Emmaus Fellowship Singapore (21 October 2001) Dr. Rick Griffith

Amman International Church (5 March 2022) Single Message

NIV 30 Minutes

Title

**The Danger of Listening to Sermons**

***James 1:19-27***

**Topic:** Obedience

**Subject:** How can you let God's Word take root in you?

**Complement:** Obey God's Word in practical ways.

**Purpose:** The listeners will apply the Bible through a realistic, measurable goal relating to their speech, compassion, or purity.

**Meditation:** James 1:22

**Reading:** James 1:19-27

# Introduction

### Interest: [There is a danger of listening to a lot of sermons.]

#### "One of the hazards of being a Christian is that you have to listen to a number of sermons" (Haddon Robinson).

Annual Bible

#### Think of it. Most of us hear more than 50 sermons a year from the pulpit alone.

#### Add to that 50 Bible studies annually if you're in a weekly small group, and 365 more looks at the Word if you have daily devotions—plus 35 podcasts, etc.

#### That's about 500 exposures to God's Word a year! For people like me—I've been a Christian 50 years—that's over 25,000 times I've confronted the Word—or the Word has confronted me.

#### Isn't that wonderful? Yes—and no.

##### Yes, it's great to have so many times to see God's view of life.

##### But when you realize that, although you *hear* God's Word 500 times a year but don't *respond* to it actively 500 times, this gets serious. That's why I entitled today's sermon "The Danger of Listening to Sermons."

Danger of Sermons

### Need: Do you feel that the Bible really impacts your life? Or do you hear it and then go away unchanged?

Sleeping in Church

#### How many times do you come away from a sermon saying, "Now here's an area of my life that is going to change or else!"?

#### How often do you ask your friend, "I know God says I should do this, but I need your help in doing it"?

#### Does God's Word really change your life?

Subject

### Subject: The issue we're addressing today is, ***"How can you let God's Word take root in you?*** What can you do to respond properly to the Word of God?"

• 3 ways

### Background: Today we continue our study of BOND—James BOND-servant of Jesus Christ. James wrote to people who had heard the Bible a lot—but it had too little effect on them.

BOND

#### He addressed Jews who had heard the OT all their lives from their earliest days.

1:1 Map

#### Jews then memorized the Torah and knew it far better than we do today.

#### Besides this, the readers had also accepted Christ as Messiah and were blessed with new truth that eventually was put into our New Testament.

Sitting in Church

#### But they were not putting all this biblical knowledge in practice very much, so he wrote this letter to tell them to make their faith practical in good deeds.

But…

### Text: James 1 hints that these Jewish believers had not been responding well to the trials they faced —probably persecution from unbelieving Jews in Jerusalem. He ended the previous section with mention of the "word of truth" in verse 18—the Bible.

Listen  
1:18

### Transition: With that thought in mind, James now turns to answer, “***How can you let God's Word take root in you?”*** *What**three ways* can we respond properly to the Word of God? First…

Subject

# I. Prepare to accept what the Bible says (1:19-21).

19

MP

• 30,000

# [Be receptive to biblical truth—be attentive to Scripture.]

## Listen before you speak (19a-b). There is a correlation between these—if you are quick to speak, you aren't listening. But if you are quick to listen, your speech will slow down.

Two Heads

### Studies have shown that women are better at both listening and talking.

#### Women can hear the language of the heart better than most men.

• 25,000

#### And while men average speaking 25,000 words a day, women speak 30,000 words—so they get more practice speaking.

### How can we listen rather than speak? Here are 11 ways…

11 Ways

Arguing

### Yet the command here is related to listening to God. Few would read this letter by James as none had their own copy of it—so the listening more likely refers to listening carefully to the word of truth in the context. But are you quick to listen or read God’s Word?

Slow Diagram

1:18

## Get rid of anger (19c-20).

What is anger

### What's anger? The best definition I've heard is that anger is *an emotional response that stems from seeing someone's rights violated.*

• Define

#### When our own rights are violated and we react, this is negative anger—like when somebody says something about us that violates our right to privacy.

#### But when God's rights are not upheld and we are hurt by it, this is positive anger—like when Jesus was angry at God's right to be worshipped without people ripping off others in the temple courts.

Cleanse Temple

### The point here, though, is that repressed anger hinders us from obeying Scripture.

Results

#### My brother-in-law Mike once wanted to marry his first sweetheart, but tragic circumstances prevented it. So he married my sister instead. But after 16 years of marriage to my sister, his first love re-entered his life and his anger that he never got to marry her resurfaced.

#### He was so bitter that he divorced my sister, despite the fact that he knew this is contrary to God's Word. His pent-up anger is a major obstacle to obeying the Bible. Are *you* angry and hindering the Word from changing you?

(But it's not just anger that prevents us from a righteous life and having God's Word reside in us. Verse 21 says you also should…)

## Get rid of *anything else* that prevents God's Word from taking root in you (21).

21

### The word for " filth" here means "dirt" but ethically means "moral uncleanness" or "vulgarity" (BAGD 738a). The "evil that is so prevalent" is also a general description for any sin. Essentially, James means to get rid of anything unclean in your life.

### Then you're empty? No, replace it with the Word of God.

### One way to replace sin with Scripture is to confess your sin and then quote a verse that relates to that sin.

#### For men, when you lust, confess this to God then quote Job 31:1—"I made a covenant with my eyes not to look with lust at a young woman."

Job 31:1

#### For you ladies who struggle with jealousy, confess it and quote Proverbs 27:4—"Anger is cruel and fury overwhelming, but who can stand before jealousy?"

Prov 27:4

# (So to respond properly to the Word, first prepare yourself to accept it. This comes by listening, getting rid of anger, and getting rid of *anything else* that prevents God's Word from taking root in you. But what else? How else can you let God's Word take root in you? Verses 22-25 tell us…)

T-Shirt

MPI

23-25

NLT

Subject

# II. Don't just listen to the Word—obey it (1:22-25)!

MP

# [Hearing the Bible is great—but acting on it is better.]

22

Just live it

## Don't just listen to the Bible because listening alone is deceptive (22a).

### You all are so courteous—listening so nicely! Not once this whole message so far (or any other time) has anyone stood up and opposed me.

### Some of us are serious about resting on the Word—but we need to be serious about being doers of the Word.

Resting on Word

### Yet this verse helps me wise up that you could really be deceiving me—and yourself! There's this deception of listening to the Word preached that we think that just because we're hearing it, therefore we must be practicing it too.

Hearing Deceptive

(That's why the middle of verse 22 says…)

Man Shoulders

## Instead of just listening we must obey Scripture (22b).

### Here is one of the most poignant reminders in Scripture to put into practice what we learn in the Word.

Black Man in Church

### Why is obedience so important? Because somehow we've gotten the wrong idea of what the spiritual Christian looks like.

#### We think that listening is also obeying.

Sermon Title

#### This is why I called this sermon “The Danger of Listening to Sermons.”

(Fortunately, we have help from God since verses 23-25 note how…)

## The Bible is a mirror that shows us what we need to change (23-25).

### What not to do—Don't ignore the sin that Scripture reveals in you (23-24).

#### [Men tend to glance at a mirror without making any improvements.]

• NIV

##### Notice that the NLT says, “For if *you*…” and continues with the second person *you* throughout this text.

• anthro

##### But the NIV and NASB and KJV all render it *man* throughout. Why? NLT wants to apply it to everyone as if the Greek has the word *anthropos*—the general word for “people.” But the Greek uses *aner* here, which only refers to men and translates either *man* or *husband.*

• aner

##### It's no accident that the word here is *aner* or "man." It's not *anthropos*, the generic word for "people."

Response to Mirror

##### Why does the text specifically refer to men? Because men look into a mirror only briefly and forget about it.

• Man

##### But women look in the mirror and remember what they look like and do something about it. My father-in-law grew up on a farm and said, "If the barn needs painting, paint it!" The cosmetic industry is founded on James 1:24. Women know how to paint.

• Paint

• Woman

##### But men can have their hair out of shape all day and never think about it until they look in a mirror before they go to bed.

#### Likewise, when we don't *respond* to God's Word, we quickly forget our sin. "Yeah, that speaker is right—I do need to read my Bible each day," we say, then make no commitment to change.

### There are three possible responses to seeing something you don't like in the mirror:

Options

• Break

#### One is to smash the mirror—There! No zits anymore!

Title

#### Another is to ignore it—You're too ugly! I ain't looking at you anymore!

• Ignore

#### A third response is to do something about what you see—Wash your face.

• Change

### This parallels three possible responses to seeing your sin through the Bible.

• Ignore

• Change

Our Mirror

• Break

#### Some smash the mirror. They throw out verses from their Bible by tearing them out or explaining them away—wife's submission, husband's leadership, divorce…

#### Another response to seeing your sin is to ignore it. This is what the man does here.

#### But a third response is to respond to what you see in Scripture—change your behavior to align with the Word.

### What should we do?—Gaze intently at Scripture and get blessed for acting on it (25).

25

#### How much better to make the commitment that I made back in 1977 to read the Bible at least 5 minutes each day.

#### And even better than that, *respond* to that reading in a practical, specific, measurable way.

#### Do you want to be blessed? The way to blessing is right there—look at God's perfect Word and do it.

# (But *which* biblical commands should we gaze at intently and then act upon? All areas of life! But the final two verses of the chapter give us three areas in which we must obey the Word…)

# III. Obey the Word in speech, compassion, and purity (1:26-27).

MP

# [Respond to what the Bible says to do with your tongue, your heart, and your whole body.]

26

## If you don't control your speech then you're self-deceived and useless for God (26).

### [Gandhi story]

Bad Speech

Many years ago a foreign student from India studied in a university in England. Having grown up as a Hindu, he felt that this was his chance to get to know more about Christianity, which had interested him very much. He was searching for the one, true, supernatural religion…

• UK Arrow

• Africa Arrow

Shortly after his graduation, the man was delighted to secure employment in East Africa—and especially thrilled when he learned that during this seven month assignment he would be living with a family who were members of an evangelical church. Here was his chance to see real Christianity first-hand…

But what he found was a family who continually complained about their sacrifices for the Lord. And at the end of these seven months he concluded that Christianity was really no different than any other major religion of the world. The speech of these Christians had “proven it.”

• Gandhi

The man’s name? Mahatma Gandhi.

### Are you willing to ask your friend, "Will you please interrupt me the next time I say something that is less than holy?"

## To please God you must care for widows, orphans, and other weak people (27a).

27

Title

Title

### Do you know any orphans or widows? Maybe, but I think these are just examples of people who are easily overlooked.

### Here's where I need a lot of work—too often I can't seem to find time to visit people in distress in hospital—or help those suffering in Ukraine.

## To please God you must keep yourself from getting stained by worldly values (27b).

Stained Glass

### Are you polluted by the world?

### What is polluting you? Often we even *pay others* to pollute us! Internet, TV, movies, magazines—even the *covers* of magazines I've seen at the checkout counters pollute our minds!

Subject

(How can you let God's Word take root in you? So here's what James is saying in a nutshell…)

# Conclusion

MI

### Obey God's Word in practical ways (Main Idea). Follow the Bible in a visible manner.

Circles

### For example, commit to listen rather than to speak!

26-27

### Which of these three areas do you need to apply God's Word right now?

#### Speech—Do I need to memorize and apply Ephesians 4:29?

Eph 4:29

#### Caring—Is there someone who needs my compassion right now?

#### Purity—What source of moral filth must be eliminated from my life?

### How can you apply an action point in this area to your life?

Get Practical

#### Make your application measurable—you should be able to see whether you obeyed in this area or not.

• Measure

##### Don't say, "I'm going to have more purity"—that's not measurable and you'll deceive yourself into thinking you're doing it.

##### Say instead, "I will not click on any picture on my phone because of how the woman looks." That's measurable.

#### Make your application realistic—don't make a goal that reaches to the moon and is destined to fail.

##### Not "I'm going to read the Bible two hours every day."

• Realistic

##### Maybe you can, but if you're not reading even 5 minutes regularly now then it's wiser to start with a more reasonable goal.

#### Be accountable to someone else—have that person ask you how you are doing in that area each day.

• Account

##### Once in college I was having trouble getting up for my quiet time. I shared this with my friend Albert and he said, "Well, what time do you need to get up to meet with God?"

##### "Oh," I said, "I guess I better rise at 5:30 if I'm going to have 30 minutes with the Lord and still have time for a shower and breakfast before I leave for class at 7 AM."

##### "Tomorrow I'll call you at 5:30 but let's not talk more than 10 seconds, OK?"

##### The next morning at 5:30 AM the phone rang, "Good morning, Rick. Are you sitting at your desk meeting with God?" "Yes," I replied. "Then I'm not going to interrupt a meeting that important," Albert said, "Bye!" Click.

##### Every morning at 5:30 AM for more than two weeks Albert called me. It took him less than a minute of his day, but the accountability for me was invaluable. I re-ignited an old, good habit.

##### You can too—if you're vulnerable enough to let someone know your weakness and be accountable.

### Maybe you need to download the YouVersion app that will send you daily reminders to follow one of the many Bible reading programs on it—even for 5 minutes a day. You can even set up an accountability partner.

Portia Nelson

You  
Version

### A woman named Portia Nelson shares her autobiography in 5 short chapters (read).

### Pray this, “Lord Jesus, help me be a doer of Your Word—not just a hearer. But it starts with hearing from You. Help me be quick to listen and then apply it in my speech, compassion, and purity of life. For your sake, Amen.”

Prayer

# Discussion Questions:

# Which of these three areas do you need to apply God's Word right now?

## Speech—Do I need to memorize and apply Ephesians 4:29?

## Caring—Is there someone who needs my compassion right now?

## Purity—What source of moral filth must be eliminated from my life?

# Preliminary Questions

**Verses Questions**

# Context: What did the author record just prior to this passage?

### James has just warned us not to blame God for the difficulties that come our way (1:12-18). These come from our own evil desires.

### This section ended with mention of the "word of truth" in verse 18—the Bible. With that thought in his mind, James now turns to what we should be doing with this truth that we all have received.

# Purpose: Why is this passage in the Bible?

### Here is one of the most poignant reminders in Scripture to put into practice what we learn about in the Word.

### Why is this so important? Because somehow we've gotten the wrong idea of what the spiritual Christian looks like.

#### Most of us look at education and status as key indicators of spiritual status. "Wow, he's got a PhD in Bible!" sometimes people say about me. "Wow, he's not 'just a pastor' but he's a *trainer* of pastors. He must be really spiritual!"

#### What should we say instead?

##### Instead of asking, "Does he have a PhD in Bible?" it should be, "Does he obey his Bible?" We assume that knowledge leads to obedience but nothing could be further from the truth.

##### Rather than asking what a believer's professor is, we should ask what his practice is!

# Background: What historical context helps us understand this passage?

# Questions

### What are we supposed to be "quick to listen" to (19)? Other people? God? The Bible?

### Why is there a warning about anger here (19)? How does this relate to the context?

### What is meant by the "moral filth" that we're supposed to get rid of (21)?

### What does it mean to "humbly accept the word planted in you" (21)?

### Does the Bible save us (21)?

# Tentative Subject/Complement Statements

Biblical content is good, but biblical obedience is better.

The danger of listening to sermons is that we only listen to sermons.

How to respond properly to the Word of God…

# Possible Illustrations

### "One of the hazards of being a Christian is that you have to listen to a number of sermons" (Haddon Robinson).

### There are three possible responses to seeing something you don't like in the mirror.

#### One is to smash the mirror (negative-active).

#### Another is to ignore it (negative-passive).

#### A third response is to respond to what you see (positive-active).

### This parallels three possible responses to seeing your sin clearly through looking at the Bible.

#### One response is to smash the mirror. Many people want to throw out verses from their Bible by tearing them out or explaining them away.

#### Another response to seeing your sin is to ignore it. This is what the man does here (24).

#### A third response is to respond to what you see in Scripture—change your behavior to be in line with the Word.

### Ignoring the red light camera won't solve your problems.

### Why is obedience so important? Because somehow we've gotten the wrong idea of what the spiritual Christian looks like.

#### We look at education and status to determine spiritual condition. "Wow, he's got a PhD in Bible!" sometimes people say about me. "Wow, he's not 'just a pastor' but he's a *trainer* of pastors. He must be really spiritual!" That's hogwash! Ask my kids. Bible scholars can be the *least* godly persons you'd meet.

#### So how *should* we evaluate ourselves and others?

##### Instead of asking, "Does he have a PhD in Bible?" it should be, "Does he *obey* his Bible?" We assume that knowledge leads to obedience but nothing could be further from the truth.

##### Rather than ask a believer's *profession*, we should ask what his practice is!

We ought to see the face of God every morning before we see the face of man.

        Dwight L. Moody, 1837-1899

        Evangelist, Founder of various ministries for women, children, minorities.

What do you read first thing in the morning; Scripture or your emails.

        Dr. Charles Swindoll

        Chancellor Emeritus, Dallas Theological Seminary

Be constantly committed to prayer and to reading Scripture; by praying, you speak to God, in reading, God speaks to you.

        St. Cyprian of Carthage

        Bishop of Carthage

        (Martyred for his faith in 258 AD)

Matthew 6: 33 But seek first His kingdom and His righteousness, and all these things will be added to you.

Matthew 7: 7 Ask, and it will be given to you; seek, and you will find; knock, and it will be opened to you.

**The Danger of Listening to Sermons**

***James 1:19-27***

**Exegetical Outline**

***Exegetical Idea:* The way to respond properly to the Word of God is prepare to accept it and then obey it in every area of life.**

# I. The way to respond properly to the Word of God is to prepare to accept it (19-21).

## Listen before you speak (19a-b).

## Get rid of anger (19c-20)

## Get rid of anything else that prevents God's Word from taking root in you (21).

# II. The way to respond properly to the Word of God is to obey it (22-25).

## Don't just listen to the Bible because listening alone is deceptive (22a).

## Instead of just listening we must obey Scripture (22b).

## Seeing biblical truth is like seeing facial defects in a mirror in that both only reveal problems without correcting them (23-25).

### A man who ignores needed changes after glancing in a mirror is like a person ignoring God's Word because he immediately forgets he has a problem (23-24).

### The man who consistently gazes intently in a mirror is like a believer who acts upon his sin that results in God's blessing (25).

# III. The way to respond properly to the Word of God is to obey it in speech, compassion, and purity (26-27).

## The believer who doesn’t control his speech is self-deceived and useless for God (26).

## The believer who pleases God cares for widows and orphans (27a).

## The believer who pleases God doesn't let s spiritual life get stained by worldly values (27b).

**Homiletical Outline** (Cyclical inductive form)

# Introduction

### Interest: There is a danger of listening to a lot of sermons (explain).

### Need: Do you feel that the Bible really impacts your life? Or do you hear it and then go away unchanged?

### Subject: How can you let God's Word take root in you? What can you do to respond properly to the Word of God?

### Background: James wrote people who had heard the Bible a lot—but it had too little effect on them.

### Text: James 1 hints that these Jewish believers had not been responding well to the trials they faced —probably persecution from unbelieving Jews in Jerusalem. He ended the previous section with mention of the "word of truth" in verse 18—the Bible. With that thought in his mind, James now turns to what we should be doing with this truth that we all have received.

### Transition: How can you let God's Word take root in you?

# I. Prepare to accept what the Bible says (19-21).

## Listen before you speak (19a-b).

## Get rid of anger (19c-20)

## Get rid of anything else that prevents God's Word from taking root in you (21).

# (One way to respond properly to the Word is to prepare yourself to accept it. But what else? How else can you let God's Word take root in you? Verses 22-25 tell us…)

# II. Don't just listen to the Word—obey it (22-25)!

## Don't just listen to the Bible because listening alone is deceptive (22a).

## Instead of just listening we must obey Scripture (22b).

## The Bible is a mirror that shows us what we need to change (23-25).

### What not to do—Don't ignore the sin that Scripture reveals in you (23-24).

#### Men tend to glance into a mirror without making any improvements.

#### When we don't respond to God's Word we quickly forget our sin.

### What to do—Gaze intently at Scripture and get blessed for acting on it (25).

# (The way to respond properly to the Word is to obey—but specifically how? In what areas? Verses 26-27 give us three practical areas of our lives to obey the Bible)

# III. Obey the Word in speech, compassion, and purity (26-27).

## If you don't control your speech then you're self-deceived and useless for God (26).

## To please God you must care for widows, orphans, and other weak persons (27a).

## To please God you must keep yourself from getting stained by worldly values (27b).

# Conclusion

### Obey God's Word in practical ways (MI).

### How can you apply the Bible to your life?

#### Make your application measurable.

#### Make your application realistic.

#### Be accountable to someone else.

### Which of these three areas needs a practical application right now?

#### Speech

#### Caring

#### Purity

### Prayer

**NT Survey Notes**

**II. (1:19-27) James affirms that faith responds to God's Word with attentiveness and obedience to exhort his readers to purity and compassionate acts.**

A. (1:19-25) Faith shows attentiveness to God's Word by listening without uttering excuses, by putting away anger and moral filth, and by doing what it says.

B. (1:26-27) Faith responds to God's Word in controlled speech, compassionate acts, and purity.

# Discussion Questions:

Emmaus Fellowship Dr. Rick Griffith

21 October 2001 Single Message

NIV 30 Minutes

**The Danger of Listening to Sermons**

***James 1:19-27***

**Topic:** Obedience

**Subject:** How can you let God's Word take root in you?

**Complement:** Obey God's Word in practical ways.

**Purpose:** The listeners will apply the Bible through a realistic, measurable goal relating to their speech, compassion, or purity.

**Meditation:** James 1:22

**Reading:** James 1:19-27

**Introduction**

Subject: How can you let God's \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ take root in you?

**I.** \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ **to accept what the Bible says (19-21).**

A. Listen before you speak (19a-b).

B. Get rid of anger (19c-20)

C. Get rid of anything else that prevents God's Word from taking root in you (21).

**II. Don't just listen to the Word—**\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ **it (22-25)!**

A. Don't just listen to the Bible because listening alone is deceptive (22a).

B. Instead of just listening we must obey Scripture (22b).

C. The Bible is a mirror that shows us what we need to change (23-25).

**III. Obey the Word in speech, compassion, and purity (26-27).**

A. If you don't control your speech then you're self-deceived and useless for God (26).

B. To please God you must care for widows, orphans, and other weak persons (27a).

C. To please God you must keep yourself from getting stained by worldly values (27b).

**Conclusion**

1. Obey God's Word in \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ ways (Main Idea).

2. How can you apply the Bible to your life?

* Make your application \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_.
* Make your application \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_.
* Be \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ to someone else.

3. Which of these three areas needs a practical application right now?

* Speech
* Caring
* Purity

**Blanks filled in…**

**Introduction**

Subject: How can you let God's Word take root in you?

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**III. Obey the Word in speech, compassion, and purity (26-27).**

A. If you don't control your speech then you're self-deceived and useless for God (26).

B. To please God you must care for widows, orphans, and other weak persons (27a).

C. To please God you must keep yourself from getting stained by worldly values (27b).

**Conclusion**

1. Obey God's Word in practical ways (Main Idea).

2. How can you apply the Bible to your life?

* Make your application measurable.
* Make your application realistic.
* Be accountable to someone else.

3. Which of these three areas needs a practical application right now?

* Speech
* Caring
* Purity