

REAL FAITH IN THE REAL WORLD

Practical Wisdom From the Book of James

SMALL GROUP LESSON 2

James 1:19-27

INTRODUCTION

Read James 1:19-27 together

The theme of this section of James is our unfortunate ability to deceive ourselves. Even as Christians, we are capable of being deceived about ourselves and our spiritual condition, thinking we're something when we're not. While we may say we are Christians, our actions do not always match what we say we believe.

We all have blind spots and tend to think of ourselves more highly than we ought. One study showed that 95% of people think they're self-aware, but only 10-15% truly are. In our spiritual lives, we can do a lot of the "right" things – going to church, praying, reading our Bible – and believe the "right" things about God and Jesus. However, some of the actions of our lives do not match these beliefs, either in how we speak, in how we care for others, or in our giving in to sin. James points this out and says – don't just listen to the word, do it! If we do not, we deceive ourselves.

Question: Why do you think we can be so deceived about ourselves?

Read Jeremiah 17:9.

Question: Why do you think the heart is so easily able to be deceived?

Read James 1:19-21

Question: In verse 19, James provides three clear directives. What are they and how do they inter-relate in your experience?

Quote from Doug Larson – "Wisdom is the reward you get for a lifetime of listening when you'd have preferred to talk."

Question: Which is harder for you – to be slow to speak or quick to listen? What are some ways you can get better at both?

Question: What role should anger play in the life of a Christian? How do you know when your anger really is appropriate, righteous anger, and when it is fleshly and ungodly?

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Anger is a secondary emotion that often stems from fear, pain, wounds, or failed expectations and disappointment.

Question: What is the best way to deal with our problems with anger? If you feel comfortable, share where you think your own struggle with anger may be stemming from.

Read James 1:22-25

Question: Does anyone relate to this image of looking into a mirror, seeing yourself clearly, and then walking away and “forgetting” about what you saw? Why do we do that?

Question: Self-reflection (looking into the mirror) is valuable, but we can’t stay there. What is the importance of verse 25?

Question: Have you ever been blessed or set free by doing the Word of God?

Read James 1:26-27

Question: What are three elements of true religion, according to this James passage? Why do you think he focuses on these particular actions?

Question: Which of the three elements of true religion are hardest for you to do? Why?

FOR PRAYER

Possible areas to ask for prayer:

- Ask the group to pray for your struggle with the tongue – either talking too much, not listening enough, or giving in to anger.
- Ask the group to pray for one the areas God is calling you to work on and bring before Him: keeping a rein on your tongue, looking after the helpless, or keeping oneself from being polluted by the world