

The questions below are designed to be used by Saylorville Church Cell Groups as they meet during the week following the Sunday morning message at Saylorville. The intent is not for groups to answer every question, but for leaders to use the questions as a guide as they tailor the discussion to the needs of their unique group.

CONNECT WITH YOUR GROUP (10-15 MINUTES)

- Would you consider yourself to be a religious person? Why or why not?
- Using a blank sheet of paper, brainstorm together about how our culture defines “religion.”

APPLY THE BIBLE (45-60 MINUTES)

Read James 1:27 in several different Bible versions, then walk through these four steps of Bible study:

1. Observation (What do I see?)**• The first step is asking questions. Examples:**

- **Who?** Who wrote this passage, and to whom? Who are the people mentioned in this passage? What is said about them?
- **What?** What are some key words or phrases in this passage? What are the action words?
- **Where?** Where is the action taking place?
- **When?** When was this passage written? What is happening in the world at this time?
- **Why?** Why is this story included in the Bible?
- **How?** How does this passage relate to the context? How does God reveal Himself in this passage?
- *Other questions from our group:*

2. Interpretation (What does it mean?)**• Begin to uncover some of the answers, reasons, and meanings behind the observations you made in the first step. Examples:**

- Why did the author use that specific word in this passage?
- What did the writer mean when he said that?
- What do parallel or similar passages say about this topic?
- *Other questions from our group:*

3. Application (How does it apply to me?)**• Once we have answers, we can begin to ask ourselves how this applies to our lives. Examples:**

- Who do I identify with most in this passage?
- Which phrase in this passage is most meaningful to me? Why?
- What is the author saying about my life or life in general?
- Is there a specific caution, command, or encouragement I need to learn from this passage?
- *Other questions from our group:*

4. Implementation (What do I do now?)**• Come up with a specific plan to practice the Biblical lessons you’ve uncovered. Examples:**

- Based on this passage, is there a change I need to make in my life this week?
- What is my plan for success in the area I’m lacking in?
- Who will I talk to about the goals I developed as a result of what I read in this passage today?
- *Other questions from our group:*

PRAY FOR EACH OTHER (5-15 MINUTES)

- Pray for the five ministries that were represented during the services on Sunday morning:
 - **Jeanie Thomas** - Director of Alpha Women’s Center
 - **Lindsey Holan** - Post Abortion Ministry
 - **Tim McCloud** - Foster Care Ministry
 - **Dave Taschner** - Rise Up Ministry to Mentally/Physically Handicapped
 - **Karen Swartzendruber** - Ministry to Senior Saints

James 1:26-27 Commentary

James 1:26-27:

26 If anyone thinks he is religious and does not bridle his tongue but deceives his heart, this person's religion is worthless.

27 Religion that is pure and undefiled before God the Father is this: to visit orphans and widows in their affliction, and to keep oneself unstained from the world.

Context:

The passage follows three sections, each with a distinct response to the word God speaks: hearing (James 1:19b-20), receiving (James 1:21) and obeying (James 1:22-25).

James 1:26

“Religious” (Greek *threskos*, used only here in the New Testament) describes someone who fears or worships God. In particular, it refers to the outward consequences of what one believes (i.e., piety, good works) rather than to what he believes or the fact that he believes deeply. The Jews, who were James’ original readers, typically regarded alms-giving, prayer, fasting, regular attendance at worship services, and the observance of holy days and feasts as signs of true spirituality (cf. Matt. 6:1-18). However, James said a better test of spirituality was God’s control of one’s tongue (cf. 3:1-12).

James 1:27

Taking care of orphans and widows (conduct) is a duty that lies close to the heart of God (cf. Exod. 22:22-24; Deut. 10:18; Isa. 1:17; Jer. 5:28; Ezek. 22:7; Zech. 7:10). Yet many who professed to love Him neglected it (Ps. 68:5; Eccles. 4:1; Mark 12:40). Likewise personal moral purity (character) is an excellent external indicator of godliness (cf. Acts 15:20; 1 Tim. 5:22). James argued for reality. He did not want us to deceive ourselves into thinking that we are spiritual if our obedience to God is only superficial.

Like Jesus, James sees worship not in terms of external law but as an expression of inner active goodness.

To summarize, vv. 22-27 insist that a person’s religion must consist of more than superficial acts. It is not enough to listen to the statement of spiritual truth (vv. 22-25), nor is it sufficient to engage in formal religious activity (v. 26). The person whose religious experience is genuine will put spiritual truth into practice, and his life will be marked by love for others and holiness before God.

In this chapter James dealt with the practical problem of trials and temptations. He used this subject to remind his readers of some very basic truths that have implications in many other areas of practical Christian living. Some of these areas are consistent commitment to God and obedience to His Word. We will demonstrate behavior that is as genuinely religious as anything anyone can do when we respond to temptations to depart from God’s will appropriately. The appropriate response involves rejecting them and rejoicing in them because we believe God is using them to mature us for His glory.

Commentary by Dr. Thomas L. Constable. Accessed at <https://net.bible.org/#!/bible/James+1>