

Harvest

Evangelical Free Church

October 18, 2009

Join us in being on mission with God!

OUR VISION

To continually mature and grow as a united body of Jesus-imitators who live out God's greatest commandment to "Love" by exalting God and serving one another, and His greatest commission to "Go" by reaching into and shaping our local, regional, and global communities.

"Danger of Being Religious"

James 1:19-27

Getting Started

After an introductory time, discuss the following questions in your group or class.

Q: What are some characteristics of someone who is considered religious in our culture?

Thinking about Friendship

1. You live in a world that bombards you with words. How does that reality change the way you tend to listen to all the messages that come your way in a typical day?

2. Verse 19 challenges you to be "quick" to listen. We speak of someone who is a fast talker, but we seldom apply that quality to the skill of listening. Describe the habits of a person who would be "quick" to listen.

3. What are some of the steps you might take to improve your listening skills?

4. You probably have experience with people who monopolize conversations and flood discussions with their own words. What are some of the reasons we tend to over talk?



James 1:19-27

¹⁹My dear brothers, take note of this: Everyone should be quick to listen, slow to speak and slow to become angry, ²⁰for man's anger does not bring about the righteous life that God desires. ²¹Therefore, 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.

²²Do not merely listen to the word, and so deceive yourselves. Do what it says. ²³Anyone who listens to the word but does not do what it says is like a man who looks at his face in a mirror ²⁴and, after looking at himself, goes away and immediately forgets what he looks like. ²⁵But 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.

²⁶If anyone considers himself religious and yet does not keep a tight rein on his tongue, he deceives himself and his religion is worthless. ²⁷Religion 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.

5. One of the habits some of us wrestle with is interrupting others while they are talking. What has been your experience with this temptation? What have you found helpful in fighting the temptation to interrupt others?

6. Thoughtfulness and excessive talking seldom go together. Faith that honors Christ makes us thoughtful when we converse with others. When you think of Jesus' conversation with his disciples of his foes, what stands out? How would you characterize his speech?

7. Verses 19-20 shift from slowness of speech to slowness to become angry. Mature spirituality impacts our anger. What do you learn from Proverbs 22:24-25 and 1 Corinthians 13:5?

8. Why do you think James does not simply prohibit anger? How would you respond to someone who argued that it is sub-Christian to be angry because love and grace should overcome anger?

9. How does Ephesians 4:26 define the way we should deal with anger?

10. Note that James is concerned about more than ethical behavior. In verse 20 he maintains that unrestrained anger prevents you from achieving something important. What is at risk if our religion does not include responding to anger differently than the world does?

Danger of Being Religious

11. In verse 21, James expands the discussion to include much more than anger. To be truly religious, there are two other categories of misbehavior you need to challenge. What are they?

12. The Bible notes that moral filth and evil are very prevalent. Identify some of the ways in which we see evidence of this in our culture today.

13. Verse 21 identifies an antidote to living at peace with those commonly accepted values. What does it call us to do instead?

14. Why is it important to understand the contrast between *listening* and *doing* in verse 23? Why do we sometimes stop with the former?

15. Describe in your own word the illustration James uses in verses 23-24.

16. What might cause someone to not pay attention to the visual message they get from looking in a mirror?



Reaching Up and Reaching Out

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17. James shifts his image in verse 25. The mirror is not a piece of metal (as they would use in the first century), but the law of God. What are some of the things God wants to show us about ourselves when we look into the scriptures?

Three horizontal lines for writing.

18. Why does James picture the man as looking “intently”? What does that look like?

Three horizontal lines for writing.

19. Why does James describe God’s law as that which “gives freedom”? What stereotype might he be trying to overcome?

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20. What do you think James has in mind when he describes the wise person as one who “continues to do this”?

Three horizontal lines for writing.

21. It’s easy to check off a devotional moment or read a passage of scripture without thoughtful reflection on how it should impact us. When can these kinds of habits do us more harm than good?

Three horizontal lines for writing.

22. Verse 26 returns the thought to our speech. It looks back to verse 19 and uses our language as one key area we are to apply the “Bible as a mirror” principle in the paragraph. Why do you think James is so persistent about obeying God in the way we speak?

Three horizontal lines for writing.

23. How can you apply this passage of Scripture to your life?

Three horizontal lines for writing.