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CFBC... “James: Real Faith For A Real World”

“LIVING BY THE BOOK”

James 1:19-27

Some warning labels are utterly ridiculous. For example, on the side of a baby stroller box, there is this warning:

- **Remove child before folding.**

On a cardboard sunshield that you place on the windshield to protect your car from the sun, there was this warning:

- **Don’t drive with sunshield in place.**

On a toilet bowl cleaning brush:

- **Not for oral use.**

On the package of a rain gauge, there was this comment:

- **Suitable for outdoor use.**

On a 500-piece puzzle:

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■ **Some assembly required.**

From the manual of a chainsaw:

■ **Don’t attempt to stop the blade with your hand.**

The reason these silly labels exist is because somebody evidently bought the products and used them in way they were never intended to be used. As a result, they were hurt. So, the creators of these items sought to eliminate liability.

You might say that our passage today is a warning label of sorts. An improper handling of the Bible can be detrimental to our lives.

Today we have amazing access to the Word of Truth. Everybody in this room has your own Bible. You can download podcasts of great preaching. You can log onto YouTube and watch some of the most gifted communicators of God’s Word unpack the rich truths of God’s Word. One thing is for sure. We are not lacking in our access to the Biblical truth!

Our challenge centers on what we do with the Word. The Word of the Lord can inform your mind without

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transforming your heart and altering your life. The challenge God lays out for us in our text today is this...

LIVE BY THE BOOK!

To live by the Book we must . . .

1. RESPECT THE WORD

I have many books in my library and many of the authors are skilled and successful. There is only one book in my possession that I would consider to be the greatest book every written—*the Bible*. Every person within the sound of my voice should respect the Bible because...

A.) It Is A Perfect Book

Take a look at these Scriptures...

Psalm 19:7–8... The law of the LORD is perfect, restoring the soul; The testimony of the LORD is sure, making wise the simple. **8** The precepts of the LORD are right, rejoicing the heart; The

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commandment of the LORD is pure, enlightening the eyes.

2 Timothy 3:16... All Scripture is inspired by God and profitable for teaching, for reproof, for correction, for training in righteousness.

Do you see the word "inspired?" It is a special word and it means *God-breathed*.

1 Thessalonians 2:13... For this reason we also constantly thank God that when you received the word of God which you heard from us, you accepted *it* not *as* the word of men, but *for* what it really is, the word of God, which also performs its work in you who believe.

B.) It Is A Powerful Book

The writer of Hebrews described the Bible like this...

Hebrews 4:12–13... For the word of God is living and active and sharper than any two-edged sword, and piercing as far as the division of soul and spirit, of both joints and marrow, and able to judge the thoughts and intentions of the heart.
13 And there is no creature hidden from His

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sight, but all things are open and laid bare to the eyes of Him with whom we have to do.

Do you see how God's Word penetrates our inmost being? This book . . .

- **confronts you**
- **comforts you**
- **convicts you**
- **challenges you**
- **converts you**
- **changes you**

Because it is God-breathed, the power of Almighty God saturates every word.

C.) It Is A Promising Book

This is the most encouraging book in the world. It contains the greatest story ever told. It is a story about the one true God who sends His Son, the Lord Jesus Christ, to save us from our sins (John 3:16, Romans 10:9-10). It promises forgiveness for sins,

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grace for our failures, comfort for grieving hearts,
and hope for the future.

LIVE BY THE BOOK!

To live by the Book we must respect the Word.
Secondly, we must . . .

2. RECEIVE THE WORD

Reading God’s Word is more than advancing a bookmark; it is listening to God speak. Living by the book was essential if these first century believers were going to please the Lord and advance His kingdom. The Holy Spirit laid down three principles that would help them and us receive the Word.

A.) The Principle Of Careful Hearing

James 1:19–20...*This you know, my beloved brethren. But everyone must be quick to hear, slow to speak and slow to anger; 20 for the anger of man does not achieve the righteousness of God.*

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The command to be **quick to listen** calls for an eagerness to hear and obey God’s message. The appeal to be **slow to speak** demands silence until we have understood and properly applied the message. It is a call for restraint.¹

Listening to God requires intense interest. Forming opinions quickly without clear direction from God’s Word will only lead to a smoldering kind of anger which develops as a result of our being resistant to God’s revealed purposes.

B.) The Principle Of A Cleansed Heart

James 1:21... Therefore, putting aside all filthiness and *all* that remains of wickedness, in humility receive the word implanted, which is able to save your souls.

Putting aside pictures the believer taking action in a decisive way. James uses the metaphor of taking off

¹ Thomas D. Lea, *Hebrews, James*, vol. 10, Holman New Testament Commentary (Nashville, TN: Broadman & Holman Publishers, 1999), 264.

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and putting away soiled clothes.² Listen, if we want to walk in victory it is absolutely necessary that we eliminate from our lives the sins that are contrary to God’s Word! These include . . .

Filthiness refers to morally degenerate behavior.

Wickedness refers to the residue of sin that was a part of our lives prior to our salvation.

To receive the Word into our lives requires that we enter into a continuing process of cleansing our heart from sin!

C.) The Principle Of Conscious Humility

James 1:21... in humility receive the word implanted, which is able to save your souls.

We must never approach the Bible with an arrogant spirit! Here’s our challenge:

² Kurt A. Richardson, *James*, vol. 36, The New American Commentary (Nashville: Broadman & Holman Publishers, 1997), 90.

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LIVE BY THE BOOK!

To live by the Book we must respect the Word and receive the Word. Thirdly, we must . . .

3. RESPOND TO THE WORD

As a follower of Jesus Christ, we are not afforded the luxury of just being a hearer of God's Word. We must respond to the Word of God with...

A.) Active Obedience

James 1:22... **prove yourselves doers of the word, and not merely hearers who delude themselves.**

Prove yourselves is a present tense verb which carries with it the emphasis of persistent obedience to God's Word and an alignment with His ultimate purpose for our lives. Listen, hearing without obeying leads to a dangerous form of self-deception and hardening of the heart! God speaks to us through the Word to produce radical change in our hearts and lives so that we can be more like Jesus.

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The result of a lifestyle of obedience is the blessing of God on our lives (25b).

B.) Accurate Observation

***First, James deals with those who listen but are unresponsive to God’s Word.** He uses the illustration of a mirror.

James 1:23–24... For if anyone is a hearer of the word and not a doer, he is like a man who looks at his natural face in a mirror; 24 for *once* he has looked at himself and gone away, he has immediately forgotten what kind of person he was.

David Daniels pointed out that the mirror informs the looker and then the looker has the power to go and deal with the change—to wash their face or comb their hair—to take care of something that’s wrong with them. It doesn’t matter if a person looks in the mirror ten times or he looks in a hundred mirrors; the person will remain unchanged unless they do something with what they have seen.

People can repeat this experience in the spiritual realm. We give a quick glance into God’s Word, find

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a morsel of truth, and jump into another task without remembering or applying what we read.³ Listen, knowledge without obedience increases condemnation for the unbeliever and discipline for the believer!

***Second, James deals with those who listen and are responsive to God’s Word.**

James 1:25... But one who looks intently at the perfect law, the *law* of liberty, and abides by it, not having become a forgetful hearer but an effectual doer, this man will be blessed in what he does.

Using the mirror metaphor, James inserts four verbs to picture the response of obedient listeners . . .

- First, the obedient believer **“looks intently into the perfect law that gives freedom.”** This describes someone who gazes at God’s message with a desire to learn. The same verb—translated as *“bent over”*—pictures the apostle John staring

³ Thomas D. Lea, *Hebrews, James*, vol. 10, Holman New Testament Commentary (Nashville, TN: Broadman & Holman Publishers, 1999), 266.

into Jesus’ empty tomb (John 20:5,8). John’s look led obedient faith.

- Second, obedient people **“abide by it.”** They put God’s Word into practice and follow through with commitment.
- Third, he describes obedient listeners as those **“not having become a forgetful hearer.”** These disciples do not have spiritual amnesia!
- Fourth, obedient listeners are described as **“effectual doers who will be blessed in what they do.”**⁴

C.) Approved Objective

James 1:26–27... If anyone thinks himself to be religious, and yet does not bridle his tongue but deceives his own heart, this man’s religion is worthless. 27 Pure and undefiled religion in the sight of our God and Father is this: to visit orphans

⁴ Thomas D. Lea, *Hebrews, James*, vol. 10, Holman New Testament Commentary (Nashville, TN: Broadman & Holman Publishers, 1999), 266.

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and widows in their distress, *and* to keep oneself unstained by the world.

Many people consider themselves to be religious based on what they do or don't do. Genuine Christian character is demonstrated by . . .

- **our conversation**
- **our concern**
- **our conduct.**

This is the approved objective that defines true religion!

CONCLUSION

How you handle this Book will demonstrate whether you are saved or lost and it will determine the level of God's blessing on your life and the amount of victory you experience as a believer. Our challenge today is profound...

LIVE BY THE BOOK!

We do this as we...

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1. RESPECT THE WORD

A.) It Is A Perfect Book

B.) It Is A Powerful Book

C.) It Is A Promising Book

2. RECEIVE THE WORD

A.) The Principle Of Careful Hearing (19-20)

B.) The Principle Of A Cleansed Heart (21a)

C.) The Principle Of Conscious Humility (21b)

3. RESPOND TO THE WORD

A.) Active Obedience (22, 25b)

B.) Accurate Observation (23-25)

C.) Approved Objective (26-27)

Have you made a mess of your life? This Book reveals how God has made provision for the salvation of sinners through the atoning death of His Son, Jesus Christ. This book says that Jesus rose from the dead and He is the Savior of the entire world. Will you repent of your sin and place your faith in Jesus as your Savior and your Lord?

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Believer, will you commit yourself to the study of God's Word and to instantaneous obedience when God speaks to you from its pages? Be a doer of the Word and not merely a hearer! Is He speaking to you today about...

- **Your need for spiritual victory**
- **Your treatment of your spouse**
- **Your flirtation with the world**
- **Your lack of commitment to Christ**
- **Your hesitation to give to the church**
- **Your failure to be baptized**

Be a doer of the Word!

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