

Glorify the Lamb! Be Doers of the Word

James 1: 22-27



Background for the Leader

Find a quiet space to read the scripture. Be sure to have pen and paper in hand. After getting still and comfortable, slowly read the text out loud. If it is familiar to you, try to imagine that it is not. After reading the text, ask God to speak to you through this scripture revealing all that God would have you to hear in it. Take your paper and make a list of words that stand out in your memory from your reading. Read the scripture again and end by thanking God for speaking to you through the Living Word.

Take a moment to pray for the women for whom you will facilitate discussion. Name their names if you know them.

Notes from Writer (*Please be sure you have done the above personal study and prayer before reading the following*):

The following personal thoughts of the writer are provided to aid you in leading this Bible study. Please be sure to follow your own personal study to know where the Holy Spirit is guiding you and the group. Use these thoughts, if needed, as further discussion material.

This is one of those scriptures that can sometimes make us wonder if the Bible is saying that our works lead to our salvation. It is my opinion that this is not what James is saying at all. As Cumberland Presbyterians, we know that our salvation comes to us only through the grace of Jesus Christ. So, what does it mean to us to be “doers of the word” and to “care for orphans and widows”?

While there is much discussion material in the ideas of how easily we can forget who we really are and how easily we can forget what God’s Word tells us (v. 24), this Bible study is focusing on the simple fact that we are called to do, not just to speak.

In focussing on Mission/Service/Outreach, we cannot forget that Christ has called us to be His hands and feet on this earth. We are called to do! So, how do we reconcile that with the notion of salvation through works? It is so simple and yet so complicated.

We are saved through the grace of Jesus Christ. We are shown unbelievable acts of love through our Creator. And we are called to work. Our works, our doing, does not save us, but our love for God does create in us a desire to do God’s work. If others look at our lives and do not see us doing the Word, but only hear us speaking the Word, then they cannot possibly see a true love of God in our lives. When we love someone, we show it; it comes down to that simple fact. If we love God and God’s Word, then we will show it. We will reach out and take care of those whom God loves. We will take care of those who need it most. We will work for justice in this unjust world. We will keep ourselves “unstained” by it. Praise be to God. In doing the Word, Glory does come to the Lamb!

A Note to the Leader

Choose from the following activities as time and your desired focus permits. You may have had insights come to you through your personal study (above) which will help in choosing

activities or which may even lead you to create new ones. Use your personal study and the guidance of the Holy Spirit in making these decisions and aiding you in facilitating discussion among the group.

As the facilitator, be sure to practice good listening skills, especially during *Searching the Word*. Through your personal study and then listening to the group's discussion, be prepared to connect the activities back to scripture and focus on the highlights which seem to be coming up again and again.

Materials Needed: Index cards, Bibles, pens, newsprint or dry erase board with markers, a copy of James 1:22-27 typed double space for each participant.

Leading the Bible Study

As participants arrive you may want to have some inviting music playing as participants arrive. Be sure that your materials are prepared for the activities so that you can spend this time in fellowship with the participants.

Activity One: Opening

Prior to the meeting, create a game of Charades by writing words on index cards in big, bold letters. The words you choose should be action words such as Eat, Baby-sit, Pray, etc. (The idea here is to "do the word.")

Divide the group into two teams. Each team will take turns having one player act out the word that you present to her from the index card. Her teammates will try to guess the word/phrase. She will have one minute to complete this task. If her team guesses correctly, that team receives a point. The team with the most points at the end of the game wins. (You may wish to have a small token for the winners such as a piece of hard candy.)

Activity Two: Searching the Word

Prior to the meeting, type James 1: 22-27 double spaced and have a copy of it for each participant.

Divide into small groups of three or four. Instruct each group to choose one person to lead them in prayer, one person to read the scripture aloud, and one person to act as scribe, taking notes on what the group says. Once these positions are filled, the prayer leader should lead her group in a prayer asking God to speak through the scripture to each of them.

Next, ask the participants to read the scripture silently, marking words which are repeated or which stand out to them. Once they have had time to do this, ask the scripture reader to slowly read the text aloud. Then, ask the group to silently look over the text once more, marking any other words which stand out to them.

Once the groups have had time to do this, ask them to share with one another the things which they marked and have the scribe take notes in order to share with the larger group.

After a few minutes of discussion time, ask each small group to share with everyone else the Word reflected to them in their study. (*See Notes from Writer for additional discussion material if needed.*)

Activity Three: Connecting to the Theme:

Say: Let's focus for just a minute on the theme for the year, "Be Shepherds of God's

Flock: Glorify the Lamb”. Looking at verse 22 and verse 27, in what ways does this scripture reflect to us how to do this?

Allow time for discussion. Be sure someone is writing ideas on the dry erase board or newsprint.

Activity Four: Worship

Rather than experiencing worship together in your meeting space, prior to the meeting, you should have arranged a mission project in your local area. Once the group has had time to reflect on the scripture, then get up and go and be “Doers of the Word.”

Ideas for projects can range from picking up litter around the church building to building a Habitat for Humanity home. Or, you may want to take literally scripture and take gifts, and love, as you visit children in an orphanage, or doing the same for residents of a nursing home. This is an opportunity for the Living Word to truly come alive.

Whether you decide to share the details with the participants prior to this meeting or to keep those details a surprise, be sure your participants are dressed appropriately and prepared for the time that it will involve.

About the Writer

Tiffany Hall McClung is an ordained Cumberland Presbyterian minister. She is currently focusing on being a full-time mom to son, Ian. She also volunteers with the youth group at First CP of Savannah, TN where her husband, Andy, is pastor. She preaches once a month for a PCUSA congregation in the area and refers to herself as the “roving preacher” available to fill pulpits when needed. Tiffany is a member of the General Assembly Council and a Vision Enabler for Touch the Future. When she isn’t changing diapers or preparing sermons, she enjoys creative writing, reading, and travelling just about anywhere.

The Father Has Compassion for His Children

James 1:27

There are two kinds of religion –Bad (self serving) and Pure (what God requires). The “Bad” religion is characterized by rituals and habits, no deep felt meaning, and it’s external (not allowing God to dwell within). The “Pure” religions is characterized by love, joy, and compassion.

Pure religion requires action. We must be doers, not just hearers only. Pure religion is practical and involves showing our love. We are not called to “share our faith,” but rather we are called to share our love and teach our faith.

Religion is a four-letter word...Love. We are to love our neighbors as ourselves.

- What a changed world we could live in if parents loved their children more than themselves; themselves more than alcohol, drugs, money or a better car or home.
- What a changed world we could live in if we gave our lives to God and our family rather than wanting someone else’s wife, husband, car, home, job or life.
- What a changed world we could live in if our priorities where God, family, and then self; if church attendance was a priority rather than some place other to go when there is no soccer, football, car races or just the opportunity to “veg out” in front of the T.V. If we would make sure we filled the Church like we do those huge stadiums what a changed world we would have. Where is our religion?

God, our Father, calls us to a religion that is pure and faultless, faithful to helping orphans and widows when they need us. We are called to keep ourselves close to God so that we are not swallowed up by all the things in life that draw us away from our personal relationship with God. Being pure in our religion requires a commitment, and that is what is lacking in so many areas of life today. We weigh in on the “Bad” kind of religion more than the “Pure”. James speaks of our temptations for pure religion as the natural progression of living for God on planet earth. The Bible teaches that God will help us overcome our personal sin.

Through Christian maturity we learn to turn our defeats into victories. The most encouraging part is that God is willing to give us the wisdom we need in the midst of our difficulties. Wisdom helps us to understand how to use the circumstances for our good and God’s glory. We need to respond to the trials and temptations with “pure “ religion, which allows us to see the privilege and importance of the position God has given us in life – regardless of the difficulties. We can live a life of “pure” religion and the final product will be a life that reflects His glory.

PRAYER:

Heavenly Father, we come to you knowing that we have not loved you completely; we have not loved our neighbors as ourselves. We have not listened to others with our full attention...we have not gone out of our way to help others unless it is convenient. The world doesn’t seem to work well when we are at the center of it, Lord. We do things we shouldn’t and fail to do what we should. Help us this hour to direct our thoughts to become aware of your intended mission for our lives. Amen.

Pat Freeland Jones
Seekers of Joy Region