

TXT MSG: What We Believe about the Bible

"APPLICATION: DOERS OF THE WORD"

JAMES 1:19-27

This Week's Core Competency

Authority of the Bible – I believe the Bible is the Word of God and has the right to command my belief and action. 2 Timothy 3:16, 17 *All Scripture is God-breathed and is useful for teaching, rebuking, correcting and training in righteousness, 17so that the man of God may be thoroughly equipped for every good work.*

Application involves relating what God has said in his word to everyday life. The process isn't foreign; it's something we do all the time with respect to other things we read. For example, we *follow instructions* to download files off the internet, *heed warnings* on bottles of the medicines we take, *obey laws* that prohibit us from parking in certain places at certain times, *receive information* and decide what to do about it. Information isn't only about *knowing*; it's often about *doing*, too. In other words, information often comes with unspecified expectations. "Bridge Out Ahead" on a yellow road sign means you should safely exit the highway. "Today is Thursday" in my house means I should take out the garbage.

When it comes to "application" of the Bible, one thing is certainly true. Bible study isn't complete without it. "Understanding, then, is simply a means to a larger end—practicing biblical truth in day-to-day life. Observation [looking closely at what the Bible says] plus interpretation [deciding

The Bible is not merely to be repeated or known, but to be lived and felt.

-Martin Luther

carefully what it means] without application [relating what it means to your everyday life] equals abortion. In other words, every time you observe and interpret but fail to apply, you perform an abortion on the Scriptures in terms of their purpose. The Bible was not written to satisfy your curiosity; it was written to transform your life. The ultimate goal of Bible study, then, is not to do something to the Bible, but to allow the Bible to do something to you, so truth becomes tangent to life. You see, we frequently come to the Bible to study it, to teach it, to preach it, to outline it—everything except to be changed by it" (Howard G. Hendricks and William D. Hendricks, *Living by the Book*, 283, 84). Having said that, when we neglect to answer the question "What does the Bible *mean*?" before we answer the question "How does the Bible *work*?" we give *too* much attention to application. And hasty application usually results in faulty application. "Application is based on interpretation, so if your interpretation of a passage is erroneous, your application will likely be erroneous. If your interpretation is correct, you have a possibility that your application will be correct" (292). Too bad, we're prone to one of two errors. Either we give *too little* attention to application or we give *too much* attention to it. Either we interpret but don't apply, or we apply but don't interpret. Remember! Interpret first, and then apply. Determine what the Bible means, and then relate that meaning to your everyday life.

Much more could be said about application; much more needs to be said. But these last few scattered thoughts will have to suffice. First, while
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all parts of the Bible are equally inspired, they are not necessarily equally applicable. For example, Leviticus 13:47-59 contains regulations regarding clothing contaminated with mildew. Are these regulations inspired? Yes. Are they applicable to our everyday lives? Not so much. On the other hand, Proverbs 5:1-23 contains a warning against adultery. Inspired? Yes. Applicable? You bet. Second, apply *the message* or the point of the passage rather than the details. "An interesting example of misapplication occurs when the disciples attempt to apply some words of warning from Jesus (Mark 8:14-21). Jesus tells his disciples, 'Watch out for the yeast [leaven] of the Pharisees and that of Herod.' The disciples make no attempt to interpret the message, but immediately state a principle of application based on one word, 'yeast.' Their principle is, Jesus is rebuking us 'because we have no bread' . . . At issue here, in the task of application, is the disciples' failure to apply *the message* of Jesus. Instead they apply only a principle based on *one word* wrongly interpreted. That kind of problem is all too common in application" (Elliott E. Johnson, *Expository Hermeneutics: An Introduction*, 215 italics added). Too often, one word or one detail in a longer passage captures our attention and we end up relating that word or detail to our everyday lives while missing the point of the passage and its implications completely. Finally, pay attention to the purpose behind the point of the passage. If its purpose is to inform, then *knowing*, sometimes followed by *doing*, is the appropriate response. If its purpose is to warn, *heeding* that warning is the appropriate response. If its purpose is to instruct, then *following* its instructions is the appropriate response. If its purpose is to command, then *obeying* its commands is the appropriate response. If its purpose is to inspire, then *being inspired* to pray, worship, or glorify God is the appropriate response.

day 1 ENCOUNTER – read God’s word to put yourself in touch with him.

James 1:19-27

19My dear brothers, take note of this: Everyone should be quick to listen, slow to speak and slow to become angry, 20for man's anger does not bring about the righteous life that God desires. 21Therefore, get rid of all moral filth and the evil that is so prevalent and humbly accept the word planted in you, which can save you.

22Do not merely listen to the word, and so deceive yourselves. Do what it says. 23Anyone who listens to the word but does not do what it says is like a man who looks at his face in a mirror 24and, after looking at himself, goes away and immediately forgets what he looks like.

25But the man who looks intently into the perfect law that gives freedom, and continues to do this, not forgetting what he has heard, but doing it—he will be blessed in what he does.

26If anyone considers himself religious and yet does not keep a tight rein on his tongue, he deceives himself and his religion is worthless. 27Religion that God our Father accepts as pure and faultless is this: to look after orphans and widows in their distress and to keep oneself from being polluted by the world.

EXAMINE – what the passage says before you decide what it means.

- * In the margin next to "my dear brothers" in v. 19 write, "Cf. vv. 2, 16."
- * Number the three things everyone should be in v. 19.
- * Circle the word "for" indicating *reason* in v. 20.
- * Circle the words "therefore" and "so" indicating *result* in vv. 21, 22.
- * Underline the important word "planted" in v. 21.
- * Highlight v. 22 and v. 27.
- * Draw a line from the word "deceive" in v. 22 to the word "deceives" in v. 26.
- * Box the words "but" and "yet" indicating *contrast* in vv. 23, 25, 26.
- * Put parentheses around the word "like" indicating *comparison* in v. 23.
- * Underline the important words "perfect law" in v. 25.
- * Box the word "if" indicating a *condition* in v. 26.

day 2

EXPLORE – the answer to these questions to better understand what the passage means.

Consult the explanation of the message and the notes to follow if you need help.

1. Describe the person who is the opposite of what everyone should be according to verse 19.
2. James explains why everyone should be "quick to listen, slow to speak and slow to become angry" in verse 20. Put what he says in your own words.
3. Verse 20 says, "humbly accept the word planted in you." What has humility got to do with it?
4. Explain the relationship of verse 21 to verse 20.
5. In what sense does the person described in verse 22 "deceive himself?"
6. Explain the relationship of verses 23-25 to verse 22.
7. What's the point of the *comparison* in verses 23 and 24, or in other words, how's the one who *merely* listens like the one who *merely* looks?
8. James refers to "the perfect law that gives freedom" (see note on v. 25). In what sense does obedience to this "law" bring freedom?
9. James uses the figurative expression "tight rein" to refer to what we should keep on our tongues. (Obviously he doesn't expect us to attach actual leather reins to them.) What image does this figure of speech bring to mind, and what does that image indicate about the matter of speech?
10. Verse 27 describes two attributes of religion that pleases God. What two words would you use to express these two traits?

Listening to what the Bible says is easy. Doing what it says, on the other hand, is a whole different matter. It's not that we don't care about spirituality. Ironically, it's quite the opposite. Many of us want to be spiritual but somehow mistake being knowledgeable for being spiritual. So we study the Bible, read books on spirituality, and listen to who we think are the best qualified Bible teachers—authors of best-selling books, pastors of big churches, and people with PhDs—but in the process become like those who want to be healthy, so they read books on fitness, go to workshops on aerobic versus strength training, join fitness clubs, debate who makes the best treadmill, watch the fitness channel, buy workout gear, but never actually exercise.

According to James, listening to what the Bible says isn't enough; we must do what it says. One author puts it this way, "He is warning us against the notion of mere assent or tame acceptance of God's truth when it is viewed as an end in itself, or worse, as a substitute for practical religion" (Ralph P. Martin, *Word Biblical Commentary*, vol. 48, *James*, 44). In verses 19-21 James stresses listening to the word planted in us when we were saved. "Take note of this," he insists in verse 19. "Everyone should be quick to listen, slow to speak and slow to become angry."

In verses 22-25 he stresses doing what it says. "Do not merely listen to the word, and so deceive yourselves," he warns. "Do what it says." The person who merely listens to the word is like the person who merely looks at himself in a mirror; both do nothing and are worse off for it. Instead,

James instructs us to look intently into God's word and "abide by it" (NASB) if we want his blessing on what we do. His illustration is priceless.

"Most of us spend considerable time in front of a mirror every day, making the most of whatever we've got to work with. James talks about a person who does just the opposite. 'Good night,' a guy says, looking in the mirror. 'I'd better shave. I'd better rearrange my remaining hairs.' But after noticing all of that, he walks off and does nothing.

"He goes down to the office, and pretty soon his boss walks in and says, 'Hey, man, don't you have any razor blades?'

"Just bought a fresh supply at the Cut-Throat Drugstore,' he says.

"Well, you'd better do something about that stubble,' the manager warns, 'or you won't be long in the employ of this company.' That's the situation James is describing" (290).

After all, a truly religious person is a person who controls his tongue, shows compassion to those who are most vulnerable, and doesn't let the world squeeze him into its mold. "Anyone who sets himself up as 'religious' by talking a good game is self-deceived. This kind of religion is hot air and only hot air. Real religion, the kind that passes muster before God the Father, is this: Reach out to the homeless and loveless in their plight, and guard against corruption from the godless word" (vv. 26, 27 *The Message*).

The Message of this Passage
Religion is as religion does, so don't merely listen to
God's word. Do what it says.

day **4** **EMBRACE** – how God spoke to you through his word.

Our desire is to not be merely hearers of the word, but doers of the word as James suggests in James 1:22. Try some of the challenges below to apply what you have learned this week.

- **Give Yourself Some Good Advice Based on the Message of this Passage.**

- **Pick a verse or verses from the passage to memorize or think about this week.**

- **Relate the message of this passage to any of the following:**
 - o **Belonging**
 - o **Becoming**
 - o *going Beyond*

- **Journal your thoughts on the passage.**

- **Home Group Discussion** (for those involved in the deeper connections of a home group)

Make a list of possible applications of James 1:19-27 for your home group. Then identify how it relates to your life personally.

“Application: Doers of the Word”
(Use the space below for Sunday’s message notes)

notes STUDY – the commentaries to answer the questions.

- v. 19 **brothers** The pl. Gk. Term *adelphoi* can mean "brothers and sisters" or "fellow Christians" as it does in v. 2: cf. TNIV and the NET Bible.
- v. 19 **take note** Lit., either "you know this" (indicative) or "know this" (imperative). The NIV translates the verb as an imperative, "take note of this."
- v. 19 **quick, slow** In this context "slow to speak" may allude to the hasty words of a hot head regretted later when he has cooled off. The three traits mentioned describe a patient person not given to "flying off the handle" (see. v. 26). See also Pr 13:3; 29:20, 22. "Do not be reckless in your speech, or sluggish and remiss in your deeds" (Sir 4:29).
- v. 21 **planted** The word "planted" in them was the word of the gospel (cf. "word of truth" in v. 18). James told them to act on the word they received when they were born again and in so doing live a righteous life (v. 20; cf. Lk 8:4-14).
- v. 21 **save** Verse 18 refers to the power of the word to save in the sense of regeneration. This verse refers to the power of the word to save in the sense of sanctification (cf. 1Co 1:18; 2Co 2:15).
- v. 22 **do** Lit., "be doers of the word." James' expression is similar to the rabbinic phrase "to practice Torah."
- v. 22 **deceive** Anyone who assumes that hearing the word is all it takes is sadly mistaken. Knowledgeable Christians are not by that alone spiritual Christians. One commentator calls such mistaken people "sermon-sippers who flit from one doctrinal dessert to another like helpless hummingbirds" (J. Ronald Blue, "James," in *The Bible Knowledge Commentary: New Testament*, 815).
- v. 23 **man** Although this word commonly refers to a male, it can simply mean "someone." The TNIV uses the plural to indicate the illustration applies to men and women alike. "Those who listen to the word but do not do what it says are like people who look at their faces in a mirror and, after looking at themselves, go away and immediately forget what they look like."
- v. 23 **like** The two are alike in that both "do nothing." The first "does not do" what the word says (v. 23), and the second "forgets what he looks like" (v. 24), i.e., does not do anything about what he saw in the mirror. "What is seen in a mirror is meant to lead to action, usually regarded as remedial. The face is seen to be dirty (go back to v. 21) or blemished and needing attention. Instead the thoughtless person 'goes off and forgets' (gnomic aorists [indicate customary behavior]) what he has seen" (Martin, 50).
- v. 23 **intently** The verb pictures someone bending over a mirror to examine his image in it. The same verb is used in 1Pe 1:12 of the angels' interest in the sufferings of Christ and in John 20:5, 11 of John peering into the empty tomb.
- v. 25 **perfect law** James is referring to the "word of truth" (v. 18), "the word planted in them" (v. 21), which was both a word about Christ and the word of Christ rather than the law of Moses. "For the Jewish Christian the law is still the will of God, but Messiah has come and perfected it and given his new law" (Peter Davids, *Commentary on James*, NIGTC, 99). (See Gal 6:2; cf. 1Co 9:21 where "Christ's law" probably refers to Christ's teachings.)
- v. 25 **gives freedom** Lit., "law of liberty."
- v. 26 **religious, religion** The same can and must be said of the one who considers himself "spiritual" and of "spirituality."
- v. 26 **worthless** Of no practical value, "useless" (NKJV), good for nothing.

Experience it!

Experience scripture through the activity-based learning exercise. Dinner is a perfect time to engage the family.

Read the following: At your next math test you decide to not write any of the answers on the answer sheet. When asked about it, you replied, "I have all the right answers in my head, so I don't see the need to prove to you by writing them down." What will your teacher probably say? Read Luke 10:25-37. Jesus teaches that your actions should always show others what you believe about the Bible.

Pray it!

As a parent you can pray God's perfect will for your child by using actual scriptures to guide your praying. Insert your child's name in the blanks as you pray.

God, let the word of Christ dwell in me richly as I teach and admonish others with wisdom and as I sing psalms, hymns and spiritual songs with gratitude in my heart to You. Col 3:16

Post it!

Post the kid-friendly Core Competency and the memory verse throughout the house. Lead your children to interact with them as they memorize.

Authority of the Bible – I believe the Bible is God's book that tells me what to believe and do.

Memory verse – "Do your best to present yourself to God as one approved, a workman who does not need to be ashamed and who correctly handles the word of truth." 2Ti 2:15

Discuss it!

Discover biblical truth by discussing the scripture. Reflective questions are great with older kids.

- *If the man answered correctly, why did Jesus say, "Do this and you will live"?
- *Describe what the priest and the Levite did when they saw the man who had been robbed.
- *How did the Samaritan respond when he saw the man who had been robbed?
- *Why did Jesus encourage the man to "go and do likewise!"

Live it!

Live out the Core Competency and build deeper relationships by doing this activity.

The Bible is God's book that tells me what to believe and do, but sometimes it's difficult to make sure there's enough time in the week to learn what it says. The brand new Kid Pix Store opens this coming Sunday. Earning tokens to exchange in the store is a great way to encourage kids to prioritize completing *The Scrolls*.

Kids K through sixth grade receive Kid Pix Tokens for each discipleship activity completed.



Family completes **Experience It** _____
 Child memorizes kid-friendly **Core Competency** _____
 Family participates in **Live It** _____ and **Pray It** _____
 Child memorizes **Memory Verse** _____

Child's name _____

Parent's signature _____

30 CORE COMPETENCIES

10 CORE BELIEFS

Trinity *2 Corinthians 13:14*

I believe the God of the Bible is the only true God - Father, Son, and Holy Spirit.

Salvation By Grace *Ephesians 2:8-9*

I believe a person comes into a right relationship with God by His grace, through faith in Jesus Christ.

Authority of the Bible *2 Timothy 3:16-17*

I believe the Bible is the Word of God and has the right to command my belief and action.

Personal God *Psalms 121:1-2*

I believe God is involved in and cares about my daily life.

Identity in Christ *John 1:12*

I believe I am significant because of my position as a child of God.

Church *Ephesians 4:15-16*

I believe the church is God's primary way to accomplish His purposes on earth today.

Humanity *John 3:16*

I believe all people are loved by God and need Jesus Christ as their Savior.

Compassion *Psalms 82:3-4*

I believe God calls all Christians to show compassion to those in need.

Eternity *John 14:1-4*

I believe there is a heaven and a hell and that Jesus Christ is returning to judge the earth and to establish His eternal kingdom.

Stewardship *1 Timothy 6:17-19*

I believe that everything I am or own belongs to God.

10 CORE PRACTICES

Worship *Psalms 95:1-7*

I worship God for who He is and what He has done for me.

Prayer *Psalms 66:16-20*

I pray to God to know Him, to lay my request before Him and to find direction for my daily life.

Bible Study *Hebrews 4:12*

I read the Bible to know God, the truth, and to find direction for my daily life.

Single-mindedness *Matthew 6:33*

I focus on God and His priorities for my life.

Spiritual Gifts *Romans 12:4-6*

I know and use my spiritual gifts to accomplish God's purposes.

Biblical Community *Acts 2:44-47*

I fellowship with other Christians to accomplish God's purposes in my life, others' lives, and in the world.

Giving Away My Time *Colossians 3:17*

I give away my time to fulfill God's purposes.

Giving Away My Money

2 Corinthians 8:7

I give away my money to fulfill God's purposes.

Giving Away My Faith *Ephesians*

6:19-20

I give away my faith to fulfill God's purposes.

Giving Away My Life *Romans 12:1*

I give away my life to fulfill God's purposes.

10 CORE VIRTUES

Joy *John 15:11*

I have inner contentment and purpose in spite of my circumstances.

Peace *Philippians 4:6-7*

I am free from anxiety because things are right between God, myself, and others.

Faithfulness *Proverbs 3:3-4*

I have established a good name with God and with others based on my long-term loyalty to those relationships.

Self-Control *Titus 2:11-13*

I have the power, through Christ, to control myself.

Humility *Philippians 2:3, 4*

I choose to esteem others above myself.

Love *1 John 4:10-12*

I sacrificially and unconditionally love and forgive others.

Patience *Proverbs 14:29*

I take a long time to overheat and endure patiently under the unavoidable pressures of life.

Kindness/Goodness *1 Thess. 5:15*

I choose to do the right things in my relationships with others.

Gentleness *Philippians 4:5*

I am thoughtful, considerate and calm in dealing with others.

Hope *Hebrews 6:19-20*

I can cope with the hardships of life and with death because of the hope I have in Jesus Christ.

About the Authors

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The mission of THE SCROLLS is to help you develop the beliefs, practices, and virtues of a follower of Jesus Christ called The 30 Core Competencies through your own active reading of the Bible. Send any questions or comments you may have about this lesson to Tom Bulick. His e-mail address is tbulick@pantego.org.