

James 1:19-27 “Faith and The Word”

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Thesis: The Bible is your true north compass that directs you how to live a life that is satisfying to you and glorifying to God. It reveals origins, explains what is wrong with the world, helps you navigate the challenges of this life, and prepares you to experience life with God today and through eternity. Thus, we neglect the Bible and its truth at our own peril.

The Bible is a cohesive collection of 66 books written over 1500 years by 40 authors. They agree internally and externally (e.g. archaeology), are consistent with science (except miracles), are filled with fulfilled predictive prophecy, and attested by thousands of manuscripts. Thus, it proves God inspired the writings and the Bible has not been altered by man. The skeptics' concerns can reasonably be addressed, and the faithful can rejoice. Those who learn the word, love it and live it have discovered that that this book, by God's Spirit gives a better life.

Today, we will discover how...

Subject: loving God & living His word

Object: learn it, love it, live it

1. How to learn His word [19-24]

¹⁹ So then, my beloved brethren, let every man be swift to hear, slow to speak, slow to wrath; ²⁰ for the wrath of man does not produce the righteousness of God. ²¹ Therefore lay aside all filthiness and overflow of wickedness, and receive with meekness the implanted word, which is able to save your souls. ²² But be doers of the word, and not hearers only, deceiving yourselves. ²³ For if anyone is a hearer of the word and not a doer, he is like a man observing his natural face in a mirror; ²⁴ for he observes himself, goes away, and immediately forgets what kind of man he was.

So then [19] refers to James exhortation in the midst of trials, tests, and temptations, that God's word brings us to Christ and spiritual life.

Listen [19]: be *swift to hear and slow to speak*. Hearing means to perceive or understand. Eight times, Jesus declared "He who has ears to hear let him hear." Jesus was referring to a heart ready to receive from God. We are reminded, "Faith comes by hearing and hearing by the word of God" [Rom. 10:17]. There is a difference between being hearing impaired and listening impaired. It is interesting that God has given us two ears and only one mouth. Being *slow to speak* implies the wisdom and humility to realize that we don't know everything and we need to be ready to learn. *Therefore, lay*

aside all filthiness and overflow of wickedness [21]. In essence remove obstacles to growth. “Lay aside every weight and the sin which so easily ensnares us” [Heb. 12:2]. *Wrath* is fierce anger. We should be *slow to wrath* [19] or have a long fuse, because *the wrath of man does not produce the righteousness of God* [20]. Outbursts of wrath are a work of the flesh [Gal. 5:20]. Unreasonable anger misrepresents God. Your temper is a valuable thing, don’t lose it. *Filthiness* [21] refers to moral uncleanness, and *wickedness* refers to immoral habits.

Learn with humility [20]: *receive with meekness the implanted word, which is able to save your souls* [20]. Approach the Bible with an earnest desire to learn from God. Let the Bible root and grow and be implanted in your mind, heart, and soul. The Bible itself doesn’t *save souls* but it reveals God’s perfection, our sin, our need for a Savior; and the means to salvation is through faith in Christ. The Bible has the capacity to clean those who come to Christ [Jn. 15:3].

In the Parable of the Soils (Sower), Jesus described four types of soil representing the receptivity of the hearer to the word of God [Mt. 13]. Hard soil refused to receive. Rocky soil considered the word, but the reception was so shallow that when tested by opposition was abandoned. Thorny or weed-filled soil received the word, but then the cares of this world choked out fruit. Good soil is characterized by hearing, understanding and applying God’s truth, and produces abundant fruit (Christ-like character and conduct).

Apply [22]: the word by doing it not simply hearing it. Those that don't apply the truth that they've heard are not really learning the Bible, and thus *deceive themselves* [22]. The word is like a mirror that reveals and reflects what we really are so that we can yield to God [23-4].

Jesus concluded the Sermon on the Mount by describing two foundations for life [Mt. 7:21-28]. The wise man builds on the rock, and the fool builds on sand. The choice of foundation determines whether a person thrives or perishes. The difference is that the wise man hears Jesus' teachings and *does them*, and the fool does not do or apply God's truth.

2. How to love His word [25]

But he who looks into the perfect law of liberty and continues *in it*, and is not a forgetful hearer but a doer of the work, this one will be blessed in what he does.

The word of God is *the perfect law of liberty*. The Bible reveals how we can experience freedom from the penalty, power, and ultimately presence of sin. Jesus declared to those who believed, "If you abide in My word, you are My disciples indeed. And you shall know the truth and the truth shall make you free" [Jn. 8:31-32]. The key is to abide or *continue in it*.

Contentment in life flows from learning, loving, and living God's word: *but a doer of the work, this one will be blessed in what he does.* The idea of *blessed* is happy or content. Those who learn,

love and live God's word are content. We learn to love God's word, because it reveals God to us, and the path to contentment in Christ.

“Blessed *is* the man who walks not in the counsel of the ungodly, nor stands in the path of sinners, nor sits in the seat of the scornful; but his delight *is* in the law of the Lord, and in His law he meditates day and night. He shall be like a tree planted by the rivers of water, that brings forth its fruit in its season, whose leaf also shall not wither; and whatever he does shall prosper” [Ps. 1:1-3]

3. How to live His word [26-27]

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. 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.

Three times James uses the term *religion*. The Greek refers to expressions of worship to God. James describes three ways we can test if we are living His word:

What you say [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.* Jesus revealed that what we say reveals what is in our heart [Mt. 12:34-35]. No one, besides Jesus, perfectly tames the tongue, however our speech

should reflect love for God and His word [Ja. 3:1-12]. When we are yielded to God's Spirit we are reflective rather than reactive, slow to speak [19], and God-controlled.

Who you serve [27]: *Pure and undefiled religion before God and the Father is this: to visit orphans and widows in their trouble.* Caring for people who are unlikely to be able to return the kindness and care is evidence that you are living His word. Widows and orphans were often the most marginalized in the ancient world (and too often in our modern world as well). The early church, like the synagogue before it, had a benevolence program to attempt feed widows in need [Ac. 6]. Here, James is encouraging Jesus' followers to visit or care for those who are troubled and unlikely to be able to return the kindness and care. More than a program, it is an organic demonstration of love for neighbors as we live His word. Social justice is a response to the gospel and God's word not a replacement for it.

How you respond to the world's temptation [27] *keep oneself unspotted from the world.*

You need to know the Bible to recognize God's values so that you can distinguish cultural values that are contrary to God. You need to know the Bible to resist temptation [Mt. 4], follow God [Ps.119:11], and grow in Christ [2Pet. 3:18]. As you learn, love, and live the word, the world doesn't corrupt your thinking about God, temptation and sin.

Study Guide Qs

Q1. Review the section, “How to learn His word.” What is especially meaningful to you?

Q2. How does love for God and His word motivate you to learn and live the Bible?

Q3. Review the section, “How to live His word.” What is especially meaningful to you?

Q4. What advice would you give to someone about learning, loving and living God’s word?

Digging Deeper

1. Here is a helpful article for those of us who find it hard to find the time to read the Bible:

<https://unlockingthebible.org/2018/02/the-3-5-method-studying-gods-word-when-youre-tired-and-busy/>

2. Here is a link to Bible reading plans that are available on our Calvary Nexus site: <http://calvarynexus.org/daily-reading-plan>.