

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), and because when we were wretched, pitiable, poor, blind and naked, he counselled us to buy gold from him that we might become rich, white garments for our nakedness and salve for our eyes that we might see (Revelation 3:17-18; see also Proverbs 14:20,21; 22:1-2; Luke 14:12-14.)

3. God has chosen the poor to be rich in faith (v5). Is it easier for the poor to have faith than the rich? Why?
(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 The Law that gives Freedom

1. How do these verses emphasise the seriousness of treating people unequally?
2. What do you think James means by “the royal law according to the Scripture”?
3. 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)

4. Discuss how an understanding of mercy over judgment might impact on Australian society today if the church were to act as James teaches.

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The letter of James

Chapter 1:19-2:13 WALK THE TALK

Consider these pearls of worldly wisdom:



“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 men the best interpreters of their thought”

John Locke *An Essay Concerning Human Understanding*

“Every man 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

1. What is the connection between James' thought in this passage and what has gone before?

2. Why is 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 listen than 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)

Generally Christianity is not thought of as a religion by Christians (eg some preachers illustrate this by saying, "religion is spelt 'DO', Christianity is spelt 'DONE'). This is the only occurrence in the New Testament of 'religious', and the only other place where 'religion' occurs, it refers to Judaism (Acts 26:5). James seems to use it here to mean not just external forms (eg ceremonies), but the outward manifestations of true spirituality. He cites three examples where our behaviour should reflect our convictions. This is not an exhaustive list, but perhaps these form a sufficient litmus test of a genuine relationship with God along with a confession of faith in Christ as Saviour.

8. How would you respond if a friend found out you go to a church and said to you: "Oh, so you're a religious person, are you?"

Chapter 2: 1-7 True Riches

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

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

(see over page for more on #2)