



LIFE GROUP STUDIES AUTUMN 2024

2 FAITH ON THE GROUND

JAMES 1. 19 - 27

Retrospective

How has the past week been for you? Has last week's teaching affected how you've responded to difficulties and challenges? Has the joy of the Lord been your strength?

Read James 1. 17 - 27

'The Word'

We're backtracking into the last two verses of last week's passage, verses 17-18.

- Do you see a connection between them and verses 22-25?
- What does James mean in verses 17-18? What is this creative act by 'the word of truth'?

Psalm 33 verse 6 says 'By the word of the LORD the heavens were made, their starry host by the breath of his mouth.' James seems to have the creation story in mind in verse, and also to be referring to the new birth which Jesus spoke about to Nicodemus in John chapter 3 verses 3-8. Nicodemus remained a secret follower of Jesus, but was involved with Joseph of Arimathea in the burial of Jesus (Luke 19. 39-41), and must have been one of the early witnesses to the resurrection, so it's quite possible that James knew him and had heard his story.

The Day of Pentecost, which is often called the birth of the church, of which James became the leader, happened on the Jewish Feast of the First Fruits.

See also 2 Corinthians 5.17.

- So what does James mean by 'the word' in verses 22-25?

Bear in mind that James is writing his letter before any of the gospels were written, and John's gospel, with its wonderful Prologue in which Jesus is portrayed as 'The Word', at creation and in his incarnation, was the last gospel to be written, as much as 40 years later. So we can't assume that James means exactly the same as we do, when we talk about listening to the Word.

We've already looked at Psalm 33.6, with its reference to God's word. James grew up steeped in what we call the Old Testament, which was his and Jesus's 'Bible'.

- Read Psalm 119 verses 1-3, 105 and 172-176 (or any of the verses in between!)
- What did Jesus say about his own teaching? See John 6.63, John 15.7, John 17.8

So James in verses 22-25 is referring to his scriptures, and the shared oral knowledge among the disciples of what Jesus taught. At the end of verse 21, James calls it 'the word planted in you, which can save you.' We are fortunate to have the whole New Testament!

- What are the lessons for us in verses 22-25? Talk through them prayerfully.

PTO

- Do you go away and forget what you've heard in the sermon? Does Life Group help you to remember?
- How do you 'look intently' into, and 'continue in' the Word on a daily basis?

Living it out (verses 19-21, 26-27)

- Verses 19-20, 26. How important is the way we speak? (James will say more on this in chapter 3.)
- Why is listening so important?
- Why are so many people so angry in our world today? Why do so many films portray angry people? How should we react? What is righteous anger?
- Verses 21 and 27. How can we apply this teaching to ourselves? How can we 'keep ourselves from being polluted by the world'?

Praying it through

Spend some time praying for yourselves and each other, to live out the teaching in this passage. The first two verses of this hymn by Kate Barclay Wilkinson (1925) could have been based on it.

*May the mind of Christ, my Saviour,
live in me from day to day,
by His love and power controlling
all I do and say.*

*May the word of God dwell richly
in my heart from hour to hour,
so that all may see I triumph
only through His power.*

Here are some practical comments on this passage which I found on-line:

It's Not Enough Just to Hear the Word: James 1:19–27 by Stacey Salsbery

'A daily commitment to doing the Word requires a daily commitment to being in the Word, willing and ready to receive what it says. Meekness, or humility, is key. If we don't come to God, needing God, then we'll be unwilling to receive what God says.

Not only has God given us His Word to encourage and guide us, but He's written it on our hearts and given us the Holy Spirit to help us live it.

A true follower of God does what God says, not only when life is easy, but also when life is hard. When trials come and temptations persist. When loved ones are hard to get along with and the kids are driving us crazy. When the future looks shaky and we're unsure of the outcome. When life is threatening to overwhelm us and fear is threatening to grip us.

Believe God. Respond with faith instead of fear, kindness instead of anger, hope instead of despair. Be doers of the Word, even in hard times. And by our actions, we will testify to the greatness and the power and the truth of our God and Saviour Jesus Christ.'