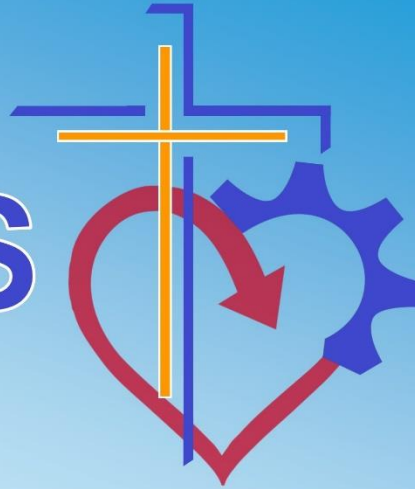


faith WORKS

The Book of James
-DEVOTIONAL PODCAST-



Humbly Accept the Word and Do What It Says

James 1:19-27 My dear brothers, take note of this: Everyone should be quick to listen, slow to speak and slow to become angry, ²⁰for man's anger does not bring about the righteous life that God desires. ²¹Therefore, get rid of all moral filth and the evil that is so prevalent and humbly accept the word planted in you, which can save you. ²²Do not merely listen to the word, and so deceive yourselves. Do what it says. ²³Anyone who listens to the word but does not do what it says is like a man who looks at his face in a mirror ²⁴and, after looking at himself, goes away and immediately forgets what he looks like. ²⁵But the man who looks intently into the perfect law that gives freedom, and continues to do this, not forgetting what he has heard, but doing it—he will be blessed in what he does. ²⁶If anyone considers himself religious and yet does not keep a tight rein on his tongue, he deceives himself and his religion is worthless. ²⁷Religion that God our Father accepts as pure and faultless is this: to look after orphans and widows in their distress and to keep oneself from being polluted by the world.

Did your mother tell you like my mother told me that God gave us two ears and only one mouth for a reason? That's generally wise advice that falls in line with James' prompting that we Christians "should be quick to listen and slow to speak and slow to become angry." In the course of conversation the first thoughts that jump into our minds are rarely the best ones. Usually these are the most selfish, uncharitable, reactive, pointed, and angry. A cursory look at our politics, news programs, and university campuses shows that for many engaging in civil discourse is a thing of the past. Now the norm is never back down and shout out your opponent. In truth we've all been conditioned to sift through each other's words and writing, scanning for the smallest offense and the moment we think we've found it, we give ourselves the green light to launch into a self-righteous tirade on how our personal honor has been assaulted. But this reaction is not something new nor do we need to be taught it because it plays right into our selfish sinful nature that makes this life all about me and my search for inventive ways to cut everyone else down to size. With such filth God is not pleased.

But how do we redirect, recondition, and re-educate ourselves? We are told to repent of our impulsive me-first garbage and "humbly accept the word planted in you, which can save you." God's Word has grace to cool our anger; it has insight that points us beyond ourselves to the good of others; the Scriptures alone contain the message of redemption, which saves us all. So as you and I come into contact with each other's words each day, let's take the time to listen and process the audio through the filter of faith and flavor our response with the language of God's Word.

But this same Word must not only be humbly heard, but also genuinely done because faith works. Should anyone think that being a Christian means only hearing God's Word in Sunday worship, in Bible study, on

Christian radio, they are sorely mistaken and deceiving themselves. Like a person looking in a mirror and forgetting what they looked like, they have forgotten their true identity as believers in Christ. Jesus himself once said, "If you hold to my teaching, you are really my disciples. Then you will know the truth, and the truth will set you free" (John 8:31-32).

We all need to heed this rebuke because it's human nature to hear what God says and let it go in one ear and out the other, to prefer what we think is best and easiest for ourselves. We've been told that real freedom is doing whatever we want, but when we stubbornly refuse to yield our selfish ways that is actually the most horrible kind of slavery. The slavery of sin. But Christ died to take away our sins and free us from living for ourselves. He has liberated us to live for him who loves us and find joy in following his commands. In that regard the law of God gives us freedom of spirit and action. It simultaneously exposes the empty lies of the devil, world, and our flesh and guides believers on the path of goodness and godliness. This is the way to eternal blessing!

Thus, real religion is not only a matter of our ears hearing and minds thinking. It must include the whole self, controlling our mouths to speak timely and appropriate words and giving of ourselves to aid the destitute and the helpless. Such living faith that puts God's Word into practice pleases our heavenly Father.



Reflection Questions:

- 1.) With our sin-broken selves in a sin-broken world it is inevitable that anger will rise up in us every day. How can meditating on God's Word in those moments help us cool down and slow up our responses?
- 2.) What are some practical ways that you can "stretch" the Word you hear in Sunday worship into the rest of your week so that it is on the forefront of your thoughts to do what it says?



Prayer: *Dear Father above, for Jesus' sake forgive me for my impatience and self-centeredness, for the times when my anger bursts out in rash and hurtful words. Help me to focus my heart, my mouth, and my actions on your saving Word, for there I am reminded of who I truly am. In your grace and good commands I am free. Amen.*