

5. (25) – Verse 25 is a great promise for the outcome of engaging God in his Word. What do the phrases, “look intently,” “continues to do this,” and “doing it,” mean for our personal study of God’s Word? How would you describe the promised blessing? Is it a present blessing (1:4) and/or a future blessing (1:12) or something else?

6. (26) – James writes, “If anyone considers himself religious and yet does not keep a tight rein on his tongue, he deceives himself...” What is the deception? How is this similar or dissimilar to the deception of verse 22? Can a person be a Christian and a gossip?

7. (27) – What are today’s comparables to “widows and orphans in their distress” and what are the practical ways we “look after” them? How do we remain in the world but not of it (“keep from being polluted”)? If these are not a result of our relationship with God, are we still Christians?

James 1:19-27

Discussion Group Questions

April 20, 2008

LESSON 3

Dr. Jerry Nelson

For discussion following the sermon on April 20, 2008

Listening and Doing

Key Points

In this passage James continues to challenge us with responsive love to the grace of God. As God reveals himself through his Word, as we put into practice what we have learned, our actions (doing) become living expressions of our love for God. Our lives clearly communicate the impact of the gospel on our hearts. In this passage we are challenged with:

- Listening and doing
- Deliberate detachment from evil
- Intentional study and application of God’s Word
- Obedience demonstrated by our attitudes and actions toward others

Religion that merely parrots theology and voices praise, but is not demonstrated in the way we live, is empty religion. We are just going through the motions of pretense, falsely believing in a dichotomy that allows us to keep our “religion” separate from the way we live the rest of our lives.

James challenges us to live an integrated life, one that demonstrates the active presence and power of the Spirit, enabled by the Word of God. Those around us will know that we are not merely “hearers of the Word,” but we “do what it says.” It will be evident to them in the way we respond to the circumstances of life; in our use of words (and the attitudes that accompany them), in our compassion for those in need, and in a resistance to the evil influences of our world. If our actions speak louder than words, then what we “do,” both good and bad, becomes a testimony to the faith we believe in.

Leader's Guide

Personal Preparation

- Think back over your day or over your week. What situations (and your response to them) reflected the application of God's Word? What impact did it have on others? How did God enable you to apply his Word, rather than responding in the ways of the world?

- We often don't take time to evaluate, or celebrate, the transformation that is taking place within us, and the outworking of that change. Take time to express your heartfelt praise to God for his Word, and for the enabling power of the Spirit to "do what it says."

Group Preparation

- Truly God is doing a mighty work among us! Last week's services plowed up "fallow ground" on secret sin and people are responding. If the Word of God continues to bring conviction (especially in areas of attitudes and speech toward one another), if the people in your groups express a need for repentance, we will keep in step with the Spirit. Be sensitive to his leading. We don't need to manipulate discussion, or to turn undue attention on individual problems (at the expense of the group). But we want to encourage you to take time (if and when appropriate) to help people respond to God as he brings illumination through his Word.

Discussion Questions:

God's goodness has given us salvation "through the Word of Truth" (verse 18). James continues his teaching by giving us guidance on how to receive the Word of Truth (verses 19-21) and on how to live out the Word of Truth (verses 22-27)

1. (19-20) – James mentions three actions that prepare us to receive the word of truth. Why is each important? What are the consequences of our reactions when we do not listen carefully, when we respond too quickly, and/or are easily angered?

2. (21) – How might the "moral filth and evil that is so prevalent" relate to the anger of man? How do these pre-empt one's ability to "accept the Word planted in you?" How does humility relate to anger and moral filth?

3. (22) – James writes, "Do not merely listen to the word, and so deceive yourselves." What is the deception? What do we deceive ourselves into believing? How does "doing what it says" keep deception away? We can be deceived into thinking that hearing is as good as doing; knowledge is as good as application. What happens when we operate from this false premise?

4. (23-24) What further description can you give to the person who looks in a mirror and goes away forgetting what he/she looks like? How does that describe the person who looks at the Word and then goes away forgetting?