

LIVING out LOUD

# James

*Studies in Practical Christianity*

*Session #2 Recognising Real Religion*

James Chapter 1 Verses 19-27

*“Do not merely listen to the word, and so deceive yourselves.  
Do what it says.” – James 1v 22*

Sladebrook Evangelical Church

[www.sladebrook.org.uk](http://www.sladebrook.org.uk)

## **Introduction and Aim of this Teaching Series:**

The book of James is often considered to be the most practical book in the Bible. Apart from the logical lessons of the Proverbs and, of course, the unavoidable challenges we find in the Sermon on the Mount that is probably true! As the half-brother of Jesus, James shoots from the hip; having witnessed firsthand what a life before God should be lived like, he speaks clearly with penetrating truths that leave little room to manoeuvre or excuse.

James wrote with divine insight that cannot be compromised. His epistle, written to scattered saints in need of encouragement, comes fresh upon each reading. Some books of the Bible require not only careful examination, but also careful interpretation, as different views can surface and political persuasions are formed. Not so with James. The challenge of this short book of 108 verses is not so much interpretation, but application! The meaning is all too clear and the challenge unequivocal. James' message throughout is clear: Practical Christian living reflects genuine faith that goes on to transform our lives. So says James, if you believe it, your life should show it!

The aim of this series is to highlight this teaching and the need to "Live it out Loud" personally and within our corporate context. James wrote to Jewish Christians facing all sorts of trials and who due to their heritage, were tempted to resort to the thankless task master of law keeping, rather than to Christ. James' message is clear: We are to aim for all that God intends us to be; not by merely verbalising a creed, or looking back to law, but by expressing a radical, counter cultural Christ-life that defies the wisdom and ways of this world. As a local church, we need to hear James' words again and heed their heart beat if we are to embrace all that Christ would have for us, both within the fellowship and as we reach out to those yet to see what genuine faith looks like: As God's people, may we learn to "Live out Loud" the truths we discover during the time we spend in the book of James.

## **LIVING out LOUD #2: Introduction**

We've all done it: we've all sat under sermon upon sermon, listening to lesson after lesson. We may even have been moved in the moment, sat poised and ready to respond. But for whatever reason, that which God intended to shape us for the week ahead failed to do so. Was it the preacher's length, depth, or lack of both?! Do refreshments usurp response? Has coffee really conquered conviction? Likewise, when did you last overhear talk about the Word and not the weather after the service? Again, some it seems are quick to rush home and save the burnt offering, rather than remain and ponder what offering the Lord may have sought from them that morning. One thing is sure; we are all guilty. As God's preoccupied people, we would do well to take note, for here is a danger that James will emphasize again...

God's people have ignored His call to respond more than once. Think how Israel either overlooked or overruled God's Word given through Moses! "You have ignored the law of your God..." (Hos. 3v6) Remember how when explaining the parable of the Sower, Jesus likened the birds of the air to Satan. Just as birds sweep down to devour the seed, so too "... the evil one comes and snatches away what was sown in his heart." (Matt. 13v 19) It is not so much by destruction, but by distraction that Satan achieves his goal. As a result, countless Christians let the work of the Word pass them by and any hope that it might penetrate our hearts and produce fruit is lost.

To address this problem, James challenges us to sweep the house of all that is evil: (1v21) A blocked drain will never know free flowing water within it. Secondly, we are to apply God's Word in lives that are swift to respond. (1v22) Mere Word watching is not only tedious, but fruitless! Our studies must never outweigh our steps. (1v23-24) James says such Christians know nothing of the vitality of God's Word, let alone how it should manifest in their lives. Finally in this section, James presents us with real religion: (1v27) Where the Word is worthless, un-yielded hearts utter unwise words. However, and in notable contrast, the Christian Living out Loud overflows with genuine faith, affecting the lives of those they are naturally drawn to help. This heady combination of purity and practice pleases God and commends Christ, hitting the spot not only for James, but for anyone who in a similar way would seek to follow Christ and share in His gospel grace.

## **Recognising Real Religion**

*As James begins to build his case for “Living out Loud” He challenges his readers to “get rid and get right,” recognising how easily it is to slip into sin. He then highlights the danger of empty Bible study as well as affirming its potential to produce fruit when heard and applied by the earnest disciple.*

### **1. V19-21: Start with the Heart: How we must all look at our lives**

*James reminds us to take note: our attitudes betray our hearts. If sin is at work, it will show and must therefore be dealt with swiftly and severely.*

### **2. V22-25: When The Word Works: How Scripture is intended to speak**

*Scripture was never intended to simply be studied! Blindness comes from inactivity, whereas blessing comes from applying the living Word of God.*

### **3. V26-27: Recognising Real Religion: How it looks and who it helps**

*Loose tongues expose deluded disciples, whereas real religion is pure and practical, pleasing God, blessing others and consistently commending Christ.*

## **LIVING out LOUD:**

- *How often do you consciously search your heart in an attempt to get rid of “all moral filth and the evil that is so prevalent”? How would you instruct a young Christian to do this?*
- *Plenty has been said and written about preparing and preaching the Word. Why is there not the same emphasis when it comes to listening to Scripture? How should we prepare ourselves to receive God’s Word during times of personal study and on Sundays?*
- *Can you think of a time when, having heard God’s Word, you simply had to respond? When was it and how did that response look?*
- *Does v27 challenge you? How similar/removed from this ideal do you consider your Christianity? In what ways can you express pure and faultless religion this week? (Give some actual practical examples)*
- *What lessons can Sladebrook take from this section of James about how we approach/employ Scripture and how as a community we respond to it?*