

The Letter of James 1:19 – 27

English Standard Version (ESV)

1 ¹² Blessed is the man who remains steadfast under trial, for
 2 when he has stood the test he will receive the crown of life,
 3 which God has promised to those who love him. ¹³ Let no one
 4 say when he is tempted, “I am being tempted by God,” for
 5 God cannot be tempted with evil, and he himself tempts no
 6 one. ¹⁴ But each person is tempted when he is lured and
 7 enticed by his own desire. ¹⁵ Then desire when it has
 8 conceived gives birth to sin, and sin when it is fully grown
 9 brings forth death.

10 ¹⁶ Do not be deceived, my beloved brothers. ¹⁷ Every good gift
 11 and every perfect gift is from above, coming down from the
 12 Father of lights, with whom there is no variation or shadow
 13 due to change. ¹⁸ Of his own will he brought us forth by the
 14 word of truth, that we should be a kind of firstfruits of his
 15 creatures.

16 ¹⁹ Know this, my beloved brothers: let every person be quick
 17 to hear, slow to speak, slow to anger; ²⁰ for the anger of man
 18 does not produce the righteousness of God. ²¹ Therefore put
 19 away all filthiness and rampant wickedness and receive with
 20 meekness the implanted word, which is able to save your
 21 souls.

22 ²² But be doers of the word, and not hearers only, deceiving
 23 yourselves. ²³ For if anyone is a hearer of the word and not a
 24 doer, he is like a man who looks intently at his natural face in
 25 a mirror. ²⁴ For he looks at himself and goes away and at once
 26 forgets what he was like. ²⁵ But the one who looks into the
 27 perfect law, the law of liberty, and perseveres, being no hearer
 28 who forgets but a doer who acts, he will be blessed in his
 29 doing.

30 ²⁶ If anyone thinks he is religious and does not bridle his
 31 tongue but deceives his heart, this person's religion is
 32 worthless. ²⁷ Religion that is pure and undefiled before God
 33 the Father is this: to visit orphans and widows in their
 34 affliction, and to keep oneself unstained from the world.

Observation (What does it say?):

Consider the observation questions on the back of this page. What do you notice in this passage?

- Draw lines to show any connections you see between the earlier passage (v. 12-18) with this passage (v. 19-27).
- Circle repeated words or ideas.
- Underline any words or phrases that are unusual or that get your attention.
- What else do you observe in this passage?

Interpretation (What does it mean?):

After observing the passage:

- How would you describe the connection between v. 19 and v. 22 about hearing?
- How do you think speaking and anger are related (v. 19)?
- What does he mean by “the perfect law, the law of liberty” (v. 25)?
- How are verses 26 and 27 related to the first two paragraphs (vv. 19-21, vv. 22-25)?
- What questions come to mind as you read?

Application (What does it mean for me?):

- How has looking into the “mirror” of the perfect law, the law of liberty, helped you to see what you are like? How do you keep from forgetting what you saw?
- Where do you find it most challenging to bridle your tongue (v. 26)?
- How would you evaluate your “religion” using the filter of v. 27?
- What would be different (attitudes, behavior) if God used this passage to change you?

Additional questions for thought and discussion:

- Earlier we saw three possible themes in James: Trials, Wisdom, and Wealth. Does this passage relate to any of those themes? Or does James introduce completely new ideas here?

For more suggested methods of study: <http://www.goodnotsafe.com/methodical-bible-study/>

For examples of inductive studies: <http://www.goodnotsafe.com/inductive-bible-study-examples-2/>

Inductive Bible Study

(A few general ideas)

Observation
(What does it say?)

What facts do you **observe** about the passage that help bring out the writer’s thought process?

- Who are the people involved?
- What action takes place?
- What type of literature is it (poetry, history, didactic, etc.)?
- What details are included or left out?
- Are any unusual words used?
- Is there symbolic language?
- What is the grammar of the passage (pronouns, prepositions, verb tenses)?
- Are words or ideas repeated?
- Any comparisons or contrasts?
- Any cause and effect?
- Are there indications of purpose (“in order that...”)?
- Are there conclusions (“Therefore...”)?
- Are there explanations?
- Does the passage logically break into sections?
- How would you summarize the passage?
- What would be a good “headline” for the passage?

Interpretation
(What does it mean?)

What questions come to mind about the facts that would help you **interpret** the meaning?

- How would the original readers have understood the passage?
- What is the main emphasis?
- Why does the writer use repetition, or contrast, or unusual words?
- What does the grammar or structure of the passage reveal about the writer’s thought pattern?
- Is there a logical sequence in the passage?
- How are different ideas in the passage connected?
- Are there any new ideas or concepts presented?
- Are there difficulties in the passage?

Application
(What does it mean for me?)

What is the impact on your life? What **application** does the Holy Spirit want to show you?

- Is there a command to obey?
- Is there a promise to be thankful for?
- Is there an attribute of God to worship?
- Is there an example to follow?

**Read nothing into the Scriptures, but draw everything from them, and suffer nothing to remain hidden that is really in them.
J.A. Bengel (1687-1752)**

For a much more detailed description of the methodology, see Robert A. Traina, *Methodical Bible Study*. Wilmore, Kentucky: Asbury Theological Seminary, 1952.