

Being A Doer  
James 1:19-27

**Slide 1**

Has someone ever told you a story and you had absolutely no clue where they were going with it, or asked someone, in the middle of their story, “What’s your point?”

In today’s passage, James begins by writing about listening skills and anger, telling us we should accept the word of God and ultimately “*be doers*” of the Word.

It may seem like James is taking us on a wild goose chase, yet there’s a method to the point he’s making.

So, let’s take a look at what James is trying to teach us and how we can apply God’s Word to become more authentic Christians.

In my past 2 messages in James, I’ve talked about trials, testings, and temptations. Today James wants us to be better listeners by being quick to listen, slow to speak and slow to become angry.

When we follow this prescription, we have the opportunity not only to live in harmony with others, but to be a doer of the Word.

There’s an old saying, “*God gave us two ears and one mouth so we could listen more than we speak.*”

Usually when we disagree with someone, we do the opposite. We’re quick to become angry, quick to speak and slow to listen. So, let’s see what James has to say.

## Slide 2

James 1:19-20, *“My dear brothers and sisters, take note of this: Everyone should be quick to listen, slow to speak and slow to become angry, because human anger does not produce the righteousness that God desires.”*

We're to be listeners. That may sound easy, but there is a difference between hearing and listening.

You may hear me speak, but when you listen, you're absorbing what's being said. You're not thinking about your grocery list, or what you're going to eat for lunch.

Listening is an art. It's not always easy to listen to a sermon that lasts more than five minutes. We become distracted, that's why some people say, *“They become tired from listening.”*

Not tired of listening, tired from listening. Listening takes concentration. This is why teachers say, *“Give me your undivided attention.”*

A benefit of listening well is that we become slower to speak. Think about most disagreements, especially arguments. We usually don't listen since we're thinking about our comeback.

How many times have you been asked, *“Did you hear what I said?”* That's when you know you're not listening. When we listen well and are slow to speak, we're not formulating our next statement.

We aren't thinking of a comeback to a disagreement, we're not cutting off the other person so we can make our point, we're trying to understand their point, their feelings and beliefs.

James reminds us we should also be slow to become angry. He isn't telling us anger is wrong, but the manner in which we display our anger and our reasoning can lead others to look at us as something less than a Christian.

We should be angry at injustice and sin, but when we become angry that we aren't winning an argument, we aren't showing God's righteousness.

Again, the point he's making is that when we're quick to really listen, we become slower to speak, because we're taking in what the other person is telling us. Because of that, we're slower to become angry.

We're less angry because we now understand the person better. It doesn't mean they're right or we even agree with them. We simply understand better.

### **Slide 3**

Then James bridges the gap between being good listeners and being doers of the Word with a very important statement in verse 21.

James 1:21, *"Therefore, 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."*

He starts by saying *THEREFORE*, in other words, *"because of what I just said,"* do this: Get rid of all that's wrong in your life. He tells us to get rid of all moral filth and evil that fills our lives so abundantly.

Getting rid of moral filth means to get rid of all that stuff that stains our soul. Think about all that we allow to filter into our minds and hearts which can stain us.

You wouldn't drink grape juice on a new white sofa. In some ways, we're more apt to protect that sofa better than our souls.

The phrase *“the evil that is so prevalent”* or in other versions *“rampant wickedness”* is pretty much what it means.

It’s an overabundance of desire to do evil or bad to someone. The inference is the intent. It’s like having a goal to harm someone. Maybe with words, maybe with actions.

So, how do we get rid of this evil? He gives the answer in the second half of the verse—*“humbly accept the word planted in you, which can save you.”*

In other words, get rid of the bad in your life and accept the gift of the Word of God, the gift of Jesus, so that you might find salvation for your soul. It’s a reminder that we must always be in God’s Word.

The only way we can guard against all that stuff that stains our soul, is to be into the Word—reading, meditating and learning it.

We need to ask questions so that we understand what God wants us to do and who He wants us to be.

#### **Slide 4**

James then reminds us that it’s one thing to know the Word, but it’s another thing to DO the Word, to live it.

James 1:22-24, *“Do not merely listen to the word, and so deceive yourselves. Do what it says. Anyone who listens to the word but does not do what it says is like someone who looks at his face in a mirror and, after looking at himself, goes away and immediately forgets what he looks like.”*

In this passage, he gives us the analogy of a person looking in a mirror. Mirrors show us what we really look like. When you look into the mirror, you see the brutal truth, yet we don’t like to acknowledge it.

When was the last time you stopped to take a good, long look at your face? I can see areas I missed shaving and some things that I don't like — more gray, less hair, more wrinkles and so on.

We're the same way with the Word of God. We take a quick look and avoid taking a long hard look at the Word because it can be very convicting.

James is calling us back to being in the Word, studying it and applying it. The Word of God serves as a mirror to show us the truth about ourselves, but it will only do us good if we read, learn and apply it.

We must apply those listening skills to reading the Word. Listen first and try to discover what's God trying to teach you.

Then, meditate on it, be slow to speak, don't justify your actions, let His Word fill you. Don't reject it, but embrace it, even if it's not what you want to hear. Even Matthew understood this concept.

Matthew 13:14-15, *"In them is fulfilled the prophecy of Isaiah: 'You will be ever hearing but never understanding; you will be ever seeing but never perceiving. For this people's heart has become calloused; they hardly hear with their ears, and they have closed their eyes. Otherwise they might see with their eyes, hear with their ears, understand with their hearts and turn, and I would heal them.'"*

Matthew is telling us that we have a serious problem in the church, a problem that hurts our ability to share Jesus. Somehow, we have a moral disconnect between faith and action.

There's a great separation between what we say we believe and what we do. Yet, you see that in the last part of this passage, Jesus tells us that if we would change, He'll bring healing to us.

In his book, *Walking with Christ in the Details of Life*, Patrick Morley wrote, “We’ve had revival without transformation. It’s a change in belief without a corresponding change in behavior.

*The American gospel has evolved into a gospel of addition without subtraction. It’s the belief that we can add Christ to our lives, but not subtract sin.*

*It is a change in belief without a change in behavior. It’s a spiritual experience without any cultural impact. It is revival without reformation, without repentance.*

*The proof of religious conversion is to demonstrate that we have both added a relationship with Christ and have subtracted sin (repentance). In so doing, we multiply proof to a weary world by what we do — our deeds, our obedience.*

*What we do must confirm what we say. A changed life is one that has added Christ and subtracted sin, that attracts a world weary of worn-out words. Obedience is the proof.”*

These are very condemning words. I don’t like what he said, but I believe he’s correct. So, what do we do?

If we’re going to convince a cynical world that the message of Jesus Christ is real, we must be intentional about living the Christian life.

We must endure to the end, even through hard times. And as we do so, we’re to lean upon the grace of God, and the strength that comes from knowing Christ and the indwelling power of the Holy Spirit.

When you continue to do this, not forgetting what you’ve heard, but doing it, you’ll be blessed.

In verse 25, James also tells us that we'll be blessed IN our doing, not as a result OF our doing.

It's not like saying, *"Hey God look at me helping my neighbor, what's my reward?"* Your reward comes in the doing!

We must return to God's Word seeking to understand and put into action the love of Jesus. We've been called to follow two commandments, love God and love your neighbor.

So, our call is to be obedient to God's call. We're to follow the perfect law and the law of liberty. Love your neighbors and love God, this frees you as you follow Christ.

1 John 4:20 tells us, *"we are liars if we say we love God but hate our neighbors."* That kind of equation never works in God's kingdom.

## **Slide 5**

### **Conclusion**

Finally, James tells us in these last verses - - -

*James 1:26-27, "Those who consider themselves religious and yet do not keep a tight rein on their tongues deceive themselves, and their religion is worthless. Religion 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."*

If you think you're a super sweet Christ follower but you're more apt to gossip, or demonstrate a quick anger towards others, instead of loving them, then you're just deceiving yourself.

You're deceiving your heart and what you say you believe is really worthless.

What you really need to do and believe is what's pure and undefiled, not contaminated by sin and in so doing demonstrate God's love to others who are in need.

That will be a sign of who God is in your life. It's showing what you treasure by your actions and your money.

So, keep yourself unstained from the world. Don't allow the world to spill it's grape juice on your clean and washed soul.

If you're not into the Word of God, begin, then practice what James is talking about.

Be quick to listen, slow to speak, and slow to become angry. It's not always easy, yet I believe it'll bring a greater peace in your life and truly demonstrate Christ at work through you.

Finally, demonstrate God's love to your coworkers, friends, to one another, and most especially to your family.

Seek to serve them, because you love them. Don't just talk about Jesus, but be a doer and that'll do all the talking you need.