

Love Does

James 1:19-27

Big Idea: Real faith isn't just hearing God's Word — it's doing it. Close your mouth, open your hands, and love people who can't repay you. That's religion that's pure before God. Love does.

Main Points

1. Loving God and others begins with a posture of listening to God through His Word and to the people around us.
2. Authentic faith requires honest self-examination. God's Word is not just a book to be read; it is a mirror meant to reveal what is truly in our hearts.
3. The process of becoming more like Christ, sanctification, is active, not passive. It requires dying to self and persevering through the hard work of spiritual growth.
4. Our words reveal the condition of our hearts. A faith that does not govern the tongue is a faith that is not producing what it should.
5. Pure religion expresses itself in love for those who cannot repay us and in keeping our hearts unstained from the world.

Scriptures:

- ☐ Philippians 1:6
- ☐ Philippians 3
- ☐ Philippians 4:4
- ☐ Romans 8:29
- ☐ Ephesians 4:22-24
- ☐ Psalm 19:7
- ☐ Psalm 68:5
- ☐ Psalm 51:10
- ☐ 1 John 1:9
- ☐ 1 John 2:15
- ☐ 1 John 3:16-18

Opening Question:

When you think about someone in your life whose faith is genuinely visible in the way they live, what stands out most about them?

Discussion Questions:

The sermon described how difficult it is to truly listen -- to God and to others -- without mentally preparing our response. Where do you find this most challenging? In your relationship with God, with family, with coworkers, or somewhere else?

Pastor Tim distinguished between anger that is a natural response to being wounded and anger that festers into bitterness and resentment. How do you personally recognize when your anger has crossed that line? What has helped you keep anger from becoming bitterness?

James 1:20 reminds us that human anger does not produce the righteousness of God. What does it look like practically to hand anger over to God rather than letting it direct our words and actions?

The sermon introduced the concept of intentional introspection, regularly examining our hearts in light of God's Word. How consistent is this practice in your own life? What tends to get in the way?

James warns against being hearers only, people who look in the mirror and walk away unchanged. What is the difference between reading the Bible for information and reading it for transformation? What does the second approach actually look like in a daily routine?

James says that a person who does not bridle their tongue, regardless of how religious they appear, has a worthless religion. Why do you think James connects the tongue so directly to the authenticity of our faith?

The sermon described verse 27 as personally haunting. The call to care for orphans and widows, people who cannot repay us. Why do you think James specifically names people who cannot give back as the measure of genuine faith?

The second half of verse 27 calls believers to keep themselves unstained from the world. In practical terms, what does that look like in the culture you are living in right now? Where do you find that most difficult?

The closing challenge asked two questions: For those who know Jesus, what is holding you back from becoming more like Him? For those who do not yet know Him, what is holding you back from placing your trust in Him? Take time to sit with those questions honestly as a group.

Practical Applications:

1. Practice intentional listening. In at least one conversation this week, make a deliberate effort to listen fully before responding. Afterward, reflect on what that felt like and what it revealed about your normal habits.
2. Read James 1:19-27 every day this week. Each time you read it, ask God to show you one specific thing in the passage that applies to your life right now. Write down what He brings to your attention.
3. Identify one person who cannot repay you. Think of someone in your life who is in a season of genuine need emotionally, physically, financially, or spiritually. Take one concrete step this week to care for that person without any expectation of return.
4. Examine your words. At the end of each day this week, spend five minutes reflecting on your conversations. Were your words life-giving or harmful? What did they reveal about what is in your heart? Bring what you find to God in honest confession and prayer.
5. Memorize James 1:22. Commit this verse to memory and return to it throughout the week as a reminder of the call to be doers of the Word, not hearers only.

Closing Thought/Prayer:

Pray that God would help us not only hear His Word, but humbly receive it and live it out through listening well, controlling our words, and loving others in practical ways.