

Studies in James

Lesson 6

Walking the Walk

INTRODUCTION:

- I. Solomon begins the sixth chapter of Ecclesiastics with the penetrating words: *"There is an evil which I have seen under the sun and it is prevalent among men..." (Eccl 6:1)*
 - A. It is important that we introduce this study with these words, because there is a terrible evil (ailment) that is also prevalent among the people of God today (the body of Christ).
 1. It is a disease that cripples our effectiveness and our ability to be productive.
 2. This illness will neutralize our impact on the lives of others.
 - B. This disease – this illness is spiritual in nature.
 1. It's the spiritual disease of INCONSISTENCY – inconsistency between HEARING and DOING.
 - C. James has already dealt with trials and temptations (**James 1:1-18**); now he comes to the basic theme of his letter: The importance of WALKING THE WALK.

1. It's one thing to TALK THE TALK, but James is more interested in how well we are WALKING THE WALK – or how CONSISTENT are we with what we HEAR and what we DO.
2. And so, our study will be taken from **James 1:19-27**.

II. Before we begin looking at these verses in detail, let's first consider THREE GENERAL OBSERVATIONS about verses 19 through 27.

A. First, James wants us to know this is IMPERATIVE truth: In essence, James is saying, "I want you to GET THIS!"

1. The KJV and NKJV use the word, "Therefore." (**James 1:19a**)
 - a. When reading these versions, it suggests James is saying, "This is something you already know – something you're already aware of."
 - b. "And so, because you already know this..."
2. However, the word is actually in the IMPERATIVE.
 - a. The NIV emphasizes the imperative by using the words, "Take note of this..." (**v. 19a**)
 - b. In essence, James is saying, "I want you to take out your notebooks and WRITE THIS DOWN..."; "I want you to GET THIS STRAIGHT..."

- c. He's not assuming this is something his readers already know.
 - d. And so, in so many words James is saying, "If you don't hear another word I say, HEAR THIS!"
- B. Second, James wants us to know this is FAMILY truth: "My beloved brethren." (**James 1:19a**)
- 1. James is speaking to Christians – to the family of God – to brethren.
 - 2. This is "family talk."
 - a. So expect James to do some straight talk – not menacing words, but getting right to the point.
- C. Third, and perhaps MOST important, James wants us to know this is PERSONAL truth: "Let every man." (**James 1:19**)
- 1. James isn't speaking to the church as a whole – but rather to each and every one of us as if we were the only one in the room.
 - a. And this is how we need to take this admonition – as if it were specifically directed at us!
 - 2. So, before we go any further into this study, there's something you need to do.

- a. When you read James' comments in these verses, don't think about:
 - (1). The person sitting next to you, or in the row in front of or behind you, or some person sitting elsewhere in this assembly, or even someone who isn't here.
 - (2). Think about YOU and YOU ONLY!
- c. Think of this as a letter James wrote specifically to YOU, and to NO ONE ELSE!

II. As we begin looking at these verses, there are three specific steps we need to take to be able to WALK THE WALK.

A. These three steps are vitally important, because without them we will never be able to incorporate these great truths into our lives.

- 1. James says the first step we need to take is to PREPARE ourselves to receive the truth. **(vs. 19b-21a)**
- 2. The second step is we must RECEIVE the truth in the proper manner. **(v. 21b)**
- 3. And finally, the third step concerns our RESPONSE toward the truth. **(vs. 22-27)**

B. Let's begin looking at these THREE SPECIFIC STEPS.

BODY:

- I. Step One: We must PREPARE to receive the truth. **(James 1:19b-21a)**
 - A. **James 1:19-21** – *So then, my beloved brethren, let every man be swift to hear, slow to speak, slow to wrath; 20 for the wrath of man does not produce the righteousness of God. 21 Therefore lay aside all filthiness and overflow of wickedness. . .*
 - B. In these verses James sets forth some basic prerequisites for preparing ourselves to receive the truth.
 1. First, we need to have an OPEN EAR – *"Let every man be swift [quick] to hear..." (v.19)*
 - a. One of the reasons we live INCONSISTENT LIVES before God is because our ears are shut.
 - (1). In order for God's Word to lodge in our hearts, we need to HEAR what He's saying.
 - b. Have you ever known someone who had GOOD HEARING, but was a TERRIBLE LISTENER?
 - (1). They HEAR THE WORDS, but they never really LISTEN – they never allow the MEANING of what you're saying to really sink in?

c. Satan clearly has a way of dulling our hearing – of letting us HEAR THE WORDS but never allowing the MEANING to really sink in.

d. So, James essentially says, "clear your minds, and let every word I'm about to say REALLY SINK IN!"

(1). Because, in order to PREPARE OURSELVES TO RECEIVE THE TRUTH, we must have OPEN EARS – we must be READY TO LISTEN.

2. Second, we must have a CONTROLLED TONGUE.

a. **James 1:19** – *"Let every one be...slow to speak..."*

b. Those who want to take the truth into their hearts not only need to OPEN THEIR EARS, they also need to SILENCE THEIR TONGUES!

(1). WHY? Because we learn while LISTENING, not while TALKING.

3. Third, James says we must also have a CALM SPIRIT.

a. **James 1:19-20** – "Let every one be...slow to wrath [anger]; for the wrath [anger] of man does not produce [achieve] the righteousness of God."

b. James is simply saying, "You can't receive the truth in an agitated mind."

- (1). Unfortunately, when we take an "ANGRY SPIRIT" with us into the place of worship it affects our whole worship to God.
 - (2). And if we try to worship anyway – without the proper preparation of a "calm spirit" – we will FAIL.
 - (3). Anger will be like a roadblock -- it will prevent truth from getting into our minds (our hearts).
4. Fourth, James says we must also have a CLEAN HEART. (**v. 21**)
- a. **James 1:21a** – *"Therefore lay aside all filthiness and overflow of wickedness..."*
 - b. There are TWO things here we need to remove:
 - (1). First, we need to remove (lay aside) all filthiness.
 - (a). Originally, this term pertained to a "plug of wax in the ear."
 - (b). James is saying filthiness deadens our ability to hear.
 - (c). The soul that comes before God soiled by sin can't hear the message – it can't take the message in.

- (d). Therefore, the FIRST thing is to remove the filthiness that prevents us from hearing God's message.
 - (2). Second, the removal of the overflow of wickedness.
 - (a). This word "overflow" in the original language refers to the dense, matted undergrowth or network of weeds or vines.
 - (b). James is saying we need to remove all the undergrowth – all the twisted, matted undergrowth of wrong that lies beneath the surface in our lives.
 - (c). Without all this removed, the word of God will eventually be choked out.
 - (d). Therefore, to properly RECEIVE the truth we need to clean up of whatever lies below the surface.
- c. How many times do we PLUNGE ourselves into Bible study and worship with cluttered lives schedules?
 - (1). How many times do we attempt to receive God's message for our lives without having an OPEN

EAR, a CONTROLLED TONGUE, a CALM SPIRIT, and a CLEAN HEART?

(2). Is it any wonder then, that we begin LIVING INCONSISTENT LIVES?

II. Step two: We must RECEIVE the truth in the proper manner.

A. **James 1:21b** – *"...and receive with meekness the implanted word, which is able to save your souls."*

B. James not only tells us WHAT to receive, but HOW we are to receive it.

1. First, He tells us WHAT we are to receive? *"RECEIVE... THE IMPLANTED WORD:"*

a. The word "receive" was always associated with hospitality in New Testament times, and means "welcome into my home."

(1). One who receives the truth in this manner isn't worried about the particular PERSON declaring the truth, but with the TRUTH ITSELF.

(2). We are certainly not to be "FINICKY EATERS" when it comes to feasting on the word of God.

(a). WHO CARES WHO PREPARED IT, as long as it's spiritually nutritious.

(3). God wants us to take, in all humility, whatever is served to us!

b. When we "receive" the word in this manner, it becomes fully "implanted" within us.

2. Next, James tells us HOW we are to receive the implanted word? "WITH MEEKNESS" ("in humility"):

a. This term means "with gentleness," and it carries with it the idea of a TEACHABLE SPIRIT – one who is open, receptive, trainable, pliable, and submissive.

b. Certainly no one can RECEIVE the word of God with an agitated, argumentative spirit – with a closed-mind.

III. Step three: We must have the proper RESPONSE to the truth. **(James 1:22-27)** In these verses, James talks about the proper RESPONSE we are to have after we've feasted on the word.

A. For us to properly RESPOND to the truth, James begins by giving us a very direct COMMAND.

1. **James 1:22** – *"But be doers of the word, and not hearers only, deceiving yourselves."*

- a. God isn't looking for RADICAL ACTIVISTS who operate without information; nor is He looking for those who are INFORMED but DO NOTHING.
 - (1). Neither of these is acceptable.
 - (2). There must be balance. First we must be HEARERS, then we must be DOERS.
 2. The term "hearer" in this verse refers to "an academic auditor."
 - a. This is the person who enrolls in a class, listens to the lectures, but is never concerned about taking the tests.
 - b. He's in the class for NO CREDIT. He's only auditing the course.
 - c. He's only there for the information. There is absolutely no accountability or responsibility.
 - d. He's only "along for the ride."
 3. So, James challenges us to *"be DOERS of the word, and NOT hearers only, deceiving yourselves."*
- B. To help us understand how we need to respond to the truth, James next gives us an ILLUSTRATION: **(vs. 23-25)**
1. **James 1:23-25** – *For if anyone is a hearer of the word and not a doer, he is like a man observing his natural face in a mirror;*

24 for he observes himself, goes away, and immediately forgets what kind of man he was. 25 But he who looks into the perfect law of liberty and continues in it, and is not a forgetful hearer but a doer of the work, this one will be blessed in what he does.

2. In these verses James contrasts two types of people – the FORGETFUL HEARER and the EFFECTUAL DOER.
 - a. He uses the example of looking into a mirror.
 - (1). The Word of God – God's spiritual mirror – allows us to see the kind of person we REALLY are.
 - b. The FORGETFUL HEARER takes the scriptures, looks at it, but once he leaves it, he forgets what it was saying to him.
 - (1). His life remains UNAFFECTED.
 - c. The EFFECTUAL DOER looks into the mirror INTENTLY (the "perfect law of liberty"), and does NOT forget what he sees.
 - (1). His life IS changed.

C. Finally, THE APPLICATION: **(vs. 26-27)**

1. James shows that we can know if we are DOING and not just HEARING.

- a. We can know that we are NOT INCONSISTENT when:
 - (1). There is NO DIFFERENCE between the truth and OUR TONGUE.
 - (2). There is NO DIFFERENCE between the truth and THE ATTENTION WE GIVE TO THE NEEDS OF OTHERS.
 - (3). There is NO DIFFERENCE between the truth and THE WAY WE KEEP OURSELVES FROM BEING INFLUENCED BY THE WORLD.

CONCLUSION:

- I. Are you living an INCONSISTENT life?
 - A. Is there a difference between the TRUTH and:
 - 1. Your manner of speech, or the things you say about others?
 - 2. The way you come to the aid of those who are genuinely in need and who can never repay you?
 - a. I think that's why James used the examples of widows and orphans.
 - 3. The way you live your life before others?

II. If there is, you're only "auditing the class" – You're only a HEARER and not a DOER of the word.

A. You need to:

1. Open your ears.
2. Control your tongue.
3. Calm your spirit.
4. Clean your heart.

III. Only then can you truly "receive the truth" in all humility, and become a DOER OF THE WORD, and not a hearer only.