

Receptive Attitudes

Disclaimer: this is an automatically generated machine transcription - there may be small errors or mistranscriptions. Please refer to the original audio if you are in any doubt.

Date: 01 January 2023

Preacher: Mike Scrivani

[0 : 00] If you have your Bible and you're in James chapter 1 verses 19-21, would you please stand with me as we honor God's word together.

! Know this, my beloved brothers. Let every person be quick to hear, slow to speak, slow to anger. For the anger of man does not produce the righteousness of God.

Therefore put away all filthiness and rampant wickedness and receive with meekness the implanted word which is able to save your souls. May God add a blessing to the reading of his word. Would you please be seated?

Well, today, as you're all aware, marks the beginning of a new year. And many people are beginning the new year by making resolutions.

Setting goals for themselves to achieve in this year which they hope will better their lives. Perhaps you've made some new year's resolutions and today is day one of your pursuit of achieving that goal, whatever it might be.

[1 : 24] Now, I have goals. Yes, I think it's good to set goals, but I don't intentionally sit down and spend time thinking or writing out new year's resolutions. But I do see the allure of making them.

Imagining a you at the end of the year who is happier and who is healthier for having achieved whatever you set out at the beginning of the year to accomplish.

One of the most common new year's resolutions that people make is to get in shape. People who have made that their goal have probably already begun to prepare.

They've purchased a gym membership, workout clothes, running shoes, supplements. Maybe even they've prepared a dieting plan.

And that's fine. It's good to be healthy. But the reality is, as studies have shown, only about 9% of those who make new year's resolutions end up keeping them throughout the entire year.

[2 : 35] Maybe you will be a part of that 9%. I certainly don't mean to discourage you. But when it comes to getting in shape, getting in shape is hard work.

And while the desire is there, the discipline to make the desire a reality often isn't. You know, we think if only getting in shape was as easy as those training montages in the Rocky movies.

You know what I'm talking about? Those clips, those montages, the background music gets my adrenaline pumping. Mickey is shouting words of encouragement to Rocky as he transforms into a lean, mean, fighting machine.

Chasing down chickens, drinking glasses full of raw eggs. Hammering his fists into slabs of beef. Doing one-handed push-ups.

Knocking out his sparring partners. His body looking like it's been chiseled out of marble. And at the end of those montages, I'm ready to step into the ring with Apollo Creed and Clever Lang and Ivan Drago.

[3 : 47] If only it was that easy. If only getting in shape was that easy. But it's not. But again, there is often a good desire behind the resolutions that we make.

But the discipline to keep them takes hard work. A resolution that Christians often make is to read the Bible in one year. And that's a great goal.

One that I highly encourage. In fact, out on our table this morning, on your way out, there's a couple different Bible reading plans that I have for you if you want to take one. That's great. But I wouldn't be surprised if the majority of us gathered this morning have set that goal for ourselves at some point in time in our Christian lives.

Maybe multiple times. But while the desire was there, the discipline to actually do it wasn't.

And so my goal this morning isn't to persuade you to get on some kind of Bible reading plan. My objective doesn't concern the quantity of God's Word that you read so much as the quality of the

time that you spend reading His Word.

[4 : 59] And I believe that's James' objective here in verses 19 through 21 and going through verse 25. The Word of God is all over this passage. In verse 18, James says that God brought us forth by the Word of Truth.

And now in verses 19 through 21, He teaches us how to receive it so that we become doers of the Word. That we be people whom God's Word doesn't go in one ear and out the other.

But that we receive it in such a way that our desire for it produces a life that is conformed to it.

James says quality time spent in God's Word will result in greater quantity of His blessings in your life.

John MacArthur said about this passage, Quality time with God's Word.

Receiving God's Word requires that you have the right attitude towards it. And our text this morning reveals those right attitudes to us.

[6 : 34] And so the main idea is this. Receiving God's Word requires the right attitude. Receiving God's Word requires the right attitude. In our text today, James, inspired by the Holy Spirit, Having already encouraged Christians to rely upon God's Word when facing trials and temptations, teaches them how to receive it with the right kind of attitude.

He presents us with three attitudes that school us in how to respond to God's Word so that our time spent with Him has quality and produces a quantity of fruit that blesses us, that glorifies our Savior, Jesus Christ.

And so the first attitude we see comes in the beginning of verse 19. Receive God's Word with a submissive attitude. James says, I prefer the New American Standards translation of verse 19, which says, James is referring to the truths that he just expressed in verse 18.

Again, it says there, The first truth in that verse is the truth of the power of God's Word to save us.

And the second truth is the power of God's Word to transform those whom He saves. Believers are the firstfruits, the evidence of His new creation that is to come.

[8 : 08] And so at this point, James makes a transition in his emphasis. He is saying that since we have experienced the transforming power of God and have been made new creations by Him, we are to continually submit to His Word, allowing it to continue His divine work in and through our lives.

In 2 Timothy 3, verses 16 through 17, the Apostle Paul instructs Timothy, a young pastor, to prioritize his attention to the study and the proclamation of God's Word because of the many benefits that it will have for himself and for those who will hear him preach.

He says there, All Scripture is breathed out by God and is profitable for teaching, for reproof, for correction, and for training in righteousness that the man of God may be complete, equipped for every good work.

God's Word can do all these things for you, but you must be willing to receive it and submit to its instruction.

Well, how do we do that? James tells us in the rest of verse 19. First, he says, Let everyone be quick to hear. In order to learn something, you must listen.

[9 : 39] You can't receive and retain instruction when you're talking at the same time. It distracts you from learning and it distracts those around you who are supposed to be learning from whomever the teacher is as well.

And if you're a teacher in this church, if you teach in schools, if you teach in Sunday school, if you teach in Awana, you know how hard it is to teach when someone else whom you're trying to teach is talking.

Doesn't work out that way. It's not a very good program. That's why some of you have spent a lot of time probably in the hallway at school when you should have been in class.

And so James is appealing for believers to not just to listen to God's word, but what he's describing here is someone who is eager to listen to God's word, to take advantage of every opportunity that they have to expose themselves to reading it, to studying it, to meditating on it, to memorizing it, and hearing it explained and proclaimed to them by others.

When a believer experiences a blessing from God, they turn to God's word to find passages to express their thankfulness to God and their praise of him.

[10 : 58] When they are troubled, they turn to God's word and search for words of comfort and encouragement and strength. When they are confused, they turn to God's word for guidance and

for wisdom.

When they are tempted, they seek out God's word to understand how it's better for them to resist temptation, to be pure, and to find within it the strength and the power to resist whatever that temptation may be.

My freshman year of high school, I had a teammate on my baseball team who, based on his talent, should not have been on the team. He should have been cut during tryouts because there are other guys who were cut who were better than him.

He made the team primarily because of his attitude. I mean, this guy sprinted everywhere. Even when it was okay to jog, even when it was okay to walk, he was sprinting.

He was staying after the tryouts. He continued that when he was a member of the team, staying after to work, to get extra work in and to practice. He was coachable.

[12:06] He was eager to obey whatever our coach's instructions were and to respond to that instruction with a hearty, yes, sir. And our coach blessed him for his eagerness to obey his instruction by giving him a uniform and putting him on the team.

You know, every Christian should have such an attitude towards God and his word, a desire to hear, a desire to obey what is read or heard.

Jesus said in John 8, 31 through 32, if you abide in my word, you are truly my disciples and you will know the truth and the truth will set you free.

In 14, John 14, 23 through 24, Jesus said, if anyone loves me, he will keep my word and my father will love him and we will come to him and make our home with him and whoever does not love me does not keep my words and the word that you hear is not mine, but the father's who sent me.

Psalms 1, 2 says, blessed is the man who walks not in the counsel of the wicked nor stands in the way of sinners nor sits in the seat of scoffers, but his delight is in the law of the Lord and on his law he meditates day and night, but his delight is the law of the Lord and on his law he meditates day and night.

[13:34] So I said it again in case you didn't hear it the first time. But now I ask you, are you an eager listener to God's word like that? Do you hunger and thirst for it?

Do you desire to submit to it? That you will abide in it? Do you delight in it? Are you quick to hear God's word?

You know, I think periodically every Christian should do a personal inventory regarding how hungry and how thirsty they really are for the word of God.

Asking themselves those kinds of questions that I already posed to you. Additionally, those who receive God's word with a submissive attitude, James says in verse 19, are slow to speak.

Cannot really hear God's word when our minds are drifting, when we need to keep quiet inside as well as outside. I think the primary idea here is that when it comes time to speak about God's word, that we've carefully thought out what we want to say.

[14:51] When we speak about God's word, when we teach God's word, we should be very concerned that what we say is true and spoken in a way that always honors Jesus Christ.

James was concerned about that. He issued a warning later in chapter 3, verse 1. Not many of you should become teachers, my brothers, for you know that we who teach will be judged with greater strictness.

Thus far, James has instructed us to receive God's word requires a submissive attitude that means knowing how to hold your tongue and knowing how to use it.

In the rest of verse 19 and 20, he adds that receiving God's word with a submissive attitude means being slow to anger for the anger of man does not produce the righteousness of God.

You know, there's a lot of angry people in our society, isn't there? Go to a sporting event. See how ruthless the fans can be with a referee or an umpire when they make a bad call.

[16:03] Don't come to any of my son's games because I don't want you to witness how ruthless I can be. But you know what I'm saying? I mean, even they drop a pass, a player, and we act like it's the worst thing in the world.

While we were gone for vacation, I got chewed out by a guy because my car door barely banged his. My brother-in-law got chewed out for a guy for sliding on some ice and cutting him off when he didn't mean to.

He was like, why are we so angry? We're angry people, aren't we? People who just combust over the slightest thing and curse people for doing things that don't really matter in the long run.

But the kind of anger that James is talking about here is an inner, deeper resentment that seethes, that smolders, is hidden, often goes unnoticed by anyone else.

It's an anger that only the believer and the Lord really know about. So in this context, James seems to be speaking particularly about anger expressed towards a truth in God's Word.

[17 : 18] when the Word confronts a person's sin or conflicts with a cherished personal belief or a strongly held tradition, instead of agreeing with God and what His Word says and repenting, they get angry.

And sometimes that anger is directed at the person teaching or preaching or explaining the truth. That happened to the Apostle Paul.

He was writing to the believers in Galatia and he points out in Galatians 4.16, Have I then become your enemy by telling you the truth? His efforts to keep the Galatians from falling back into error was met by resistance and resentment by some of the believers there who wanted to keep their traditions and their incorrect interpretations of God's Word.

Apparently, some of the members in the congregation that James was writing to had anger issues as well. But their anger was not producing the righteousness of God but was breeding discontentment and dissension.

In James 4.1, he calls them out. What causes quarrels and what causes fights among you? Is it not this, that your passions are at war within you?

[18 : 41] People desire to have their opinions confirmed, their own ways approved, their own likes and dislikes accepted by others or forced upon them.

Self-will was supreme, personal hostility was rampant, and the spiritual damage was enormous. They fought each other in order to keep or to have their own ways preserved, to do their own thing. and they believed that their anger was justified and disregarded the damage being done to their own spiritual well-being and the well-being of their church.

There is a just anger. There is an anger that is holy and that is righteous, an anger that is indignant against sin.

Remember, Jesus was intensely angry when he cleansed the temple and he did it not just once but twice. His anger was justified because it was motivated by a righteous love for his father and a hatred towards the sin being committed in his father's house.

[19 : 55] but mere personal anger, bitterness and resentment especially when it comes to opposing what God's word says can never serve the cause of Christ.

And you know what? Satan loves it when we get angry for the wrong reasons. Ephesians 4 26-27 says, Be angry and do not sin.

Do not let the sun go down on your anger and give no opportunity to the devil. Anger, unrighteous anger gives Satan an opportunity to deceive you.

Don't let him. In the moment it might make you feel good to just let it out to rage but it's not going to achieve what you think that it will.

It won't achieve the righteousness of God that's for sure. And that is especially true again when the hostility is directed towards the truth contained within his word.

[21 : 10] So you must receive God's word submissively. The second attitude receive God's word with a purified attitude with a purified attitude.

verse 21 beginning says therefore put away all filthiness and rampant wickedness. Filthiness in the Greek refers to any sort of moral defilement or impurity.

It is closely related to another Greek term used to describe earwax. I'm sure as a kid you were told clean out your ears for not paying attention because you were distracted by something or someone else.

And so what James is telling us here is that to receive God's word our ears need to be cleaned out. They need to be purified. Rampant wickedness pertains to evil desires or evil intents.

Dwelling upon and delighting in thoughts that are sinful. Thoughts that are covetous and lustful. Paul uses a similar illustration in Ephesians 4, 21-24.

[22 : 20] Assuming that you have heard about him and were taught in him as the truth is in Jesus, to put off your old self which belongs to your former manner of life and is corrupt through deceitful desires and to be renewed in the spirit of your minds and to put on the new self created after the likeness of God in true righteousness and holiness.

In Colossians 3, 8-10 he says, but now you must put them all away. Anger, wrath, malice, slander, and obscene talk from your mouth. Do not lie to one another seeing that you have put off the old self with its practices and have put on the new self which is being renewed in knowledge after the image of its creator.

God So let me ask you some more questions. What are you watching? What are you listening to? What are you reading?

Do these things promote your spiritual growth and the new creation that you are in Christ? When you watch them, when you hear them, when you read them, do they produce good desires, good thoughts and intentions within you?

And if not, maybe it's time to purge them from your life. There are the wax in your ear that has built up and is making you not hear God's word as clear as you need to.

[23 : 47] James and Paul are talking about putting off or putting away filthy things, stinky things, dirty things, repugnant things.

When I think of dirty clothes, it reminds me of a locker room, a guy's locker room. I remember in college walking into our locker room and you know, we practiced basically all year long.

And we had a uniform to practice in, a blue t-shirt and baseball pants. And we didn't take those blue t-shirts home to be washed very often.

In fact, some of us didn't take them home all year long to wash them. And so you think, here's a garment that you've sweated in and it's soaked with sweat, you've taken it off, it's dried out by tomorrow, and you put it back on and you repeat the process over and over and over again.

So when you walked into the locker room, it was gross. It smelled. Now here's the thing. I think there's in a Febreze commercial, right? Nose blindness.

[25 : 04] It's a real thing. If you're in the locker room long enough, you just forget how bad it smells. until our coach would come in and say, you guys need to take your stuff home and get it washed.

That's what God's word does for us. You know, our noses have become blind almost to the filth around us. Our eyes have, our minds have. And so we need to receive it by eliminating also those filthy distractions that keep us from it, keep our attention from it.

I think that's what Paul has in mind in 2 Corinthians 10.5. He says there, we destroy arguments and every lofty opinion raised against the knowledge of God and take every thought captive to obey Christ.

Thoughts and ideas, speculations, reasonings, philosophies, and false religions are things people use to barricade themselves from God and His word and the truth.

And such fortresses need to be destroyed to keep us, too, from being tempted to put back on those old, filthy, stinky, dirty grave clothes that we shed when God saved us and rescued us.

[26 : 26] And likewise, for unbelievers, we need to be there to destroy these barriers that they've put up with the words of truth that they, too, would be saved from the sin that they're enslaved to.

You know, also, I think receiving God's word purely means reading God's word with yourself in mind. You know, how many times do you read the Bible and you think, oh, I wish that person would hear this, God.

They really need to hear this. They've got a lot of problems. Or we read something in God's word, word, it talks about tithing or evangelism or you name it, and we automatically just kind of create this detour in our mind around it.

Well, I'll tithe when I inherit a lot of money. Or, you know, I would evangelize, but man, I'm just so busy right now and I'm shy and that's just not my giftedness.

Don't we do that with God's word? That's not hearing it purely. And also, we bring so many ideas from the world, the world's ideas to God's word, when it needs to be the other way around.

[27 : 39] It's God's word that helps us see the world as we need to. The word of God thinks differently than the world. And so must we. That's how we receive it purely.

Third, receiving God's word requires a humble attitude. Receive God's word with a humble attitude. James continues, verse 21, he says, and receive with meekness the implanted word which is able to save your souls.

Greek scholar W.E. Vines defines meekness in this way, as a temper of spirit in which we accept God's dealings with us as good and therefore without disputing or resisting.

Christians who receive God's word meekly receive it humbly. with a submissive and a gentle and a teachable attitude which is cleansed of pride, resentment, anger, and moral filth.

James describes God's word as being implanted within us and he does so metaphorically. Remember, Jesus taught a parable in Matthew 13 about the gospel seed which falls on different kinds of soil.

[28 : 53] soil. God's word takes root in the good soil, in the heart of every believer when they are saved. And so I think that James has a couple of Old Testament passages in mind when he speaks about how God's word is implanted within us.

The first is Jeremiah 31. Jeremiah the prophet was speaking to a people who were not living according to God's word. They couldn't keep it.

And through Jeremiah, God issues a promise, a new covenant that he will make with his people one day. Jeremiah 31, 31-33 says, Behold, the days are coming, declares the Lord, when I will make a new covenant with the house of Israel and the house of Judah.

Not like the covenant that I made with their fathers on the day when I took them by the hand to bring them out of the land of Egypt, my covenant that they broke, though I was their husband, declares the Lord.

For this is the covenant that I will make with the house of Israel after those days, declares the Lord. I will put my law within them. I will write it on their hearts and I will be their God and they shall be my people.

[30 : 06] According to Jeremiah's prophecy, God was going to write his law on the hearts of his people. To use James' language, he was going to implant his word within them.

The other Old Testament passage that I think James had in mind is Ezekiel 36 verses 26 through 27. And I will give you a new heart, God declares, and a new spirit I will put within you.

And I will remove the heart of stone from your flesh and give you a heart of flesh. And I will put my spirit within you and cause you to walk in my statutes and be careful to obey my rules.

God puts his word in our hearts, he puts his spirit in our hearts, and the spirit of God working through the word of God sanctifies us, cleanses us, motivates us, inspires us, and moves us to live according to its instruction.

And so therefore, our diet must consist of God's word. When Danny was pregnant with Hazel, our daughter, I put on a lot of weight.

[31 : 24] They call it sympathy weight. I remember soon after coming to Highland Park that someone had taken a picture and posted it on social media of me, and it was me of my profile, and I looked at it, and I thought, oh my goodness, who shoved a pillow under my sweater?

When I wasn't looking. You know, I had developed a diet during that time that consisted of a lot of glazed donuts. That was my weakness.

I saw that picture and I realized, I've kind of gotten fat. I didn't have a good diet. I was eating what I wanted to.

In fact, I wasn't so much eating donuts as I was inhaling donuts. You know what I'm talking about? So I changed my diet and that was a difficult adjustment.

But the weight was coming off. And I noticed that as the weight came off, I felt better. I had more energy.

[32 : 29] I stopped snoring when I was sleeping. I had more peaceful nights because Danny wasn't waking me up with an elbow to get me to stop snoring. And so I saw these results and you know what?

I began to like this new diet because of the good it was doing for me. And I stopped desiring those foods so much.

But I had to humbly acknowledge that I wasn't healthy and I needed to make a change. There are a lot of spiritually lethargic Christians in our world.

think they can carry on just fine without going to church or going to church much without reading and studying the Bible.

And you know what? It shows. Many of our churches are in a state of decline and they're headed towards death.

[33 : 27] We have become lethargic in our evangelism, lethargic in our giving, lethargic in our being doers of the word because we don't have or give, I should say, the time to receive it with the right attitude.

So may God snap us all out of that lethargy with an understanding of how vital it is to be in his word, to be feasting on his word.

As James says in the rest of verse 21 of the word, which is able to save your souls. This phrase refers back to our initial salvation in which the word brought the truth of the gospel to our unsaved hearts, showing us the way of salvation and saving us from the penalty of our sin.

God's word is able to save by being a constant resource of God's truth that the Holy Spirit uses to guard and to preserve our souls from being ensnared by sin.

And ultimately, God's word will lead us to complete salvation when we are glorified with Christ in heaven forever, separated eternally from sin's presence in or around us.

[34 : 52] God's word initiates salvation. God's word keeps it alive and growing. and finally brings it to final glory, complete and perfect.

We have been saved, justified through the power of God's word. We are kept saved, sanctified through the power of the word and we will ultimately completely and eternally be saved, glorified through the power of God's word.

and since God has seen to it that his word is able to do so much for you, how can you not read it? How can you not keep it? How can you not want to and develop the disciplines in your life necessary to live your life conformed to it?

So the main point of application this morning. Be resolved to receive God's word by giving time in God's word.

[36 : 03] Be resolved to receive God's word by giving time to God's word. Right? In order to receive the word you've got to spend time in the word.

And you know what? A Christian should always be resolved to be in God's word. quality time in God's word will lead to a desire I believe to spend a greater quantity of time in God's word.

The more the time has quality the more quantity that will come after that. Like diet and exercise though it takes work.

And just like those things when you start exercising and dieting you may not see the results for a while but as you stick with it in time you will. So be in God's word receive it submissively and purely and humbly and you and our church will be made all the better for it.

I want to tell you brother sister for me one of the goals I have and every time I preach to you is that God would increase your appetite for his word.

[37 : 26] That whatever you hear this morning will result in you going back home today and this week and be like man! God's word is so good I want more and more of it.

And that will be my prayer for you it's been and will continue to be my prayer in this year God that the people at Highland Park Baptist Church would know your word well and be doers of your word also.

If you're here this morning you're hearing these things about what God's word can do but you don't! him as your Lord and Savior let me tell you as we've sung and as we've heard God is good Jesus is great there's nothing greater than knowing him as your Lord and Savior man he's worthy he lived the sinless life that you couldn't live he died on the cross to atone for sins that he did not commit he rose again victoriously on the third day as proof that he was is the son of God who reigns forever and ever and it's by faith in him and who he is and what he's done that you're saved now and forever and you can come to God's word and you can meet with God through his word and you can hear what he has to say to you and it's good sometimes it's hard but even the hard stuff is good amen amen may we be those kinds of people that are always in

God's word and always talking about God's word three questions of application that I hope that you'll reflect on today and this week question number one what is preventing you from giving time in God's word I just encourage you to evaluate how you spend your time sometimes your phone gives you a weekly report of how much you've looked at it I hate that thing but I'm thankful for that thing right I can't believe how many hours I've spent on that stupid phone but I need to hear that or read that for encouragement but just think about how much time do you spend in other things that you could give to reading God's word and then what do you need to eliminate to give more time to it start making those commitments start cutting those worthless things out of your life question number two how will you seek to better listen to God's word I think you know when it comes to your time of

Bible study maybe for you night time is better maybe morning time is better for you but when is a time where it can just be you in a quiet space where you can listen better to God's word what can you do how can you prepare that time and that space for you to be with God alone in his word and then thirdly are you receiving God's word correctly are there passages I encourage you to go back

to those passages I encourage you to repent of those things I encourage you to wrestle with God and his word in the hopes that he will show you that his ways are always best for you let's be people who know God's word well and live it out in ways that glorify him let's pray Lord we ask for the kind of attitudes that we need to have to receive your word in a way that sees us not just be hearers of your word but doers of your word

[41 : 04] God I pray that you would search our hearts and our minds that Lord you would reveal to us those things that we spend so much of our time in the pursuit of or that consumes so much of our time that we don't even realize it time that could be better spent with you and your word God I pray that in your grace and your mercy that your spirit would convict us of those things and that we would change our attitudes that we would not just have the desire but develop the disciplines to make that a priority for us every day of our lives God thank you for what you've done for us through your word how your word Lord is what saves us the gospel the good news of who Jesus is and what he's done how Lord that good news in your word continue to work in conjunction with your spirit to sanctify us to make us more and more like

Christ until that day Lord when ultimately! we stand before you in heaven and may we treat it with the great respect that it deserves and may we seek to spend more time with you in it again Lord that we would be the kinds of people that you've called us to be who make a difference in this world in desperate need of Christians to be more like Jesus Christ in whose name we pray Amen!
Amen!