

06/07/26 Message

Part of Real Religion A Journey Through the Book of James
June 6, 2026

Message: Shut Up and Listen

Series: Real Religion

Background

This series is an exposition of the book of James, written by Jesus' brother who "found faith" after His death, burial, and resurrection. James was writing to a persecuted church, and he wanted them to understand the difference between man-made religion and true, genuine, real religion.

We see something happen in James that should be what happens to us once we grasp who Jesus really is. James became full of the Holy Spirit who lit a fire inside him that made people notice this man was changed!

—Pastor Chad

James is shouting:

- Walking with Jesus is not about RELIGION it's about RELATIONSHIP!

Real Religion Results in Change

This series is about Real Religion not the religion based on tradition and laws, but religion based on a real relationship with Jesus! Today, James is teaching us that real religion changes how we hear and real religion changes how we speak, what we say.

James 1:19-27 (NLT)

19 Understand this, my dear brothers and sisters: You must all be quick to listen, slow to speak, and slow to get angry. 20 Human anger does not produce the righteousness. God desires. 21 So get rid of all the filth and evil in your lives, and humbly accept the word God has planted in your hearts, for it has the power to save your souls. 22 But don't just listen to God's word. You must do what it says.

Otherwise, you are only fooling yourselves. 23 For if you listen to the word and don't obey, it is like glancing at your face in a mirror. 24 You see yourself, walk away, and forget what you look like. 25 But if you look carefully into the perfect law that sets you free, and if you do what it says and don't forget what you heard, then God will bless you for doing it.

26 If you claim to be religious but don't control your tongue, you are fooling yourself, and your religion is worthless. 27 Pure and genuine religion in the sight of God the Father means caring for orphans and widows in their distress and refusing to let the world corrupt you.

Three Part Rule

I've heard it said: here it is, after all the religious systems, theological arguments, denomination distinctions, and doctrinal debates, James cuts to the chase in two verses. Pure and genuine religion is about caring for others (specifically widows and orphans) and keeping yourself uncorrupted by the world. No creed to recite. No ritual to perform. No institution to join. Real religion has dirt under its fingernails and an open door for those in the world no one else is looking after!

—Pastor Chad

The Message translation puts it something like this:

Post this at all the intersections, dear friends: Lead with your ears, follow up with your tongue, and let angle straggle along in the rear. Throw all spoiled virtue and cancerous evil in the garbage. Be humble and let God change you!

James 1:19 (NLT)

Understand this, my dear brothers and sisters: You must all be quick to listen, slow to speak, and slow to get angry.

- Quick to LISTEN, slow to SPEAK, and slow to get ANGRY

James tells us to follow this three-part rule in that particular order and if you'll do it, it shapes everything else in your life... your relationships... your emotions... your testimony... your witness.

—Pastor Chad

Quick thoughts:

- Quick to listen: You can't learn what you already think you know.

Listening reveals humility.

- Slow to speak: Words said quickly are rarely words said well.

Proverbs 17:28 reminds us that even fools are thought wise when they keep silent.

- Slow to anger: Anger masquerades as righteousness but James tells us: it's wrong, and it's not right!

The Mirror

James 1:22-24 (NLT)

22 But don't just listen to God's word. You must do what it says. Otherwise, you are only fooling yourselves. 23 For if you listen to the word and don't obey, it is like glancing at your face in a mirror. 24 You see yourself, walk away, and forget what you look like.

It's someone who reads the Bible but never does what it says. Reading the instruction book but never following the instructions. Learning from the Master but never really learning from the Master. James says that's the problem. Knowledge without action is wasted.

—Pastor Chad

- Knowledge without CHANGE is WORTHLESS

God's Word is a mirror, it shows us reality, who we really are and what we really love, and what we're trusting.

James 1:25 (NLT)

But if you look carefully into the perfect law that sets you free, and if you do what it says and don't forget what you heard, then God will bless you for doing it.

Real religion sets you free! Traditional religion enslaves you, it keeps you in bondage to the do's and don'ts, you focus on failure more than focusing on victory. Real religion changes all that and more. When you follow Jesus, I mean really follow Jesus, He leads you out of the bondage and into freedom. He sets you free and He blesses you along the journey... if, that's the key part, if

you really follow Jesus.

—Pastor Chad

Two Marks (to prove your religion is real)

James 1:26-27 (NLT)

26 If you claim to be religious but don't control your tongue, you are fooling yourself, and your religion is worthless. 27 Pure and genuine religion in the sight of God the Father means caring for orphans and widows in their distress and refusing to let the world corrupt you.

At the end of this passage, James issues a warning. He says if you claim religion but can't control your tongue, your religion is absolutely powerless, ruthless, and useless! Because:

- The mouth REVEALS what the heart CONCEALS

Sadly, we live in a world where religion is best seen by talking about what we believe in, instead of showing the world by how we live. All talk and no walk! James gives an example. He talks about living it out by loving on, ministering to, and providing for widows and orphans.

—Pastor Chad

Prove it's real...

The first mark to prove it's real is when we:

- LOVE on, MINISTER to, and SERVE others.

The second mark to prove it's real is when we:

- REFUSE to let the world CORRUPT you

James is telling us, your faith journey is either real or it's not real. And if you aren't doing the things that Jesus would do if He were physically here with you, then you really aren't following Jesus.

- Activity without Ministry is the same as Religion without Relationship

Challenge

Here are a few things I want you to pray about this morning:

- Do a mouth audit. In the past week, were you quick to listen or quick to respond? How much of your anger has been dressed up as righteousness?
- Identify one person in genuine need near you. Not a donation to an organization but one actual person. An elderly neighbor. A single mom. A needy child. What does real religion look like for them? Do they know the church cares about them enough to love on them, minister to them, and meet their needs?
- Take the mirror seriously. Read one passage of Scripture this week and ask, "How does this reveal to me something in my life that needs to change?"

Let your words and your actions reflect a heart changed by Jesus! And if it hasn't been changed, today is a great day to make that change a reality!

—Pastor Chad