

## Love: A Passion that is Pure

### James – God’s Work in Us and through Us

Hillsboro Presbyterian Church

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Do you “walk your talk”? On Memorial Weekend, we remember those who backed up their words with action. Do you? James is a “how to” book for the Christian faith. James explains how Christians behave...and why. Writing to the Early Church, born at Pentecost, now dispersed throughout the Roman Empire, James teaches that faith is a verb...that God is growing His children to spiritual maturity... that God is producing the fruit of the Spirit in those who profess the Lord Jesus Christ. We began by discovering “pure joy” is there for those going through trials because God is right there with them as their faith is tested. In this message we learn ***“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”*** (James 1:27)...which is practical instruction for followers of Jesus. The word of God requires us to act in practical ways with God’s holy love.

#### First, RECEIVE GOD’S WORD – James 1:19-21

1:21b ***“...humbly accept the word planted in you, which can save you.”***

The word “accept” is a hospitality word that means “welcome”. Welcome the redemptive word of God into your heart and into your life. This is the first step for all Christians. Jesus used the same illustration in the Parable of the Sower (Matthew 13). Jesus said, “The word of God is a seed that is planted in our hearts.” In some hearts it thrives, in some hearts it dies. Jesus said some hearts are hard...some are rocky...some are full of weeds...some are receptive. I just reseeded my lawn. Some spots were more receptive than others and actually grew new grass! Receptivity makes all the difference. James notes 4 attitudes that prepare our hearts for receiving God’s word.

**Be careful.** 1:19 ***“Everyone should be quick to listen, slow to speak...”*** Give it your full attention. When I’m talking, I’m not listening. God gave us two ears and one mouth so we ought to listen twice as much as we talk. Many of our problems are caused because we’re quick to speak rather than being quick to listen. Be careful in your attitude. Be ready to receive God’s word.

**Be calm.** 1:19b ***“... and slow to become angry ...”*** A relaxed attitude increases receptivity. We don’t hear much when we’re angry, upset, bitter, or resentful...from others or from God. The Psalmist wrote ***“Be still and know that I am God.”*** (Psalm 46:10) Pray for peace. Pray for calm.

**Be clean.** 1:21 ***“Get rid of all moral filth and the evil that is so prevalent...”*** Do a little weeding. The word “filth” that he says you’ve got to get rid of is actually the Greek word that means “earwax”. When you have a sin in your life it blocks your hearing. It prevents God’s word from getting into your heart. How can we be clean? By confession. ***“If we confess our sins, He’s faithful and just to forgive us and cleanse us from all unrighteousness.”*** (1 John 1:9)

**Be compliant.** 1:21 ***“humbly accept the word planted in you...”*** Teachable, yielded, humble, willing to be changed. To be compliant means to be like tilled soil...ready to receive God’s word.

#### Second, REFLECT ON GOD’S WORD – James 1:22-25

1:25 ***“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”***

A mirror reflects what we’re like on the outside. God’s word reflects what we’re like on the inside.

Hebrews 4:12 says ***“The word of God...judges the thoughts and attitudes of the heart.”*** How do we look at ourselves in God’s word?

**Read it.** 1:25 ***“the man who looks intently into the perfect law”.*** Focus your attention on the word of God. Investigate it. You can gaze at a mirror or you can glance at a mirror. All of us have done both. It’s human nature that you can’t walk by a mirror and not look at it. When you glance at it, you immediately walk away and forget what you’ve seen. It didn’t do you any good. Many people try to have a quiet time that way. They don’t want to gaze at it, but glance at it. Give God five minutes. God says that He wants us to gaze at the word. Look at it intently in detail.

**Review it.** 1:25 ***“...and continues to do so...”*** That means over and over and over. The Bible calls this meditation. Meditation is not, put your mind in neutral and contemplate lint in your navel. Meditation means to think seriously about something over and over. If you know how to worry, you can meditate. Take God’s word and think about it over and over. ***“Meditate on God’s word day and night”*** Joshua 1:8 I give you the printed sermon so you can review it...it’s how we learn.

**Remember it.** v. 25 ***“... not forgetting what he has heard.”*** Nothing will do more for your spiritual life than memorizing Scripture. Psalm 119:11 says ***“I have hidden your word in my heart that I might not sin against you, O Lord.”*** We remember what is important to us.

#### Third, RESPOND TO GOD’S WORD – James 1:22, 26-27

1:22 ***“Do not merely listen to the word, and so deceive yourselves. Do what it says.”***

This is where the rubber meets the road. The word “merely listen” is the word for “audit”. If you audited a class in college you didn’t take it for credit, you just listened...you didn’t have to really learn it or apply it. Too many people “audit” church...come, come to church, hear the word of God, and walk away with no intention of being changed. I was one for years. I took notes, wrote things down, but it never changed me. James says it’s self-deception if we are not changed by God’s word. The test of spiritual maturity is not knowledge, it is character. We must put into practice what we know. Knowledge increases responsibility. ***“To whom much is given, much is required.”*** (Luke 12:48) And every single one of us knows more spiritual truth than we’re putting into practice right now. We need to put into practice what we already know. James concludes this section with three examples of walking the talk...of genuine Christianity. (Each of these responses are also in the rest of James.)

**A controlled mouth.** 1:26 ***“If any one considers himself religious and does not keep a tight reign on his tongue he deceives himself and his religion is worthless.”*** Worthless. We all know people who don’t watch their words and say they are believers. James says their religion is worthless...their words do not bless others and they show they do not know God. We say “actions speak louder than words”...James says words show what is in your heart...words ARE action.

**A caring heart.** 1:17 ***“Religion that God our Father accepts as pure and faultless is this: to look after orphans and widows in their distress.”*** The marginalized. Then as now, there are people in society who are in distress who God our Father expects His people to reach out to. It is pure and faultless because we extending God’s love to those who are in need.

**A clean mind.** 1:27 ***“and to keep oneself from being polluted by the world.”*** Integrity. God’s word requires a response in how we talk to others and in how we care for those in need – and it also requires Christians to live with integrity. There is no service without sacrifice. There is no speaking words that bless others and doing good deeds without godliness. On this Memorial Day weekend, may we recommit ourselves to loving God in practical ways – in word and in deed...with integrity.