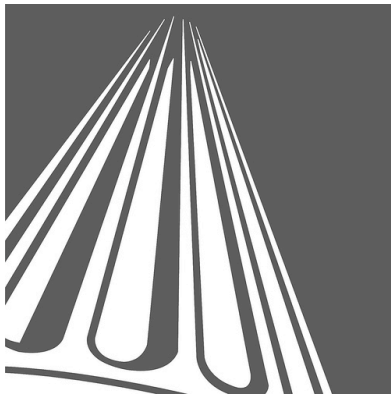


discipleship that changes lives

the great disconnect



Battle Ground
Bible Church

2430 East 600 North

West Lafayette, IN. 47906

765.567.2844

www.bgbc.org



how can I prepare to
hear the Word of God?

the great disconnect

discipleship that changes lives

The Great Disconnect. A. W. Tozer, described the Great Disconnect with these words:

“There is an evil which I have seen under the sun which in its effect upon the Christian faith is more destructive than communism, secularism and liberalism combined. It is the glaring disparity between theology and practice among professing Christians.

So wide is the gulf that separates theology from practice in the church that an inquiring stranger who chances upon both would scarcely dream that there was any relation between the two of them. An intelligent observer of our human scene who heard the Sunday morning sermon and later watched the Sunday afternoon conduct of those who had heard it would conclude that he has been examining two distinct and contrary religions.

It appears that too many Christians want to enjoy the thrill of feeling right but are not willing to endure the inconvenience of being right. So the disconnect between theology and practice becomes permanent fact, though in word the union is declared to be eternal. *Truth sits forsaken and grieves till her professed followers come home for a brief visit, but she sees them depart again when the bills come due.*”

That’s what James wants to talk to you about in James 1:19-27. James wants to talk about the massive disconnect that exists between what you know and what you do. The disconnect between what you believe and how you behave, between what you hear and how you walk.

God is in the process of changing you and transforming you into the image of Jesus Christ and everything that He does in your life is for that purpose.

And while trials are God’s primary process of life change, (get this) *truth is God’s primary tool for life change*. Jesus prayed to the Father in John 17:17, “Sanctify them in the truth, Your word is truth.”

Listen, we are exposed to massive amounts of truth every single Sunday. Did you know that? But how much of that truth gets into the car with you when you leave? How much of that truth gets into your life and changes your character and transforms your family? How does the truth of God’s word impact the way you do business, or how you relate to other people?

I want to challenge you to do something that most fail to do before they hear the truth and it’s this: Make a personal commitment to God right now that you will only think about one person while reading this. Make a commitment to God that you won’t think about your wife or your husband or your neighbor or your boss or even the person you’re going to give this to. Say to God,

“Lord, I will only think about ME. And I will only think about what needs to change in MY life. Lord I commit myself not just to telling people about what Your word says, but first and most importantly applying what your word says to my own life. Lord, drive out of my heart and mind the tendency to see other people’s flaws and bring my own into the light of your word and change me into the image of Jesus for your glory. I ask this in Jesus’ name, amen.”

Okay here we go. The question that James wants to answer in you is this: **What can I do that will allow the truth of God’s word to change my life?**

James gives us the answer in three steps:

the great disconnect

discipleship that changes lives

First, I must be PREPARED to receive the truth. You say how do I prepare myself to receive the truth? Well James gives 4 prerequisites. Look at verse 19, James says, "Know this (listen up) my beloved brothers: let every person be quick to hear." *I must have eager ears*. That's the 1st prerequisite.

If I am going to receive the truth, I have to be seriously fired up about what God has to say me! Did you know that it is possible for you to come to church every Sunday morning and sit in your seat and hear truth and yet not hear it? I'm serious, it happens every week all over the world. It's possible to listen to God's Word proclaimed faithfully and accurately week in and week out and yet never come to a place where you realize that those words are life to you. You have to have ears that want to hear truth more than anything. Here's a 2nd prerequisite:

James says, "Let every person be quick to hear and slow to speak." This is the other side of the coin. *I must have a shut mouth*. Abraham Lincoln said, "It is better to keep one's mouth shut and be thought a fool, then to open it and remove all doubt." Not only do I have to be fired up about what God has to say to me, but I need to shut my mouth while He's saying it.

Have you ever met a person that when you're trying to tell them something, they're always cutting you off, or finishing your sentences, or arguing with you? Have you met someone like that? Husbands don't even think it! Trust me, I did that this week and I'm still paying for it.

But here's the thing: When you're sitting and listening to the sermon what is your first instinct when you hear something you don't agree with? Is it to immediately start arguing against it and rehearsing what you're going to say when you get the chance? Or do you say, "You know that's not what I have ever been taught, but I could be wrong and so I'm just going to shut my mouth and listen. Maybe God's

got something to teach me." James says in verse 21 "receive with meekness (receive with humility) the implanted word."

Now if it doesn't conform to God's word, then throw it out. But don't allow arrogance to hinder receiving the life-changing truth that God wants to give you. The epitome of spiritual immaturity is the attitude, "I've got it all figured out." Here's a 3rd prerequisite to preparing to receive the truth:

I must have a calm spirit. Look at it, "Let every person be quick to hear, slow to speak, slow to anger; (why?) because the anger of man does not produce the righteousness that God requires." "Anger," *orge* in the Greek. And *orge* doesn't speak so much to explosive outbursts of temper as it does to a deep resentment that seethes and smolders, usually totally unnoticed by other people.

And what makes this kind of anger so dangerous to receiving the truth of God is that it finds its root in hatred. What's this anger directed toward? Well in context it's the directed toward the truth. When the truth confronts sin or challenges a personal belief or a standard of behavior. The anger that James is talking about here is directed toward the message of God's truth and sometimes toward the messenger of God's truth.

It's that, "Why does he keep saying that? And what gives him the right to teach that or to say that? Who cares about that? I don't." If that describes you your heart CANNOT receive the truth of God's word. You can't hear when you're angry. And if you're harboring anger in your heart either toward the message, toward the messenger or just anger period, God's word will continue to be a closed book to you.

If you don't get that thing that is seething and smoldering in your heart out and repent of it and turn from it, you will NEVER receive God's word in a life-changing

the great disconnect

discipleship that changes lives

way. And you will continue to live in that, negative, dead-end, mad at everybody existence.

That's why Paul says, "the anger of man does not produce the righteousness that God requires." If I want to be prepared to receive God's life-changing truth, I must have eager ears, a shut mouth and a calm spirit. Here's the 4th prerequisite:

I must have a pure heart. Look at verse 21, "Therefore put away all filthiness and rampant wickedness." There are two areas that James mentions as a pure heart. First, there must be the removal of filthiness. The NIV translates it "moral filth." One commentator calls it, "conduct that is disgusting and offensive to the pure mind."

Immoral things that I do. Things I say; lying, gossip, profanity, sharp criticism. Things I do; sexual immorality, stealing from my job, cheating on my taxes. Things I dwell on; lustful thoughts, dwelling on old offenses, tearing down other people in my mind. It's what James calls *filthiness*.

The Greek word for *filthiness* here is really interesting. It's the word *rupos* and even though it means moral filth, it started out as a medical term that described a heavy build-up of wax in the ear so that a person could no longer hear. Is that cool or what?

A few months ago, I had blockage of some kind in my right ear and could hardly hear anything; it finally cleared up by itself and I never found out what it was. But in the process of trying to find out what the problem was, I automatically assumed that I had wax build-up. And so Stephanie, my wife, went to the store and got an earwax removal kit and brought it home.

Well it didn't do anything for my right ear, but I treated my left ear. I didn't seem to have any blockage there, but I thought, "Hey I got the kit, let's go for it." And so put the stuff in my ear and then rinsed out my ear and you would not believe what came out! I mean there was a hunk of earwax that fell out of my ear that was an inch long and half an inch thick! Am I grossing you guys out? You're like, "Dude you're telling us about your earwax, what is up with that?!"

Just bear with me, I'm almost done. Here's the thing though: When that huge hunk of earwax came out of my ear, all of sudden I could hear things so much clearer than I ever could before!

Now listen, here's the point: *When you allow moral filth in your life, it will prevent you from being able to hear God's truth.* It will. I mean this is Christian Life 101. *If there are things in your life that are wrong, (mark it down) they will prevent you from hearing God's word this morning.*

The second thing that needs to be removed is what James calls "rampant wickedness." The NASB has it, "all that *remains* of wickedness." Not only do I remove moral filth from my life, but I continue to root it out and destroy every vestige of it that I find left over. And every time I see it creep back in I'm on it. I mean I want to change so bad that I will do ANYTHING it takes to unplug my spiritual hearing.

Some people say, "You know, I just don't get anything out of his sermons. Other people apparently do, but I don't." Well have you entertained the thought that there just might be a problem with you? Maybe you've got some earwax that needs to be removed.

Listen: stop blaming the message, stop blaming the messenger and get on your face before God and say, "Lord I gotta to get rid of some earwax . . . There are

the great disconnect

discipleship that changes lives

some things that I'm allowing in my life, some thoughts that I'm harboring, some anger I'm tolerating, some pride I'm feeding, some grudges I'm nursing, and it is preventing me from receiving your truth in a way that changes me. And I am so done with that!" Do that. And then turn from those things, if you're really serious about receiving the life-changing truth.

You know James is really talking about preparing your heart for hearing the truth. You know it blows my mind how little Christians prepare their hearts to hear the Word on Sunday morning. I think a lot of us put more time into thinking about where we're going to lunch, than we do in preparing our hearts for the ministry of the word.

On Sunday morning, most of us roll out of the rack just before we gotta leave, throw the kids in the car, fight with our spouse half way to church, we run in here, get the kids where they gotta go, find our seats, still ticked off at our spouse, then we start signing and before you know it, it's time for the message. That's pretty lame preparation, don't you think?

So begin on Saturday night. What do you do on Saturday night to prepare yourself for the word on Sunday morning? You'll find it almost impossible to get me to go somewhere on Saturday night. Even if I'm watching college football games on Saturday during the day, I set aside an extended period of time on Saturday night to prepare my heart for the Word. And then I get up a couple hours early on Sunday morning to do the same thing. I have to prepare my heart. I have to get alone with God, confess sin and prepare myself.

Could that be the reason why Sunday morning services aren't reaching you? Could that be the reason there is such a disconnect between what you hear and what you do? Could that be the reason why you can be exposed to so much truth every single week and yet not be changed by it?

I must be *PREPARED* to receive the truth. That's the 1st step. Here's the 2nd step: Having prepared myself to receive the truth.

Second, I must receive the truth in HUMILITY. James says in verse 21, "Therefore put away all filthiness and rampant wickedness, and (here it is) receive with meekness (with humility) the implanted word, which is able to save your souls." James highlights an action—receive, and an attitude—meekness.

In the original language the attitude of meekness is emphasized and so let's start there. Meekness, it's an attitude of humility and gentleness; it's a teachable spirit. "Lord, I'm teachable. Regardless of who cooked the meal, I am ready to learn." It's a humble openness. Then the action, "receive the implanted word." Listen: the one who receives the truth isn't a finicky eater. He doesn't care who prepares it as long as it's there.

When I was growing up we had a name for finicky eaters: hungry. Mom was just like, "this is what I'm serving, if you don't like it, fine don't eat." We can be like that. We want it in a certain style, we want it from a particular cook, we want it served with the same utensils that we're familiar with. And then we smell it. (Sniff, sniff) "I don't like that. I don't like the way he says *God*." or "I don't like this series." or "I don't like the way he walks around or the way he stands still or . . ." that's finicky eater. And finicky eaters typically don't receive much truth at all.

And God says, "Hey, take what I give you and be thankful for it." Why? "Because it is able to save your souls." Then there's the 3rd step:

Third, I must RESPOND TO the truth. It doesn't end when the word's implanted. In verses 22-27 James highlights the proper response to the truth. Let me give you a structure for verses 22-27. In verse 22 there's a *command*. In verses 23-25 there's an *illustration* and in verses 26-27 there's an *application*.

the great disconnect

discipleship that changes lives

Look at verse 22, “But be doers of the word, and not hearers only, deceiving yourselves.” There’s the command. Look at that word “hearer.” I studied this word in the original a little bit and I found something really interesting about it. It was used in the first century to describe a student that audits a course. You know what it means to audit a course?

When I was in college I audited a course once. And you can always tell the people who are just auditing the course, they’re the ones that are laughing when the Prof hits the class with a pop quiz. You know why they’re laughing? Because they don’t have to take the quiz. They don’t take tests, they don’t have to write any papers, they don’t have to read, they have no responsibilities. They don’t do anything but passively take in information! Just filling the notebook with notes.

There are some of you who audit church on Sunday morning. You’ve got your notebook packed full of notes, but you haven’t seen a significant change in your life for years. Just keep on taking it, and taking it in and taking it in and taking your notes and building up information and NOTHING changes.

Think about all the Sundays we spent on how to deal with conflict with another believer. Has that made any difference at all with how you deal with conflict? Or are you still using the old way, just talk bad about ‘em behind their back? Or talk to somebody else that you know will talk to them?

Or what about those studies on forgiveness? Have you gone out and extended forgiveness to those people who’ve hurt you? Or are you still nursing those old grudges? Are there any demonstrable changes that you can point at and say, “there, there’s proof that I’m not just auditing the course.”

You know this hits me hard, because I spent a certain amount of time as an auditor. I attended a church where the Bible was dealt with like a textbook and I

was going to college where it was textbook too. And I got so much truth that I grew arrogant and proud and always comparing what I knew to what other people didn’t know.

And one day, when I was in Seminary a godly professor of mine sat down next to me one day and he said, “Kenny, you know what I see in you? I see a person who has a great deal of theological and biblical knowledge, but I also see a person who is arrogant and proud and unchanged.”

Talk about a trip to the woodshed. But it was the most significant and life-changing confrontation I ever received in my life. Because for the first time in my Christian life I began to see the truth of God’s word not as something designed to satisfy my curiosity, but something designed to change my life! To alter my attitudes, to make me loving and gracious and kind, when I was by nature the other way. Listen when God’s truth speaks, do it! It’s not more difficult than that.

The evangelical church today is filled with auditors. They have a lot of truth crammed in their heads, but it never seems to make it into their lives. Let’s not be a church of auditors, okay? Let’s be the kind of church that says, “you know what auditing is not an option here. Life-change is required here and if it’s not happening, then let’s find out why.”

Now James gives us two illustrations; one of the person who only hears the word and another of the person who hears and *does* the word. Look at verse 23, “If anyone is a hearer of the word and not a doer, he is like a man who looks intently at his natural face in a mirror. ²⁴For he looks at himself and goes away and at once forgets what he was like.”

Now this isn’t a physical mirror okay? A physical mirror doesn’t show you what kind of person you are; it shows you what your face looks like. God’s mirror is

the great disconnect

discipleship that changes lives

what James calls in verse 25 “the perfect law, the law of liberty—that is the comprehensive truth of God’s word.” And that mirror shows you want kind of person you really are.

And so James’ illustration shows a person who picks up or hears God’s word, he’s exposed to the exact same truth that everyone else is exposed to, walks away and forgets everything he’s read or heard.

Now look at the second illustration in verse 25, “But the one who looks into the perfect law, the law of liberty, and perseveres, being no hearer who forgets but a doer who acts, he will be blessed in his doing.” Now when I look out at you guys, I see something that you all have in common. Before you come to church, you looked at a mirror, am I right?

Here’s another thing I know. You did something about what you saw in the mirror. Now there are some of you who look really scary in the morning, I mean like freak show scary! Am I right? Now here’s what I want for you to do next Sunday. I want you to get up in the morning, take a look at the mug in the mirror and do nothing about and just come to church. All right? How many of you can count on?

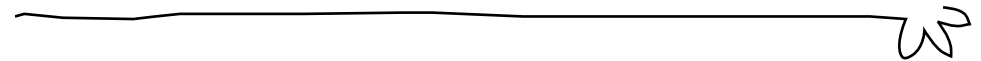
You know where this is going right? I mean how many of us, hear the truth on Sunday morning and you’re like, “man that sermon rocked!” Big hairy deal, what difference did it make in your life? Okay what differences are you talking about James? Get specific. James says, no problem. I’ve got three things. Here they are: I know my life is changing when:

First, *I know my life is changing when: there is no disconnect between the truth and my tongue.* Look at verse 26, “If anyone thinks he is religious and does not bridle his tongue but deceives his heart, there is a major disconnect.” How’s the problem with gossip going?

Second, *I know my life is changing when: there is no disconnect between the truth and the needs of others.* Verse 27, “Religion that is pure and undefiled before God, the Father, is this: to visit orphans and widows in their affliction.” When’s the last time you got involved in the life of a single mom and her kids? When’s the last time you took one of her son’s to the game with you?

Third, *I know my life is changing when: there is no disconnect between the truth and how the world affects you.* “And to keep oneself unstained from the world.”

Are you preparing to be changed by the Word of God at church?



the great disconnect

One of the most important questions that any local church can ask itself is: Who are we? What do we value as a local body of believers? Battle Ground Bible Church has identified and highlighted eight core values that drive everything that our local body does and aspires to:



REACH UPWARD

we are devoted to proclaiming the **truth** with boldness
we are devoted to magnifying and **exalting** Jesus Christ through the praise and prayer of the gathered body

GROW INWARD

we are devoted to **discipleship** that changes lives
we are devoted to accountable **relationships** that unify the body of Christ
we are devoted to making every member a **minister**
we are devoted to developing broad godly **leadership**

GO OUTWARD

we are devoted to impacting our community and the world through gospel **outreach**
we are devoted to **replicating** like-minded sister churches.