

## Small Group Study Guide

### "Faith That Functions: Being Doers of the Word"

Based on James 1:21-2:13



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#### OPENING PRAYER

Begin your group time asking God to help you not just be hearers of the Word, but doers who apply what you learn.

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#### ICEBREAKER

Share about a time when you prepared extensively for an important event (wedding, interview, performance, etc.). How did the anticipation and preparation affect your experience?

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#### KEY SCRIPTURE PASSAGES

- James 1:21-27
- James 2:1-13

- Philippians 2:12-13
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## **SERMON SUMMARY**

The sermon explores how genuine faith must be expressed through action. James calls believers to be "doers of the word, not hearers only," emphasizing that salvation comes through faith alone, but true faith inevitably produces works. Using the imagery of a wedding day, the pastor illustrates how we should prepare ourselves with anticipation and reverence for our eternal union with Christ, working out our salvation "with fear and trembling"—not in terror, but with awe, reverence, and loving anticipation.

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## **DISCUSSION QUESTIONS**

### **Understanding the Text**

1. What does James mean when he says we should "receive with meekness the implanted word" (James 1:21)? How does humility relate to spiritual growth?
2. The sermon distinguishes between "working FOR salvation" and "working OUT salvation." Why is this distinction important? What's the difference?
3. James compares hearing without doing to looking in a mirror and immediately forgetting what you look like (James 1:23-24). What does this metaphor reveal about spiritual forgetfulness?

### **Personal Reflection**

4. The pastor shared the story of Mike Bauer, who was turned away from one church because of his appearance but became a prayer warrior at another. Have you ever witnessed or experienced partiality in the church? How did it affect you or others?
5. When you look into the "mirror" of God's Word, what areas of your life does it reveal need changing? Are you acting on what you see, or walking away unchanged?
6. The sermon describes "fear and trembling" as reverence and awe—like anticipating your wedding day. How does this imagery change your perspective on spiritual discipline and obedience?

## Applying the Truth

7. James 1:27 says pure religion is "to visit orphans and widows in their trouble and to keep oneself unspotted from the world." What are practical ways your group can live this out in the coming month?
  8. The pastor mentioned the online debate among Christian apologists that became a poor witness for Christ. How can we "bridle our tongues" (James 1:26) in our digital age, especially on social media?
  9. James warns against showing partiality based on wealth, appearance, or status (James 2:1-9). Where might we unconsciously show partiality in our church, workplace, or community? How can we actively combat this?
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## KEY TAKEAWAYS

1. **Salvation is by faith alone, but true faith is never alone**—it produces action and transformation.
  2. **The Word of God is a mirror** that shows us what needs to change; we must act on what we see.
  3. **Pure religion involves caring for the vulnerable** (orphans and widows) and maintaining personal holiness.
  4. **We must not show partiality** based on external factors; all people are made in God's image and have equal value.
  5. **Christian life is preparation for eternity with Christ**—like a bride preparing for her wedding day with anticipation and reverence.
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## PRACTICAL APPLICATIONS

### This Week:

- **Daily Mirror Check:** Each morning, read a passage of Scripture and ask, "What does this show me about myself? What one thing will I do differently today because of it?"
- **Tongue Watch:** Before posting on social media or engaging in a difficult conversation, pause and ask, "Will this honor Christ and build others up?"

- **Look for the Overlooked:** Intentionally seek out someone who might be marginalized or overlooked in your church or community and show them Christ's love.

### **This Month:**

- **Serve the Vulnerable:** As a group, identify one practical way to serve orphans, widows, single parents, or the elderly in your community.
- **Partiality Audit:** Examine your own heart and habits. Do you gravitate toward certain "types" of people? Challenge yourself to build a relationship with someone different from you.
- **Wedding Preparation:** Create a personal spiritual growth plan. What areas of your life need preparation for Christ's return? Set specific, measurable goals.

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### **MEMORY VERSE**

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

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### **CLOSING REFLECTION**

The sermon ended with a powerful image of communion as the "rehearsal dinner" before the marriage supper of the Lamb. We are the bride of Christ, and He has paid the ultimate dowry for us. Just as a bride prepares herself for her wedding day, we should be preparing ourselves—not to earn His love, but in joyful anticipation of being with Him forever.

**Reflection Question:** How does viewing your Christian life as preparation for eternal union with Christ change how you approach daily obedience, service, and spiritual disciplines?

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### **PRAYER REQUESTS & CLOSING PRAYER**

- Share prayer requests, especially focusing on areas where group members want to become "doers" rather than just "hearers"
- Pray for humility to receive God's Word
- Pray for strength to act on what God shows you
- Pray for opportunities to serve the vulnerable without partiality

- Thank God for the anticipation of eternal life with Him
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### **LEADER NOTES**

- Consider sharing your own struggle with being a "hearer only" to create vulnerability
- If discussing the Mike Bauer story, be sensitive—some may have experienced rejection from churches
- The partiality discussion may surface uncomfortable truths; create a safe space for honest reflection
- End on the hopeful note of Christ's return and our eternal hope

## 5-Day Devotional: Working Out Your Salvation



### Day 1: The Mirror of God's Word

**Reading:** James 1:21-25

#### **Devotional:**

When you look into a mirror each morning, you see what needs attention—messy hair, sleepy eyes, things that need fixing. God's Word functions as a spiritual mirror, revealing not our physical appearance but the condition of our hearts. James warns against being someone who looks into this perfect mirror and walks away unchanged. The implanted Word has power to save your souls, but only when we respond with action. Today, ask yourself: What has God's Word revealed to me lately that I've ignored? What spiritual "bedhead" have I left uncombed? Don't just acknowledge what needs to change—participate with God in the transformation. The mirror shows truth; your response demonstrates faith.

## **Day 2: Faith That Functions**

**Reading:** Philippians 2:12-13

### **Devotional:**

"Work out your salvation with fear and trembling" doesn't mean earning your way to heaven—it means exercising the salvation you've already received. Think of a bride preparing for her wedding day. She doesn't earn her groom's love through preparation, but her anticipation moves her to action. She gets ready because she can't wait to see him. Similarly, our salvation is secure through Christ alone, but our love for Him should compel us to prepare ourselves for eternity with Him. God works in you "both to will and to do," meaning He provides both the desire and the power for transformation. Your part is humble participation. What area of your life needs this active cooperation with God's transforming grace today?

## **Day 3: Doers, Not Just Hearers**

**Reading:** James 1:22-27

### **Devotional:**

Knowledge without application creates spiritual stagnation. You can attend every Bible study, listen to countless sermons, and memorize Scripture, but if your life remains unchanged, what has truly happened? James cuts through religious pretense: pure religion involves bridling your tongue and caring for orphans and widows—tangible, costly actions. It's easier to consume spiritual content than to actually love difficult people, serve the marginalized, or surrender our words to God's control. This week, identify one specific way you've been a hearer only. Maybe you know you should forgive someone, serve somewhere, or change a habit. Don't just acknowledge it again—do it. Let your faith function in the real world where people can see Christ through your actions.

## **Day 4: Love Without Partiality**

**Reading:** James 2:1-13

### **Devotional:**

Our culture constantly evaluates people by external measures—wealth, influence, appearance, status. The church should be radically different. James confronts our tendency to honor the impressive while overlooking the humble. When we show partiality, we've become "judges with evil thoughts," establishing a hierarchy God never intended. Remember: Christ's blood paid equally for every person. The wealthy executive and the struggling addict are both made in God's image, both equally valuable, both equally in need of grace. Mike, the tattooed biker turned prayer warrior, reminds us that God's greatest servants might not look like our expectations. Today, examine your heart: Who do you instinctively honor? Who do you overlook? Ask God to give you His eyes for people.

## **Day 5: Anticipating the Wedding Feast**

**Reading:** Matthew 26:26-29

### **Devotional:**

When Jesus said, "I will not drink again of this fruit of the vine until that day when I drink it new with you in my Father's kingdom," He was painting a picture of anticipation. Like a groom preparing for his bride, Jesus has gone to prepare a place for us. Communion isn't just backward-looking remembrance—it's forward-looking anticipation. We're in the engagement period, the betrothal season, preparing ourselves for the moment the doors open and we see our Bridegroom face to face. This should fill us with the same trembling joy as a wedding day—tears of anticipation, weak knees, overwhelming love. How does this change your daily life? Live as the beloved bride, preparing with reverence and joy for the eternal wedding feast ahead.