

JAMES: HANDBOOK FOR CHRISTIAN LIVING

W2 - "A Disciple Takes Action" - James 1:19-2:26 - 04.19.2026

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Last week we began our walk through James entitled HANDBOOK FOR CHRISTIAN LIVING. There are five total characteristics a disciple of Christ is to embody, and last week we looked at the first one which was: "A Disciple Endures." A disciple is to endure through both trials and temptations.

This week we will look at three responses the disciple will have in order to take action.

Point 1: RESPONSE TO THE WORD: How is the word of God received in a true disciple's life?

James shares with us three ways we are to respond to the word: Receive, Practice, and Share.

I. Receive the Word

James begins:

James 1:19 "Know this, my beloved brothers: let every person be quick to hear, slow to speak, slow to anger;"

In the context of trials and temptations—remove yourselves and listen to the Lord. What is He doing through this situation?

There's a time for speaking, and a time for listening. Listening is more important so we can learn and observe.

Our words can get us into a lot of trouble, but our ears—to my knowledge—have never gotten us into trouble.

The result of being slow to speak and quick to listen is being slow to anger.

When we READ the scripture and RECEIVE it, it's amazing what occurs in our life. You'll begin to recognize areas in your life that need to be corrected.

***Romans 12:2** Do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewal of your mind...*

Transformation of the mind occurs through READING and RECEIVING the WORD.

Upon reception and transformation, you'll be slow to anger.

Why would the Word of God cause us to be slow to anger?

***James 1:20** “for the anger of man does not produce the righteousness of God.”*

It is not being the Lord's hands and feet on this earth. Matter of fact, it is blending right in with the world.

The source of anger is internal, and we discovered last week that trials and temptations will reveal the inside. If you are lashing out in anger, you may need to check your heart. Jesus states:

***Matthew 15:19** “For out of the heart come evil thoughts, murder, adultery, sexual immorality, theft, false witness, slander.”*

A Christian receives a transformed heart. A heart that produces the righteousness of God—the fruits of the spirit.

James gives us further instruction of receiving the Word:

***James 1:21a** “Therefore **put away** all filthiness and rampant wickedness ...*

Paul instructs the Ephesians to do the same thing:

***Ephesians 4:22, 24** “to **put off** your old self, which belongs to your former manner of life and is corrupt through deceitful desires...and to **put on** the new self, created after the likeness of God in true righteousness and holiness.”*

Peter utters the same argument:

***1 Peter 2:1** “So **put away** all malice and all deceit and hypocrisy and envy and all slander.”*

Take off old, put on the new. This is congruent throughout scripture.

When you come to Christ, you are abandoning your old ways.

***James 1:21b** ...and **receive** with **meekness** the implanted word, which is able to **save** your souls.”*

Paul states:

***Romans 10:17** Faith comes from hearing, and hearing through the word of Christ.*

The Word has POWER to SAVE. The preacher needs to do their job in sharing the WORD and the congregation needs to do their job in RECEIVING.

James and Paul are saying, when the Word is RECEIVED, it has to power to SAVE your soul.

Upon reception of the Word, we begin looking different. We begin to practice what the Word says.

II. Practice the Word

There's the common saying "practice makes perfect." While you will not achieve perfection in this life, you will begin being conformed to the likeness of Christ.

James 1:22 "But be doers of the word, and not hearers only, deceiving yourselves."

A direct sign of your love for God is your obedience to His Word.

John 14:15 "If you love me, you will keep my commandments."

The word doer in ***James 1:22*** denotes one who is a professional. Many people may be able to bake just fine, and have their specialties, but many are not professional bakers with their own restaurants.

A Disciple of Christ is a professional. He's surrendering His will to the Lord daily. He's listening to the Spirit. He's reading the Word, and breaking it down for it's original intent and then applying it to his life.

The hearers are just those who sit in on Sunday sermons, rejoice at the proclamation of the word, and they do not put any extra time or study into it. These are those who “dabble.” Hearers are NOT those who receive (v.21) the implanted Word—therefore, it is UNABLE to save their soul.

They are just going through the motions, and as James will discuss later, it will promote conflict within their life.

James 1:23-24 “For if anyone is a hearer of the word and not a doer, he is like a man who looks intently at his natural face in a mirror. For he looks at himself and goes away and at once forgets what he was like.”

Mirrors in the first century were bronze or copper. Therefore, the way to perfectly examine yourself in the mirror was through angling it in order for the sun to enlighten the bronze/copper making your reflection more clear.

A hearer is someone who put all that work in to check himself out in a mirror, and then leave and completely forget every single thing he just saw.

- He heard about sin and the destruction it causes, he heard about the solution to sin and the complete love and forgiveness of Christ, and then he left with no repentance because he did what he had to do—attend Church.

This is incredibly important to the context because James is writing to a congregation who has gotten lazy because they are saved by Faith.

James 1:25 “But the one who looks into the perfect law, the **law of liberty**, and perseveres, being no hearer who forgets but a doer who acts, he will be blessed in his doing.”

A doer doesn't study the mirror, but what is revealed in the mirror. Therefore bringing to light all the abnormalities and imperfections.

When you read the Word of God, it is a mirror staring back at you showing you those issues, but they just don't show you the issue, they provide you the **remedy**. The perfect son of God, who was slain for you and I.

Part of Practicing the Word is actually sharing the Word.

III. Share the Word

***James 1:26-27** "If anyone thinks he is religious and does not bridle his tongue but deceives his heart, this person's religion is worthless. Religion that is pure and undefiled before God the Father is this: to visit orphans and widows in their affliction, and to keep oneself **unstained** from the world."*

Perfect religion is producing works. It is also *unstained from the world*.

Too often do we as Christians, and the Church at large, allow the world to stain us.

Scripture is not talking about you living a perfect life because that is unattainable. But it is clear and evident here in this passage of scripture that a disciple of Christ will HATE his sin.

He doesn't just hate—he makes an attempt to get rid of it. He fasts in order to get more of Jesus and less of himself. He digs into God instead of pleasures. TO RID HIS LIFE OF SIN.

The Word of God is the mirror in which when we carefully study, listen, receive, we will be disgusted at what we find about ourselves and therefore drawn to the source of all grace, love, wisdom, and forgiveness. However, it must be received with humility—with a teaching spirit, not a vending machine.

No matter how mature you are in your walk with Christ—the Word of God will continually refine you.

Point 2: RESPONSE TO PEOPLE

James closes what we read as chapter 1 giving us what real religion is. It is action, it is pure, it visits orphans and widows—ie societally outcasted individuals. Then he rolls right into the next thought.

***James 2:1** “My brothers, show no partiality as you hold the faith in our Lord Jesus Christ, the Lord of glory.”*

Showing favoritism in the body of Christ is the opposite of *“Keep[ing] oneself unstained from the world.”*

James shares an example:

***James 2:2-4** “For if a man wearing a gold ring and fine clothing comes into your assembly, and a poor man in shabby clothing also comes in, and if you pay attention to the one who wears the fine clothing and say, “You sit here in a good place,” while you say to the poor man, “You stand over there,” or, “Sit down at my feet,” have you not then made distinctions among yourselves and become judges with evil thoughts?”*

They just outwardly judged, and then subjugated the poor man because of his socioeconomic status. What they did was bring the world into the Church.

In the world we are constantly making outward judgements.

In the Kingdom of God, we do NOT pick and choose the people that walk through the door.

They made it to Church today, we are to love them as Christ has always loved them, treat them with respect as Christ has always treated them with respect, and build relationships the way Christ built relationships with people from less desirable lands.

If they are a christian—no matter what they look like, smell like, walk like, whatever—we are to accept them. If they are not a Christian, we are to receive them because Christ died for them too.

James 2:5 “Listen, my beloved brothers, has not God chosen those who are poor in the world to be rich in faith and heirs of the kingdom, which he has promised to those who love him?”

In the first century, there was a large divide between a minority of rich and a majority of poor. When Jesus came to earth, he sought out the subjugated, impoverished Jews causing them to feel seen for the first time. The rich are not further from God, but the reality is the poor are more likely to trust God with their ENTIRE being.

Jesus says this:

Mark 10:23 “And Jesus looked around and said to his disciples, “How difficult it will be for those who have wealth to enter the kingdom of God!”

Because they will trust not in God, but in their wealth. In the context, the rich man was unable to sell all his possessions and give it to the poor. He was unable to FULLY surrender to God.

James is teaching the Jewish recipients to prioritize LOVE over LOOKS. Love enables you to see others through the lens of Christ.

Proverbs 17:5 “Whoever mocks the poor insults his Maker; he who is glad at calamity will not go unpunished.”

In the example James used, they mocked the poor believer by subjugating him.

Wiersbe states, “The way we behave toward people indicates what we really believe about God!”

1 John 4:20 “If anyone says, “I love God,” and hates his brother, **he is a liar**; for he who does not love his brother whom he has seen cannot love God whom he has not seen.”

God promised salvation to those who love Him, not to those who are rich or poor.

James 2:6-7 “But you have dishonored the poor man. Are not the rich the ones who oppress you, and the ones who drag you into court? Are they not the ones who blaspheme the honorable name by which you were called?”

In this context, the rich were likely the Sadducees and the Pharisees, and they wanted to silence this “heretical movement.” Therefore throwing them in front of the courts to imprison them or even kill them.

In the example, the poor man was a believer yet subjugated and received based on outward appearance—illustrating being stained from the world. The rich man, may not have been a believer yet was received like he was a great guest pastor.

Again, we are to view everyone through the lens of Christ.

James 2:8-11 *“If you really fulfill the royal law according to the Scripture, **“You shall love your neighbor as yourself,”** you are doing well. But if you show partiality, you are committing sin and are convicted by the law as transgressors. For whoever keeps the whole law but fails in one point has become guilty of all of it. For he who said, “Do not commit adultery,” also said, “Do not murder.” If you do not commit adultery but do murder, you have become a transgressor of the law.”*

This is the Greatest commandment. All things in the body of Christ are rooted in this word: Love.

Love is:

- Patient
- Kind
- Does not envy or boast
- Is not arrogant or rude (i.e. humble)
- Does not insist on its own way (i.e. selfless)
- Is not irritable or resentful (i.e. slow to anger)
- Does not rejoice at wrongdoing (i.e. impartial)
- Rejoices with truth (**1 Corinthians 13:4-7**)

Wiersbe states “Love enables us to obey the Word of God and treat people as God commands us to do. We obey His Law, not out of fear but out of love.” Love for God results in obedience to His commands.

Christian love does not mean we are best friends with every believer. It doesn't even mean we hangout with them, however, it does mean that we treat them the way God treated us. Jesus stated:

Matthew 7:12 *So whatever you wish that others would do to you, do also to them, for this is the Law and the Prophets.*

They need something, we give it to them.

- They need someone to speak to, we are their ear.
- They need advice, we are their preacher.
- They need empathy/sympathy, we are their hug.

It doesn't matter what they look like on the outside, it is the inside that matters to God, and thus the inside is what matters to us disciples.

James 2:12 *“So speak and so act as those who are to be judged under the law of liberty.”*

If you say you're a Christian, act like one.

James 2:13 *“For judgment is without mercy to one who has shown no mercy. Mercy triumphs over judgment.”*

We show mercy because God first showed us mercy. Same concept as we were forgiven therefore we are quick to forgive. In this context: The Jewish believers should have showed mercy toward the poor individual that entered their Church yet they JUDGED him without mercy. This merciless judgement revealed their spiritual nature. Therefore, they too will be judged without mercy.

If you are saved or spiritually mature, your response is in love—no matter what someone looks like.

Point 3: FAITH'S RESPONSE

Faith is such an incredibly important doctrinal word. We are saved by faith, we walk by faith, and we approach God in faith. The Book of Hebrews includes a Hall of Faith. But what is faith? Saving faith is as Warren Wiersbe puts it “confidence that God’s Word is true, and conviction that acting on that Word will bring His blessing.”

James discusses two different kinds of faith in this passage of scripture, dead faith and living faith.

I. Dead Faith

James 2:14 “What good is it, my brothers, if someone says he has faith but does not have works? Can that faith save him?”

What does faith look like?

James is addressing the fact that there are people in the gathering claiming to be Christians, yet their works expose the illegitimacy of their confession. These are the ones who would acknowledge that they believe in Jesus, God is real, and Jesus died and rose from the dead. YET, they DO NOT know CHRIST.

They do not spend intimate time in prayer and meditation on the Word of God. They still look the same as they did before their confession of faith—absolutely nothing has changed.

There should be evidence that you are a Christian.

James gives a real life example of dead faith to the Jewish Christians:

James 2:15-16 “If a brother or sister is poorly clothed and lacking in daily food, and one of you says to them, “Go in peace, be warmed and

filled,” without giving them the things needed for the body, what good is that?”

This poor person went into the church looking for help, and all the believer responded with was *“Go in peace, be warmed and filled.”*

In the direct context, that person did not need to hear about someone telling him to be warmed and filled. He knew that. He needed assistance from the Church. Which, this is the very job of the Church.

John writes:

1 John 3:17 *“But if anyone has the world’s goods and sees his brother in need, yet closes his heart against him, how does God’s love abide in him?”*

We have the means to supply for others, why not give to them.

James 2:17 *“So also faith by itself, if it does not have works, is dead.”*

True saving faith is not alone. Saying you have faith but showing zero works is evidence your faith is counterfeit.

Counterfeit faith is head knowledge. It is full of the right things to say, but absent of the one they speak about.

James 2:18-20 *“But someone will say, “You have faith and I have works.” Show me your faith apart from your works, and I will show you my faith by my works. You believe that God is one; you do well. Even the demons believe—and shudder! Do you want to be shown, you foolish person, that faith apart from works is useless?”*

James brings in a hypothetical objector. Essentially, this person is saying “I have faith, you have works, we both believe in Christ, leave me alone.” Except, faith and works are inseparable.

Again, DOERS examine themselves in the mirror *intently!* Intently in the greek (katanoeō) means to consider, to contemplate, to take notice of! You are finding your sin and CUTTING IT OUT OF YOUR LIFE. That is Faith!

Faith is internal yet externally revealed. Salvation is marked by evidence in your life. What changed in you? How do you live?

Salvation is not dead faith but living faith.

II. Living Faith

James gives us two examples of living Faith, while also illustrating impartiality. He will first discuss Abraham—who was rich and knew God. Then Rahab—who was poor and a prostitute.

A. Abraham

James 2:21-22 “Was not Abraham our father justified by works when he offered up his son Isaac on the altar? You see that faith was active along with his works, and faith was completed by his works;”

It is important to understand who James is writing to and what they were struggling with. This group of Christians believed because they were saved by grace through faith they didn’t need to do anything anymore. They acknowledge that Jesus saved them, and did nothing to earn it. With that

knowledge, they cast blind eyes to their sin and their works. They also decided to not help out those in need (**2:15-16**).

On the other hand, Paul to the Romans is combatting an opposing view. He was writing to a Church divided between Jew and Greek, and the Jews were imposing Jewish ritualistic law upon Greeks in order for them to obtain salvation and be righteous before God. Therefore he uses the exact same scripture reference in **Romans 4:2-3**.

Faith and works are not enemies but good friends. They **compliment** each other.

The Lord made a promise to Abraham that He shall multiply his OFFSPRING and it shall be as the multitude of stars in the sky.

Genesis 15:6 *And he believed the LORD, and he counted it to him as righteousness.*

Then, Abraham showed his faith by TRUSTING God's promise that Isaac would be the offspring in which will become many nations, and therefore he OBEYED God's Word when he was put to the test in **Genesis 22**.

The test revealed his spiritual condition. His faith in God's promise produced works.

- Our Faith in God's promise of salvation through Christ produces good works. For example: visiting orphans and widows (1:27), being impartial (2:1), supplying for the needy (2:16), being unstained from the world (1:27).
- It produces the fruits of the Spirit.

In front of God, we are justified through the sacrifice of Christ. In front of people, we show people our justification and salvation by what we do.

The Christian is to show others our Christ. What good does it do if the Christian looks EXACTLY like the WORLD. James just said, YOU ARE TO BE UNSTAINED by the world!

What good does it do if the Christian decides to do nothing? If Abraham did not listen to God's command, he therefore would have been saying to God that he did not TRUST His promise.

True salvation produces works and shows others that we are saved. We are only saved by GRACE through FAITH, but WORKS are a direct result.

Abraham heard the promise and responded to it.

***James 2:23-24** “and the Scripture was fulfilled that says, “Abraham **believed** God, and it was counted to him as **righteousness**”—and he was called a friend of God. You see that a person is justified by works and not by faith alone.”*

Mind you the context of this passage. It is evident that the Jewish believers—because we are saved by Faith—decided to stop working.

- Evidently, they are not visiting orphans and widows.
- They are not being unstained from the world.
- They are not being impartial and treating everyone with equal rights.

James is combatting dormant Christianity. Non-working Christianity. Non-attendance Christianity. Paul, in his letter to the Romans is addressing prideful Christianity. They believed they earned their salvation.

B. Rahab

James shares another example:

James 2:25-26 *“And in the same way was not also Rahab the prostitute justified by works when she received the messengers and sent them out by another way? For as the body apart from the spirit is dead, so also faith apart from works is dead.”*

It's not a matter of doing works to claim righteousness, it's a matter of accepting the Grace of God and it therefore producing works for God.

Rahab was first justified that she believed the Lord was God and He had done mighty works. Based on her BELIEF in God, and the mighty things He had done, she WORKED on behalf of the Israelite spies. **(Joshua 2)**

James, by using these examples again draws from his earlier statements in this chapter *My brothers, show no partiality as you hold the faith in our Lord Jesus Christ, the Lord of glory.*

Abraham, godly man. Rahab, prostitute and sinner. But what do they share in common?

Internal faith in God, external works for God.

ACTION STEPS: How can we apply this to our life?

- Are you someone who just attends Church and does not Read? I encourage you to start reading today. Begin with James 1 and 2 and follow along with this series!

- Are you someone who has been passively reading the Word and hasn't received any nourishment? Begin by setting aside 10 plus minutes and slowly walk the text—then ask questions and look for the answers in scripture.
- Do you view people poorly? Ask the Lord today to give you eyes to see people the way He sees them.
- How do we represent Christ? Do we draw others to Christ, or are we drawn to their ungodliness? To their rampant wickedness?
- Do you believe you have dead faith? If you were put on trial for Christianity, would you be convicted? Would your friends assume you to be a true disciple based on your actions, or a basic American, “go to church on Sunday Christian?” If so, it is your day to repent in front of Jesus! Life is not guaranteed, and if your faith is dead, so is your soul.