

Don't just listen; Do something

Do not merely listen to the word, and so deceive yourselves. Do what it says. (James 1:22)



1. The Word saves. Do what it says.

My dear brothers, take note of this: Everyone should be quick to listen, slow to speak and slow to become angry, for man's anger does not bring about the righteous life that God desires. Therefore, get rid of all moral filth and the evil that is so prevalent and humbly accept the word planted in you, which can save you. Do not merely listen to the word, and so deceive yourselves. Do what it says. Anyone who listens to the word but does not do what it says is like a man who looks at his face in a mirror and, after looking at himself, goes away and immediately forgets what he looks like. But the man who looks intently into the perfect law that gives freedom, and continues to do this, not forgetting what he has heard, but doing it-- he will be blessed in what he does. (1:19-25)

- Two problems this text confronts:

1. _____. James teaches that the Bible is perfect and gives freedom. Liberals argue that it is imperfect and oppressive. You must choose whom you will believe. Remember this: "If you marry the spirit of *this* age, you'll find yourself a widow in the next."
2. _____. Americans hold obedience in low esteem, but James teaches that obedience is a necessary part of faith. Don't negotiate with the Scriptures. Do what they say.

2. Case in point: If you love your neighbors, you will help them.

- If you want to be religious, get rid of impurity and love the needy.

If anyone considers himself religious and yet does not keep a tight rein on his tongue, he deceives himself and his religion is worthless. Religion that God our Father accepts as pure and faultless is this: to look after orphans and widows in their distress and to keep oneself from being polluted by the world. (1:26-27)

- If you favor your rich friends, you prove that _____.

My brothers, as believers in our glorious Lord Jesus Christ, don't show favoritism. Suppose a man comes into your meeting wearing a gold ring and fine clothes, and a poor man in shabby clothes also comes in. If you show special attention to the man wearing fine clothes and say, "Here's a good seat for you," but say to the poor man, "You stand there" or "Sit on the floor by my feet," have you not discriminated among yourselves and become judges with evil thoughts? Listen, my dear brothers: Has not God chosen those who are poor in the eyes of the world to be rich in faith and to inherit the kingdom he promised those who love him? But you have insulted the poor. Is it not the rich who are exploiting you? Are they not the ones who are dragging you into court? Are they not the ones who are slandering the noble name of him to whom you belong? (2:1-7)

- Thinking this through:
 1. Millions now have _____ from growing up in the sexual revolution—where their social and moral fabric has been shredded. With the collapse of our families, it's no wonder many Americans live dysfunctional lives. Meanwhile, many of America's elite continue to dismantle the virtues necessary for community life as they live in their gated communities, attend their private schools, and enjoy their government and corporate perches. America's greatest poverty is _____.
 2. What the poor need most: _____.
- If you don't love your neighbor, you break the whole law. What good is it to get _____ if you favor the rich over the poor?

If you really keep the royal law found in Scripture, "Love your neighbor as yourself," you are doing right. But if you show favoritism, you sin and are convicted by the law as lawbreakers. For whoever keeps the whole law and yet stumbles at just one point is guilty of breaking all of it. For he who said, "Do not commit adultery," also said, "Do not murder." If you do not commit adultery but do commit murder, you have become a lawbreaker. Speak and act as those who are going to be judged by the law that gives freedom, because judgment without mercy will be shown to anyone who has not been merciful. Mercy triumphs over judgment! (2:8-13)

3. It's no good to claim to have faith if you don't obey.

- Real faith leads us to do something for our poor brothers and sisters.

What good is it, my brothers, if a man claims to have faith but has no deeds? Can such faith save him? Suppose a brother or sister is without clothes and daily food. If one of you says to him, "Go, I wish you well; keep warm and well fed," but does nothing about his physical needs, what good is it? In the same way, faith by itself, if it is not accompanied by action, is dead. (2:14-17)
- James and Paul: Paul teaches us that we can never earn salvation; it comes through faith (Romans 1-5; Ephesians 2:1-10). James teaches that real faith is obedient. _____.

But someone will say, "You have faith; I have deeds." Show me your faith without deeds, and I will show you my faith by what I do. You believe that there is one God. Good! Even the demons believe that-- and shudder. You foolish man, do you want evidence that faith without deeds is useless? Was not our ancestor Abraham considered righteous for what he did when he offered his son Isaac on the altar? You see that his faith and his actions were working together, and his faith was made complete by what he did. And the scripture was fulfilled that says, "Abraham believed God, and it was credited to him as righteousness," and he was called God's friend. You see that a person is justified by what he does and not by faith alone. In the same way, was not even Rahab the prostitute considered righteous for what she did when she gave lodging to the spies and sent them off in a different direction? As the body without the spirit is dead, so faith without deeds is dead. (2:18-26)

- Faith without obedience is useless. Put your faith in motion!