

Doers of the Word

JAMES 1:18-27

In fulfillment of his own purpose he gave us birth by the word of truth, so that we would become a kind of first fruits of his creatures. **19** You must understand this, my beloved: let everyone be quick to listen, slow to speak, slow to anger; **20** for your anger does not produce God's righteousness. **21** Therefore rid yourselves of all sordidness and rank growth of wickedness, and welcome with meekness the implanted word that has the power to save your souls. **22** But be doers of the word, and not merely hearers who deceive themselves. **23** For if any are hearers of the word and not doers, they are like those who look at themselves in a mirror; **24** for they look at themselves and, on going away, immediately forget what they were like. **25** But those who look into the perfect law, the law of liberty, and persevere, being not hearers who forget but doers who act--they will be blessed in their doing. **26** If any think they are religious, and do not bridle their tongues but deceive their hearts, their religion is worthless. **27** Religion that is pure and undefiled before God, the Father, is this: to care for orphans and widows in their distress, and to keep oneself unstained by the world.



How does James describe the word of God?

What does your unbridled tongue tend to produce?

What would it take to bridle it?

In what specific circumstances will you need Jesus' help to do so this week?

Where do we find today's "orphans and widows"?

What are some of the problems with caring for them?

What is it about caring for them that is so central to God's heart?

How are we changed in the process?

How would you like to move towards the needy this month?

RESPONSE THAT PLEASES GOD

- **Be real** – avoid superficial, fake, or overly simple responses like "I learned I just need to trust God."
- **Be specific** – avoid general responses that any nice person could do even if he or she weren't a Christian.
- **Be risky** – choose responses that cause you to need God, not to just exercise will power.
- **Be prayerful** – Ask regularly, "God, what are you wanting to say to me?"

Goal: to come to wisdom and understanding about the meaning of the text for the original audience and for those studying today.

Leading into Response

What makes a Bible study rather than merely comforting, cathartic, or informative? Without and application, it is too easy to be “like a man who observes his natural face in a mirror... and at once forgets what he was like.” (James 1:23-24) If we are not doers of the word, the power of the word does not impact and change us, and we deceive ourselves.

CHARACTERISTICS OF GOOD RESPONSE QUESTIONS:

- Flow from the study
- Appropriate to the group
- Immediate
- Concrete
- Realistic but pressing
- Requires reliance on Jesus
- Involves accountability (e.g., group application, shared with prayer partner, followed up at next Bible study)

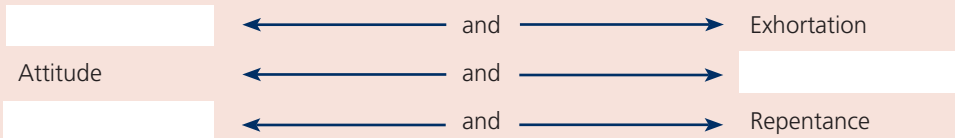
ASK YOURSELF,

1. What does the author want you to do?
2. What is your sense of the group’s need?
3. What has God said to you?

Helping a group enter into transformative application is a leadership skill. You must start with where the group connected to the scripture intellectually or emotionally, and then move them from general to specific. It is not enough to say that, “Jesus addresses our fears.” Students of the word must be helped to name the specific fears, in fact, fears that they presently experience, rather than fears they have experienced at some point in their life. In naming and articulating live issues, and then letting the truth of the scripture address those real issues, the Bible study becomes a direct encounter with the living God.

In preparation, brainstorm 4-8 application questions. Write questions that address different parts of the study. Paired questions work well. The first question is

A BALANCED DIET IN YOUR RESPONSE QUESTIONS: BOTH



(not necessarily in a single study, but certainly over the course of several studies)

often broader and helps identify an area of life. The second question in the set brings a greater level of concreteness by asking for specific action or response.

When it comes time for application in the study, select the two questions that seem to connect most with the group given the discussion the group has just had. Help people be specific and concrete by writing down answers on the back of their paper, splitting into pairs to share their answers, or deciding together on a communal application (e.g. taking out the trash of everyone one in the residence hall after a Bible study about servanthood). If you chose a communal application, provide leadership to bring the experience to completion, rather than throwing some ideas around and seeing what happens.

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How does James describe the word of God?

Implanted word that has the power to save your souls, the perfect law, the law of liberty, produces blessing through obedience

What does your unbridled tongue tend to produce?

What would it take to bridle it?

In what specific circumstances will you need Jesus' help to do so this week?

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Leading into Response

What makes a Bible study **transformative** rather than merely comforting, cathartic, or informative? Without **concrete** and **specific** application, it is too easy to be “like a man who observes his natural face in a mirror... and at once forgets what he was like.” (James 1:23-24) If we are not doers of the word, the power of the word does not impact and change us, and we deceive ourselves.

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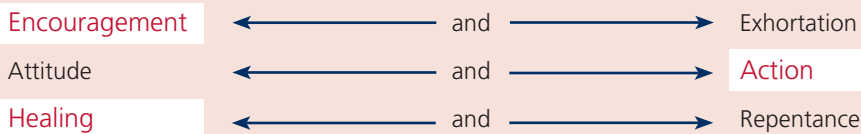
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