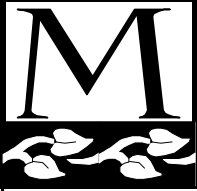


DON'T JUST LISTEN – DO SOMETHING !

James 1:19-27

Dallas Willard, author of *The Spirit of the Disciplines*, writes that we all tend to admire the athlete who moves with skill and grace and strength, and when we have the chance to compete, we too try to emulate their movements and form. Yet we find that the results are not the same. Why? Because the athlete has committed himself of herself to a life of discipline that will yield excellence. James says that it is much the same in regard to the spiritual life.

What Does It Say?



My dear brothers, take note of this: Everyone should be quick to listen, slow to speak and slow to become

angry,

²⁰ for man's anger does not bring about the righteous life that God desires.

²¹ 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.

"Listen to the conversations of our world, between nations as well as between couples. They are, for they most part, dialogues of the deaf."

Paul Tournier

"Men have two ears but one tongue, that they should hear more than they speak. The ears are always open, ready to receive instruction; but the tongue is surrounded by a double row of teeth to hedge it in, and keep it within proper bounds."

1st-century Rabbis

What Does It Mean?

LISTENING

Good listeners are hard to find. Why is listening such a difficult skill to cultivate in our own lives?

Do a brief **word study** of "listen" in the book of Proverbs.

ANGER

What do the following verses have to say about anger?

Eph 4:31

Col 3:8

Titus 1:7

Proverbs 29:11

Genesis 4:1-16

(Describe how anger affected Cain's life.)

"Save" is used in the New Testament to describe how God delivers us, in regard to the past (justification), present (sanctification), or future (glorification). In what sense do you think James is using the word "save" here in **verse 21**?

²² *Do not merely listen to the word, and so deceive yourselves. Do what it says.*

²³ *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*

²⁴ *and, after looking at himself, goes away and immediately forgets what he looks like.*

²⁵ *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.*

The following two passages describe the power and richness of the word of God and our response to it. Read them and make some observations:

Proverbs 2:1-11

Mark 4:1-20

The Greek word used here to “**look intently**” (vs 25) is also used to describe Peter gazing into Christ’s empty tomb (see John 20:5,11). What does it mean for a person to look intently into the Scriptures?

It was said of the Puritans that their “blood was Bibrine” because of their devotion to the Word of God. The resultant stability in their lives caused some to say that it was as if they had “swallowed gyroscopes”.

Use an example from your own life to “flesh out” **verse 25**. Think of an area in which (1) you need to be constantly reminded of truth, then (2) you need to follow up that knowledge with action, and (3) you receive a blessing in your life as a result.



²⁶ *If anyone considers himself religious and yet does not keep a tight rein on his tongue, he deceives himself and his religion is worthless.*

²⁷ *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.*

“When people shed their grosser sins, they are still extremely vulnerable to this one. A man will steer clear of adultery, or stealing, or drunkenness, in fact, he may be a shining light of outward religious observance – and yet he will delight in destroying the character of others.”

John Calvin

“Religion” (verse 27) comes from the Greek word *eusebia* and means “the external manifestation of the inner spiritual life”.

In an era of “political correctness”, how do we tend to set up our own rules for “spiritual correctness”?

James concludes this section with 3 “signs of life” that serve as a barometer of whether we’ve really been listening to Him. These signs are concrete tests of our true inner life. What are they?

1.

(see **Matthew 12:33,34**)

2.

(see **Isaiah 1:11-17**)

3.

(see **John 17:15-17**)