



***RESCUE THE CHURCH
FROM RELIGIOUS MALPRACTICE***



S E R M O N G U I D E

Rescuing The Church From Religious Malpractice

James 1:21-27

INTRODUCTION

In today's message, we are going to talk about a subject that isn't often associated with the church. When we think about malpractice, we tend to think about legal, medical, or even financial malpractice, but rarely do we think about religious malpractice. However, this is a sad reality of many churches today. Therefore, this is a topic worth discussing and studying Scripture for so that can make sure we avoid religious malpractice and instead follow Jesus the way we are commanded to in God's Word.

NOTES

KEY POINTS

1. Restore The Credibility Of The Church

This, in essence, is the point of James 1:21-25. There were Christians who knew all the rules and who performed all of the rites and rituals of the church. The problem was that their behavior didn't line up with what they proclaimed. They were the Christian hypocrites of the ancient world, who said one thing but did another. Inconsistency is what robs the church of its credibility and compromises its witness in the world. So, James says to get rid of all that; get rid of all the duplicitous discipleship, fraudulent faith, and misleading ministry that pushes people away from Jesus, rather than draws them nearer.

2. Reframe The Conversation Of The Church

James 1:26 says, *"If you claim to be religious but don't control your tongue, you are fooling yourself, and your religion is worthless."* This verse is often quoted as a prohibition against using profanity. But I think there is something more profound here than whether saying four-letter words is a sin that James is trying to underscore.

James, I think, is trying to tap into the heart of Proverbs 18:21, which says, *"Death and life are in the power of the tongue, and those who love it will eat its fruits."* In other words, there is power in our mouths, and as children of God, how we use our mouths and the words we speak have the potential to create death or life in a situation, or to leave a person feeling dead or alive.

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Our words can either lift people up or pull people down. And yet sadly, Christians all too often engage in death talk by speaking words of death over themselves, words of death to others, and words of death about God. In order to avoid this, we have to reframe the conversation of the church.

3. Renew The Courage Of The Church

James 1:27 suggests that the credibility and conversation of the church are substantiated by the courage of the church to serve those who are oppressed in a corrupt world. Most versions of the Bible translate the main verb in this sentence as “caring for” or “visiting” orphans and widows,” but the Greek here is more accurately translated as, “interceding on behalf of,” “advocating for,” or “fighting for the rights” orphans and widows in their distress.

The admonition here extends beyond merely sending get-well cards, printing their names in the Sunday bulletin, and visiting them in nursing homes. Those things are fitting, but James is saying that the measure of real ministry and genuine Christian compassion is determined by what you do and how you pray for those at the bottom of the social ladder.

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QUESTIONS TO CONSIDER

1. When was a time you were guilty of acting hypocritically? How do you think your behavior affected the credibility of the Church? What can you learn from that situation?
2. What is an example you've experienced of words giving life or bringing death?
3. What is one way you can intercede for or advocate for people in need in order to love them the way Jesus did?
