

10. God has chosen the poor to be rich in faith (v5). Is it easier for the poor to have faith than the rich? Why? Why not?

(See Proverbs 18:11-12; 28:11; Matthew 19: 16-26; Luke 1:53; 4:18; 6:20-24; 12:13-21.)

Chapter 2: 8-13 Love like it's the Law

11. How do these verses emphasise the seriousness of treating people unequally?

12. What do you think James means by "the royal law according to the scripture"? Does this mean Christians are "under law" after all?

(See Jeremiah 31:31-34; John 14:15, Matthew 28: 18-20; Romans 8:1-2; Galatians 5:13)

Chapter 2:14-26 Put Faith to Work

13. Give a contemporary example of the situation described in James 2:15-16. Discuss the meaning of verse 2:18.

14. How is the relationship between faith and deeds to be understood? Look at these examples noting the sequence- Eph 2:8-10 and James 2:21-24.

15. What motivation do Paul's words in 2 Corinthians 5:6-10 provide for ensuring that your deeds demonstrate your faith?

16. What are some examples of good deeds that will pass through the fires of God's judgment and be rewarded as described in 1 Corinthians 3:10-15?

- Think about: Improper motives that get you involved in doing good deeds for others; excuses you have given God for not being more involved in serving others.
- Someone has said: "Only one life, t'will soon be past, and only what's done for Christ will last." Assess your life's "achievements" so far. Do they offer any evidence that agrees with this quote? What things can you start to challenge and change to do things that last for Christ's sake?



bible study notes

study #2

James 1:19—2:18

the letter of james

"The world can only be grasped by action, not by contemplation. The hand is more important than the eye.... The hand is the cutting edge of the mind" Jacob Bronowski *The Ascent of Man*

"Our deeds determine us, as much as we determine our deeds"

George Elliot *Adam*

Bede

"The great end of life is not knowledge but action"

Thomas Huxley *Technical Education*

"I have always thought the actions of people are the best interpreters of their thought" John Locke *An Essay Concerning Human*

Understanding

"Everyone feels instinctively that all the beautiful sentiments in the world weigh less than a single lovely action"

James Lowell *Among My Books*

"Action is eloquence" William Shakespeare *Coriolanus*

Chapter 1: 19-27: Words Words Words



READ the passage

1. What is the connection between James' thought in this passage and what has gone before?
2. Why do people find it easier to speak than to listen?
3. What is the connection between speech and anger? (See Proverbs 15:1,18; 16:23; 29:11 and Matthew 5:21)

Note the strong **wisdom** themes in James letter, and again, echoes of the Sermon on the Mount.

4. What does the imagery of the implanted word and the rank growth of wickedness (v.21) remind you of in Jesus' teaching? (Hint: Matthew 13:1-8)

5. In what ways do we merely listen to God's word and fail to put it into practice? Why is it easier to merely listen and not to act?

6. How could we help each other more to be doers of the word and not merely hearers who deceive ourselves?

7. What do you think of James' definition of religion (v27)?

(See Deuteronomy 14:29; Psalm 68:5; Mark 12:40; Luke 4:16-21)

Christianity may not be thought of as "religion" by contemporary Christians. Many today think it has negative connotations. For example, Bill Hybels uses it in a well-known illustration about Christianity saying to people: "Religion is spelled D O." Religion, according to Hybels is where people seek to justify themselves before God with external behaviours. "Christianity, on the other hand," he says, "is spelled D O N E." Rather than that burdensome dead-end of DIY righteousness, Hybels says we should understand that all everyone needs for salvation has already been DONE in and through the person and work of Jesus Christ, as the Gospel proclaims. We receive what we need by faith in Him. What, then, are we to do with this word "religion" that appears in James 1:27? This is one of two occurrences of the word in the New Testament. In the other (Acts 26:5), it refers negatively to Judaism. James isn't using the word for mere external practices (eg ceremonies) that Old Testament prophets denounce. Rather, he redeems it to speak of true faith in Christ. He believes that there are outward manifestations of true spirituality; true religion. He cites three examples where our behaviour should reflect our convictions- not an exhaustive list. Perhaps these form a sufficient litmus test of genuine relationship with God.

Chapter 2:1-7

Who do you love?

8. What kind of things might make you favour one person more than another?

9. Why should believing in "our glorious Lord Jesus Christ"(v.1) keep us from showing favouritism?

We know the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ only because, though he was rich, yet for our sake he became poor (2 Cor.8:9). When we were wretched, pitiable, poor, blind and naked, he counselled us to receive his gift of gold from him that we might become rich; white garments for our nakedness; salve for our eyes that we might see God (Revelation 3:17-18; see also Proverbs 14:20,21; 22:1-2; Luke 14:12-14.)