

Be Doers Of The Word (James 1:19–27)

James makes it clear that hearing the word of God is not enough. The word must be *received* with humility, *obeyed* in practice, and *demonstrated* in everyday life. True religion is not merely something we profess; it is something we live.

Introduction:

1. Many people are willing to hear the word of God, read the Bible, attend worship, and even agree with what the Scriptures teach. Yet James warns us that hearing God's word without obeying it can actually lead to self-deception (James 1:22).
2. The word of God has the power to change our lives, but only when we receive it with the proper attitude and allow it to govern our conduct. James describes it as “the engrafted word, which is able to save your souls” (James 1:21).
3. In this passage, James shows us the progression that ought to take place whenever we encounter God's truth. We must **receive the word, obey the word, and live the word** (James 1:19–27).

1. Receive The Word, James 1:19–21:

- a. Be Swift To Hear, James 1:19: God has spoken, and therefore our first responsibility is to listen. We should approach His word with an eagerness to learn rather than assuming that we already know everything we need to know. The wise man is willing to hear instruction and increase in learning (Proverbs 1:5). Jesus repeatedly emphasised the importance of hearing properly when He said, “He that hath ears to hear, let him hear” (Matthew 11:15).
- b. Put Away Those Things Which Hinder The Word, James 1:19–21: James tells us to be “slow to speak, slow to wrath,” because human anger does not produce the righteousness God requires. He then commands us to lay apart “all filthiness and superfluity of naughtiness.” Sin allowed to remain in the heart prevents us from receiving God's word as we should. Before the word can produce its intended fruit, we must be willing to remove those attitudes and practices which oppose it (James 1:19–21; cp. 1 Peter 2:1–2).
- c. Receive The Word With Meekness, James 1:21: The word must be received “with meekness,” which describes an attitude of humility and submission. We do not approach Scripture looking for ways to make it agree with us; we approach Scripture prepared to change ourselves so that we agree with God. Samuel expressed the proper attitude when he said, “Speak; for thy servant heareth” (1 Samuel 3:10). When God's word corrects our thinking or behaviour, meekness causes us to accept the correction rather than resist it (Psalms 25:9; James 1:21).

2. Obey The Word, James 1:22–25:

- a. Hearing Without Doing Leads To Self-Deception, James 1:22: James commands, “But be ye doers of the word, and not hearers only, deceiving your own selves.” A person may listen attentively to sermons, attend Bible classes, read Scripture regularly, and possess considerable biblical knowledge while still failing to obey what he learns. Knowledge by itself does not constitute faithfulness. Jesus asked, “And why call ye me, Lord, Lord, and do not the things which I say?” (Luke 6:46; cp. Matthew 7:21).
- b. God's Word Is A Mirror Which Reveals What We Are, James 1:23–24: James compares the word of God to a mirror. A physical mirror shows us what we look like outwardly, while Scripture reveals our spiritual condition. It exposes sin, wrong attitudes, misplaced priorities, and areas in which change is necessary. It is foolish to look into a mirror, see something that needs correcting, and then simply walk away; it is equally foolish to see ourselves in God's word and refuse to change (James 1:23–24; cp. Hebrews 4:12–13).
- c. The Doer Of The Word Will Be Blessed, James 1:25: The faithful person does more than glance casually at God's word. He “looketh into the perfect law of liberty, and continueth therein.” He studies it, remembers it, obeys it, and continues to live according to it. Jesus likewise taught that the person who hears His sayings and does them is like a wise man who built his house upon a rock (Matthew 7:24–25). God's blessing belongs not merely to the person who knows His will, but to the person who faithfully does it (John 13:17; James 1:25).

3. Live The Word, James 1:26–27:

- a. Control The Tongue, James 1:26: James immediately gives a practical test of whether God's word is truly governing our lives. A person may appear religious, but if he “bridleth not his tongue,” his religion is vain. Christianity must affect the way we speak, including what we say about others, how we respond when angry, and whether our words are truthful, gracious, and edifying. Our speech reveals much about the condition of our hearts (**Matthew 12:34–37; cp. Ephesians 4:29**).
- b. Show Compassion Toward Those In Need, James 1:27: “Pure religion and undefiled before God” includes visiting “the fatherless and widows in their affliction.” James is not describing a ceremonial visit but genuine concern expressed through practical help. Christianity turns our attention away from ourselves and teaches us to care about the burdens and needs of others. John makes the same point when he asks how the love of God can dwell in someone who sees a brother in need and refuses to help him (**1 John 3:17–18; cp. Galatians 6:10**).
- c. Keep Yourself Unspotted From The World, James 1:27: True religion involves both compassion toward others and personal holiness before God. Christians live in the world, but they must not allow the world's sinful values, attitudes, and practices to mould them. Paul commands believers not to be conformed to this world but to be transformed by the renewing of their minds (**Romans 12:1–2**). The person who receives and obeys God's word will increasingly demonstrate a life which is distinct from the sinful world around him (**1 Peter 1:14–16; James 1:27**).

Conclusion:

1. James leaves no room for a Christianity which consists merely of hearing, knowing, or talking about God's word. The word which is able to save our souls must first be received with meekness and allowed to take root within us (**James 1:21**).
2. Having received the word, we must obey it. The Bible is not simply a book to be studied, discussed, admired, or defended; it is God's revelation which demands a response. The person who hears but refuses to obey deceives himself, while the person who continues in the word and does what it teaches will be blessed (**James 1:22–25**).
3. Finally, obedience must become visible in everyday life. Our speech, our treatment of those in need, and our separation from the sinful ways of the world demonstrate whether our religion is genuine. The challenge of James is therefore simple but searching: **Do not merely hear the word. Do it** (**James 1:26–27**).

Applications:

1. Examine How You Listen To God's Word: Whenever we read the Scriptures or hear them taught, we should ask ourselves whether we are genuinely prepared to be corrected and changed. We must never approach the Bible merely looking for confirmation of what we already believe. We should receive God's word with meekness and allow it to expose whatever needs to change in our lives (**James 1:21; cp. Acts 17:11**).
2. Act Upon What You Learn: Biblical knowledge brings responsibility. When we discover something God commands, we should not continually postpone obedience or satisfy ourselves merely with knowing the correct answer. Jesus pronounced blessing upon those who hear the word of God and keep it (**Luke 11:28**). Each of us should therefore ask, “What am I doing with what I already know?” (**James 1:22–25**).
3. Allow The Word To Reach Every Part Of Your Life: Genuine Christianity cannot be confined to the assembly on Sunday. God's word must govern our speech, relationships, compassion, priorities, entertainment, behaviour, and moral choices throughout the week. Pure religion is demonstrated by a life which reflects God's will both publicly and privately (**James 1:26–27; cp. Colossians 3:17**).

Questions:

1. What attitude should we have when receiving the word of God (**James 1:21**)?
2. What danger does James associate with hearing the word without obeying it (**James 1:22**)?
3. Why does James compare God's word to a mirror (**James 1:23–24**)?
4. Who does James say will be blessed (**James 1:25**)?
5. What three practical characteristics of genuine religion does James identify (**James 1:26–27**)?

Summary:

James teaches that our relationship with God's word begins with the way we **receive it**. We must be swift to hear, remove sinful attitudes which hinder its influence, and receive it with meekness. God's word is not merely information for the mind; it is the engrafted word which is able to save our souls.

We must then **obey the word**. Hearing without doing produces self-deception. Like a mirror, Scripture shows us what we really are, but seeing our condition accomplishes nothing unless we respond by making the necessary changes. The blessing belongs to the person who continues in God's word and puts it into practice.

Finally, we must **live the word**. Genuine religion becomes visible in ordinary life through controlled speech, compassionate concern for others, and personal holiness. James therefore moves us from hearing to doing and from doing to living. The question is not simply, "Do I know what God's word says?" but, "**Am I doing what God's word says?**"

Questions & Answers:

1. What attitude should we have when receiving the word of God (**James 1:21**)?

Answer: We should receive the word “with meekness,” humbly submitting ourselves to what God has revealed rather than resisting His instruction (**James 1:21**).

2. What danger does James associate with hearing the word without obeying it (**James 1:22**)?

Answer: The person who hears the word but does not obey it deceives himself into thinking that hearing or knowing God's will is sufficient (**James 1:22**).

3. Why does James compare God's word to a mirror (**James 1:23–24**)?

Answer: Just as a mirror reveals our physical appearance, God's word reveals our true spiritual condition and shows us what needs to be corrected (**James 1:23–24**).

4. Who does James say will be blessed (**James 1:25**)?

Answer: The person who looks into the perfect law of liberty, continues in it, and becomes “a doer of the work” will be blessed in what he does (**James 1:25**).

5. What three practical characteristics of genuine religion does James identify (**James 1:26–27**)?

Answer: Genuine religion includes controlling the tongue, caring for those in need, and keeping oneself unspotted from the world (**James 1:26–27**).