

Listening & Doing

Listening and speaking, like knowing and doing can be challenging. We tend to like speaking our mind and doing what needs to be done whether we've listened or learned first.

What does James mean when he says to be quick to listen and slow to speak in verse 19? How does this relate to anger?

Have you ever found yourself planning what to say next while someone is still talking? Or formulating an answer to a question before the person has even finished asking it?

How does that happen in relationship to prayer? With God, do you do more talking or listening when you pray? How might your prayer life be different if you listened more?

Have you ever been on a silent retreat? Try spending 30 minutes in silence, listening to God.

What happens when you hear God's word but don't do what it says? Tell about a time you were fairly confident about following God's Word and Will. Did it work out well, or not?

Listening to respond means you're formulating your response while the other person is still talking. This type of listening is self-centered and can lead to miscommunication or misunderstanding.

On the other hand, *listening to understand* means you put your own thoughts and emotions aside to focus fully on what the speaker is saying.

Peering into the Mirror



These masks are known as *Comedy and Tragedy*. They are symbols of the theater. Greek actors would wear masks to portray various characters in a play. The definition of hypocrisy comes from these masks. The Greek word *hypokrites* was used to refer to actors in a play.

Sometimes we look at ourselves in the mirror but show another face to the world. How is that like the *hypokrites* plays two different roles in the same play?

Take a good long look of yourself in the mirror – deeply into your own eyes – pray for the Holy Spirit to bring a renewed sense of authenticity to your day.

True Religion

What does James mean by pure and faultless religion in verse 27? Do we take this passage literally – expressing care for “widows and orphans” or is there a broader sense, like Eugene Peterson expressed in The Message saying, “Reach out to the homeless and loveless in their plight”?

Read Isaiah 57 – In the NIV it is titled “True Fasting”. As you read it, exchange the word *fasting* for the word *worship, worshipping or religion*. Does that change the meaning of the text or deepen it? How does Isaiah 57, when read in that light, inform your reading of James 1:27?

Think about our life together at FRC. In this transitional phase, we're taking a good long assessing look at ourselves in the mirror. Are we keeping a “tight rein” on our tongues? Is the way we practice “religion” pure and faultless? Are we outward focused or inward focused? Ask God what this congregation will look like in 5-7 years? How do we begin to live into that?