

How Genuine Are You?
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- What translation of scripture would you guess is the most popular based on sales?
 - BIBLE TRANSLATIONS - Based on Dollar Sales
 1. New International Version various publishers
 2. King James Version various publishers
 3. New King James Version various publishers
 4. New Living Translation Tyndale
 5. English Standard Version Crossway
 6. Holman Christian Standard Bible B&H Publishing Group
 7. New American Standard Bible update various publishers
 8. The Message Eugene Peterson, NavPress
 9. Reina Valera 1960 (Spanish) American Bible Society and licensees
 10. New American Standard various publishers
 - Source: Christian Booksellers Association 2009
 - Every day people are reading a version of God's Word other than the NIV; KJV; NKJV; etc. It's the Y.O.U. We've all heard the old saying: "YOU may be the only Bible some people read!"
 - What does that mean?
 - When people look at us as believers, they are constantly sizing us up to see if we are the "real deal"... "the GENUINE article"... or just another religious hypocrite.
 - The whole THRUST of the book of James is helping Christians display that our religion is GENUINE by learning and doing what the Bible teaches. Or as stated in James 1:20b "accomplish the righteousness of God."
 - How do we accomplish that?:
 1. When we are open to the truths of His Word, we can know how to live as God wants.
 2. Studying God's Word is incomplete until we translate it into our lives with actions that are in accord with its truths.
 3. When we apply God's Word to our lives, we will exhibit GENUINE CHRISTIANITY.

Turn with me to James 1:19-27 – Can I get three folks to volunteer to read a portion of this passage?

James 1:19-27 (New International Version)

Listening and Doing

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.

- A Truth: As Christians we all anticipate taking a flight one day when Christ returns. But one flight Christians can ill afford is to FLY OFF THE HANDLE.
- What does that old expression mean?
 - If you look it up; it DOESN'T MEAN just getting angry
 - Meaning: Lose self control.
 - Origin: An American phrase and it alludes to the uncontrolled way a loose axe-head flies off from its handle.
 - A USEFUL TOOL that becomes dangerous because of a lack of stability
- That's why James gave us three important steps to dealing with this problem. Look at verse 19:
 - Quick to hear
 - Slow to speak &
 - Slow to get angry

My friend Chip Ingram just released a new book:

“Overcoming Emotions That Destroy:”
Practical Help for Those Angry Feelings That Ruin Relationships

- He devotes three chapters to these three points: Quick to hear; Slow to speak; & Slow to get angry. I'm going to share some of his points in this morning's lesson.
- His co-author Psychologist Dr. Becca Johnson says:
 1. we need to be active and attentive listeners;
 2. we need to think before we open our mouths; and
 3. we need to slow down our response

Quick To Hear

- When James says be “quick to hear” he's not just talking about sound waves bouncing off our ear drums.
 - What do you think he means by being quick to hear?
- The word hear translates: “to understand or to grasp” in other words to be open and willing to learn.

- Now when someone says or does something to make us angry that's our first reaction right? I'm sure you immediately say "I am open and ready to learn!"
- No! Our human tendency is what? To give 'em a piece of our mind!
- The book says: "The first question to ask is, 'What am I supposed to hear?'" Then they give three areas:
 1. Learn to listen to your heart to understand the root feeling fueling your anger
 2. Learn to listen to what others are saying by developing good listening skills
 3. Learn to listen to God's voice and what he desires for you, even in the midst of emotionally charged situations.

Slow to Speak

- Here's another old saying: "You can't unring a bell!" Ever say something in a moment of anger and immediately wish you could swallow it back down? We all have!
- Scripture gives us lots of advice on this:

Psalm 39:1

¹ *I said, "I will watch my ways
and keep my tongue from sin;
I will put a muzzle on my mouth
as long as the wicked are in my presence."*

Proverbs 11:12

¹² A man who lacks judgment derides his neighbor,
but a man of understanding holds his tongue.

Proverbs 21:23

²³ He who guards his mouth and his tongue
keeps himself from calamity.

Proverbs 17:28

²⁸ Even a fool is thought wise if he keeps silent,
and discerning if he holds his tongue.

Proverbs 12:18

¹⁸ Reckless words pierce like a sword,
but the tongue of the wise brings healing.

Proverbs 18:21

²¹ The tongue has the power of life and death,
and those who love it will eat its fruit.

James 3:8

⁸but no man can tame the tongue. It is a restless evil, full of deadly poison.

Thomas Jefferson: "When angry, count to 10 before you speak. If very angry, a hundred."

- Bottom line: After you listen...take a time out BEFORE you respond!

Slow to Anger

Roman Statesman Seneca said: "The greatest remedy for anger is delay!"

Back to Chip's book:

- One of the Greek words for anger is "thumos" which means to "blow up"
- The other is "orge" which refers to resentful, ruminating feelings
- One is explosive and the other is lingering and cancerous

Chip says: "Too many of us have given ourselves permission to vent our frustration. We need to revoke that permission."

- He offers these points:
 - A – Acknowledge the anger (What am I feeling?)
 - B – Backtrack to the root reason (What am I really feeling?)
 - C – Consider the cause (Why am I feeling this way?)
 - D – Determine how to deal with the situation (What should I do?)
- "In every conflict, you have a task – to communicate your needs, understand the other person's point of view, and work toward a solution."
- "The longer the time until we potentially explode, the better our chances of...diffusing the anger bomb within us."
- Verse 19 in review:
 - Quick to hear
 - Slow to speak &
 - Slow to get angry

To make sure we GOT IT look at verses 20 and 21 of James 1:

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.

- He didn't say "don't be angry". Remember what Paul wrote in Ephesians 4:26
 - 26 "In your anger do not sin"[a]: Do not let the sun go down while you are still angry,
- If we're going to be the people God wants us to be who live the "righteous life" He desires...we must CONTROL our anger!
- What is the two step process in verse 21 to do that?
 - Get rid of the evil
 - Replace it with the "implanted" Word of God

Look at verse 22 (a very quoted verse!)

²²Do not merely listen to the word, and so deceive yourselves. Do what it says.

- What's the difference between telling someone to "do" something and telling them to "be a doer"?
- Don't just MEMORIZE verses; DO WHAT THEY SAY! No further comment needed on that one.
- In verses 23 and 24, what kind of illustration does James give for this?
 - Looking in a mirror then forgetting what you saw
 - What does that mean? Explain it to me.
 - It would be like looking in the mirror and seeing what needs fixing then getting distracted and forgetting to fix it. Oops. Didn't comb my hair or brush my teeth or put on my make up. How ridiculous!
 - You want to see ridiculous?
 - How many times have we read a scripture passage that just got hold of us and we say "Whew! That's talking about me! I need to DO something about that!" and ten minutes after quiet time you can't remember what the passage was or what you were supposed to DO about it?
 - Now THAT'S ridiculous!
 - Looking into the MIRROR of God's Word and forgetting what we saw!

Verse 25 sets us straight:

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.

- Blessed in all he/she does. I'd like to sign up for that, how about you?
- How do we "look intently" into the Word of God?
 - Study
 - Prayer
 - Meditation
 - Application
- Hopefully, every week in this class we all LOOK INTENTLY into the Word of God.
- But my goal is that you and I DO SOMETHING WITH IT!
- How ridiculous would it be if you read a book instructing you on your favorite pastime and did nothing with the knowledge?
 - Read a great book on improving your swing and never pick up a club?
 - Read a great book on gardening and never put out a plant?
 - Read a great book on tennis and never pick up a racquet?

"You've read 100 books on golf? You must be a good player?" "Nope. Never touched a club!"

"You've memorized 100 scripture verses! You must be a great Christian!" "Nope. Still just an angry, bitter jerk who knows a lot of scripture." OUCH!

1. Quick to hear
2. Slow to speak
3. Slow to get angry

- If we can't put that into practice when we walk out of here I don't know what we could learn that would be any more straightforward.
- You know what James said about that? Verse 26:

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

- My religion is worthless? I didn't say it...Jesus' half brother James said it!

Eugene Peterson in The Message paraphrases that verse this way:

Anyone who sets himself up as "religious" by talking a good game is self-deceived. This kind of religion is hot air and only hot air.

- So what IS GENUINE "religion"? What is GENUINE Christianity? Give us an example James!

Verse 27:

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.

Peterson's paraphrase again: Real religion, the kind that passes muster before God the Father, is this: Reach out to the homeless and loveless in their plight, and guard against corruption from the godless world.

- Reach out in their plight. Sounds like: LOVE LOUD to me.
- Keep oneself from being polluted by the world. Ever hear Pastor Johnny talk about "staying close and clean"?
- GENUINE Christianity

So, what do we do with this as we walk out that door this morning?

- This was a good lesson on anger management, but it's bigger than that
- When faced with the trials of life...
 - We seek experts and knowledge and experience and advice and all that is fine.
 - But do we consult with the one who controls it all?
 - Too often we fix the problem without the MANUAL and wind up with worse mess and parts left over.
- Remember last week's lesson? The definition of WISDOM from God is asking "What would God have me do in this situation?"
- What do you think He might say?

- Call him up and chew him out?
 - Go home and yell at your wife and kids?
 - Those people in need can take care of themselves?
- No. James tells us to look intently into the “perfect law that gives freedom,” not forgetting what we’ve heard, but DOING IT
- And you know what God promises? We will be blessed in what we do.