



Faith In Real Life – James 1:19-27 Faith In The Mirror

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS (PAGE 1)

TRADITIONAL MODEL

- What would life be like without mirrors or the ability to see ourselves?

- Quick to listen; slow to speak; or slow to anger – which of these three directives from James 1:19 is the most difficult for you and why?

- Quick to listen, slow to speak, and slow to anger – why do you think James put these three directives together and in the order that he did?

- When it comes to being “quick to listen” to God, how can slowing down when we read Scripture allow us to hear and receive more clearly?

- What benefit do we gain from being slow to speak?

- Analyze this idea from Dr. David Powlison: Our hearts are like sponges. When squeezed, whatever comes out is not simply a result of the squeeze, but a revelation of what was already in the sponge. In regards to anger, we can try and blame the inevitable squeezing of life for the anger that comes out, or we can take seriously the fact that there is a sinful anger in our hearts that needs to be addressed (Matt. 15:19; Luke 6:43-45).

- Read through James 1:21. Can anyone relate to our tendency to move quickly through verses or passages like these? And if so, why is that the case?

- Read James 1:22-25. Why is it improper for us to pit doing versus hearing?



DISCUSSION QUESTIONS (PAGE 2)

- Why is it critical for us to be both hearers and doers, to both hear and do?
- Consider James' usage of the mirror analogy. What is the significance of James moving from the imagery of someone looking in a mirror to an instruction to look into the perfect law and persevering?
- Analyze this statement: "Faith in the mirror is reflective. Faith away from the mirror, however, is real faith – it is responsive."
- Analyze this statement: "When we are confident about who God is and who He has created us to be, we can be and act accordingly."
- Although we know that there are many others that we can help, what is something that we can practically do to for the orphans, parentless, and/or widows in our community?

CONTEMPLATIVE MODEL

What are you learning about God from this message?

What are you learning about yourself from the message?

What questions does this message bring up for you?

What has God been doing in your heart lately?



DISCUSSION QUESTIONS (PAGE 3)

What things do you feel are getting in the way from what God wants to do in you?

What is the biggest thing causing you concern these days (something to pray about/ask prayer for)?

FAITH IN THE MIRROR NOTES

James 1:19-27

¹⁹ Know this, my beloved brothers: let every person be quick to hear, slow to speak, slow to anger; ²⁰ for the anger of man does not produce the righteousness of God. ²¹ Therefore put away all filthiness and rampant wickedness and receive with meekness the implanted word, which is able to save your souls. – James 1:19-21

OBSERVATIONS:

- This is in continuation from verse 18 (in the Greek, verses 18 and 19 form one sentence); the beginning of verse 19 should read, "...so that..."
- The audience is being told that they are new creatures, given birth by the word of truth (James 1:18). Thus, from the onset, we realize that this section is about identity (who we are and what we do are hand-in-hand).
- When we read Scripture, we have to realize that what's stated almost always implies that the opposite is the reality that opposes.



- Since James writes that every person should be “quick to hear, slow to speak, and slow to anger,” this implies that most of us do not listen well, speak too quickly, and react in anger too easily. In other words, these three directives – notice that they are characteristics of the fruit of the Spirit – oppose our flesh and what we tend to do.
- “The righteousness of God” denotes a courtroom setting; righteousness is the “verdict of approval”. Though this passage of Scripture doesn’t expound upon this idea, the good news is that when we place our faith in Christ, Christ’s righteousness is imputed to us (transferred/given/ascribed to us) and we are accordingly justified (declared right/made right/reconciled).
- HOW EASY is it to skip over verse 21 or verses/passages like it? Let’s consider, however, how critical this is. The longer I am a Christ follower, the more I realize how grateful I am for his grace and how hopeless I am without him.
- The wickedness here refers to evil that is present, even if not *outwardly expressed*
- The implanted word can mean a number of things, but most notably it is the good news of Christ.

22 But be doers of the word, and not hearers only, deceiving yourselves. 23 For if anyone is a hearer of the word and not a doer, he is like a man who looks intently at his natural face in a mirror. 24 For he looks at himself and goes away and at once forgets what he was like. 25 But the one who looks into the perfect law, the law of liberty, and perseveres, being no hearer who forgets but a doer who acts, he will be blessed in his doing.



OBSERVATIONS:

- The assumption in this passage is that many are hearers but not doers. It is improper, however, to say that there are hearers and then there are doers. In other words, pitting hearers against doers is not the point and an incomplete representation of this passage.
- Deceive – *to reason, contrary to truth*. How common is it for us to attempt to reason with ourselves to hide what's wrong with us? We need to be honest with ourselves, particularly concerning our sin and weakness.
- Hearing is incredibly important (remember James 1:19), but doing can indicate that we've wisely received.
- "Doers" is the Greek word *poiétés* (a maker, poet, doer, performer). Not that in Ephesians 2:8-10, when Paul says we are "God's workmanship, created in Christ Jesus to do good works...", the Greek word for workmanship is *poema*, which is where we get the English word for poem.
- "Hearers" is the Greek word *akroatés*, which comes from the word *akroatérion* (which referred to an auditorium, a courtroom, or another place of audience or listening)
- Regardless of whether or not you would prefer to be on stage or in the audience; there is no running away from the fact that we're all to both hear and do.
- 1st century mirrors were bronze and dusty. They most likely weren't common household items, but people knew what they were. The only other time a mirror is referenced in the New Testament is in 1 Corinthians 13:12.
- NOTICE THE SHIFT from verse 24 to verse 25. James moves from the imagery of someone looking in a mirror to an instruction to look into the perfect law and persevering. Faith is not just something to reflect upon; true faith responds to the hearing of the word.



- We move from looking at ourselves to looking at Christ and what he's accomplished. Only Christ perfectly fulfills the law and frees us to live under his kingdom and reign. Stepping away from the mirror allows us to see the freedom in Christ that we've been given to experience, to perform, to be, and to create!

²⁶ If anyone thinks he is religious and does not bridle his tongue but deceives his heart, this person's religion is worthless. ²⁷ Religion that is pure and undefiled before God the Father is this: to visit orphans and widows in their affliction, and to keep oneself unstained from the world.

OBSERVATIONS

- Again, it is too easy to deceive ourselves. Let's not fool ourselves.
- This assumes that we're good at talking without our hearts truly being changed.
- Religion is NOT a bad word! Just as we've falsely pit hearing vs. doing, we've become culturally accustomed to hearing Christian catch-phrases like, "It's not about the rules; it's about the relationship." "This isn't religion. This is a relationship." The heart behind those statements may be well-meaning, but true religion, as James describes it, is something we certainly need to reclaim.
- It's too easy to think about faith as us solely towards God; this is incredibly incomplete. Our faith is not only vertically oriented, but horizontally practiced.
- Orphans and widows are often forgotten, and this should not be the case! In the Greek, "to care for" literally means to visit. In other words, we are called to be physically present.