

■ SCRIPTURE

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.

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.

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. *ESV*

■ DISCUSS

1. James tells us to be “quick to hear, slow to speak.” Have you had situations where you did the opposite—slow to hear, quick to speak? What’s the problem with that?
2. What does James say about anger?
3. Is there such a thing as “righteous indignation”? Do you think that sometimes God wants us to get angry about certain things? Then what do you do with verse 20?
4. What “word” is he talking about in verse 21? How is it “implanted” in us? (Is this the same as the “word of truth” in verse 18, through which we were “brought forth”? What’s the connection?)
5. Moving on to James 1:22, how do we “deceive ourselves” by just listening to God’s Word? What is that mirror thing all about (in James 1:23–24)?
6. Do you think it’s really “worthless” to hear God’s Word without doing it? Why or why not? In verse 25, what does James call God’s law?
7. In what way is the law “a law of liberty”? Wouldn’t you think it does the opposite?
8. Verses 26–27 focus on “religion.” How would you define “religion”?

9. Do you think of religion as a good thing or not? Do you think your neighbors think of religion as a good thing? With that in mind, do you think James is using the term “religion” in a positive way? Why or why not?
10. In verses 26–27, how does James define “religion”?
11. There are three specific actions he includes in his definition. What are they?
12. Why do you think he mentions these three? Aren’t there other good deeds he could name?

■ LIVE IT OUT

The book of James emphasizes the active side of our faith, so let’s consider several ways we might put its teaching into practice.

Memorization: Learn James 1:22. Perhaps you could write it out on a card, which you put (appropriately) on your mirror.

Conversation: Do you need to develop the ability to be “quick to hear, slow to speak”? Is there a particular person in your life with whom you should do more listening? Work on this. You might even think of some questions to ask in your next conversation. Focus on them, not on your own responses.

Journaling: If you have a Bible study journal, add this component. If not, try journaling this week. Take the next six pages and put four headings on each page. Read. Think. Pray. Do! Then select Scriptures to read each day. As you do, record your thoughts on the text, write out key words of a prayer, and then—because of James—figure out something God would like you to do in response to that text. Oh, yeah—and then do it.

Prayer: Pray specifically about two things this week. (1) Your anger. (Even if you’re not hot-tempered, do you “stuff” your anger and let it turn into bitterness?) (2) Soul pollution. Ask God to show you ways you might be getting “polluted” by the world.

“Widows and Orphans.” In many parts of Scripture—and here in James—we are urged to care for the neediest members of society. In your area, who are these people, and how can you help? It’s possible they are, literally, widows and orphans, having suffered the loss of a family member. But also consider the homeless, the hospitalized, retirees, special-needs children and adults, the unemployed, immigrants, prisoners, etc. See if your church has a ministry you could support and become involved with, but also consider parachurch ministries and other charities.