

The Book Of James: Keeping It Real

James 1:19-21

James 1:19

(KJV) *Wherefore, my beloved brethren, let every man be swift to hear, slow to speak, slow to wrath*

(NIV) *My dear brothers and sisters, take note of this: Everyone should be quick to listen, slow to speak and slow to become angry*

God has graciously given us two ears and one mouth. Should we then listen twice as much as we speak? Probably the ratio leans much more than *that* in the direction of listening!

Ecclesiastes 5:1-3

Keep thy foot when thou goest to the house of God, and be more ready to hear, than to give the sacrifice of fools: for they consider not that they do evil. Be not rash with thy mouth, and let not thine heart be hasty to utter any thing before God: for God is in heaven, and thou upon earth: therefore let thy words be few. For a dream cometh through the multitude of business; and a fool's voice is known by multitude of words.

Plans, oh do we have *plans*. And dreams, and opinions and ideas. And too often, in order to legitimize our plans, we spiritualize them. James will have none of that, as he addresses presumptuous sins in this passage:

James 4:13-17

Go to now, ye that say, Today or to morrow we will go into such a city, and continue there a year, and buy and sell, and get gain: Whereas ye know not what shall be on the morrow. For what is your life? It is even a vapour, that appeareth for a little time, and then vanisheth away. For that ye ought to say, If the Lord will, we shall live, and do this, or that. But now ye rejoice in your boastings: all such rejoicing is evil. Therefore, to him that knoweth to do good, and doeth it not, to him it is sin.

From this rather sobering passage, we learn that God has plans too. Better plans. And if we take the time to pray, take the time to listen, He is happy to share His better plans with His children. It is even Biblical to seek advice from a variety of counsellors—to both garner prayer support and receive different perspectives from your leadership and those with proven spiritual discernment (Proverbs 15:22). Remember though, at the end of the day, we humble ourselves and pray—if *the Lord wills*...

Ecclesiastes 5:3 says that *a fool's voice is known by multitude of words*. The more we conceive and dream in our heads and hearts, the more we verbalize to ourselves and others all about our plans. We all do it. And sometimes God allows us to—only to bring us back around to Him and *His* wisdom. To His better plan.

Jeremiah 29:11-13

For I know the thoughts that I think toward you, saith the LORD, thoughts of peace, and not of evil, to give you an expected end. Then shall ye call upon me, and ye shall go and

pray unto me, and I will hearken unto you. And ye shall seek me, and find me, when ye shall search for me with all your heart.

My wife and I have certainly learned to pray and listen and wait on God before making big, sweeping life decisions. God has taught us through some painful lessons that the stakes are too high and the consequences too costly not to wait on God. *Lord keep all of us in prayer!*

*QUESTION FOR MEDITATION: Have you ever made big life decisions without consulting God? How did that work out for you? What spiritual steps would you take in the future to ensure a better outcome?

*STUDY POINT: Find three passages in the New Testament that are classic Biblical examples of humility and listening to God.

Ecclesiastes 5:1 warns us to come into God's house with quiet, humble reverence, ready to worship Him according to His Word; ready to worship Him with all we are; ready to worship Him with our spiritual ears wide open.

John 4:23-24

But the hour cometh, and now is, when the true worshippers shall worship the Father in spirit and in truth: for the Father seeketh such to worship him. God is a Spirit: and they that worship him must worship him in spirit and in truth.

Even fellowship following our corporate worship can be an opportunity to listen with Christ's heart as we inquire as to what the Lord is doing in the lives of our brothers and sisters, and offering an encouraging word for their week.

When Sheri, my wife, and I were married in the winter of 2000, we were celebrating a victory that only God could have accomplished—drawing together three broken people and a dog into a redemptive, faithful family. But we knew, given our dysfunctional family backgrounds and new frontiers of learning to communicate, that there would be hardships. God immediately exposed my self-loathing and anger—triggered whenever I relived past sins—as I would punch walls and kick furniture and meltdown into rage. I recognized that ours would be a short marriage if this behaviour was not cut off immediately.

God gave me this verse to memorize and declare out loud whenever I felt the devil taunting me into self-hatred and anger:

James 1:20

(KJV) *For the wrath of man worketh not the righteousness of God.*

(NIV) *because human anger does not produce the righteousness that God desires.*

My personal paraphrase of this verse went something like this:

“Darren, your kind of selfish anger does not bring about the righteous lifestyle that God has in mind for you.”

Through His Word, God delivered me very effectively and expediently from the rage in my heart that threatened to end our young, miraculous marriage. *Hallelujah!*

*STUDY POINT: Human anger stems from our sin nature. Find the first three examples of human rage in the Bible. How did God respond in each case? What could we learn from His responses to our anger?

James 1:21

(KJV) Wherefore lay apart all filthiness and superfluity of naughtiness, and receive with meekness the engrafted word, which is able to save your souls.

(NIV) 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.

Beloved, there is no greater gift from God than Jesus and His Word. And there is no greater investment of our time on earth than spending time with our Saviour and time in His Word.

Get away from the world today. Get quiet. Get God and His Word into your heart and soul.

He has saved you for times like these. And He will save you time and again because of times like these.

Amen.

~ Reverend Darren McClelland