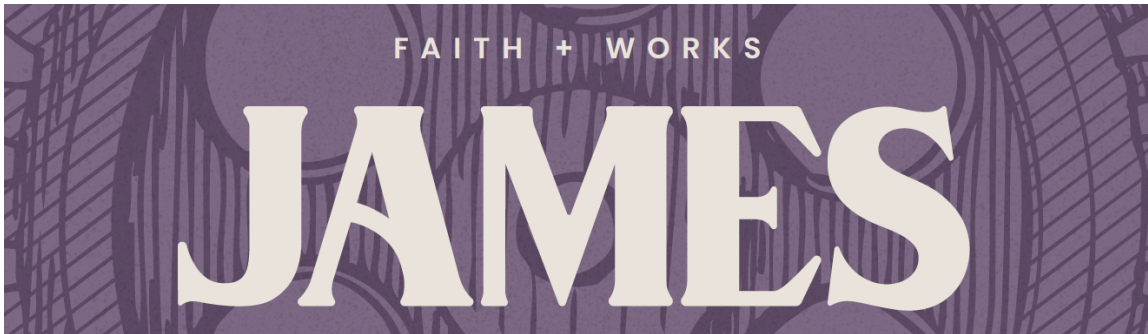


Week 4: James: Doers of the Word

Hook



Main Point: Those who really know Jesus will live as Jesus lived and love as Jesus loved.

If you have a child or grandchild, you might have encountered Ryan Kai – the star of the YouTube channel “Ryan’s World.” This young man began his entertainment empire with a series of videos in which he would play with and review toys. By 6 years old, Ryan’s videos had earned him more than \$10 million, and he now boasts more than 38 million YouTube subscribers.¹ Ryan’s success spurred countless eager YouTube hopefuls to create their own channels in which they play with toys, and so millions of children watch other children instead of playing themselves. According to a 2025 survey, children 5 to 8 years old spend an average of three and a half hours a day looking at screens.²

Q: What toys did you enjoy playing with most as a child?

Q: Why might children today prefer to watch others play?

Q: What might children miss out on if they only watched others and never played?

Transition: Today’s passage will challenge believers to go beyond hearing the Word and live it out!

RECAP: In our first lesson, we were introduced to the book of James, covering the author, audience, genre, and the supposed “conflict” between James and Paul (faith and works), which isn’t a conflict at all. Then we began our verse-by-verse study. The first week, we focused on wisdom, what true wisdom is, and how we find it. Wisdom is the basis for everything else covered in James, which is known as the “wisdom literature of the New Testament.” Last week, we learned about the place of trials and temptations in

the life of a believer and how God uses all things for our good. This week, we'll hear how James encouraged us to be doers of the word, not just hearers.

Week 4: James: Doers of the Word

Book

Main Point: Those who really know Jesus will live as Jesus lived and love as Jesus loved.

James 1:19–21 and Ephesians 4:25–32 [Read]

Talking Point 1: God's people should be self-controlled, patient and careful with their words.

Q: Why did James say to be “slow to anger” instead of telling us not to be angry at all?

Q: Why should we take care with our words? How do our words affect people?

In this section, James provided some practical advice about the way we should live as followers of Jesus. Rather than a checklist of dos and don'ts, it's a description of what a person who is filled with the Holy Spirit and bearing the Fruit of the Spirit is like. Being quick to hear, slow to speak, and slow to anger all come from the fruits of love, peace, patience, goodness, gentleness and self-control. These things are all very hard to do in our human strength, but if the Holy Spirit is growing His fruit in us, they will become more natural.

Especially in our culture right now, it seems like everyone is the exact opposite of this. We are quick to anger, quick to speak, and slow to listen. This is exacerbated by social media, but it happens in real life, too. People seem so quick to get outraged about everything, especially in our current political climate. Every sound bite or headline gets us riled up, and we react with self-righteous anger before we even read the whole article or understand the details of what is going on. Media outlets and social media algorithms have capitalized on our addiction to outrage.³

This most often happens on social media, but it happens watching the news or reading articles, too. Media is intentionally crafted to get a rise out of us. They want us to react with emotion because that's when we will share their story, keep the TV on, and read more articles. It's what gets them the most clicks, viewership, and ad revenue. The world wants to keep us quick to anger. Outrage is addictive and contagious, and it feeds on itself. Self-righteous indignation can feel “good” because it makes us feel morally superior, but even righteous anger at injustice shouldn't be handled in a reactive, “quick to anger” kind of way. That's not a healthy or productive way to handle the injustice. It escalates things; it doesn't solve them. James didn't tell us not to be angry at injustice but to be slow to anger, not reactive and explosive. It's like when Paul said, “Be angry

and do not sin” (Ephesians 4:26). Anger itself is not sinful, but the explosive, reactive, impatient kind of anger is.

Our world also does not want us to be quick to listen and slow to speak. It wants us to react with emotion rather than carefully thinking through what we’re going to say. It wants us to talk past one another, not really listen or communicate, because it wants to keep us divided. Most of us don’t take the time to really listen; we’re too busy thinking about what our next response will be. We speak before we think; we don’t take care with our words. We don’t know how to empathize with those who are different from us. If we took time to listen, we could understand one another better. If we stopped and thought before we spoke, our words would be more careful, less reactive, and would hurt others less often.

Those of us who know Jesus are different from the world. Those who live in fellowship with God will be like God. Being “slow to anger” is a characteristic of God, a phrase He repeatedly used to describe Himself in the Old Testament (Exodus 34:6–7). God is perfectly patient (1 Corinthians 13:4). He is also empathetic. He is the God who sees and the God who hears (Genesis 16:11–13). He is quick to listen to us when we pray (John 9:31).

The ability to be slow to anger requires patience, gentleness and self-control, which are Fruits of the Spirit. They are not things our sinful nature naturally has, but when we abide in Jesus and walk by the Spirit, they grow in us. The ability to be quick to listen and slow to speak requires love, empathy, gentleness and self-control. All these things, even self-control, come from God. They are not natural for us; they are not things we can simply try harder at and expect to do better. The way to grow them in our lives is to grow closer in fellowship with Jesus. James didn’t tell us this to make us feel obligated or burdened, as if to give us something we must do to be a good person. He told us this because it’s what God is like, so it’s what His people should be like, too.

Q: Why is it difficult to be slow to anger, slow to speak, and quick to listen?

Q: What are some examples of words that build up versus words that tear down?

Q: Describe people you know who are very patient and choose their words carefully. What kind of impact do they have on the world around them?

James 1:21 and Colossians 3:5–14 [Read]

Talking Point 2: God’s Word is implanted in our hearts so we can live by His ways.

Q: What is the implanted word? How does it save our souls?

Q: Describe the difference between the old self and the new self in Christ.

The word James used here for “implanted” is unique.⁴ This is the only place in the whole New Testament that it’s used. Some lexicons say it means “engrafted” (KJV), but it’s not the same word used for branches being “grafted” into a tree. It has more of the sense of a seed that has been planted. Not just planted but implanted, planted *inside* of us, suggesting a deep, intrinsic connection, communion or integration. The metaphor of implanting was used figuratively in Greco-Roman philosophy and rhetoric to describe the integration of ideas or virtues into one’s life. When your philosophy was no longer just words and ideas but the way you lived.⁵

Theologically, it points to the concept that God’s Word is not just something external to us. It’s not just a book of stories and laws we read and try to follow. It’s something that has been planted inside us. As God prophesied through Jeremiah, in the new covenant He would write His law on our hearts (Jeremiah 31:31–34). God’s Word is not just words on a page; it’s living and active (Hebrews 4:12). It has become internalized in us; it is so much more than just words.

God’s implanted Word saves our souls, but it also begins the process of sanctification in us. The ESV Study Bible tells us that “save your souls refers here to progressive sanctification and ultimately the completion of God’s saving work on the last day.”⁶ This is where the imagery of a plant comes into play. Salvation is by grace through faith alone; that’s a one-time thing. But the imagery of a plant points to His Word *growing* in us – that’s the process of sanctification. This imagery points us again to the Fruit of the Spirit. God’s Word is a plant growing inside us, bigger and stronger each year. The Word itself does not change, but our understanding of it and our ability to keep it grows.

When we accept Christ as our Savior and are made a new creation in Him, God puts His Spirit inside us. The Spirit is not the plant growing in us. He dwells in us fully from the beginning. He does not change. But the Fruit of the Spirit grows throughout our lives. This is how we can keep His Word and live by His ways; He gives us His Spirit, and His Spirit grows love, joy, peace, and so on inside us (Ezekiel 36:26–27; Galatians 5:22–23). When God put the Holy Spirit in us, He implanted His Word in our hearts so that instead of just being external rules we try to follow, His living and active Word changes us from the inside out.

Yet this doesn’t mean we have no part to play. We are not completely passive. James said to put away all filthiness and wickedness. Paul told us to put to death what is earthly in us and put away all anger, obscene talk, etc. and then put on the new self – compassion, kindness, humility, and so on (Colossians 3:5–10). We must actively turn

away from the things of the world and turn toward the things of Christ. We must intentionally set our minds on things above, not the things of this world (Colossians 3:2). Intentionally put on the armor of God (Ephesians 6:10-18). Intentionally take every thought captive (2 Corinthians 10:5). God is the one who changes us and grows His fruit in us, but we must do the work of turning to Him, submitting to Him, and giving ourselves to Him as a living sacrifice.

Q: How have you grown in your understanding of God's Word over time as a Christian? How has your ability to keep His Word and live by His ways grown?

Q: Colossians 3:5-7 lists specific sins to put to death. How do these sins listed impact our relationship with God and others? What strategies can we use to combat these temptations?

Q: What are some practical ways we can hide God's Word in our heart?

James 1:22–25 and Matthew 7:24–27 [Read]

Talking Point 3: Followers of Jesus don't just hear His Word, they do it.

Q: How are hearers (but not doers) of the Word deceiving themselves? What does the metaphor of forgetting what we look like tell us about being doers of the Word?

Q: What does Jesus' metaphor of building on the rock tell us about being doers of His Word?

Q: How does building your life on Christ's teachings influence your daily decisions and relationships?

The previous verses about God's Word being implanted in us lead us directly into this passage on being doers of the Word. Because God's Word is implanted in us, because it's not just an external list of rules but an internal heart change, we can keep His law. We can be doers. By the power and wisdom of the Holy Spirit, we can follow Jesus and do what He said.

James encouraged the people, just as Jesus had in the Sermon on the Mount, to be doers of the Word and not just hearers. As wisdom literature often does, this just makes logical sense. What's the purpose of hearing, reading, or studying God's Word if you're not going to follow it? Yet many believers do just that. They come to church on Sundays and listen to the faithful teaching of God's Word, then go right out the door and live however they want. It begs the question, why even bother coming to church? God's

Word is not a philosophical discussion or intellectual argument. It is a lifestyle that is meant to be lived.

James said people who hear without doing are deceiving themselves. They're like people who look at themselves in the mirror but then forget what they look like as soon as they walk away. They don't really know themselves; they aren't being honest with themselves about who they really are. They're putting on the persona of being a Christian, but because they aren't living like Jesus, it's unlikely they really are. Jesus said we would recognize His followers by their fruit (Matthew 7:16–20). And His disciples would be known by their love for one another (John 13:35). This doesn't mean believers can't make mistakes or be less than perfect. We are all in the process of sanctification; we are all growing; no one has arrived; we're all on the journey (Philippians 3:12–14). But if you aren't bearing any fruit, you need to honestly examine your heart.

The truth is that disciples are not just people who believe in Jesus; they are followers of Jesus. In the ancient world, when a rabbi mentored a group of young disciples, they didn't just study his teachings, they imitated his lifestyle.⁷ This is the very definition of what it means to be a disciple – to follow Jesus, to imitate Jesus, to be like Him. The word “Christian” itself means “little Christ,” like being “mini-me” of Jesus. We cannot be a “Christian” without being like Christ. That's what Christian means.

It's not enough to sit in church and listen to His Word, sit in this class and listen to the teaching, or sit in your quiet time and read your Bible. Sitting in church doesn't make you a Christian any more than sitting in a garage makes you a car. Followers of Jesus don't just listen to His words, they do them. But obeying Jesus' words isn't just about doing what He said out of guilt or trying to appease Him or even for the sake of obedience. Obeying His words is also what is best for us. It is what will make our lives stand firm in any storm like a house built on a rock. Because Jesus is God and because He loves us and wants what is best for us, His ways are the best way for us to live. Those who follow His ways will be blessed.

Q: When we see Christians not being doers of the Word, what should our response be? How can we encourage them rather than criticize or tear them down?

Q: How have you seen that following Jesus' ways turns out best for you?

Week 4: James: Doers of the Word

Took

Main Point: Those who really know Jesus will live as Jesus lived and love as Jesus loved.

The Christian life is not a spectator sport – get in the game! Brainstorm with your LifeGroup areas in which you would like to become doers of the word. After you have collected those responses, pair them with opportunities to exercise obedience. For instance,

- “I want to share the Gospel”: schedule a coffee with a friend, practice the 3 Circles Method of evangelism (or another method of your choosing) and share the Gospel.
- “I need to be obedient in the area of stewardship”: contact Prestonwood Foundation for resources <https://prestonwood.org/give/foundation/>.
- “I want to use my spiritual gifts to build up the Church”: complete a spiritual gifts assessment (<https://www.lifeway.com/en/articles/women-leadership-spiritual-gifts-growth-service>) and contact your divisional minister for service opportunities.

CHALLENGES

THINK: Reflect on ways you struggle to follow Jesus and do what He said. In what ways is it hard for you to imitate Jesus and live the way He did? Which commands don’t make sense to you or seem unrealistic or too hard? Which commands are contrary to the way the world tells us to live and what it tells us to value? How can we know what Jesus taught? How can we know “WWJD: What Would Jesus Do?” in every situation? How can we find the spiritual strength and wisdom to live like He did?

PRAY for God to give you the wisdom, strength and love to live the way Jesus did. Ask the Spirit to grow His spiritual fruit in you more and more every day. Submit yourself to trust Him and live by His ways. Ask Him to give you the self-control to be slow to anger, quick to listen, and slow to speak.

ACT: Practice self-control. Start every day this week by asking the Holy Spirit to give you self-control and to grow the fruit of self-control in your heart. Every time you are

tempted to lose your temper, react with outrage, or speak too quickly, stop and ask the Spirit to give you the strength to control your anger and your tongue.

¹ <https://www.forbes.com/profile/ryan-kaji/>

² <https://www.usatoday.com/story/news/nation/2025/02/27/kids-screen-time-tablets/80696185007/>

³ This term was coined in 2009 by *The New York Times* political cartoonist and essayist Tim Kreider.

⁴ We should be careful not to read a modern surgical meaning of “implant” into this word. This was an agricultural term; they did not have surgical implants in James’s day.

⁵ Thayer’s Greek Lexicon

⁶ Crossway Bibles, [The ESV Study Bible](#) (Wheaton, IL: Crossway Bibles, 2008), 2392.

⁷ Craig Keener, *Bible Background Commentary: New Testament* (Intervarsity Press, 2002).