

Teaching Notes

Why do we do what we do? Why do we build a strong house?
Why do we build according to code?

Homes are a place to belong...

... where people are free to live good lives **together**.

BIG IDEA: Everything in the Christian life should be seen through the lens of mission.

God's mission is belonging, bringing people into His family.

Title: Through the Lens of Mission

How can we be effective? fruitful? powerful in the mission?

Last week we ended with the simple but difficult first step of **controlling our tongue...** and that is where we will pick up today.

1:26 If anyone among you thinks he is religious, and does not bridle his tongue but deceives his own heart, this one's religion is useless.

Did you have any luck? Did you use words to build up?
Did you stop yourself before you said something you shouldn't?

Controlling your mouth is not a one and done...

...it is never done, but always important.

Our religion is useless unless our mouths match our mission

Through the lens of mission...

1. Controlling my mouth keeps me useful.

Unholy mouths confuse people and limit our power.

Unholy mouths grieve and quench the Holy Spirit...

If it doesn't seem like your expression of faith has power the first area that should be examined is your words.

As if just watching our mouth wasn't enough James goes on...

27 Pure and undefiled religion before God and the Father is this: to visit orphans and widows in their trouble, and to keep oneself unspotted from the world.

Through the lens of mission...

2. Purity helps me be productive.

What does pure mean?

There are two ways to be pure.

First, in Leviticus, what is pure does not impart uncleanness.

I could not take part in the temple if I was unclean.

So...stay away from corruption, and you will be pure and able to participate in the mission and community.

...For us...stay free from corrupt selfish desire, sin and guilt.

The **second** way to be pure is to be cleansed by fire or pruning.

Purity comes from God's pruning or purifying fire.

We get cut back.

Things get cut off.

Life gets hot. We go through the fire.

...AND, when we submit to that work, we are purified.

Fire and sharp blades can hurt and be harmful...

...BUT God knows what He is doing...

...AND so it is how we receive it that makes the difference.

If you **don't** have faith during the fire, you may just get burned.

If you **don't** have faith in the pruning, you may just get cut.

If you fight the fire or run from the pruning it won't purify you

So stay free from corruption and trust the trials have a purpose.

The other word James uses to describe religion is **Undefiled**.

Defiled is something dirty, deformed, debased or degraded.

Something defiled is not operating at full capacity.

It's force or vigor has been effected.

Something "**undefiled or sanctified**" is operating at full strength.

Defilement limits our effectiveness and efficiency.

Through the lens of mission...

3. Being undefiled eliminates limits.

When a **filter** on the car is defiled/clogged performance is limited.

...Gas mileage is limited, misfires limit power, smelly, black smoke limits enjoyment,

defilement limits horsepower.

Defilement comes both from things we do and shouldn't do...

...and others things we don't do and should do.

Defiling limitations come in 3 areas:

- thoughts
- actions
- situations

What do you think about?

Do your thoughts defile or limit you in the mission of God?

Do your thoughts help you love people?

Do your thoughts help you share the gospel?

Do your thoughts help you give to the church or the needy?

Do your thoughts help you serve and meet needs?

What about our actions?

Do your actions help you love people?

Do your actions help you be faithful to your spouse or future spouse?

Do your actions help you share your faith?

Do your actions help you serve and meet needs?

Do you put yourself in situations that limit God's mission?

The group you are with gossips and nit picks other women.

The friends you have encourage you to judge people not like you.

The corporate ladder keeps you from loving your family.

Purity and being undefiled are not about staying clean...
...they are about staying on mission.

These words have to do with action, making things happen

God doesn't just call us to be pure or undefiled because he wants us to **look** good on the **outside**.

Christians are not just to sit in a religious display case.

Christians are to be used daily for His mission and glory.

His desire is that you and I would be pure and undefiled so we can be powerful and productive in our faith.

So many times Christian purity comes across the wrong way.

Don't touch that. Don't do that. Don't think that. That's dirty!

The mission of the church is like a hospital.

Why is a **hospital** supposed to be a clean environment?
Germs **limit** the effectiveness of healing and helping people.

Being pure and undefiled helps us be effective in healing and helping people.

In other ways the church is like an army.

Soldiers fight to advance and protect a country and its people.

Why do soldiers keep their weapons clean?
Defiled weapons are not dependable and don't operate at full effectiveness.

God wants us to be pure and undefiled so that we can be strong and effective on his mission.

So what is a pure and undefiled outward expression of faith?

to visit orphans and widows in their trouble, (and) to keep oneself unspotted from the world.

Two parts here...visiting those in trouble and keeping unspotted.

4. Following God keeps us on God's mission.

This sentence describes who God is.

The word "**visit**" was the same word Luke used to describe Jesus.

Luke 1:68 "Blessed is the Lord God of Israel, For He has visited and redeemed His people,

God is not removed from humanity or the suffering of humanity.

God loves, and cares, and visits people in their trouble.

One of the most powerful promises God gave was, I am with you.

On His mission we should go to people in need or trouble.

>>>>Who has need or trouble? He says, "Orphans and widows"

Again this is who God is...

Ps. 68:5 "Father of orphans and protector of widows is God in his holy habitation."

Christians have forever spearheaded this kind of service.

The first concern in Acts for the church was taking care of widows.

Saving abandoned babies was often done by the early church.

American Protestants fund orphanages around the world

Today, \$3.3 billion from Christians support orphans.

In the 19th century, Christian organizations built orphanages.

It was a swift solution to the dire need of abandoned and neglected children. What might have been seen as a temporary solution, however became in many cases permanent.

“While it was incredibly generous and well-meaning, it caused harm that we didn’t realize,”

Ps. 68:5 "Father of orphans and protector of widows is God in his holy habitation....God settles the lonely in families;

The mission of God is belonging.

One key way we help orphans and widows is to help them know and feel the belonging of God’s family.

We do that with care ministries, Mentor up and even the lighthouse ministry.

The second part of pure and undefiled religion is

“to keep oneself unspotted from the world.”

What does that exactly mean...“Unspotted from the world”?

The world is the system of life where Jesus is not the Lord.

“The way the world works” is not the way God’s kingdom works.

- Cash is king
- Might is right
- Believe in yourself.
- Follow your heart.

...Our mission should demonstrate that Jesus is the Lord.

To be unspotted from the world means...

...The blemishes of the world don’t get on us and influence us.

...We remain free from the vices and stains of this world.

What shapes & drives the world does not shape & drive us.

This is where the **songs** or **shows** or **conversations** or **clubs** can become a problem because of the way they operate or think or what they promote or value that creeps in.

We must cleanse and renew ourselves with God’s truth.

He is our king and the commander of our mission.

If you visit Brazil...

Brazil is in huge turmoil about their government...

...we care because we care about people, but it isn’t my govt.

When I visit the school I used to work...

They have to deal with discipline...I just enjoy the game.

Don’t let the worries or the ways of this world spot you...

...we have a different king and a different kingdom.

When the ways and worries of the world get on you...
...you are no longer concerned with the things of God's kingdom.

It is not that I don't care about the world or the environment or countries... I have different priorities and goals and values.

So James now goes into a very specific example of what else pure, undefiled and unspotted religion looks like...

2:1 My brethren, do not hold the faith of our Lord Jesus Christ, *the Lord of glory*, with partiality. **2** For if there should come into your assembly a man with gold rings, in fine apparel, and there should also come in a poor man in filthy clothes, **3** and you pay attention to the one wearing the fine clothes and say to him, "You sit here in a good place," and say to the poor man, "You stand there," or, "Sit here at my footstool," **4** have you not shown partiality among yourselves, and become judges with evil thoughts?

This is how people in the world's system think.

- Be good to people if they can do something for you.
- Respect what people look like on the outside.
- Important people are more important than other people.

One person feels devalued and unloved...

...The other person may feel used and manipulated.

Neither feel accepted or like they belong for who they really are.

But on God's mission...

- **Purity** of heart removes my selfish motives.
- **Undefiled** thoughts and actions sees them as equally important
- **God's mission** to value all people and bring them in is seen

We should 't show partiality, or play favorites.

Interestingly, we just talked about this in Genesis this week.

Jacob ordered his family based on his partiality.

And this wreaks havoc in his home.

Don't favor those that are rich.

Don't favor those that can help you.

Don't favor those that can give you what you want.

But God created every person in His image.

Every person has value because they are created by God and made in His image.

We have blown this so many times.

We have become partial to those like us and those we like.

So here is the next step for us as disciples...

In Closing...

1. See everything through the lens of mission.
2. Be pure and undefiled so you can be effective and powerful
3. Follow God and God will accomplish His mission through you

Who knows what kind of trouble or need people have...
...You may see it if you are pursuing Him and paying attention...
And God knows...follow Him and see where He takes you!

Discussion Questions

Have you ever experienced an unholy mouth from a believer? How did that help or hurt God's mission of belonging?

How does the idea of mission motivate you to be pure? Is this how most people think about purity?

Have you felt like a church or Christian was "spotted by the world"? How did that impact God's mission through them?

With all the needs possible to mention, why do you think James chose orphans and widows? Would you add any others today?

How does favoritism go against God's mission of helping everyone belong to His family?