

# ***FPFWC Christian Development***



## **Faith and Wisdom in James**

August 2020

Winter Quarter

**August 8, 2020**

**Lesson #2 – Hearing and Doing?**

SCRIPTURE TEXT – James 1:19-27

**ICE BREAKERS -**

1. How do displays of anger and temper affect the witness of a Christian?
2. What guardrails can you erect to help you control your tongue in difficult situations?
3. How can we keep ourselves from being polluted by the world?
4. Explain the part wisdom

***Key Verse: Be ye doers of the word, and not hearers only, deceiving your own selves. —James 1:22***

**LESSON BACKGROUND**

Amid all that the Creator provided Adam and Eve in the garden—amid all the evidence of God's goodness—the first humans heard the command not to eat of the tree in the middle of the garden. But they failed to do what God commanded (Genesis 3) when they failed to tune out a contradictory voice. The disconnect between hearing and doing was and is at the heart of sin.

This is also the story of Israel. Even after clear evidence of God's presence during the exodus, the Israelites failed to obey, instead creating an idol to worship (Exodus 32). During the time of the judges, the Israelites went through relentless cycles of oppression, deliverance, and relapse. They never seemed to make the connection between their actions and the results. This pattern was fundamentally a problem of the heart (see Proverbs 4:23).

The power of speech is likewise a thread that can be traced through Scripture, beginning in Genesis 3. As we study, we remember the context of James's audience: economic oppression, some infighting, and persecution (see lesson 9 Lesson Context: James the Epistle; also see James 2:1-7; 3:13-4:12; 5:1-6).

**LESSON COMMENTARY**

Quick to Obey, Slow to Speak, Slow to Anger ( 1:19-20)

1:19-20. The maxim lists the three essential character qualities in trials and summarizes the body of the epistle (see Introduction). Quick to hear (see 1:22-2:26) counteracts sluggishness to obey God; slow to speak (see 3:1-18) corrects sins of the tongue; and slow to anger (see 4:1-5:12) evades outbursts in trials. Human anger, customarily sinful ( Mt 5:22), does not achieve God's righteousness (cf. 3:18; 5:6, 16), either in oneself or in others.

IV. Body of the Letter: Godly Responses in Trials ( 1:21-5:6)

A. Quick to Obey in Trials ( 1:21-2:26)

## 1. Nature of True Obedience ( 1:21-27)

1:21. Verse 21 begins the body of the letter. Holiness ("righteousness," v. 20) is developed by putting aside all... wickedness. The goal of sanctification is to save your souls (cf. 5:20), better translated "save your life (lives)." In the OT ( LXX ), the phrase means deliverance from physical death (e.g., Gn 19:17; 1Sm 19:11). Jesus used this sense ( Mk 3:4; Lk 6:9) but added a spiritual meaning: by submission to Christ, the believer delivers his life from worldliness (see the comments on Rm 6:15-23), enables him to experience the abundant Christian life, and preserves it for eternal reward ( Mt 16:24-27; Mk 8:34-38). James uses both concepts: sanctification can save believers' lives from early physical death ( vv. 10-11, 14-15) and bring future reward ( v. 12; 2:12-13).

1:22-25. To "receive the word" ( v. 21) is now clarified as prove yourselves doers of the word. Believers who are merely hearers of biblical truth are self-deceived (cf. v. 7; Gl 6:3; 1Jn 1:8). A believer who does not act on truth is like a man who looks at his natural face in a mirror ( v. 23). James has just referred to our spiritual birth ( v. 18) and will allude to our new self in the "law of liberty" ( v. 25). So natural face, which is literally "the face of one's birth," corresponds to the believer's spiritual birth. The Christian looks in the mirror of God's Word ( 2Co 3:18 NASB ) at his new self, transformed by new birth ( v. 18). But the Christian who has gone away from the mirror ( v. 24) has tragically forgotten what kind of person he is in Christ ( v. 24; cf. 2Pt 1:9). The law of liberty ( v. 25) is the "law" or "principle" by which God frees believers from sin ( Gl 2:4; 5:1, 13; 1Pt 2:16), namely, the gospel, creating in them new selves ( 2Co 5:17; Eph 4:24; Col 3:10). For blessed, see v. 12.

1:26-27. Pious devotion is worthless or empty if it does not curb a person's tongue or meet practical needs. To visit orphans and widows ( v. 27; cf. Dt 10:18; Ps 146:9) means to "look after" them ( NIV ). Providing for the unfortunate is linked to the command to keep oneself unstained by the world. Our hearts follow our treasures ( Mt 6:21). So the one who gives financially to help others guards her or his heart from the blemish of worldly, monetary values.

**LESSON NUGGET** – The Word of God gives us spiritual birth. It is like seed planted in the heart that produces spiritual fruit (v.21). It is a mirror that helps us examine ourselves (vv.23-25) and cleanse our lives. We must do the Word of God, not just read it or study it; the blessing is in the doing.

**Sources: Moody Bible Commentary, Standard Lesson Commentary, and The Essential Everyday Bible Commentary**