we get frustrated sometimes, but where I want to focus on is in the middle of my story. Remember that trail at the end of our cul de sac? We all have our trail, our fork in the road where we have to make a decision. Unfortunately, my decision was to get annoyed and start complaining. We didn't go the direction I wanted to go and events didn't happen the way I had envisioned and I pitched a little fit. Now I've apologized to my wife and we're all good, but for how many of us does this describe our relationship with God sometimes?

How do we respond when something doesn't go our way? When God doesn't answer a prayer the way we want? When something seems so obvious to us but the opposite happens? What do we do?

I think more often than not, when expectations aren't met, we start to complain. Just like I did that day walking with my family.

When events in our life don't go our way, how do we respond?

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Turn with me to **James 1:19-21 pg 825:**

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.

This scripture seems pretty straight forward, but when we ask the deeper question of “why” we start to see the layers. How often do we look at scripture and say, “Why do I need to hear this? Why is God, in all of his knowledge and power, bringing it to my attention? Why are we slow to listen? Why are we so quick to speak? Why do we rush to anger?”

Let’s look to what was just talked about in James.

If you’re just joining us, this is our third week in our James series. Pastor Glen taught us that trials and troubles will come. This past week, he taught us about temptation and our response to it. So when we look at what comes before James 1:19, our scripture for today, we see the greater context of believers dealing with trials, temptation, and now anger. Out of the background of these previous verses comes James 1:19, “¹⁹ My dear brothers and sisters, take note of this: Everyone should be quick to listen, slow to speak and slow to become angry...”

So let’s go back to my question, “Why?” When trials and temptations come, why should we be quick to listen, slow to speak, and slow to get angry?

Because, when things don’t go our way, we’re tempted to let our pride take over.

It works like this, ‘Everything is going great...I see a fork in the road...I think to myself that we should go that way....we end up going a different way...what...why are we going that way? This way is better...this way makes more sense...I’ve planned it all out...what are you doing? I don’t like this...’

The root in our response is based in pride. We had a plan. We know better.

James knows this and encourages us to position ourselves in a place of humility. Being quick to listen, slow to speak, and slow to become angry actually reminds us that we don’t know what’s best. It reminds us to trust God.

I want to tell you about a recent example in my own life that worked to build my trust in God.

We’ve been trying to sell the first house we bought, when we did ministry in Kentucky, for many years. We finally got a buyer and last week we had the notary in our kitchen

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and we were getting ready to sign closing documents. As she was pulling out her stamp, I get a call from our realtor telling us that we can't close. Something has happened to the loan of our buyers and their financing has been cancelled. The notary leaves and the house still belongs to us. At first I wanted to fuss at God and say things like "What are you doing? Why are you doing this? We are so close and have prayed so many prayers." The entire night I was wrecked. Why God? Why?

At first, I let my pride take over because I thought I was in control of things. In a matter of moments and in the form of an email, I lost control of all of my plan, how I thought God was answering my prayers, and my finances. This plan I had worked out wasn't working. At first, I was angry. I was scared. Here I'm thinking we have to pay another mortgage payment to a house we aren't even living in. I was worried where the money was going to come from and now we might have to start all over. I went to bed stressed out and worried about what the heck God was doing.

The next morning I woke up and was getting ready for work. I began to pray out loud and I started to ask God for a miracle. I said, "God please make this work. Make a miracle" and then I paused. I was being quick to speak, quick to get angry, and slow to listen. It occurred to me that I hadn't even asked God what he wanted. So I stopped praying and started over. I said, "God, you know I believe this is what should happen, but this wasn't a surprise to you. You know what's going on and all the reasons. I trust you. I want you to take control here. I don't know best. If they can get another loan and it's fixed then that's awesome. If they can't, we'll trust you to start the process over with someone else." I had made the decision that God was going to be good regardless of what was going to happen.

About two hours later, I get a text at work from our realtor. They got approved for a different loan and the sale was back on.

In these moments, God wasn't concerned with my plan, he was concerned with my trust in him. I'm thrilled to say that a week ago, we signed the paperwork and the house is officially sold.

When life takes a left turn, trust that God knows the way.

Trusting God doesn't mean that everything has to go my way. When the pride of thinking we know everything is in check, we'll be quick to listen, slow to speak, and slow to get angry. Why? Because we trust that God knows the way. In fact, when things doing go our way is when our true faith is really shown.

Faith grows stronger during adversity.

Getting to this point of trust can be a long road. The Bible guarantees that we'll be hit with trails and frustrations. We know that God will answer some of our prayers the way we want and others in a way we wish he didn't. But, God always answers us. Silence is

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even an answer.

The question is then, will we respond out of pride or out of humility?

Pride causes anger. We're angry because something isn't going our way. God isn't doing what we want him to do.

Is all anger sinful? No. The Bible talks about righteous anger, but we're not talking about righteous anger here. We're talking about anger from the pride that I know best. If you have more questions about anger, I'd suggest you check out our sermon from this summer on Anger. Just visit our website pantano.church and search "inside and out: anger."

Why do we think we know best? Is it because we think we set our destiny, we set our future, we think everything is in our own hands, if that's the case, we're basically crowing ourselves as god. But that is a lie. While we DO have a responsibility to make good decisions, believers surrender our rights to the control our lives when we put Jesus in charge of it.

Isaiah 55:8-9 says,

8 "For my thoughts are not your thoughts,
neither are your ways my ways,"
declares the Lord.

9 "As the heavens are higher than the earth,
so are my ways higher than your ways
and my thoughts than your thoughts.

When life takes a left turn, trust that God knows the way.

If his thoughts are higher than our thoughts, then we can trust that he's going to take care of us, that we don't have to have the outcome figured out. We can trust that he's doing to work towards the good of those who love them (Romans 8:28). His thoughts and ways being higher than my thoughts or ways is the best thing that can ever happen to us.

Romans 12 says that we shouldn't think more highly of ourselves than we ought to. Why? Because God is higher than us. He's smarter than us. He knows everything that can happen and regardless of what happens good or bad, he wants to use it to bring us back to him. He wants to use our stories to show others how good of a God we have.

The absolute worse thing we can do is place all the attention on ourselves and our limited knowledge. Our limited understanding of situations. Our emotions. Our friend's

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opinions. Our jobs. Our careers. Our families. God wants all of it.

Which brings me back to James 1:19-21.

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.

Verse 21 says in order for us to get to this point, we need to get rid of all moral filth. In other words, we need to get rid of our old ways of thinking, our old ways of feeling like we know best, that we're in charge of our lives, that we know everything. Just this past week, Pastor Glen taught us about temptation and 13 people chose to come forward and be baptized. Many more made the decision to address their temptations and take their faith seriously. As you might have found out, just because we make a decision that we're no longer going to live in old ways doesn't mean we won't be tempted to live in old ways. So the challenge here is to rid ourselves of triggers, temptations, unhealthy friendships, relationships, and so forth so that we can refocus on Jesus. James continues to say that when we refocus and remove filth, then we need to HUMBLY accept the word planted in us.

Our response to God is determined by how we live out our faith during difficulties. When we're in the right position, a place of humility caused by knowing we aren't perfect and we need help to get our life back together, we naturally live out being quick to listen, slow to speak, and slow to become angry.

So how do we move forward? What do we do now?

1. First, we need to slow down. For example, my moral filth was my attitude when we were walking. It was in my response, body language, thoughts, and the tone I took with my wife. If I had slowed down, I would have recognized that I was responding out of pride. I knew where we should walk and how the time should work.

We need to recognize that pride is the root of a lot of our problems. It's the reason why we're so quick to speak, why we're so slow to listen, why we get angry so fast.

The moral filth James talks about in verse 21 also includes lust, greed, hypocrisy, and so forth. But again, the root of all of these is pride. We have to realize we have a pride problem and put it in its place.

How do we put pride in its place? By remembering that God is God and we are not.

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I want to take a moment and pause here. I want us to spend some time asking God and allowing the Holy Spirit to speak to us about this. Take a couple moments and have this conversation with God. Ask him, where is my pride at? Is it showing up in moral filth, by my excessive talking, my anger, where is it?

2. The second action we need to take is to implant the word of God inside of us. The Bible says that God's word is alive and active. It says that we need to write these words on our hearts, to memorize them, to meditate on them. This week I want you to memorize **Isaiah 55:8-9 says,**

8 "For my thoughts are not your thoughts,
neither are your ways my ways,"
declares the Lord.

9 "As the heavens are higher than the earth,
so are my ways higher than your ways
and my thoughts than your thoughts.

As you leave today, we have cards for you to take with you. On the front, these cards say quick to listen, slow to speak, slow to get angry = 's pride. The back says Isaiah 55:8-9.

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.