

**James 1:19-21**  
**“How to hear the word of God”**

**I. Introduction**

**II. Vs. 19-21 How to hear the word of God**

**I. Introduction**

James introduces the next section of his letter with the phrase, “*So then*” which tells his readers that what he is about to express is an **action based upon what he has previously written**. The topic of the above verses was the “*Believers maturity*” and how that was accomplished through:

- A. Enduring through trials
- B. Enduring through temptations

The believer’s maturity is still the focus of this section and **endurance still the key** as verse 25 suggests that the believer will need to “**continue in it**” and avoid self deception which James mentions twice in verses 22 and 26. With trials being something that happen too us and temptation something that we are to avoid James mentions something that we can do to facilitate spiritual growth in our lives and that has to do with our “spiritual diet” which needs to be upon the Word of God. James want’s his readers to know three ways in which the maturing believer will digest God’s word in their life that will effect their maturity:

- 1. Vs. 19-21 How they **HEAR** it
- 2. Vs. 22-25 How they **APPLY** it
- 3. Vs. 26-27 How they **SHARE** it

**II. Vs. 19-21 How to hear the word of God**

Vs. 19-20 First after James makes an initial statement upon the “*personal qualities*” needed for maturity of being: “Swift to hear”, “Slow to speak” and “slow to wrath”. Then his focus is upon what “*receiving with meekness the implanted word*” looks like in the maturing believer.

Notice that the illustration from James is drawn from the realm of agriculture as James describes in negative terms:

- In verse 20 anger is said to halt the “***PRODUCE*** of the righteousness of God” in a person’s life.
- Then in verse 21 he describes, also in negative terms, what his readers were to lay aside namely the world’s influence upon them so that they can, “receive in meekness the ***IMPLANTED*** word”.

What we are to realize is that both our ***flash*** as well as the ***world system work against our maturity and will have to be overcome***. The question is just how is such negative influences as our flesh and world system to be countered? First James in his exhortation mentions in verse 19 three “personal qualities” necessary if we are going to be able to appropriate the Word of God for maturity as we will need to be: “***Swift to hear***”, “***Slow to speak***” and “***Slow to wrath***”. We will need these three things first so that we will be able to “lay aside all filthiness and overflow of wickedness” so that we can “receive with meekness the implanted word, which is able to save your souls.” Those familiar with Hebrew poetry will recognize James phrase as he uses “parallelism” to the triple “personal qualities” to receiving the word of God.

1. Vs. 19a “***Swift to hear***”: The statement indicates the early date of this letter as these Jewish believers had no written scripture yet of the New Testament and only had the First Testament. This suggests the importance placed upon “***hearing***” because ***the truth with regards to Jesus was oral and not written yet***. They would have gathered in homes to “***hear the truth***” and listening was imperative as those who wouldn’t listen would have no back up in the written word of God as we do. ***Those that listened gain an advantage to spiritual maturity***. Though we modern believer aren’t as handicapped because we have the written word we still

are “non-listeners” as billions of words are spoken with few heard! One of the major reason today that we Christians are poor listeners is that we are too busy or too preoccupied to pay attention. Further more we have switched from a society that “reads” or even “listens” to a society that “watches” all of which has drastically shortened our attention spans and our ability to concentrate. This inability to listen has huge implication to our ability to “HEAR” the word of God.

*This morning I have been given the call to speak the Word of God to you all and you have been given the task, for your maturity, to listen to the Word of God spoken and our prayer ought to be that we both finish at the same time!*

The modern prayer of many a saint is, “*Speak NOW LORD to me! You have 30 seconds!*” The problem of listening to 45 minutes of teaching is compounded when we take into consideration that the average 30 second commercial on TV has 60 images in glaring color with sound and we are accustomed to turning that out; how does a modest exposition of God’s Word stand a chance? *Our maturity in Christ depends upon our ability to be “SWIFT TO HEAR” there are five disciplines that will make us better listeners:*

- a. **Posture**: Becoming a good listener requires hard work, we need to get our hearts and bodies in the best position to listen, sit up and look up as if your life depended upon what was being said.
- b. **Exposure**: You must limit your exposure to visual media, if you don’t it will over whelm you and impair your ability to listen.
- c. **Exercise**: You need to read God’s word, take notes, high light passages be engaged, pray the word of God into your life.

- d. **Patience**: You need to take the time to listen, pray what Samuel did in 1 Samuel 3:10 “*Speak, for your servant listens*”.
- e. **Consistent**: Far too many only hear God’s word once a week on Sunday, I suggest to take the best of every day to listen to the One who loves you so much that He sent His Only Son to die in your place!
2. Vs. 19b “**Slow to speak**”: The second the triple “personal qualities” to receiving the word of God again were directed to the early church practice that invited open dialog during the service. This unstructured climate created opportunity for insistent interruptions that were a distraction to hearing the word of God. James, though not barring the practice seeks to cause people to wait and listen above asking questions or making comments. Zeno the Stoic philosopher said, “*We have two ears and one mouth, so that we should listen twice as much as we speak.*” There is always the danger as I know well that far too often I open my mouth only to change my feet! You never have to take back that which you didn’t say in the first place! Proverbs 10:19 reminds us that, “*In the multitude of words sin is not lacking, but he who restrains his lips is wise.*” It is unfortunate that far too often with regards to God’s word that we can become “Slow to hear” and “quick to speak” and because of this stunt our own maturity.
3. Vs. 19-20 “**Slow to wrath**”: The final of the triple “personal qualities” to receiving the word of God is James’ understanding that those who don’t really listen to the Word being taught where they foolishly speak out without thinking are prone to display anger at others who attempt to correct this threefold progressive trend. “**A angry heart never belongs to a teachable spirit!**” That’s the point of James’

words in verse 20. We need to listen with all our heart for the Word of God, however it may come to us and not become angry in the way truth has been delivered! No person I know will be convinced of the truth I speak by a display of anger.

Vs. 21 Having dealt with the triple “personal qualities” to receiving the word of God James issues a two-part command to receive the word of God from an agriculture illustration of.

1. “***Therefore lay aside all filthiness and overflow of wickedness***”: The first part of this command is negative as James says that an unwillingness to listen is connected to a sinful tongue and an unrighteous anger. If we reverse James exhortation and become “Slow to Hear, Quick to Speak and Quick to Wrath” then moral filth is the outcome of our actions. So if we desire to mature we need to reverse this trend and do some spiritual house cleaning. A closed Bible belongs to a closed heart which is characterized by filthiness and an overflow of wickedness! James is saying that before you plant in the soil of the garden of your heart the seed of the Word of God you may need to pull some weeds out. It is foolish to try to plant the Word of God in your heart if it is covered in the weeds of the flesh and the world!
2. “***And receive with meekness the implanted word, which is able to save your souls***”: The second part of this command is positive. First we learn something that God’s Word is not native to our hearts as it needs to be “***implanted***” and as stated above in “soil” that has been cleared of the weeds. Then it needs to be “received with meekness” which suggests both humility and teach-ability. To hear God’s

Word suggests that when we read it, listen to it, that we will accept it, and obey it so that we will be transformed by it especially if it challenges us! Our “Point of View” can be weeds that need to be removed as what we desire is the truth of His point of view! We have already personally witnessed that such acceptance has saved our souls so why stop being teachable now?