

February 20, 2022

## 12. Do the Word, Guard Your Speech — **James 1:19-27, NRSV**

Growing up, I went to a church in Garland, Texas. We had a game we played called The Sword Drill. We held our Bibles and were allowed to place one finger inside. Most kids would try to find the middle. The leader would then call out a book of the Bible, the chapter, and the verse, and we would race to get to the passage first and read it out loud. It was called the sword drill because, you know, the Bible is a sword. It was a weird and toxic place, so don't judge me. We would do this every Sunday for prizes and even money sometimes. We did all of this, but none of it ever stuck. We never applied the Bible verses to current situations. We were just competitive. We all saw it as a game.

We were kids, but the problem still persists. We heard the Scriptures, but we never applied them to our lives. We were hearers of the word, but not doers. Christianity in the United States has gotten away with this for a long time. We know the Scriptures, but we do not apply them. Many times, we know that God has been good, but we respond inappropriately. In the book of James, we are called to be doers of the word, not merely hearers. It is great for us to know Scriptures, but we need to live them out in our lives.

This is important for us individually and communally as the church. Actions will always speak louder than words. Our actions prove the faith we talk about. Do we believe that God loves all of creation? Do we believe that God is against oppression and for the liberation of both physical bodies and spiritual souls? Do we believe that peace and justice can be achieved in a nonviolent, nonmilitaristic manner? If the answer is yes, then we need to live this out. James 1:27 tells us what religion looks like. "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." Our religious beliefs must translate to our actions. We are called to take care of the oppressed and the downtrodden in our world.

—Jerrell Williams

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## Resources for this session

Looking for participant guide page numbers in the leader guide? The page numbers in the leader guide work for both guides.

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