

STUDIES IN THE LIFE OF JAMES

STUDY NUMBER 3 – JAMES 1:19-27

GROWTH IS PRODUCED BY THE WORD

In our first study we talked about “Growing Taller Through Testing” that God the Father uses tests in our lives to measure our journey toward Christlikeness and to help on that journey.

On the other side of the picture we talked about temptation last week. Coming from Satan and the purpose is to render us ineffective and ultimately to destroy us.

This came from *Our Daily Bread*:

A man was traveling in Canada one springtime when frost and melting snow made it nearly impossible to drive farther. He came to a crossroads and saw a sign that said “Take care which rut you choose, you’ll be in it for the next 25 miles.” That’s a wise warning for all of us—and not just when we’re driving in rough road conditions.

Whenever we come to a crossroads in life, what choice do we make? In other words, in what direction will we travel and what habits--which ruts of routines—will we establish?

A habit is a pattern of behavior that we follow consistently. We need to decide prayerfully what

habits we will practice. Will our habits be mere ruts of routine or will they become “grooves of God’s grace”? When you’re facing the tests, and you’re going to have them, we want to handle those tests victoriously in the power of the Spirit. That was our first study that we had together.

This is from the *Daily Walk Bible*, the book of Jeremiah: “I have learned how to get along happily whether I have much or little” (Philippians 4:11). Do you recognize those words? They aren’t the declaration of a plaster saint or the meaningless small talk of a feather bed royalty. Rather they are the carefully reasoned words of Paul—a man who had been beaten, stoned, shipwrecked, imperiled and impoverished. He had learned the secret of being content regardless of the circumstances swirling around him.

Jeremiah was much like Paul. On trial for his life, slandered by a fellow prophet, faced with a howling mob demanding his blood, Jeremiah calmly went about delivering his God-given message of judgment and doom. He lived above his circumstances, not under them, in his walk with God.

Then the little box over on the side I thought was so good:

Those who truly aspire to be Christlike should not be surprised when the mob comes to crucify them.

Excellent observation. You are going to have challenges. You are going to have difficulties but first of all you have to fall deeply in love with the Lord Jesus Christ and know that God the Father has your life completely in His hands. And that whatever He permits and allows is for His glory and ultimately you will have grace to get through it. And as a result of that, you will have an experience of spiritual growth.

In Beth Moore's book, *When Godly People Do Ungodly Things*. She is talking about the whole issue of temptation. This is what Beth says:

One of the first Biblical principals most believers learn concerning their new agenda is that God has a *plan* for their lives. Please hear this with your whole heart believer: *so does Satan*. Considering the following truths and their suggested counterfeits:

- **“For I know the plans I have for you,” declares the LORD, “plans to prosper you and not to harm you, plans to give you hope and a future” (Jer. 29:11).**

[Then she turns that verse around:]

- **“For I know the plans I have for you,” declared the devil, “plans to totally bankrupt you and to harm you, plans to make you hopeless and to destroy your future.”**

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When Satan turns up the heat, I often say something like this to myself: You have no idea what's going on there, old girl. This could be really important. Stand firm and don't give the yell leaders of hell anything to cheer about. God is for you. Back up a second. Do you realize God is for you? Yes, the stakes are high. Yes, the battle is rough and sometimes seems unbearable, but God is always for us. . . .

Perhaps right about now, you're feeling sick inside thinking, *But I've already blown my play. I failed my test.* Listen here, brother or sister. Do you want to talk about someone who has blown some plays? I have! But I'm thankful to say God didn't take me off the team. He took me to the locker room, gave me a little chewing out, a lot of coaching, a little cheering, and sent me back onto the field. The strategy seemed to be making the competition tougher and tougher until I had to toughen up or die. To the glory of God, I have made most of my plays since then.

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Temptation is very real as is the test. The problem is we don't see the two apart and as a result we have a tendency to resist the test cause we don't like it and we respond favorably toward the temptation because it's something that is designed to be something we would like or enjoy.

Scripture from the very beginning of time makes that very real.

Genesis 4:6, 7

Then the Lord said to Cain, “Why are you angry? Why is your face downcast? If you do what is right, will you not be accepted? But if you do not do what is right, sin is crouching at your door; it desires to have you but you must master it.”

Peter who later in the experience just before the denial was warned by the Lord in:

Luke 22:31, 32

Simon, Simon, behold, Satan has demanded permission to sift you like wheat; but I have prayed for you, that your faith may not fail; and you, when once you have turned again, strengthens your brothers.”

What you have then is the picture of test and temptation which is very real and part of spiritual growth. But how do we handle both of those things victoriously? You handle them by daily approach to the Word of God.

God has designed the book and your daily feeding upon it to be able to understand why the test is coming into your life and if you lack wisdom He'll give it. And when the temptation comes, He Himself will intervene and provide the strength for victory.

Jeremiah 15:16

When your words came, I ate them; they were my joy and my heart's delight, for I bear your name O Lord God Almighty.

Listen to Chip Ingram from his book *Invisible War*.

The real secret to happiness isn't anywhere in prime-time entertainment, of course. The key to a fulfilled life has nothing to do with fast cars, revolving partners, or this year's fashions. Those are just counterfeits with which the enemy and the flesh conspire to tempt us. And the remedy, the number one defense against this devious deception—is to clothe ourselves in truth.

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How do you do that? Dietrich Bonhoeffer from the prison cell just before he was hanged by the German Gestapo:

The deceit, the lie of the devil, consists of this: that he wishes to make man believe that he can live without God's word.

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You read the Word on a daily basis and you respond to it quietly in submission before the Lord. That brings

spiritual health, spiritual victory, and you in the process are going to be changed. The Word of God is a living document. It's designed by the Spirit of God to produce change in our lives with the ultimate purpose that fruit will be borne through us in the lives of others.

Chapter 1: verse 21 is the key verse to today's study.

Jump with me into the text.

V.19 You know this, my beloved brethren. Now let every man be quick to hear, [and I could put woman there, too] slow to speak, slow to anger.

You say: "I don't get it. You're talking about the Word being the key to the victory over the test and the temptation then you come along and hit me with three commands like this that have to do with the tongue."

One of the big things you're going to learn about James is he doesn't mince words. In fact, he senses the tongue is such a big deal that he's going to give a whole chapter to it.

It is interesting to me that before you can have any encounter that is fruitful with the Word of God, you've got to shut up. You've got to be still and know that He is God. You can't question that. You can't argue with it. It is God speaking to you through the Word. But first, He's got to get your attention. He's got to have

you quit talking, quit thinking, and just allow Him to speak. That's why so many people never get anything out of the Bible. Because they're always putting their own thoughts on it, their own spin, and the little voices inside are just going crazy and the mind is completely distracted by everything else. You pray early in the morning before you get in the Book and you say, "God, this is a stewardship, this is a responsibility that I have today. God if there's anything blocking You teaching me through Your Word, let's address those. And that's what He's going to say in verse 21. But, what are the three basic principles that you would use to help you be in a framework to get the most out of the Word? Be a person who's quick to hear, slow to speak, and slow to get angry.

Our problem is when somebody comes to us with something we are not quick to hear and you guys know that as well as I do. We just don't hear humbly. We hear with a solution in mind. Quick to hear. Are you noted as that kind of person? If you're quick to hear, you not only hear what's being said but you ask a question which will give you more understanding to let the person know that you've heard.

You've got to come to God in His Word. Being a person first who is quick to hear. You're sensitive. You're listening. You're getting vibes from it.

Then slow to speak. You don't have the solution, ok? Please be humble enough to admit it. So just back off.

Listen, listen carefully, and then be slow to speak. Let God speak. Let Him be the One rather than you. And then quick to hear, slow to speak, and slow to get angry or mad because you hear something that offends you or hurts you.

“Speak Lord, for your servant is listening” has got to be the attitude.

Psalm 46:10

Stand silent, know that I am God; I shall be honored by every nation in the world.

So you see, our attitude as we approach the Word is to discover in the Word the two big things we’re bringing to the Word. How do I relate to this test God? And how are You going to get glory and fruit from that? And, Lord, I am really being blindsided and emotionally involved in this temptation. It’s not right. I’m praying for victory. Teach me how to say no and to trust in the strength of the Spirit to avoid this horrible thing that can get blown all out of proportion whether it’s marriage, pornographic website or a jillion other distractions that can come. You know all about them. They’re out there and flourishing. Attitude as we approach the Word. Test and the temptation, go to the Word. Be a person who is really quick to hear.

O God, I want to hear. And don’t come to God preaching a sermon to Him. Ok? Be really slow to speak because you’re dealing with a perfect, righteous,

holy God. Just be still and be teachable because the richness of what comes will well out-measure you being able to say anything. And above all, slow to anger. Don't take offense. Trust Him in the quietness that He's at work.

I found this poem the other day:

**A wise old Owl lived in an oak.
The more he knew the less he spoke,
the less he spoke, the more he knew
and the same thing can be applied to you.**

Well, well said.

Now, verse 20 gives you the reason why you don't get angry.

Reason:

V.20 For a man's wrath does not bring about the righteousness of God.

Now when you see a statement like that following these three commands, he's just telling you "watch it." When you're angry you're going to make a speech that's going to be the worst one you will ever make and you'll say things that are damaging and hurtful that you will regret. Some maybe for the rest of your life, you wish that you hadn't spoken. Scripture is filled with illustrations of what happens when somebody gets

mad. Go back to Cain again. The Lord warned it: “Sin is crouching at your door. It desires to have you but you must master it.” You’ve just gotten ticked because you’re offering was rejected and Abel’s was accepted. You have to deal with that because “sin is crouching at your door.” He didn’t hear it. As a result, he murders Abel in his anger.

Then you come down to the time of Moses. What an incredible leader. What a shepherd for the children of Israel. They had hassled him, criticized him, made life miserable for him for almost 40 years. And finally it just comes to the breaking point. God said to him, “To handle the water situation and the thirsty crowd don’t hit the rock, speak to the rock.” And he’s already lost it so he hit the rock instead of speaking to it, and he lost his chance to lead the people into the land.

There’s a horrible consequence to anger. It may not seem so right at the moment but the long term results, especially with marriages can be devastating.

Then you see in Naaman. Remember Naaman? The Syrian general who had leprosy. He comes down and expects Elisha’s going to treat him as the guy that he is, big time leader, and Elisha didn’t even go out and talk to him. He just says, “Tell him to go dip in the Jordan seven times and when he comes up he’ll be well.” Well Naaman just went up in smoke. He yells at his servants and says, “Aren’t the rivers of Pharpar and Syria better than the dirty Jordan?” Finally after he cools down a

minute one of the guys says, “You know, we can at least give it a try.” He probably could have lost his head for that but the guy cooled down enough to go give it a try. On the seventh dunk he came up cleansed of his leprosy.

Those kinds of pictures are sad because you see people out of control. How about Jonah. He gets really mad because God doesn't come through with the judgment on Nineveh because they repented and in brokenness responded to His message. But he gets his nose out of joint because the judgment doesn't come on them like He said it was going to. Taking it all personally and getting very, very angry. And ends up in embarrassment in the last part of the book.

Man's wrath does not bring about the righteousness of God. Now let's just take that and throw in there Colossians 3 where Paul warns the Colossian saints about this very same thing.

Colossians 3:6-10

God's terrible anger is upon those who do such things. You used to do them when your life was still part of this world, but now is the time to cast off and throw away all these rotten garments of anger, hatred, cursing, and dirty language. Don't tell lies to each other. It was your old life, with all its wickedness, that did that sort of thing. Now it is dead and gone; you are living a brand new kind of life that is ever learning more and more of what is right and trying to be more

and more like Christ who created this new life within you.

Don't let that old stuff come back again. Deal with it. It's a temptation used to ruin you. Reject it because you have the power of the Spirit dwelling in you to live the Christlike life.

V.21 Wherefore having laid aside all moral uncleanness and wickedness, which is abounding, [what are you supposed to do? Command] in meekness receive the implanted Word, which is able to save your souls.

You know, almost all of these passages that have a command about the power of the Word have first a negative statement and then the positive.

Peter says that very same thing. You read:

1 Peter 2:1-3

Lay aside [and he goes through a list just like Paul does. But then he says] following that as newborn babes desire the sincere milk of the word that they may grow thereby.

James is doing the same. He's saying there's stuff that you've got to process before the Spirit of God can use the Word of God to teach you. Do you understand what I'm saying? There's negative stuff that you've got to

handle folks, we're not ready for the message from the Lord and the Word with our hearts distracted.

“Wherefore” you’ve got to do a couple of things here. “Lay aside all moral uncleanness and wickedness, which is abounding.”

I’ve read that so many times and I do it every morning. I mean I really, I don’t know my heart. I don’t know how I offended the holiness of God the day before. Sure there’ve been times when it’s quite obvious and other times maybe I went on oblivious and in some area He wants to work in my life. So start with David’s prayer, both of them. Psalm 26:2-3 and Psalm 139:23-24. Basically those prayers are “examine my heart”—it’s open before you, I have nothing to hide. I want to be an honor to You. I want to be used by You. I want to be blessed by You so God show me any areas where I’m offending You right now that would stifle my understanding of the Word so that the Spirit is free to teach me what I need to know from the Word today.

A lot of people when they start reading through the Bible, they just do it as an exercise so they can get a certificate at the end of the year. And they say “Wow! I got that done.” You see, that’s a whole wrong motivation and attitude. You come at it with “This is the staff of life. This is the key ingredient to all of spiritual growth.” And if you’ve not been in the Word this week then Satan’s won his day. I want to tell you

that you've wasted a week and you've missed what could have been yours.

Charles Spurgeon does the best job on what happens when you miss it. So you deal with the negative but then you receive the implanted Word which is going to do something able to save your souls. Listen to Spurgeon:

If we can only grasp those words by faith, we have an all-conquering weapon in our hand. What doubt will be slain by this two-edged sword [the Word of God]? What fear is there which shall not fall smitten with a deadly wound before the arrow from the bow of God's covenant? Will not the distresses of life and the pangs of death; will not the corruptions within, and the snares without; will not the trials from above, and the temptations from beneath, all seem but light afflictions, when we can hide ourselves beneath the bulwark of "He hath said"? Yes; whether for delight in our quietude, or for strength in our conflict, "He hath said" must be our daily resort. And this may teach us the extreme value of *searching* the Scriptures. There may be a promise in the Word which would exactly fit your case, but you may not know of it, and therefore you miss its comfort. You are like prisoners in a dungeon, and there may be one key in the bunch which would unlock the door, and you might be free; but if you will not look for it, you may remain a prisoner still, though liberty is so near at hand. There may be a potent medicine in the great pharmacopœia [pharmacy] of

Scripture, and you may yet continue sick unless you will examine and search the Scriptures to discover what “He hath said.” Should you not, besides reading the Bible, store your memories richly with the promises of God? You can recollect the sayings of great men; you treasure up the verses of renowned poets; ought you not to be profound in your knowledge of the words of God, so that you may be able to quote them readily when you would solve a difficulty, or overthrow a doubt? Since “He hath said” is the source of all wisdom, and the fountain of all comfort, let it dwell in you richly, as “A well of water, springing up unto everlasting life.”

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Man I finished reading that and said: “That’s exactly what we’re talking about.” We receive the implanted Word so we can submit and surrender with integrity to the test and we can resist victoriously in the strength of the Lord the temptation and we are partaking the Word of God so we’re growing to become more Christlike on a regular basis. We are eating God’s Word. It’s like Jeremiah said that he did.

Well in Matthew 13 you have the parable of the sower. You have all the parables of the kingdom there. And in Matthew 13 he starts out with the parable of the sower. And he says the seed is the Word of God. And that seed is sown in all these different kinds of soil. You have the hard highway which is the typical person who comes and hears the message and his heart is still hard and

unchanged and the bird [Satan] comes down and grabs the seed before it has a chance to germinate.

Then you have the rocky soil. And you have the thorn-infested soil. And finally you have that last one, where the Word is implanted in a good heart that's prepared for it. It's received and they're never the same again. They have been instructed and taught and their glorifying the Lord.

So the focus of all of Christian maturity from the Lord's point of view is the intake of the Word.

Psalm 119:9-11

How can a young man keep his way pure? By keeping it according to Your word. With all my heart I have sought You; Do not let me wander from Your commandments. Your word I have treasured in my heart, That I may not sin against You.

1 Thessalonians 2:13

And we will never stop thanking God for this, that when we've preached to you, you didn't think of the words we spoke as being just our own. But you accepted what we said as the very word of God, which of course it was and it changed your lives when you believed.

That is the life-changing power of the Word of God.

Lehman Strauss said:

Where there is life there will be growth.

You have received the implanted word of God. There is life in you. That life will manifest growth if you don't stifle the Spirit and you spend quality time taking in the Word of God.

V.22 But keep on becoming doers of the Word and not hearers only, deceiving yourselves.

You see now why we had those three commands back in verse 19? Be quick to hear, be slow to speak, and you be slow to get mad because God is expecting that when you hear the Word of God you are going to be a person who has a prepared heart and you're ready not only to hear it but also to do it.

Now there are not very many really good dynamic illustrations in the Scripture of people who received the Word with excitement and joy. I've got to be honest with you but there are some really bad ones on the other side. In Jeremiah 36 if you'll remember this story, it's so sad. Jeremiah is preaching to Judah just before they go into captivity in 586 B.C. to Babylon. And he has been mistreated, persecuted, and no wonder he's the prophet of tears. But he gets a message from the Lord and the secretaries read it and are scared to death and so they're going to take it to the king. Listen to this:

Jeremiah 36:21-26

The king sent Jehudi to get the scroll, and Jehudi brought it from the room of Elishama the secretary and read it to the king and all the officials standing beside him. It was the ninth month and the king was sitting in the winter apartment, with a fire burning in the firepot in front of him. Whenever Jehudi had read three or four columns of the scroll, the king cut them off with a scribe's knife and threw them into the firepot, until the entire scroll was burned in the fire. The king and all his attendants who heard all these words showed no fear, nor did they tear their clothes. Even though Elnathan, Delaiah and Gemariah urged the king not to burn the scroll, he would not listen to them. Instead, the king commanded Jerahmeel, son of the king, Seraiah son of Azriel and Shelemiah son of Abdeel to arrest Baruch the scribe and Jeremiah the prophet.

In other words, go get the guys that are the ones who brought it to us. We don't want to deal with God. You know what the Lord does as soon as He finds out? He says, "Jeremiah, get your act together, call your secretary, we're not only going to write everything that just got burned up but we're also going to write some more."

That's the way God does it. You don't mess with God and you don't mess with His Word. When you stand against it man you're going to be the lone wolf and you're going to pay a horrendous price.

That next year they went into captivity. History. because of deliberate acts of judgment.

Now when Christ faced temptation in Matthew 4, three times he quotes from the book of Deuteronomy. It's like, "I'm telling you something folks. Hit them with the word and you'll win every time."

Matthew 4:4

[Satan told him after 40 days of fasting, why don't you just turn these stones into bread. Zap! He answered him and said]

It is written, "Man shall not live on bread alone, but by every word that proceeds out of the mouth of God."

And so again you get an illustration from Christ telling us what we should do. Paul tells young Timothy: "Study the Word. Be a person who's approved of God by the fact that you are a disciplined student of the Word."

Ephesians 6:17 And take the helmet of salvation, and the sword of the Spirit, which is [what?] the word of God.

That's your offensive weapon. In temptation and in the battle, it's the Word of God.

Job says almost at the time when he's ready to throw it in after his three friends have been unsuccessful in condemning him for sin in his life:

Job 23:12

I have not departed from the commands of his lips; I have treasured the words of his mouth more than my daily bread.

He stands on the basis of his own personal integrity.

Remember how the Lord ended the Sermon on the Mount? What's the last thing he said? The wise guy is the guy who builds his house on the rock and the foolish guy is the guy who builds his house on the sand. So when it starts to rain, when the tests start to come, his house is going to fall and great is the fall of it.

The foundation is the Word of God. It's when you do what I say You do that you're building a foundation that will stand the storms of the test and will always be steadfast in the storms of temptation, glorifying God and being made more like Christ. That's what I want. I want that more than anything in the world. And James spells it out for us here so clearly. "Do a good work in my life but keep me focused on doing what You tell me to do in Your Word."

V.23 Because if anyone [Are you ready for this? Here comes the reason.] is a hearer of the Word and not a doer, this one is like a man looking at the face of his birth in a mirror.

How does that relate to what we just got through saying? The Word of God is like a mirror. The reason a lot of times we don't like it is because it says stuff about us that we don't like. He says, "the word is a mirror."

That's like getting up early in the morning, looking in the mirror and apologizing for the reflection and then doing nothing about it. That's what he's describing.

When you come to the Word of God and you hear it then you just walk away and you haven't changed, you haven't made any desires or motions toward God that you want to be this kind of a person, He says "you're like the one who looked at himself in the mirror" and then in verse 24 gives you the reason.

V.24 For he looked at himself and he has gone off and immediately forgot what sort of person he was.

Rationalize it. Put it away, that's something I'll handle at another time later down the road. Well, he didn't do anything about it.

v.25 But [in contrast. This is so good this ought to just light your path] he who has looked into the perfect law, the law of liberty, and has continued in it, not having been a hearer who forgets, but a doer who works, [there it is] this man shall be blessed in what he does.

You honor God by being in the Word and He is going to bless you abundantly. Maybe some of you feel so tired, so worn out, so dry that you're going through a desert experience. Lighten up a bit. Tell God to show you what's stifling the rain and let it start to fall. Bless your marriage. Bless your kids. Bless your church. Bless your work. How He blesses! Joseph understood that because everything he did God blessed. Joshua understood that.

Joshua 1:8

This Book of the Law shall depart out of your mouth, but you shall meditate in it day and night. Then you are going to make your way prosperous and then you're going to have good success.

Keep the Word central in your heart and in your pursuit and know it, learn it, and be quick to hear and slow to speak and slow to become angry. Don't get defensive. Let God do that great work in your life.

V.26 If any man is thinking himself to be religious, not holding in check his tongue, [ouch] but is deceiving his own heart, his religion is worthless.

What he's going to tell you in these last two verses is three things that you can characterize and take to the bank. These three things are the characteristics of a person who's a doer of the word, he's not just sitting around listening.

The first one is given to you in verse 26.

1. He is “holding in check his tongue.”

He’s careful about what he says. There’s only one way that can happen. Remember the fruit of the Spirit in Galatians 5? The last one is self-control. It’s when you’re most eager to speak that you’re going to say some of the dumbest things. Stop. He’s saying, if you truly are a believer and you’re controlled by the Spirit, the words you are going to say are going to be well measured and they are going to end up being fruitful and they are going to be wise because they are words produced by the Spirit of God that hit the mark.

That’s the kind of person that is a doer of the word and not just a hearer. Then he gives you two more in verse 27, our last verse.

V.27 Religion which is pure and undefiled in the presence of our God and Father is this, to look after orphans and widows in their distress, to keep oneself unspotted by the world.

“Religion which is pure and undefiled in the presence of our God and Father is this”:

1. “to look after orphans and widows in their distress”
and

2. “to keep oneself unspotted by the world.”

Now, put those three things together. To care about widows and orphans you have to be motivated by the compassion of Christ. Your heart has to be filled with a love for others. And then the third thing, you have to care enough about your relationship to the Lord because the Lord hates the world and He knows that believers, when they compromise with the world and they love the world and the flesh and all of these things, that they get spotted and they’re ineffective. Keep yourself pure and unspotted from the world.

Now put those three things together. If you are a growing doer today in the Word of God, it’s going to be manifested by the discipline of the Spirit, keeping you from talking prematurely. Secondly, by a love that ministers to the needs of others. Thirdly, a purity that is there because you have a right attitude toward the world.

How does growing happen in our lives? How do we make progress according to chapter 1? Submitting to the test, resisting the temptation, and implementing the Word of God.

I’d like to ask you some questions.

1. Are you growing? Can your wife see it? Has she caught you in prayer and on your face before God?

Reading the Word? How about you women? Can your husband see it?

Because of your change in priorities. Your love and compassion for family. Your desire to grow deeper in your walk with God. Can your kids see it?

You say, “I’m not growing.” That’s a problem. Houston, we have a problem. If you’re not growing it’s one of two reasons.

1. You’ve never been born again. And that’s simply turning to the lovely Lord Jesus and saying “You’re knocking at my heart’s door and I want Jesus to come in today.” That’s the beginning.

But for most who have made that decision in their childhood, it’s an even greater issue that you’ve still got the controls. You’re still trying to perform for God so that you’ll have a nice computer printout when you get there that’ll have “Rejection” stamped on it when you meet the Savior at the desk.

Our heart is deceitful above all things and desperately wicked, who can know it?

Our works in His sight are like unclean rags. It repulses God to think that we could gain acceptance in the presence of God without going to the cross of Calvary and everything He did at Calvary didn’t account to anything because after all we’ve been able

to handle it on our own. What a reproach to a holy God to say that.

I trust the Spirit of God will not allow you any comfort as you leave but that God will speak to you.

Joni Eareckson Tada is one of my favorite authoresses because since '72 she's been in a wheelchair. She's written a delightful little book. It's called *31 Days Toward Intimacy with God*. If there's a lady on the topside of the globe that can talk about intimacy with the Lord, it would be a lady who forged an international worldwide ministry from a wheelchair. I want you to listen to this little story.

Smoothed and flattened, the wrinkled sheet of wide-lined tablet paper lay in the center of my empty desk.

A crayoned sun in the upper right corner beamed five thick rays onto the happy faces of dancing flowers. A white house with two large windows and red shutters sat squarely in the middle. In front of the house, sitting in a chair with large, spoked wheels, was a girl with blond hair, two pink circles on her cheeks, and a wide smile with neatly lined teeth.

I smiled. A portrait of me?

Big blockish letters scrawled with a red marker bore the following message:

DEAR JONI,
I LIKE MY CAT AND I LIKE SCHOOL.

**WHEN I GROW UP I WANT TO HAVE A
WHEELCHAIR JUST LIKE YOURS.
LOVE,
SHANNON**

My smile broke into laughter.

Shannon is a healthy, active little girl who plays hopscotch, four square, and “Mother, May I.” She may not realize it now, but she has absolutely no use for a wheelchair.

Try telling that to Shannon! A wheelchair would top her birthday list, more coveted even than a purple bicycle with pink and white streamers on the handles. As far as she’s concerned, a wheelchair means *adventure*. A joyride. An initiation into a very special club.

Shannon hasn’t a clue about the price one actually pays to join such a club. The pain. The paralysis. The disappointment. The heartache and the hurdles. She discounts all that. She disregards the dark side, considering it not worth even knowing. All she desires is the chance to identify with me, to be like me, to know me.

pp. 6-8

What children are running around today that want to have every adversity you have because they want to be close and they want to be like you?

Jesus said it so well. If you're going to love me, if you're going to follow me, then deny yourself, take up your cross and follow me.

LESSONS FROM THE PASSAGE:

What are some of the lessons we can learn from this particular study?

LESSON #1: The key to growth is our response to the Word.

LESSON #2: Discipline is a manifestation of the Spirit's work in our lives and forms the base for victory.

LESSON #3: Discipline, love, and purity are qualities of a growing Christian.

LESSON #4: The control of our words and emotions also reveal the growing relationship.

LESSON #5: It is easy to rationalize when we need to repent.

STUDY NUMBER THREE
GROWTH IS PRODUCED BY THE WORD
JAMES 1:19-27

NOTES

KEY VERSE 1:21

v.19 You know this, my beloved brethren. Now let every man be quick to hear, slow to speak, slow to anger.

v.20 For a man's wrath does not bring about the righteousness of God.

v.21 Wherefore having laid aside all moral uncleanness and wickedness, which is abounding, in meekness receive the implanted Word, which is able to save your souls.

v.22 But keep on becoming doers of the Word and not hearers only, deceiving yourselves.

v.23 Because if anyone is a hearer of the Word and not a doer, this one is like a man looking at the face of his birth in a mirror.

v.24 For he looked at himself and he has gone off and immediately forgot what sort of person he was.

v.25 But he who has looked into the perfect law, the law of liberty, and has continued in it, not having been a hearer who forgets, but a doer who works, this man shall be blessed in what he does.

v.26 If any man is thinking himself to be religious, not holding in check his tongue, but is deceiving his own heart, his religion is worthless.

v.27 Religion which is pure and undefiled in the presence of our God and Father is this, to look after orphans and widows in their distress, to keep oneself unspotted by the world.

QUESTIONS:

1. Read James 1:19-27 and in your own words pull out the main thought of this passage.

2. What three things are we asked to do in verse 19?

3. Why should we be careful about getting angry, according to verse 20?

4. What does James ask us to do in verse 21?

5. How does James illustrate a person who only listens to the Word and does not practice it in verses 22-24?

6. What is the result of doing the Word in verse 25?

7. What does James say about the “tongue” in verse 26?

8. What two things does James say about our “religion” in verse 27?

9. Which verse in the study has meant the most to you?

10. What lesson have you learned from this study?

LESSONS FROM THE PASSAGE:

What are some of the lessons we can learn from this particular study?

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LESSON #2: Discipline is a manifestation of the Spirit’s work in our lives and forms the base for victory.

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ADDITIONAL NOTES:
