

# Wednesday Night BIBLE STUDY

Wednesday, May 4, 2016 – First Baptist Church Buda  
Midweek Prayer Meeting & Bible Study

**GETTING PRACTICAL WITH YOUR FAITH**  
**A STUDY OF THE BOOK OF JAMES**  
**“The Great Divorce”**  
*James 1:19-27, Selected Scriptures*

**A WARM UP EXERCISE:** *Listen as the following case studies are read and see if you can identify what might be going on in the life of each and why, what the real problem may be and perhaps offer some suggestion on what might be the cause and cure or help.*

**CASE STUDY 1:** Judy has been going through a really rough time lately. Her husband, Ben, of 15 years recently walked out on her and their 2 boy. Said he was feeling trapped and held back... they married too young before he got through running around... and he just wasn't happy. So he left Judy and 2 young boys for a much younger woman and left his wife and children hurting and broken, scared and feeling alone and abandoned. Judy, had always been pretty strong in her faith. At first she turned to her pastor and church for counsel and encouragement, but it didn't seem to stop the bleeding she was feeling. She felt many people were talking about her and Ben and even felt ostracized by some. So she started spending more time in God's Word, and more time in prayer, though she can't hardly get through a passage of Scripture or a prayer without uncontrollable tears and crying. She is about at her wit end and Judy feels that the heavens are silent. It is as if God isn't speaking right now. She cries out to Him but she has started to feel like God has abandoned her just like he husband did, and maybe all of this is her fault. She keeps listening for God's voice in all of this chaos and confusion she is feeling, but she hears nothing but her own cries.

**CASE STUDY 2:** Brandon was raised in a good Christian home, taken to church at an early age. Both of his parents were believers and were very active in their church, and so was Brandon from a very early age. He accepted Christ as his Lord and Savior when we was 13 years old. Was active in their youth group and at one time thought God might be calling him to the ministry. He had been on may mission trip with his youth group and had even lead several of his high school friend to Christ. It was in High School that Brandon started letting his guard down. He would party with his friends occasionally, but “only to try to reach them” he would always say. He had a steady girlfriend and they had at times fooled around and gone a little too far, but all in all Brandon had always been a good kid and kept his life out of trouble. Since that time Brandon has struggled with many things in his life. Married at one time... it just didn't work out and they divorced early in their marriage. He had been other relationships since, but noting permanent. And he doesn't party anymore, but the drinking has continued in his life, sometimes alot. He still goes to church, but he doesn't get much out of it. It all just seems pretty routine

and irrelevant to his life, though he knows this is something he should do as a Christian. He rarely read his Bible anymore and hardly ever prays unless he gets in a bind. He believes in it, he just doesn't get much out of it. Sometimes he feels like he is just going through the motions and wonders what happened to his life, but he feels like there is no answer and God doesn't respond.

So what is the problem with listening, anyway? If God is still speaking, and He is, why is it that so often we can't hear Him?

Solomon begins this sixth chapter of Ecclesiastes with penetrating words, "There is an evil which I have seen under the sun and it is prevalent among men..." it is appropriate for us to introduce this study with these words, for there is an ailment that readily exists within the Body of Christ. It is a disease that has crippling effects upon our effectiveness and production as believers and as the church. This evil illness neutralizes our impact and nullifies our testimony. It is the problem of divorce – not between husbands and wives... don't anybody get upset... we are talking about divorce of a different kind. We are talking about "divorce between theory and practice... between hearing and doing. James has already dealt with the problem of trials (James 1:1-12) and temptation (James 1:13-18), but now he comes to the basic theme of his letter... the important of behaving like we believe.

## I. GENERAL OBSERVATIONS (James 1:19)

*<sup>19</sup> So then, my beloved brethren, let every man be swift to hear, slow to speak, slow to wrath." – James 1:19*

As James wrapped up his first chapter, he laid a ground work for the instructions that follow in subsequent chapters. From these words, there are four observations that can be made about the body of his presentation:

### 4 General Observations About James' Statement in James 1:19:

1. **This is "imperative" truth** – James said "So then..." In some translations it says "You know..." It goes like this... "Given this... this is absolutely imperative that we do it." But what is he talking about. Look back at the preceding verses (READ: vv. 12-18). Notice *verse 18, "<sup>18</sup> Of His own will He brought us forth by the word of truth, that we might be a kind of firstfruits of His creatures."* Given the fact that He saved us and made us His own, it is imperative that we do this verses 19 and following. It's imperative truth.
2. **This is "family" truth** – James, *"So then, my beloved brethren..."* Who is this speaking to? Who is this "imperative" truth leveled toward? "Brethren"... believers, Christians. This is "family"... Christian family... brother and sisters in Christ truth. This is for Christians!
3. **This is "personal" truth** – James says, "So then, my beloved brethren, let every man..." Every individual one of you! Each one of you! Personally do this! Listen, Christian this truth applies to you personally.

4. **This is “logical” truth** – It follows a progression which this study will follow. James says, “<sup>19</sup> *So then, my beloved brethren, let every man be swift to hear, slow to speak, slow to wrath.*” – James 1:19 Here is the progression you see here:

**Progression to Follow In James 1:19:**

- (1) **Open your ears** – Really listen and hear what God is saying you. Implied is listening to understand.
- (2) **Stop talking** – Idea here may be to stop talking over God. Quiet yourself and be teachable
- (3) **Don’t get offended** – Conviction can either offend us and cause us to be put off, not listen, rebel against what we are being told, decide against what we are being told, choose to do it our own way... or humbly adjust our lives and choose to follow God instructions. It can either push you close to who God wants us to be or further from who He is calling us to be.

**II. SPECIFIC INSTRUCTIONS (James 1:19-27)**

*<sup>19</sup> So then, my beloved brethren, let every man be swift to hear, slow to speak, slow to wrath; <sup>20</sup> for the wrath of man does not produce the righteousness of God. <sup>21</sup> Therefore lay aside all filthiness and overflow of wickedness, and receive with meekness the implanted word, which is able to save your souls. <sup>22</sup> But be doers of the word, and not hearers only, deceiving yourselves. <sup>23</sup> For if anyone is a hearer of the word and not a doer, he is like a man observing his natural face in a mirror; <sup>24</sup> for he observes himself, goes away, and immediately forgets what kind of man he was. <sup>25</sup> But he who looks into the perfect law of liberty and continues in it, and is not a forgetful hearer but a doer of the work, this one will be blessed in what he does. <sup>26</sup> If anyone among you thinks he is religious, and does not bridle his tongue but deceives his own heart, this one’s religion is useless. <sup>27</sup> Pure and undefiled religion before God and the Father is this: to visit orphans and widows in their trouble, and to keep oneself unspotted from the world.” – James 1:19-27*

By way of preview, here is James’ presentation in verses 19-27. First, James talks about preparing ourselves for truth. Then, he talks about the actual time of taking it in. And third, James talks about the correct response in daily life. Let’s look at each one of these separately as we work through James’ words in James 1:19-27.

- A. PREPARATION FOR THE TRUTH (James 1:19-21)** In these verses, James sets forth four prerequisites in the period of preparation.

**4 Prerequisites for Preparing Ourselves for God’s Truth:**

1. **We are to have an open ear (James 1:19, John 16:5-15)** – Again James says in the first part of **verse 19** of our passage, “*So then, my beloved brethren, let every man be swift to hear...*” One of the reasons we “divorce” or separate ourselves from God is because our ears are shut. In order for us to say that God’s Word has lodged in our hearts, we must be hearing what He’s saying. It is possible to have good hearing but be hard of listening... to hear words but not really hear what

they mean to our hearts. Satan has his way, and so do we, of dulling the hearing. So James says that to prepare ourselves for the truth, we must have open ears... we must be ready to listen.

Through the ages many sincere Christians have attempted to listen to God. Usually, after several painfully silent sessions, they cease their efforts, claiming that either that God doesn't have anything to say to them or they just don't know how to hear Him... how to hear His voice. We know we have a concerned Father who is more than willing to communicate, and we certainly want to hear Him. So what's the problem? I believe the problem lies with us, in that we have often accumulated (sometimes unknowingly) spiritual hindrances that prevent us from clearly hearing the Lord. (READ: John 16:5-15)

In John 16 Jesus is continuing to prepare His disciples (and followers) for what lies ahead for Him (and for them). They have come to know Jesus by this time... really know Him. They have known Him to be the way, the truth and the life (see John 14:6). They have seen Him live out before them a sinless and perfect life, and they have seen the truth in His words. They have seen him turn water into wine and multiply a little boys lunch to feed thousands. They have seen Him heal the sick, give sight to the blind, cast out demons, and raise the dead, walk on water and calm a storm by his words. Not only that, they have eaten with him, slept with him, watched his every step and heard his every word. They know Him, yet they don't seem to "know" him yet... you know what I mean. Listen to John 16:5-15,

*<sup>5</sup> 'But now I go away to Him who sent Me, and none of you asks Me, 'Where are You going?' <sup>6</sup> But because I have said these things to you, sorrow has filled your heart. <sup>7</sup> Nevertheless I tell you the truth. It is to your advantage that I go away; for if I do not go away, the Helper will not come to you; but if I depart, I will send Him to you. <sup>8</sup> And when He has come, He will convict the world of sin, and of righteousness, and of judgment: <sup>9</sup> of sin, because they do not believe in Me; <sup>10</sup> of righteousness, because I go to My Father and you see Me no more; <sup>11</sup> of judgment, because the ruler of this world is judged. <sup>12</sup> 'I still have many things to say to you, but you cannot bear them now. <sup>13</sup> However, when He, the Spirit of truth, has come, He will guide you into all truth; for He will not speak on His own authority, but whatever He hears He will speak; and He will tell you things to come. <sup>14</sup> He will glorify Me, for He will take of what is Mine and declare it to you. <sup>15</sup> All things that the Father has are Mine. Therefore I said that He will take of Mine and declare it to you.' – John 16:5-15 (NKJV)*

This passage of Scripture is all about the work of the Holy Spirit, the coming of the Holy Spirit and Jesus preparing His disciples for such, yet in the middle of this discussion is a very clear understanding of some of Jesus closest followers... His disciples not really listening to what He was telling them, not hearing Him, not being able to really grasp it even though they knew Him. Verse 12 of the particular passage of Scripture has not only intrigued me for many years, it also

raises some questions in my mind and personal walk. In verse 12 Jesus says to His disciples, <sup>12</sup> *'I still have many things to say to you, but you cannot bear them now. – John 16:12 (NKJV)* What is Jesus saying? It probably has both positive and negative implications in some ways. A part of what He is telling his disciples in context is that He has a lot more to show them regarding the Holy Spirit, but that will come later, right now He is telling them just what they need to know. And this is certainly true in our lives. God is not going to reveal to us or show us more than we are capable or ready to handle at any given time (i.e. my own call experience in relation to this verse this verse). On the more negative side He may have been saying to them you are ready to hear anymore at this time, you aren't at a place in your walk and relationship with me to really hear more. In other words, they didn't know Him to the depth needed to hear Him any further.

What are the implications and truths that we may glean from this passage? Let me give you a few here. We may call these 5 Interferences to Hearing God that emerge from John 16.

### **5 Interferences to Hearing God Based on John 16:5-15:**

- (1) **We allow circumstances to cloud our hearing -** The circumstances, even those we may have no control over, always have the potential of clouding everything in our lives... our thinking processes, our ability to reason and make good decisions, and especially our ability to accurately hear. Think about it, when we are down and discouraged, grief-stricken, or even sick we are not at our best and things can really look skewed. When we are in the throes of deep struggles and heartaches, going through a particularly difficult trial that has us emotionally pent up, grieving so deeply that we can't think or focus on anything else... this type of circumstance can cause us not to hear well even those who love us and are trying to encourage us. That is essentially what is happening to the disciples in our passage in John 16. Jesus has been telling them... speaking to them about His purpose in coming and what He is about to go through. He has also been describing what many of them may potentially face. Listen to what He says to them in verse 5, <sup>5</sup> *'But now I go away to Him who sent Me, and none of you asks Me, 'Where are You going?'* <sup>6</sup> *'But because I have said these things to you, sorrow has filled your heart.* Did you see it? Sorrow had filled their hearts and they were not hearing what He said. The same is true for us. The circumstances we find ourselves in can cloud our hearing of God's voice in our life if we are not careful, and sometimes even when we are "careful" those circumstance can make the heavens seem as brass.
- (2) **We think we know best for our lives –** We often think we know best for our lives. No one knows me better than ME. I know my likes and dislikes. I know what make me tick. I know what will make me happy. I know my gifts and strengths and I know my weaknesses. Not only that, no one has a right to tell me how to live my life. This is often the attitude, or perhaps better called "excuse," for many who don't want to give their lives to Christ, or who reject God's Words speaking to their life. "No one, not even God, has a right to tell

me how to live my life.” The truth is, nothing could be farther from the truth. God has a right to tell you how to live your life, especially if you are His... a Christian. You belong to Him. He has every right to tell you how you should and shouldn't live, what you should and shouldn't do. But even beyond this fundamental truth, He knows what is best for you and wants what is best for you. This is key! When we think we know better than God what is best for our lives, we stop listening to Him and His voice, His Word, and start only listening to our own voice... our self, and that is always... always dangerous. In our passage in **verse 7** Jesus told his disciples *“Nevertheless I tell you the truth. It is to your advantage that I go away; for if I do not go away, the Helper will not come to you; but if I depart, I will send Him to you.”* I like that phrase, “it is to your advantage.” In others words, Jesus was saying to them, although you don't understand it and think you know best, I know best and even though this is all hard to hear (my death and departure from you) I know what is best (to your advantage). Always remember that God knows what is to your advantage so you should listen to Him.

- (3) **We don't want to hear what he has to say (makes us too uncomfortable)** – Jesus told His disciples and followers in **verses 8-11**, *“<sup>8</sup> And when He has come, He will convict the world of sin, and of righteousness, and of judgment: <sup>9</sup> of sin, because they do not believe in Me; <sup>10</sup> of righteousness, because I go to My Father and you see Me no more; <sup>11</sup> of judgment, because the ruler of this world is judged.* Do you get what Jesus was telling them? Sometimes the things God has to say to us, even though they may be for our good, are not easy to hear. When His words convict our hearts, cut to the quick, point out the error of our ways, or step on our toes it is not always pleasant. Often we find ourselves wincing at His Word to us, because it gets so personally convicting at times, and the truth is we often shut out His voice because we simply don't want to hear what He is saying. It cuts too deeply and quite frankly we don't want to give up the very thing that He may be speaking to. When this happens we just don't... or won't hear Him.
- (4) **We are not ready to hear what He has to say or who us** – There are times when we can't hear God because we are not ready to hear God, or to put it more simply we are not a place in our life at that time when we will hear Him. That is perhaps the idea behind what Jesus said to His disciples in **verse 12** of our passage, *“<sup>12</sup> I still have many things to say to you, but you cannot bear them now.”* There may be many different reasons why we “cannot bear them now”... that is the words that Jesus would say to us. It could be what we said earlier... we do not want to hear what He has to say. It simply makes us too uncomfortable so we shut off His voice and tune Him out. Or it could be that we are not at a place spiritually where we are ready to hear all that He has to tell us (i.e. my personal call experience in relation to this verse). Have you ever thought that is maybe God grace that He doesn't tell us everything?
- (5) **We don't know Him well enough to hear Him yet** – Verses 13 through 15 are pretty clear. God speaks to us through His Holy Spirit, who indwells every believer. He is God's voice to us and we must learn to listen to the Spirit's still small voice in our life. If that is not happening, it is not because

God is not speaking or is silent... it is because we are not cultivating the kind of heart and life that knows Him intimately and walks closely with Him. Listen to **verse 13-15** of our passage, *<sup>13</sup> However, when He, the Spirit of truth, has come, He will guide you into all truth; for He will not speak on His own authority, but whatever He hears He will speak; and He will tell you things to come. <sup>14</sup> He will glorify Me, for He will take of what is Mine and declare it to you. <sup>15</sup> All things that the Father has are Mine. Therefore I said that He will take of Mine and declare it to you.*

Dr. Charles Stanley, in his book **“How to Listen to God,”** gives us 10 contributing factors raise thick barriers to hearing God when He speak. James says as believers we need to really learn to hear God, what are some hindrances to our doing that.

### **Ten Hindrances to Hearing God: (Dr. Charles Stanley)**

- (1) **We don't know God (John 10:27)** – Jesus said in **John 10:27, “<sup>27</sup> My sheep hear My voice, and I know them, and they follow Me.”**(NKJV) The truth and premise of what Jesus is saying is right on target. If we belong to Him we should listen and follow Him, but is that always the case. And if it is not (always the case), why isn't it? As Jesus said “I know them” (my sheep), but perhaps we don't always know Him! Oh, we may have accepted Him as Lord and Savior of our lives and we are saved believers, but we have never grown past that beginning stage of our Christian experience, where we really “know” Him and can clearly distinguish His voice from the many competing voice that vie for our attention. Many believers know Christ as Savior, but they have failed to press on to know His ways and character. If we know Him only as Savior, God cannot speak some things to us because we simply don't know the way He operates. The more we understand who God is, the more we will hear from Him. That is why it is so urgent that we study the Word of God daily. As we do, we give Him fertile field in which to work and speak to our hearts.
- (2) **A poor self-image** – How many times have we heard people say, “Why would God want to speak to me? I'm not a preacher or in full-time Christian service. Why in the world would He want to communicate with me?” The truth is, we are saved, we are sanctified, we are saints, we are children of the living God. Fathers just naturally want to speak to their children, fathers just naturally want their sons and their daughters to listen to them. Unfortunately, we often see ourselves as unworthy, and when we do, we wonder why a great, magnificent God would speak to us. God could scream in that case, and we could not hear him.
- (3) **A false sense of guilt** – There are two kinds of guilt. One is true guilt, that is, it stems from sin against God... we are responsible for it and we have to deal with it. The second is false guilt, which Satan places on us... this occurs when the devil accuses us of not living up to God's standards. Many people live countless years under such deceptive guilt. They never

feel as if they can quite get God's acceptance... they think they never quite measure up and never quite please God... they believe they will never be all that God wants them to be. These people have a difficult time hearing God, because Satan is always accusing them, saying, "You think God will speak to you? Look what you have done in the past. Do you think He is going to overlook that?" Everything they hear is sifted through a preprogrammed pattern of guilty thinking.

- (4) **Business/busyness** – It is impossible to live in today's world without being busy. We all have schedules to meet, problems to solve, people to relate to on a continuing basis. So, when I refer to business (or busyness), I am not talking about shirking responsibilities on the job or in the home. Yet it is easy in the midst of all the clamoring voices of our society to miss the still, small voice of God. We must be careful to remain sensitive to His presence.
- (5) **Unbelief** – Many people do not fully believe that God speaks today. If we think we get direction only through Scripture, then we will miss out on much of what God has to share, because He will speak so often through His Spirit, circumstances, and other people. We must make absolutely certain that we are fully convinced and persuaded that God does speak to us personally about our families, our businesses, our finances, our hurts, our frustrations, our fears.
- (6) **God-directed anger** – Can you really hear someone else when you are angry, bitter, resentful, and hostile toward them? I don't think so. During my years of ministry, I have occasionally met people who were just plain mad at God... sometimes they didn't even see it in themselves. Perhaps a spouse died, or a child was killed, or their finances collapsed. No matter the event, they don't understand who God allowed it; so they become angry toward Him and they even lash out at others in their anger. When they pray, they seem to continually recall those bitter moments and express their anger. They want to blame God for their problems. They pray and suddenly discover their hostility gushing forth out of their mouths toward God. He will not retaliate. He understands our anger, and even allows it, but we must recognize that that anger in us hardens our heart toward His voice and we don't hear Him.
- (7) **Harboring sin** – Harboring sin is different from committing a sin. Harboring a sin means knowing sin is present, knowing God has put His finger on it, and still not settling it. Harboring sin is like static on the radio. We may faintly hear God voice, but we can't make it out. As Isaiah warned in *Isaiah 59:2*, "*But your iniquities have separated you from your God; your sins have hidden his face from you, so that he will not hear.*"
- (8) **A rebellious spirit** – A rebellious person may want to pray, but he does not want to hear. God will speak to the rebellious heart to repent of a sin, but if no change occurs, God will not speak on other subjects. Rebellion blocks God's penetrating voice. This is the problem with not responding to God invitation in a service. If God speaks and tells you to go forward,

to recommit your life, or surrender your life, or join the church or whatever it may be... for us not to respond is rebellion and we are hindering the voice of God in our life. The next time you may not hear him. His voice may become less and less distinct in your life.

- (9) **Rejecting God’s messengers** – God speaks through other people in our lives and sometimes we don’t listen because we don’t like the messenger that God is using. Maybe we don’t like the way the preacher looks, or talks, or maybe he has annoying habits when he speaks, he speaks too long, or has too much of a “Texas draw.” Maybe God want to speak to you through the music, but you don’t like the style. Maybe God wants to speak to you through a child or young person, but they are too young for you to learn anything from so you don’t listen. Maybe God want to speak to you through a friend, but you aren’t going to take that from your friend. Be careful you could be rejecting God’s messengers and God’s voice in your life
- (10) **Untrained to listen** – Listening to God isn’t something we come into this world automatically knowing how to do. WE have to train ourselves to listen. We are often hindered from hearing God because of our own inexperience. We must train ourselves and discipline ourselves to be good listeners for God’s voice.

**By the way, the idea of being “swift” or “quick” to hear indicate an eagerness, waiting on baited breath for God to speak so that we will hear Him the moment He speak. Believers are to respond positively to Scripture and the voice of God in their lives, and eagerly pursue every opportunity to know God’s Word and will better. Oh, that we would be this way in our lives as believers!**

2. **We must have a controlled tongue (James 1:19, Matthew 16:23)** – James not only speaks to our listening abilities, but also speaks to our “talking” abilities... namely, talking too much. Interesting. Here is how he says in in verse 19, *“<sup>19</sup> So then, my beloved brethren, let every man be swift to hear, slow to speak...”* Very interesting, just as he said we need to be better listeners, he also said we need to be better at “not-talking” at times” I have to tell you, I find this very intriguing! We learn while listening, not while talking. Those who want to take in the truth must silence their tongues in order to hear God speak. In fact, we must spend time in silence preparing ourselves for the sowing of God’s Word in our minds and hearts.

**(READ: Matthew 16:13-23)** This may reflect one of the most “teachable moments” in the lives of Jesus’ disciples as Jesus spoke, taught and tried to prepare them for what was ahead, His coming, and His purposes. The interesting one to pay attention to here is Peter, because he may show us exactly the lesson that James is trying to instill in us in James 1:19 about being quick to hear and slow to speak. Peter seems in this passage to be just the opposite slow to hear and way to quick to speak. Perhaps, an honest look at our own lives in light of God’s

Word in Matthew 16:13-23, may reveal why we too, like Peter, are at times unteachable because we

### **3 Simple Truths Why We Must Be Slow To Speak: (Matthew 16:13-23)**

- (1) **Our words/talk overshadows what God is really saying to us** – Peter may have even had good intentions in what he says to Jesus in verse 22, he didn't like to think of Jesus having to go through what He was speaking of in previous verses. But it also indicates that Peter wasn't really hearing and learning what Jesus was trying to teach Him. Peter incessant talking here indicates that he was somewhat "unteachable" even now at this late point in Jesus' earthly life, and even after such a great confession of Christ verses earlier. We need to talk less and listen more... more closely, more eagerly to what Jesus/God is trying to show us.
  - (2) **Our words/talk are often shaped by hidden motives/agenda** – What might have been Peter's motives in his talking to Jesus this way (v.22)? Concern for Jesus, fear of what was ahead, protection of self and his perceived agenda for a Messiah who would be a great warrior, hero, military leader to deliver Israel and set up His kingdom here. Whatever Peter's motives and agenda, they were clearly not in line with Jesus' purpose and they drew the sharpest kind of rebuke from Jesus in verse 23, "... Get behind Me, Satan! You do not have in mind the things God, but of men." Wow! Those are some sharp words! You see Peter was talking so much here that he was missing God's Word to Him and even his concern and fear for Jesus were misplaced. Peter kindness, in that was his intention, would have been the thwarting of God's planned agenda and the salvation of millions through the death of Christ, including ours.
  - (3) **Our words/talk crowd out God's Word** - Here is simple truth for us. It's hard to hear when we are doing all the talking.
3. **We must have a calm spirit (James 1:19-20, Matthew 5:23-25)** – Here is James again in James 1:19-20, <sup>19</sup>*So then, my beloved brethren, let every man be swift to hear, slow to speak, slow to wrath;* <sup>20</sup>*for the wrath of man does not produce the righteousness of God.* James presents a picture of agitation, saying that one cannot receive truth while in such a state. Tragically, many try to take an angry spirit with them into the place of worship. The service begins, the singing of hymns gets underway, and before long the declaration of truth from God's Word is given; with little or not preparation we try to worship, yet our hearts remain agitated... and we have no success. Anger often blocks the passage of truth into our minds. Why do you think this is? Maybe because our minds are so pre-occupied with other things... namely the anger of what happened (playing it over and over in our minds, brooding about it, mulling it over and over) that we can't focus on anything else.

I think maybe this is why Jesus gave us these instructions concerning worship in His Sermon on the Mount in Matthew 5:23-25 (**READ: Matthew 5:23-25**)

4. **We must have a clean heart (James 1:21)** - Listen to James in verses 21, *“<sup>21</sup> Therefore lay aside (putting away) all filthiness and overflow of wickedness, and receive with meekness the implanted word, which is able to save your souls.”* James names two areas of such cleaning:

**2 Areas of Need Cleaning:**

- (1) **The removal of filthiness** - “Filthiness” is a term meaning “wax in the ear that plugs up the sound.” Interesting that James would use this Greek word in the context of his discussion of our ability to hear God. Sometimes we can’t hear God because we have the “wax” of filthiness in our ears. Wow! Filthiness deadens the hearing. The soul that comes before God ill prepared to hear because of dirt and sin in his or her life can’t take in the message. That’s the way God designed it. Therefore, hearing must be preceded by confession.
- (2) **The removal of all that remains of wickedness** - This refers to the network of wrong, encased in motives and attitudes, that lies beneath the surface. Receiving truth must be preceded by a below-the-surface cleanup.

**COMMENT:** By nature we plunge into Bible study and worship with cluttered lives or selfish time schedules, saying, “Speak now, Lord, or You’ll lose Your chance. I’m really busy right now and must run soon.” Yet God doesn’t fit into any of the frameworks we offer Him. Without an open ear, a controlled tongue, a calm spirit, and a clean heart, we live in a state of divorce... separation from Him, and we miss Him

- B. RECEPTION OF THE TRUTH (James 1:21)** James highlights our attitudes and actions in verse 21, *“<sup>21</sup> Therefore lay aside all filthiness and overflow of wickedness, and receive with meekness the implanted word, which is able to save your souls.”*

**How We Receive the Truth:**

1. **Attitude = “with meekness”** – The term “with meekness” means “strength under control” specifically for the believer it means a submission and surrender of your will to the control of the Spirit. It has with it the idea of being breakable (as in a horse being broken and brought under control) or by implication you and I being teachable. Interesting!
2. **Action = “implanted word”** – The word “receive” in verse 21 was associated with generous hospitality in New Testament times and means “to welcome into my home.” One who receive in this manner is not concerned with the particular person declaring the truth, but with the truth itself. In other words, we are not to be finicky eaters of the Spirit-meals prepared for us. God wants us to take, in humility, what is served us. Receiving spiritual food in this manner allows the Word to become implanted within us.

- C. REPONSE TO THE TRUTH (James 1:22-27)** In these verses, James talks about the proper responses once a spiritual meal has been imbibed (eaten, swallowed, taken in).

*“<sup>22</sup> But be doers of the word, and not hearers only, deceiving yourselves. <sup>23</sup> For if anyone is a hearer of the word and not a doer, he is like a man observing his natural face in a mirror; <sup>24</sup> for he observes himself, goes away, and immediately forgets what kind of man he was. <sup>25</sup> But he who looks into the perfect law of liberty and continues in it, and is not a forgetful hearer but a doer of the work, this one will be blessed in what he does. <sup>26</sup> If anyone among you thinks he is religious, and does not bridle his tongue but deceives his own heart, this one’s religion is useless. <sup>27</sup> Pure and undefiled religion before God and the Father is this: to visit orphans and widows in their trouble, and to keep oneself unspotted from the world.” – James 1:22-27*

### **3 Parts In Our Response to the Truth:**

1. **The command (v.22)** – James says in verse 22, *“But be doers of the word, and not hearers only, deceiving yourselves.”* God isn’t looking for activists who operate without information, nor is He looking for those who are informed and do nothing. Neither one of these alone is acceptable. There must be balance. First we must be hearers, then we must be doers. The term “hearer” refers to “an academic assignment, responsibilities, or tests. There is also a strong warning here. The word translated here as “deceive” or “deceiving” literally means reasoning beside or alongside (as in “beside oneself”). This word was used in mathematics to refer to a miscalculation. “Professing” Christians who are content with only hearing the Word and not living out (divorcing theory from practice) have made a serious miscalculation. What are the implications of what James is saying do you think?
2. **The illustration (vv. 23-25)** – James contrasts two types: the “forgetful hearer” and the “effectual doer”. Using the example of a mirror and one looking into it, he illustrates that God’s spiritual mirror shows us the kind of people we are. The forgetful hearer is the person who takes in scripture, looks at it, but once he leaves the setting, he forgets what God has said. His life is unaffected. In contrast, the effectual doer looks at the mirror (here called the “perfect law” which is another word for the Word of God/Scripture) intently and does not forget what he has seen. He does what he hears. Which are we? James says we must look and not forget!
3. **The application (vv.26-27)** – From James closing remarks we find that genuine Christianity exists:

### **3 Evidence that Genuine Christianity Exists (in ones life):**

- (1) When there is no divorce between the truth and the believers tongue
- (2) When there is no divorce between the truth and the attention given to the needs of others
- (3) When there is no divorce between the truth and the believer’s uniqueness in society