

**HOW TO BE BLESSED BY THE BIBLE**  
**Developing a Faith That Works - Part 5 of 15**  
**James 1:19-27**  
**Rick Warren**

James 1:19-27

*"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." (vs. 25)*

**I. I MUST \_\_\_\_\_ GOD'S WORD. (vs. 19-21)**

*"... accept the Word planted in you ..." (vs. 21)*

Matt. 13:1-9, 18-23, 1 Peter 1:23

**ATTITUDES FOR "GOOD RECEPTION"**

\* \_\_\_\_\_ (vs. 19a)

*"Be quick to listen, slow to speak..."*

\* \_\_\_\_\_ (vs. 19b)

*"... and slow to become angry ..."*

\* \_\_\_\_\_ (vs. 21a)

*"Get rid of all moral filth and the evil that is so prevalent ..."*

\* \_\_\_\_\_ (vs. 21b)

*"humbly accept the Word planted in you ..."*

**II. I MUST \_\_\_\_\_ ON GOD'S WORD (vs. 22-25)**

Illustration: God's Word is like a mirror

2 Cor. 3:18, 2 Tim. 2:7

1. \_\_\_\_\_

*"... the man who looks intently into the perfect law..."*

S.P.A.C.E.P.E.T.S. Questions

2. \_\_\_\_\_

"... and continues to do so ..."

John 8:31-3, Ps. 119:97, Joshua 1:8

3. \_\_\_\_\_

"... not forgetting what he has heard ..."

John 15:7, Heb. 2:1, Ps. 119:11

**III. I MUST \_\_\_\_\_ TO GOD'S WORD (vs. 22-27)**

*"Do not merely listen to the Word, and so deceive yourselves. DO WHAT IT SAYS!" (vs. 22)*

*"The man who put the Law into practice wins true happiness." (vs. 25 PH)*

Matt. 7:24-27, John 13:17

3 Examples (vs.26-27)

**HOW TO BE BLESSED BY THE BIBLE**  
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In America, Bibles are everywhere. You can find them in grocery stores, bookstores, motel rooms, everywhere. They're available in all sizes, shapes, translations, versions, leather bound, paperback. Every year the Bible outsells every other major bestseller. Last year there were 500 million Bibles published in the world in 18,000 different languages. In America we are glutted with the word of God on the airways, radio, TV, books, magazines. It's everywhere. Yet millions of people still miss the blessing of the Bible.

Why? Because it's not automatic. The Bible is a book of blessing. It promises comfort, strength, hope, wisdom, joy, power, and purpose. But just because you have a Bible doesn't mean you're going to get the benefit from it. James, being his practical self, gives us three steps on how to be blessed by the Bible.

v. 25 is the key verse, *"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."* The Bible is called the perfect law because it's exactly what I need. It promises freedom and it promises blessing. James gives us three steps:

**1. I MUST RECEIVE GOD'S WORD IF I'M GOING TO BE BLESSED BY IT**

vs. 21, *"Accept the word planted in you."* Circle the word "accept". This word in Greek is a hospitality term which literally means "to welcome" -- come on in. If we're going to be blessed by the word of God, first we must welcome the word into our lives. We must be receptive.

James gives an illustration. He says it's planted in you. He gives the illustration of a garden and seed. The Bible, all through Scripture, compares itself to seed. Jesus told the parable of the sower and said, "The word of God is a seed and it's planted in our hearts." How is it you can take two seeds that are exactly the same and plant them in two different locations and get two different crops in fruitfulness? One soil is prepared and the other is not. How is it that you can take two people and put them in the same service, with the same message, and one person gets blessed by it and the other person says he didn't get anything out of it. One heart was prepared and one wasn't. James says we must receive the word of God with the right attitude. He gives us four attitudes you need to be blessed by God's word. They are hearing-aides.

1. Be careful. I must have a careful attitude. v. 19 *"Be quick to listen..."* Give it your full attention. Be alert. Don't miss it. *"... slow to speak ..."* When I'm talking, I'm not listening. God gave us two ears and one mouth so we ought to listen twice as much as we talk. Many of our problems are caused because we're quick to speak rather than being quick to listen. Be careful in your attitude. Be ready. Be intent. Be ready to receive God's word. Be careful.

2. Be calm. Be calm if you're going to receive God's word and be blessed by it. v. 19b *"... and slow to become angry ..."* A relaxed attitude increases receptivity. If you're relaxed, people can

## **HOW TO BE BLESSED BY THE BIBLE**

### **Developing A Faith That Works - Part 5 of 15**

communicate with you more. We work on relaxing people in our services for that reason. We don't hear much when we're angry, upset, bitter, resentful. Bitterness is a barrier, an emotional block that keeps us from hearing God's word. Some may ask, "How come God never speaks to me." Maybe you've got some resentment in your life you need to get rid of. An article I read from Reader's Digest said when you listen it actually lowers your blood pressure. When you speak it raises your blood pressure. James says be calm, be slow to anger.

What is your emotional state, normally, when you come to church on Sunday morning? Do you come with a calm attitude? In many homes on Sunday morning it's kind of hectic. Then we come at the last minute and expect God to speak to us. What preparation? You need to be calm. Maybe you need to get up a little bit earlier.

3. Be clean. v. 21 *"Get rid of all moral filth and the evil that is so prevalent..."* Before you can plant the seed you need to do a little weeding. The word "filth" that he says you've got to get rid of is actually the Greek word that means "earwax". When you have a sin in your life it blocks your hearing. It prevents God's word from getting into your heart. He says get rid of the evil, anything that we know that isn't right in our lives. God says, "Lay aside all of the emotional garbage, the old habits, the junk in your life so that God's word can get through to you."

How can we be clean? By confession. *"If we confess our sins, He's faithful and just to forgive us and cleanse us from all unrighteousness."* The Living Bible says *"Get rid of all that's wrong in your life, both inside and out."*

4. Be compliant. Teachable, yielded, humble, willing to be changed. He says *"humbly accept the word of God planted in you..."* Don't act like you know it all. If you know it all, God's word can't get through to you. Pray, "God, do what You need to do in my life."

God says if you want to be blessed, first you have to receive it, be receptive with these four hearing aids. Reception is not enough. James says we not only need to receive the word of God, but...

## **2. REFLECT ON THE WORD OF GOD**

v. 23 *"Anyone who listens to the word but does not do what it says is like a man who looks at his face in a mirror and after looking at himself immediately goes away and immediately forgets what he looks like."* James uses an illustration here. God's word is like a mirror. The purpose of a mirror is to evaluate us. We use them to evaluate ourselves. We look in a mirror to assess the damage from the night before. Then we do something about it. What good is a mirror if we don't do anything about what we see? God says a mirror reflects what we're like on the outside. God's word reflects what we're like on the inside.

Have you ever seen yourself in the Bible? Hebrews says, *"God's word detects the thoughts, intents, motives and desires of the heart."* Many years ago, Queen Elizabeth, who was beautiful in her youth, ordered that all of the mirrors be removed from Buckingham Palace because she couldn't stand to face that she was growing old.

## **HOW TO BE BLESSED BY THE BIBLE**

### **Developing A Faith That Works - Part 5 of 15**

A lot of people don't read the Bible because they're afraid. They're unwilling to face themselves and see themselves as they really are. They don't want to look in the mirror of God's word.

James gives us three practical ways to reflect on the word of God,

1. Read it. v. 25 "*the man who looks intently into the perfect law*". He's actually talking more about research that he is reading. Investigating. The word "look" in Greek means "to stoop down and gaze in". It's the word used when Peter went to the tomb on resurrection Sunday when he stooped down and peeked in. He investigated. Focus your attention on the word of God.

There are two ways you can look at a mirror. You can gaze at it or you can glance at it. All of us have done both. It's human nature that you can't walk by a mirror and not look at it. When you glance at it, you immediately walk away and forget what you've seen. It didn't do you any good. Many people try to have a quiet time that way. They don't want to gaze at it, but glance at it. Give God five minutes. God says that He wants us to gaze at the word. Look at it intently in detail.

Nine things to look for -- S.P.A.C.E.P.E.T.S

S - Is there a Sin to confess?

P - Is there a Promise to claim? Look for promises, there are over 7000 promises in the word of God.

A - Is there an Attitude to change?

C - Is there a Command to obey?

E - Is there an Example to follow?

P - Is there a Prayer to pray? There are lots of prayers in the Bible. You can take those prayers and pray them for yourself and for others. You can know they'll be answered because they're in the Word of God.

E - Is there an Error to avoid?

T - Is there a Truth to believe? Is there something I just need to believe God for?

S - Is there Something to thank God for?

That's how you look intently at the word of God. Look at the details. James says we need to receive the word of God and then reflect on it, first by reading it and second by reviewing it.

## **HOW TO BE BLESSED BY THE BIBLE**

### **Developing A Faith That Works - Part 5 of 15**

2. Review it. v. 25 *"...and continues to do so..."* That means over and over and over. The Bible calls this meditation. When you think about something over and over, it's meditation. Meditation is not, put your mind in neutral and contemplate lint in your navel. Meditation means to think seriously about something over and over. If you know how to worry, you can meditate. Take a negative idea and think about it over and over, and it's called worry. Take God's word and think about it over and over, and it's called meditation. The Bible says, "Meditate on God's word". Jesus said, *"...if you continue in My word, then you're truly My disciples."* Read it and review it. The outlines I give you each week are not so that you can keep up with me, it's so that you can review it during the week. God says, "You want to be blessed by the word? Review it."

Psalm 119:97 *"I meditate on your word all day long."* Every businessman ought to memorize Joshua 1:8. If you'll do one thing God promises to bless you with success. And that promise is IF you meditate on His word.

Read it and review it continually. Stay in it and be faithful to the book. I know some people that are more faithful to Ann Landers or the sports page than they are to God's word. How many of you believe everything you read in the newspaper or watch on TV? Then why do we spend more time reading or watching something we don't believe than something we do?

We need to fill our minds with the word of God. James says, "You want to be blessed? Reflect on the word. Think about it by reading it and reviewing it."

3. Remembering it. v. 25 *"... not forgetting what he has heard."* Nothing will do more for your spiritual life than developing the habit of memorizing Scripture. Nothing will benefit your personal spiritual life more than developing the habit of memorizing Scripture. *"Thy word have I hid in my heart that I might not sin against Thee."* Memorize God's word if you want to be blessed by it. We remember what's important to us.

Take notes, write things down. If you value God's word you're going to take notes on it. Hebrews 2:1 *"Write things down so we don't let slip what we've heard."* The United States Air Force did a study and found that we forget 95% of what we hear within 72 hours. This statistic depresses a pastor. I spend all week preparing a message to give on Sunday. By Wednesday you've forgotten 95% of what I've said unless you've written it down. James says, "Receive God's word with the right attitude, reflect on God's word by reading it, reviewing it, remembering it." But even that's not enough.

### **3. I MUST RESPOND TO THE WORD OF GOD**

I must do something about it, act on it, live it, practice it. vs. 22 *"Do not merely listen to what the word says and so deceive yourselves. Do what it says."* Practice. What good is a mirror if you look at it and don't do anything about it? The word "listen" in Greek is the word for "auditor". If you audited a class in college you didn't take it for credit, no tests, no responsibility, no research. You were totally relaxed. You just listened, you didn't have any intention of applying it. We have a lot of auditors in the church. They come to church, walk in, hear the word of God, walk out with no intention of ever

## **HOW TO BE BLESSED BY THE BIBLE**

### **Developing A Faith That Works - Part 5 of 15**

being changed. I was one for years. I took notes, wrote things down, but it never changed me. We must respond to God's word, let it change us if we're going to be blessed by it.

James says it's self-deception when we don't let it change us. We think that just gaining content is making us spiritually mature. The test of maturity is not knowledge. The test of maturity is character. A lot of people have great Bible knowledge and they are spiritual midgets. I need to practice it, apply it, put it in my life.

And knowledge increases responsibility. The more we know the more we're accountable for. What am I doing about what I know? Jesus said, *"To whom much is given, much is required."* And James said, *"To him who knows to do good and doesn't do it, it's sin."*

Illustration: Let's say you folks as a church decide to get concerned about your pastor's health. You come to me and say, "Rick, as you move into older years we don't want you to have a flabby body, or furniture problems -- where your chest drops into your drawers -- so you take up an offering and buy me as a gift Arnold Schwarzeneger's Bodybuilding Book. You say this book can change your life. It's fantastic. It has changed the lives of millions of people. It will keep you strong. It will be a blessing to you. Read this book. It will change you." I say, "Great" I go away for 6 months and then come back and I'm the same guy. You say, "What happened? Didn't you read the book?" What if I said to you, "I read the book. I enjoyed it. This is the greatest book I've ever read. I loved it. I even underlined portions of it with colored markers and memorized sections of it and even started a group study of the book and looked at the etymology of every single word of the book. Every night I would spend a couple hours studying it." How often do we do that with the word of God? We give awards for memorizing Scripture, but we don't give awards for doing Scripture. We get a plaque that says "I read through the Bible" but don't get one that says, "I did the Bible." We need to mark our Bibles, but we need to let the Bible mark us. It's not how many times you've been through the word of God, it's how many times it's been through you. You've got to be a doer of the word. I deceived myself in thinking that because I had knowledge that made me mature. Having knowledge of a bodybuilding book doesn't produce muscles. Just because we know something doesn't mean we act on it.

There was an article in the Orange County Register. They did a poll of Christians in Orange County. "Many in Orange County believe but don't practice." We live in a hotbed of Bible teaching. Some of the top Bible teachers of the nation are within driving distance of where we are right now. You can turn on the radio at any time of day and hear godly men teaching the word. We are in a gospel glut in Orange County. You can hear the word of God 24 hours a day. A lot of us are lulled into the fact that because we're hearing a lot about God, we are maturing. Many believe but don't practice. James would say, "They are hearers but not doers."

"From scores of well-kept churches Orange County residents appear average or even devout in their religious beliefs but when it comes to practicing those beliefs, a Register poll reveals that most residents are more inclined to worship the golden calf than the Lamb of God." It goes on and talks about hearers not doers.

## HOW TO BE BLESSED BY THE BIBLE

### Developing A Faith That Works - Part 5 of 15

That is what James is attacking. He's saying, "If you want to be blessed, you've got to live the word of God, not just hear it. Not just know it."

I really work at making the Bible simple. There is a lot in the Bible that is difficult to understand, complex, deep. Yet I try to present it in such a way that's very clear and very easy to understand and easy to put into practice. When you go out of here I want you to be able to do the word not just hear the word of God. I work at making it practical. I try to make it simple so we can put it into practice.

I heard about the guy who came to church late. He walked in just as the service was completing. He said to an usher, "Is the sermon done, yet?" The usher was wise and said, "The sermon has been preached, but it is yet to be done." Be ye doers of the word, don't merely listen. Put it into practice.

My honest prayer on Sunday afternoon is that you will remember what I said and put it into practice. I pray that Saddleback Church will develop the reputation that people say, "They're doers of the word. They practice what everybody else talks about. They live it." People have a Living Bible. You ought to be a Living Bible. The best translation of Scripture is when you translate it into your life and let it change you.

What pleases me even more than a comment or compliment is when somebody says they will put it into practice and use it. They say they will do the sermon this week. "Let's not deceive ourselves," James says.

v. 25 (Phillips) *"The man who puts the law into practice wins true happiness."* Jesus, in Matthew 7, tells the story of the wise and the foolish builder. He says the foolish builder builds on sand. He is like the guy who hears the word of God but doesn't do what it says. The wise man is the one who hears it and then goes out and makes an honest attempt to put it into his life. Practice it.

Jesus said John 13:17, *"Now that you know these things, you will be blessed if you do them."* I think the simplest definition of maturity is to be a doer of the word. That's what it means to be mature. You do what the Bible says. We must not only read the word, we must heed the word. Every single one of us knows more spiritual truth than we're putting into practice right now. You don't need to know more, you already know enough. It's not the matter that we need to know more. We just need to put into practice what we already know. I just need to practice what I already know to do, not learn anything new. Be a doer of the word.

James concludes this section with three examples of practicing the word. He covers each of these in the rest of the book so we will be back to them.

In v. 26 he says, "One of the ways you can know that you are a doer of the word is you have a controlled mouth." *"If any one considers himself religious and does not keep a tight reign on his tongue he deceives himself and his religion is worthless."* One of the ways you can know if you are a doer of the word is you have self-control over your words.

## HOW TO BE BLESSED BY THE BIBLE

### Developing A Faith That Works - Part 5 of 15

A caring heart. *"Religion that our God and Father accepts as faultless is this. To look after orphans and widows in their distress."* I help the helpless. Social concern, a caring heart.

A clean mind. *"To keep oneself from being polluted by the world."* Spiritual integrity.

That is genuine Christianity.

What is James saying to us? He's saying "What are you going to do about what you already know?" What are you going to do about it today? Maybe some of you need to decide to start preparing better for worship. Get up a little earlier so you're not so rushed and coming in late halfway through the songs. I sit down here for the whole service, I tune in to God and get calm and collected and I'm quiet and ready. I can say, "Lord, here I am. Teach me, so I can be blessed by God's word." Maybe some of you need to say, "I'm going to read through the Bible this year." About five chapters a day and you'll go through the Bible in a year. "I'm going to start memorizing Scripture. I'll pick a verse a week and hide God's word in my hart." It's a condition for answered prayer. John 15:7 *"If you abide [continue] in Me and My word abides in you, you can ask whatever you will and it will be done for you."* The word of God in your heart is a condition for answered prayer. "I need to find a place of ministry where I can get involved." The article in the Register said that all these people believe but less than one-third ever devote any time for ministry. Impression without expression leads to depression. If you're always taking in, one study after another, and never get out in ministry, it's going to dry up your spiritual life.

James is saying that the blessing of the Bible comes when we start living it.

Prayer:

Father, You have not beat around the bush this morning. We can't ignore what Your word says. You've told us to be doers of the word, to practice what we already know. Lord, I know You have put some ideas in the minds of people and they know they've got to do something maybe even before today ends. I pray that You would give them the courage to act on what they know. Help them to do the right thing. Help them to act on what they already know is right. Lord, maybe it's to pay off some debt, or to ask forgiveness, or to return an object, or to be baptized, or to join the church, or to make a phone call, or to witness to some neighbor and invite them to church, get involved, or to receive Christ for the very first time. Lord, Help us to do what we need to do, to not deceive ourselves, to not glance at the mirror of the word and walk away unchanged. Help us not to miss the point, that we need to receive Your word with the right attitude and we need to reflect on it through reading and studying and memorizing. But Lord, that we most of all need to respond to it and allow it to live in our lives.

If you've never opened up your life to Jesus Christ, do it this morning. Ask Him to come into your heart. That's the first step. Say, "Jesus Christ, I don't understand it all but I want You to come into my life. I want to be a believer." He died for you on the cross. He will forgive your sins if you ask Him to. He will give you a new start. Just say, "Christ, come into my life. I want to be a Christian, a real Christian." Others of you know the Lord. The issue for you is not to make that first step but to practice what you already know. Say, "God help me to do what I know is right." That takes

**HOW TO BE BLESSED BY THE BIBLE**  
**Developing A Faith That Works - Part 5 of 15**

faith and courage. He will give you that faith and courage. Say, "Help me to live Your word this week and apply even what I've heard today in the next few days." Lord, Your word is true. It is accurate and it pierces even to the dividing asunder of soul and spirit and the joints and marrow and is a discerner of the thoughts and intents of the heart. Lord, we've seen areas of our lives we need to work on today. Give us the strength and courage to do what we know we need to do. In Jesus' name. Amen.