



What we SAY doesn't demonstrate what we believe, but how we BEHAVE does. Today we examine how Christians different than culture can make a difference in culture.

**Week 1** We began our study through the letter called James, or better translated **Jacob** - likely the half-brother of Jesus. James/Jacob moved from putting *TRUST THAT* to **TRUST IN** Jesus. He moved from *trusting THAT* Jesus existed to **TRUST IN** Jesus as the Lord - the authority of his life.

**Week 2** We were challenged to examine how we respond to **various kinds of trials** - difficult days that will come for ALL of us (1:2-12). Will we trust God in the tough times too? Secondly, we examined how we respond when faced with **temptation** to sin. Do we give in and blame the temptation on God or do we recognize our own sin proclivities and seek a way of escape (1:13-18)? It's during those trials & temptations that we are assured that our heavenly Father who gives us all good gifts, WANTS to give us His wisdom. **Faith is more about WHO we trust than HOW we trust.**

*One of the greatest reasons for us to TRUST God is found here in v. 18.*

**James 1:18** (NIV) <sup>18</sup> **He chose to give us birth through the word of truth**, that we might be a kind of **firstfruits** of all he created.

Why trust God? He made the first move to give you spiritual **birth through the word of truth** - the message of the Gospel.

- The **firstfruits**, the first crop harvested was usually a good indicator of what the future crop would look like. God required that the Jewish people give the firstfruits to the priests who served God and the people (Lev. 23:10-11; cf. Ex. 23:19; Deut. 18:4). Jacob refers to his audience who had responded to the Gospel of Jesus as the firstfruits of God - the first spiritual harvest of many to come in the future.

Sadly, many Jewish people in Jesus' day did NOT trust the message of Jesus. They heard what He said. They just didn't DO what he said.

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**Matthew 21:28-31** (NIV) <sup>28</sup> "What do you think? There was a man who had two sons. He went to the first and said, 'Son, go and work today in the vineyard.' <sup>29</sup> " **'I will not,'** he answered, but **later he changed his mind and went.** <sup>30</sup> "Then the father went to the other son and said the same thing. He answered, **'I will, sir,' but he did not go.** <sup>31</sup> "Which of the two did what his father wanted?" **"The first,"** they answered. Jesus said to them, "Truly I tell you, the tax collectors and the prostitutes are entering the kingdom of God ahead of you."

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What we SAY doesn't demonstrate what we believe.

**BIG TRUTH: How we BEHAVE shows what we BELIEVE.**

**James 1:19–20** (NIV) <sup>19</sup> My dear brothers and sisters, take note of this: Everyone should be quick to listen, slow to speak and slow to become angry, <sup>20</sup> because human anger does not produce the righteousness that God desires.

Jacob combines many of the writings from Proverbs to come up with this three-fold statement. You have no doubt heard the phrase “*You have 2 ears and 1 mouth so that we should listen twice as much as we speak.*”

The rabbis said: “*Men have two ears but one tongue, that they should hear more than they speak. The ears are always open, ever ready to receive instruction; but the tongue is surrounded with a double row of teeth to hedge it in, and keep it within proper bounds.*”<sup>1</sup>

### **Quick to listen**

• **Listen to God:** First, we should be quick to listen to everything God says.

☀️ Kent Hughes: *The devotional prayer of the modern man is, “Lord, speak to me! You have sixty seconds.”*<sup>2</sup>

But what if it were like this instead?

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**Psalm 119:33–35** (NIV) <sup>33</sup> Teach me, LORD, the way of your decrees, that I may follow it to the end. <sup>34</sup> Give me understanding, so that I may keep your law and obey it with all my heart. <sup>35</sup> Direct me in the path of your commands, for **there I find delight.**

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Are you quick to listen to God? Are you seeking what He says?

• **Listen to People.** *Listening communicates care for others, one of the first ways to love your neighbor as yourself.* Further, the Proverbs are full of commands to listen to the wisdom of others - including our parents (Proverbs 6:20–24) and godly friends/leaders (Prov. 19:20).

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**Proverbs 12:15** (NIV) The way of fools seems right to them, but **the wise listen to advice.**

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**Slow to Speak** We can't listen well when we're speaking, and we need to be wise in what we say.

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**Proverbs 29:20** (NIV) Do you see someone who speaks in haste? There is more hope for a fool than for them.

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**Proverbs 17:28** (NIV) Even fools are thought wise if they keep silent, and discerning if they hold their tongues.

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To be sure, God can use our words (a fountain of life - Proverbs 10:11 that nourishes others Prov. 10:21). We are not told to be silent, but be **slow to speak**. Ask God to USE our words before we speak - to honor Him & help others.

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<sup>1</sup> R. Kent Hughes, *James: Faith That Works*, Preaching the Word (Wheaton, IL: Crossway Books, 1991), 65–66.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*, 64.

**Slow to become angry** It is possible to be angry and yet not sin. Jesus was angry without sin and so can we, but this is not the point Jacob is making. He is saying that, in general, man's anger does not demonstrate God's righteousness (v.20).

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**Proverbs 29:11** (NASB95) A fool always loses his temper, But a wise man holds it back.

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**Proverbs 16:32** (NET) Better to be slow to anger than to be a mighty warrior, and one who controls his temper is better than one who captures a city.

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In these 3 ways - quick to listen, slow to speak, slow to become angry

**BIG TRUTH: How we BEHAVE shows what we BELIEVE.**

### Doing What God Says

**James 1:21-25** (NIV) <sup>21</sup> Therefore, get rid of all moral filth and the evil that is so prevalent and humbly accept the word planted in you, which can save you. <sup>22</sup> Do not merely listen to the word, and so deceive yourselves. **Do what it says.** <sup>23</sup> Anyone who listens to the word but does not do what it says is like someone who looks at his face in a mirror <sup>24</sup> and, after looking at himself, goes away and immediately forgets what he looks like. <sup>25</sup> But whoever looks intently into the perfect law that gives freedom, and **continues in it**—not forgetting what they have heard, but **doing it**—they will be blessed in what they do.

**Ancient mirrors** were made of polished metal, very expensive, and produced only a distorted reflection (cf. 1 Cor. 13:12).<sup>3</sup> God's words function as a spiritual mirror of perfect clarity when we spend time looking **intently into the perfect law that gives freedom** - this is the message of Jesus! We are to **continue in it**, remembering what Jesus & the apostles have said.

Does your BEHAVIOR match what you say you BELIEVE? **If not, you have reason to be concerned.** Jesus said,

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**Luke 6:46** (NIV) "Why do you call me, 'Lord, Lord,' and do not do what I say?"

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You can TURN from your sin and TRUST in Jesus alone. You don't DO good to get right with God, but when you're RIGHT with God, you will DO GOOD.

### Examples of Real Religion

**James 1:26-27** <sup>26</sup> Those who consider themselves religious and yet do not keep a tight rein on their tongues deceive themselves, and their religion is worthless. <sup>27</sup> Religion that God our Father accepts as pure and faultless is this: to **look after orphans and widows in their distress** and to **keep oneself from being polluted by the world.**

*Again, Proverbs is full of this wisdom as is all the Scripture.*

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**Proverbs 14:31** (NIV) <sup>31</sup> Whoever oppresses the poor shows contempt for their Maker, but whoever is kind to the needy honors God.

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<sup>3</sup> Robert James Dr. Utley, *Jesus' Half-Brothers Speak: James and Jude, vol. Volume 11*, Study Guide Commentary Series (Marshall, TX: Bible Lessons International, 2000), 25.

We ARE to be salt and light in our culture - INFLUENCERS. Yet we are NOT to be influenced by our culture's moral filth & evil (James 1:21). We are to love the sinful people on the planet (John 3:16), but NOT the sinful philosophy of the people on the planet (1 John 2:15-17). *Our greatest example is JESUS Himself.*

There should be a difference that causes some to say, "I want some of dat!"

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**Matthew 5:16** (NIV) ...**let your light shine before others**, that they may see **your good deeds** and **glorify your Father in heaven**.

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**Imagine a world where people who claimed to be Christians ACTED like it.**

- Living appreciative of the great grace that God showed by giving them spiritual birth (v.18).
- Be quick to listen, slow to speak, & slow to become angry (v.19)
- Get rid of filth and live like the message of Jesus is real. *This should even impact our language!*
- Care for people that others don't care about - treating them with value because of who created them (v.26-27).

***Examine your life. Repent of Sin. Live like you've been forgiven.***

***BIG TRUTH: How we BEHAVE shows what we BELIEVE.***