



STUDY 2

FAITH IS MEANT TO WORK

JAMES 1:19-27

Last week we saw that James is writing to Christians in troubled times. The economic and social hardships they're facing are putting pressure on everyone. And it's showing. James says that it's times like these that show God is actually growing his people and challenging them to trust him more. But it's hard to grow spiritually if you take your eyes off the gospel. Let's listen to James challenge us to be 'word of truth' people - from the inside, out!

LIVING FAITH

Read James 1:19-27

1. What are the basic Christian behaviours that James emphasises in verses 19 and 27? From what you remember about what was happening at the time, why would these behaviours be so important for his readers?
2. James says “humbly accept the word planted in you” (v21). What’s this ‘word’? (see 1:18) Why would someone not ‘humbly accept’ it?
3. The mirror analogy is about knowing who you are, but then forgetting it a few minutes later (v23-24). What does the gospel message say about who we really are? Why is it important to remember that?
4. James calls the gospel “the perfect law that gives freedom” (v25). What’s freeing about the gospel – especially when it comes to how other people think of us and treat us?

5. According to v26, one key indicator of a person's spiritual progress is how they talk. That's exactly what Jesus said too. According to Jesus, where do our words ultimately come from, and what do they show? (check Jesus' words from Luke's gospel in the sidebar.)

The gospel is not just a new religious system. It's God's powerful message that he 'plants' in our hearts. It's the defining truth which should shape every aspect of our lives. In the gospel, God is not angry at us anymore, but forgiving. So we should be forgiving too. In the gospel, God is not selfish but generous. So we should be generous too. But sometimes the busyness, discouragements and temptations of life take their toll. We forget who God has made us to be. We forget his gracious love and kindness. And we walk around in life not always reflecting the reality of the gospel in our lives. So James reminds Christians to not just *know* the gospel - but to live it out! He says, don't be deceived. Don't blend into the world's ways. Live in light of the word planted in you - the powerful good news!

REAL RELIGION

6. Share a time when someone in church did something for you that was consistent with 'gospel living'. What was it and how did it make you feel?
7. Widows and orphans in the ancient world lacked any real support network. Who needs practical love in our church and local community?

Luke 6:43-45

⁴³ "No good tree bears bad fruit, nor does a bad tree bear good fruit. ⁴⁴ Each tree is recognized by its own fruit. People do not pick figs from thornbushes, or grapes from briars. ⁴⁵ A good man brings good things out of the good stored up in his heart, and an evil man brings evil things out of the evil stored up in his heart. For the mouth speaks what the heart is full of.

8. Modern life is crazy busy and disorienting at times. What causes you to take your eyes off the beauty and power of the gospel?

9. How can we help each other to live out the gospel in more practical ways?

10. What's one concrete thing you will do this week to live out the gospel?

James is calling Christians to be who God has made them to be. It's a wonderful and challenging journey of growing together. Let's pray that we would be people who deepen in our faith, and that we might show that in our everyday lives. Let's also keep encouraging each other in all sorts of practical ways as we follow Jesus together. Let's not just hear the 'word' - let's do this!