

# James 1:19-27

## Commentary: Doers – Not Merely Hearers (James 1:19-27)

James has dedicated most of chapter one to exhorting the early Jewish believers living abroad to endure in their trials and to continue to resist the temptations of the world. In verses 19-27 James stresses to his readers that the key to responding obediently through trials and temptations comes from careful examination of the Word of God. At the time of writing, the Word of God consisted of the Old Testament and the teachings of Jesus. James' readers were then instructed to welcome this authority with humility so that they may be responsive to the Word, being doers of the Word, and not merely hearers (v22). This statement is the resounding theme of the entire epistle. Those that have genuine faith in Jesus demonstrate it through action. The born again believer must accept God's Word, act on it, and abide by it.

## Instructions:

Carefully read through James 1:19-27 and then attempt to answer the questions which follow.

In order to be a doer of the Word, believers must first be a hearer of the Word.

1) What three instructions does James give to believers as they prepare their hearts to hear from God's Word (v19)?

The word translated "receive" (v21) means to openly welcome. In order to openly welcome the Word, James says we must do two things.

2) What must we lay aside?

3) What must we adopt?

The word translated as meekness or humility (v21) does not refer to weakness, but rather, controlled strength in submission to God. It is a stark contrast to an aggressive arrogance that forces its opinions and desires on others.

4) What happens when we approach God's Word with a sense of humility (v21-22)?

5) How does James describe those that are hearers of the Word only (v22)?

James uses the analogy of a man looking into a mirror to explain the differences between a hearer and a doer of the Word. The Greek word translated as “looks” in verse 23 and 24 is *katanoeo* (kata= intense and noeo= perceive or understand) and refers to careful observation.

6) What does this indicate about the one who is a hearer of the Word?

When a believer “immediately forgets what kind of person he was” (v24), he/she neglects to apply what they know and understand from the Word of God.

7) What quality does the forgetful hearer lack that prevents them from being a doer of the Word?

In contrast, those who are doers of God’s Word will investigate the “perfect law of liberty” (v25) and then allow it’s teachings to influence their actions.

8) What are some of the outward signs that such a transformation is taking place in a person’s life (v26-27)?

The word used for “religion” (v26-27) refers to the outward expression of what one believes (our good works), rather than what he/she believes, or the fact that he/she believes deeply.

Verse 26 describes believers who are doers of the Word, however, they lack a deep abiding love for the One the work is done for. In today’s terms we might say they are “doing church” instead of “being the Church”.

9) How does the tongue expose this “worthless” religion?

**Hint: Matthew:15:11, 18, Luke 6:45, Proverbs 15:2, 7, 28**

10) How could we summarise James’ description of “pure undefiled religion” in verse 27?

**Hint: Matthew 22:36-40**