

# Time to Take Action

James 1:19-27

## Introduction

How are you different today from a year ago? Specifically, how has God's Word and the time you've spent with Him in the last year made you different – or even more importantly, changed what you do?

I'll be honest. Being a teacher is hard for me. It was even harder in years past when I preached to sometimes sizeable groups of people. It can be very disheartening to believe you have a message from God for a group of people, study to make sure you are accurate in your interpretation and application, and prepare the most persuasive presentation you can, and then when you get to the call to action, the invitation or conclusion or whatever you want to call it, everyone just sits there waiting for you to be done so they can get on with the rest of their plans for the day.

## Bible Passage

James 1:19-27 - <sup>19</sup>This you know, my beloved brethren. But let everyone be quick to hear, slow to speak *and* slow to anger; <sup>20</sup>for the anger of man does not achieve the righteousness of God. <sup>21</sup>Therefore putting aside all filthiness and *all* that remains of wickedness, in humility receive the word implanted, **which is able to save your souls.** <sup>22</sup>But prove yourselves doers of the word, and not merely hearers who delude themselves. <sup>23</sup>For if anyone is a hearer of the word and not a doer, he is like a man who looks at his natural face in a mirror; <sup>24</sup>for *once* he has looked at himself and gone away, he has immediately forgotten what kind of person he was. <sup>25</sup>But one who looks intently at the perfect law, the *law* of liberty, and abides by it, not having become a forgetful hearer but an effectual doer, this man shall be blessed in what he **does.** <sup>26</sup>If anyone thinks himself to be religious, and yet does not bridle his tongue but deceives his *own* heart, this man's religion is worthless. <sup>27</sup>This is pure and undefiled religion in the sight of *our* God and Father, to visit orphans and widows in their distress, *and* to keep oneself unstained by the world.

## Bible Study

Who is James writing to: Christians or non-Christians? Christians. Then what does he mean when he says that the implanted word can save their souls? He's not talking about salvation. He's talking about sanctification. Sanctification is what begins at salvation and continues for the rest of your life as a process of becoming more and more like Jesus. That is change.

And he then goes on describing this change in terms not of beliefs, but actions.

I think we should be especially concerned about what he says in 22-24. (BTW, "hearers" is used because in that day, no one had written copies of the Bible.)

The danger that James highlights here, is the danger of being someone who encounters God's Word, possibly weekly or even daily, but leaves unchanged. The proof of someone who "hears" the Word is they do it. Encountering God's Word changes what we do. Warren Wiersbe says, "Many people have the mistaken idea that hearing a good sermon or Bible study is what makes them grow and get God's blessing. It is not the hearing but the doing that brings the blessing. Too many Christians mark their Bibles, but their Bibles do not mark them! If you think you are spiritual because you hear the Word, then you are only kidding yourself."

Verse 25 describes what the proper response is to God's Word: action! "abides", "effectual doer", "what he does". Action is what God is looking for.

## Discussion

First, let's discuss this idea of changing, of doing. What things has God called you to change since you became a believer? \_\_\_\_\_

What things has he called you to do? \_\_\_\_\_

I spent Monday with my best friend Andrew and while we were talking he began to tell me what God was leading him to focus on with his congregation. It's funny because my situation parallels his much more than I ever realized. He told me that most of the men in his congregation are engineers. He thinks engineers are drawn to his teaching because he is logical and predictable in his teaching style. He went on to say, "Engineers don't want to be shaken up. They want stability and predictability. **But what they may need the most is to be shaken up.**"

That conversation made me think, not only about myself, but also about our class. Every Sunday I present one or more Bible passages that are aligned toward some particular practical area of life. You do a good job discussing them and debating my sometimes un-Baptist interpretation or hopefully challenging application. Once in a while some of us may even walk away thinking, "that was a good class this morning."

But I have to admit, aside from maybe one or two families, I really don't see noticeable change among us. And I'm not saying this to try to get any sympathy or something. **I'm saying it because I think we may be guilty of exactly what James is warning about in this passage.**

So the best thing I can do at the start of this new year is to begin with a challenge for each one of us. It's time to take action. It's time to do something different. It's time to do something. I am praying for each one of us this year

that we will hear what God has likely been speaking to us for some time and actually respond with action, instead of just walking away unchanged.

### **Practical Application**

What has God been calling you to do, but has thus far been ignored?

What would be the cost of becoming a doer instead of just a hearer?

What is the cost of just hearing and not doing?

### **Conclusion:**

Here are two ways you can tell when God is working in your life: When you are being called to change. When you are being called to do something new or different.

I am certain God has been calling on many, but we've not answered. I pray that 2012 will be the year when we start to do and not just hear.