

## Fleshed Out: A Journey Through the New Testament Letter of James

### “The End of Maybe”

### Discuss

Words hold power. By simply listening to someone talk for a while you can get a sense of what type of person they are and what they value. James tells the Christ follower that we should be known as people of integrity; that our intentions should be clear in our interactions with people.

Jesus even drives this point home when He tells us to “count the cost” of following Him before we make such a life-changing decision (see [Luke 14:25-33 NLT](#)). James wants our words and our actions to carry authority. He knows that this is only possible if we are not people who “live in the grey”.

*“Above all, my brothers and sisters, do not swear—not by heaven or by earth or by anything else. All you need to say is a simple ‘Yes’ or ‘No.’ Otherwise you will be condemned.”* ([James 5:12 NIV](#))

- Why is James asking us not to “swear” in this verse?
- What types of interactions is this verse talking about and what types of interactions is this verse not talking about?
- What would be the long-term result in your life if you always made your intentions clear with others by using a simple “yes” or “no”?
- Are there any types of interactions where you find it difficult not to “live in the grey”?

**By letting our “yes” mean yes, and our “no” mean no, that forces us to think through what we are saying. This keeps us from making rash statements. Making a rash statement means talking without thinking through what might happen as a result. James talked to us earlier about the power of our “tongues.” For the Christ follower to speak without thinking through the results of our words would be unwise.**

*“Observe the people who always talk before they think—even simpletons are better off than they are.”* ([Proverbs 29:20. MSG](#))

- Has there ever been a time when you have taken the time to fully think something through, and ended up with a great result because you resisted the temptation to act impulsively? What happened?
- Has there ever been a time when you spoke rashly and regretted the words you spoke? Were you able to rectify the situation?
- Learning to think before we speak is a skill. The more we practice thinking before speaking, the more natural it becomes. What will be some of the long-term effects of thinking before we speak?

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God is very concerned about the person we are becoming. He wants our words to mean something. They should not need anything else behind them (i.e., the need to swear) to count in the minds of other people. A person who is true to their word has become increasingly rare in our culture. We strive to become more like Jesus so we can become living examples of who He is; we know that when people see God for who He really is they will draw closer to Him.

*“Friends, this world is not your home, so don’t make yourselves cozy in it. Don’t indulge your ego at the expense of your soul. Live an exemplary life in your neighborhood so that your actions will refute their prejudices. Then they’ll be won over to God’s side and be there to join in the celebration when he arrives.”* ([1 Peter 2:12, MSG](#))

- God wants so much more for us than just becoming “nice” people. He wants us to show the world who He is by becoming examples of Him. Are you more like Jesus this year than you were last year?
- Jesus said that He came to save the world and not condemn it. Should we spend our time condemning people? How does God command us to interact with people who are still deciding whether they want to follow Him?
- What does living an “exemplary” life look like for you?

**God wants us to think before we speak, to become a person of integrity and character, and to commit to what we are saying. He does not want us to stay in the grey area of saying “maybe”, especially when it comes to life’s biggest questions. He wants us to decide, commit, make a plan and take action!**

*“If anyone hears what I am saying and doesn’t take it seriously, I don’t reject him. I didn’t come to reject the world; I came to save the world. But you need to know that whoever puts me off, refusing to take in what I’m saying, is willfully choosing rejection.”* ([John 12:47-48, MSG](#))

- Are there any areas of your life where you can be more decisive? Any areas where “maybe” should not be the answer?
- Are there any times in life where “maybe” could be a suitable answer? When?
- Have you made the definite decision to follow God wholeheartedly? Jesus is clear that He does not reject anyone. The choice is ours. Think through what a life totally committed to God looks like for you.

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### Next Steps

Begin to think through some of the major areas of your life. Have you made a commitment in each area? Are you heading in a definite direction with God leading the way? He does not ask us to be perfect; He only asks us to be committed and faithful.

September 22: [The Big Picture Bible Study](#)

September 22: [REALIFE](#)

September 23: [2021 Church and Culture Livestream Event](#)

September 24: [Family Night \(Online and In Person\)](#)

September 25: [Second Harvest Food Bank Serve Day](#)

Daily: [Training Camp](#)

### Continued Reading

Read: [Philippians 4:8](#)

### Prayer

God,

I know that you care about my character and integrity. I know that as I become more like you, the more I'll be able to show the world who you are. Thank you for the position that you have uniquely placed me in. I pray that I live an exemplary life in my community for others to follow. Amen.