

Sermon Notes and Discussion Questions: Living in Obedience

INTRODUCTION

Why do parents sometimes tell their kids, “Do as I say, not as I do”?

What reveals more about a person: actions or words? Why do you say so?

When have you seen someone’s actions match up with their words, even when doing so was difficult?

A primary emphasis of James’ letter is the daily expression of one’s faith in action. Evidently James was dealing with some who tried to separate being a Christian from demonstrating one’s faith in everyday life. The same thing is often true of the church today. We live in a culture that delights in listening but runs from doing. In James 1:19-27, James stressed the vital connection between hearing the Word of God and living it.

HAVE A VOLUNTEER READ JAMES 1:19-21.

How are James’s three commands in verse 19 related to one another? What is the root issue James warned his readers against with these commands?

What do we communicate to other people when we don’t listen well or talk too much? What happens when these negative traits enter into our relationship with God?

Have you ever responded to a particular truth or command from God’s Word with resistance of heart and mind? What is the danger in this?

How does verse 21 reflect the antonym of the human tendency James notes in verse 19?

The readers of James’s letter knew the transforming power of God’s Word, the gospel. James urged them to demonstrate this change. The command to be quick to listen calls for an eagerness to hear and obey God’s message. The appeal to be slow to speak demands silence until we have understood and applied the message. It is a call for restraint lest we produce hasty, ill-timed reactions. The challenge to be slow to become angry warns against hostile, bitter feelings. Instead, we should receive the word humbly. The Word of God is planted in your heart and His Spirit dwells there to move you into action.

HAVE A VOLUNTEER READ JAMES 1:22-25.

Why do we often “hear” and not “do” when it comes to Scripture? What does this say about our faith?

The phrase “looks intently into the perfect law” can be understood as: “remember the word constantly.” How can you do that?

In what area of your life could you do a better job applying God's Word rather than just listening to it?

What is the benefit of applying God's Word (v. 25)? Conversely, what happens when you don't?

James was concerned that believers persevere in living out God's Word. James maintained that just listening to God's Word was insufficient. The Word evokes action, and if there is no action then there has been no acceptance of the Word. As you accept it, apply it. If your life is built on listening to the words of Jesus alone, then your life will ultimately and eternally end in destruction (See Matt. 7:21).

APPLICATION

Help your group identify how the truths from the Scripture passage apply directly to their lives.

If based on how much you give attention to it, how highly do you value the Word? If based on how well you obey it, how highly do you value the Word?

Are there any issues where God's Word has been confronting you in which you have been resistant to listen and obey? What is the danger in continuing that way?

How has God blessed you in your life through the application of His Word?

PRAYER

Thank God for His Word, through which He makes your paths straight. Invite God to show you what areas of your life He has been telling you to obey and you have not done it. Commit to trust Him as you see to take necessary steps to obey Him in that.