

#3 Faith Works: A Study in James - How does faith work when you are angry?

- All right, this is gonna be super fun. If you've got a Bible go to a New Testament book called James. It's written by Jesus' kid brother. And we tend to think of Bible teachers, theologians, scholars, as coming out of institutions with formal educations. That's not the situation with James. I call him the blue collar scholar of the New Testament. His dad is Joseph. His mom is Mary. He grows up in a rural small town, poor family peasant. He's going to work with his dad as a little boy, his dad's a carpenter, but nonetheless, the spirit of God is so strong in James that he grows up to serve his big brother, Jesus, as his Lord and savior and write this amazing book of the Bible. So what we're finding ourselves studying today is the topic of how does faith work when you get angry? And so what happens is there are times in life that we need to take our faith and we need to put it to work because faith does work. So we're in James chapter one verses 19 through 27. And we're gonna talk about some practical and some personal stuff today. Probably some stuff you don't wanna necessarily even think about because maybe you're ashamed of it, you're embarrassed by it, you're struggling with it. Or you've sort of surrendered to it in a negative way. God wants to heal it today. God wants to deliver you today. So as we get into these personal and practical matters, two things I want you to know upfront. God is your father. He's gonna tell us that twice in James chapter one. And he's gonna tell us three times that you are his beloved. I've got five kids, I love with all my heart. And if they're having a hard time or they're struggling or they're in a season, I want them to know that I'm their dad. I love them. I'm for them. I'm there for them. I want them to know that our relationship is secure and that their wellbeing is my first priority. That's God's heart for you today. And so, as we jump into the book of James, we're gonna start by looking at the theme of chapter one and the context is trial. So here's the first question, what's your trial? And we've all got trials. We're all in something that is a struggle, a hardship, a difficulty, a complexity. This is the theme of James chapter one. Verse two says when you meet trials of various kinds, we've all got trials. Some of us physical, mental, spiritual, emotional, relational. And then he says, James 1:12, "It's an opportunity, the trial is, "bless it as the man or person "who remains steadfast under trial." So first question is, what trial are you in? For some of you it's a big thing right now. You've got a big decision or big opposition. For some of you it's a bunch of little things. Now I'll just be honest, as we're in James one, it's been super helpful for me. What I have learned about myself I tend to do really good with the big trials. And then I tend to trip over my own feet with the little ones. Any of you like me? So like, so, you know, God's like, Hey, grab your five kids in your mid forties, move halfway across the country start a church. You have no money. You have no people. You have no clue. You have no job. And I'm like, okay, great. And then I kid you not. I'm meditating on this verse a couple of days ago, driving on the freeway and some kid in a Honda civic, a hundred miles an hour with a ball cap backwards vaping, one of those lowered, you know, and then they put the muffler on it. So it sounds like a real car, it's not, and he's going a hundred miles an hour, weaving in out of traffic, he drives the truck alongside of me off the road, cuts me off and gives me my least favorite finger. And I'm meditating on this verse, I'm like getting tried, and then all of a sudden I'm like this kid needs the ministry of the right hand of fellowship is all I'm thinking, right? Usually I'm good in the big trials and then I kind of struggle with the little ones. We've all got our trials going on. What happens when there is a trial around us, it triggers emotion in us.

We get emotional. That's where he's gonna go next. So what's your trial trigger? Someone or something in your trial triggers you. So the experience out there leads to a response or some emotion in here. James 1:19 through 20, "Know this, my beloved," so again, God loves you. "Brothers, like Jesus is our big brother too, "let every person be quick to hear, slow to speak, "slow to anger "for the anger of man does not produce "the righteousness of God." So what he's saying is there's a trial out there, someone or something triggers you, you get emotional in here. And usually that primary emotion is anger. You're frustrated, you're agitated. So we're gonna talk about this. Let's start with the anger. Anger is a very important emotion because it reveals to us who and what we love. We get angry about people and things we care about, whether they're harmed or endangered or taken advantage of, used, abused or neglected. And when you're angry, it means that that's a person or a thing that is very treasured by you. It's important to you. So it's a trigger for emotion in you. In addition, when it comes to our anger, anger is something we feel and it's something we do. It's something we feel and then we do. And so he's going to build on that with behavior that our anger manifests itself with the words that we speak and the deeds that we do. And so when we're looking at anger, we've got to ask, okay, what does the Bible say about anger? Now, some of you've been wrongly told that there are good emotions and bad emotions and that anger is a bad emotion. Some of you have been told that. I was dealing with a pastor a couple of years ago and he said, yeah, I never get angry. I said, well, then you're a terrible pastor, because there are things that you should be angry about. Like I'm angry that you don't get angry. Like it's what I'm thinking. And what he was thinking is holy people are not angry people. But if you look at sin and injustice and evil and abuse, there are certain things that are just wrong and if you don't feel angry, you're actually not emotionally agreeing with God. So anger can be a motivator. It can be a passionate igniter of action in our life. And so the question is, is our anger good anger or bad anger? Is it righteous anger that agrees with God or is it the anger of man that does not produce the righteousness of God? That's the context in James one. So let's just look at some triggers for unhealthy anger.

Sometimes this can be entitlement. We feel like we're owed something. We deserve something, you're obligated to us and we don't get it so then we get angry. That's an unholy, ungodly anger. Sometimes unholy, ungodly anger it's triggered by selfishness. And this is where someone is inconveniencing us or annoying us. And if you're not yet married, I'm just prophesying your future, okay? You don't know how selfish you are till you get married and you realize that this other person is going to take some of your time, money and energy. And it triggers anger in you and frustration because you're selfish. Marriage is two selfish people, just so you know, being served by Jesus and learning to serve one another. Oftentimes the frustrations, the annoyances, the emotional responses in marriage, it's just totally out of selfishness. And the next level you find that you are an angry person in an unhealthy way when then you add children. Okay. All the parents laugh and the single people are like, what, I don't understand. Again, we're prophesying your future because what kids will do is they will make you very frustrated. And sometimes, yeah, so we do have a witness in the third row. So what happens is that sometimes anger manifests itself as disappointment or hurt or frustration or annoyance, and sometimes even fear, but under it all is ultimately anger. And so what happens when you're a parent is, your child says or does something that's an inconvenience, a frustration and as a result, you get upset with them. But the question is, did they commit a sin or a mistake? There's

a big difference between a sin and a mistake. God gets upset about sin, but mistakes are what human beings do and that's how human beings learn. We don't always get it right the first time and it takes us awhile. If you're always upset because people are making mistakes, you are creating this perfectionistic environment where you're going to be triggered by their humanity. And then you're gonna punish them for being human and this is the case with kids. Just so you know, kids are gonna spill their drink, they're gonna wake up in the middle of the night, they're gonna wet their bed, they're gonna climb into your bed then they're gonna wet your bed. These things just happen. And unless they methodically plotted it, and sometimes I think they do, it's just a mistake. And so we shouldn't get angry about humanity. Now, ultimately the, probably the worst negative human expression of unhealthy anger comes out of bitterness and unforgiveness. When you are bitter, unforgiving towards someone, everything they do triggers you. Just hearing their name triggers you, seeing their face on social media triggers you. Having to interact with them during the holidays triggers you. And so you and I need to make sure that our anger is not triggered by bitterness and unforgiveness, which are demonic strongholds, that we need to forgive people as God has forgiven us. And that's why he tells us in Ephesians 4:26, "Be angry and do not sin." What he doesn't say is, don't get angry. What he says is you're going to get angry and when you do get angry, it's a powerful motivator and it can lead you into good action or bad action. Choose to use it in a constructive way not a destructive way. In your anger do not sin. And what can happen when we are angry, we're more prone to temptation and sin because we're more frustrated in the moment. Now, let me ask you this, does God ever get angry? He does. And so if God gets angry, it is godly to sometimes be angry. If you're always angry, you're not godly. If you're never angry, that's not godly. Sometimes God gets angry and as a result, godly people sometimes get angry. So the difference between the unrighteous anger of man and the righteous anger of God is are we angry about the things that God is angry about? So recently, and sometimes I get angry, just so you know this, my initials are Mark Allen Driscoll. So my initials are MAD. So this is a life struggle for me. Okay. So recently I was upset, I was frustrated and I thought, okay, I'm gonna go talk to God about this. And I was like, "God, I'm very frustrated." And he talked to me, sometimes God talks to me. And he said, "Why?" I said, "Well, this is what happened." He said, "I'm not angry, why are you?" I was like, "Oh, you're not angry about this?" He's like, "No. "And if I'm not angry, why are you angry?" See, sometimes we're angry and we need to ask God, are you angry? Does this upset you? If it doesn't upset you, why should it upset me? If my response is different than yours then my response is ungodly 'cause that's not God's response. What he does here in James one, he quotes a verse from the old Testament, the book of Exodus, chapter 34. There, God comes down and introduces himself. Hi, I'm God. And he says the Lord, the Lord, meaning I'm in charge and you probably are gonna forget that so I'll tell you again, the Lord, the Lord. And then he says, slow to anger. God introduces himself as a God who is capable of anger, but has to be pushed toward it, He doesn't begin at it. God's anger has a very long wick. The other religions in the world, they tend to conceive of their false erroneous view of God, that God's an angry God, that God is always sort of on the edge of his seat, ready to attack you and you need to appease him. The God of the Bible says, no, no, no. I'm not an angry God. I'm a loving God. And you need to really push me for a very long time before you agitate me. Now, this is good news for us. And it should be a good example for us. The good news is, if we know that God is loving, merciful, and slow to

anger, when we blow it, when we're triggered, when we're emotional, when we're in a trial, when we've made some bad decisions, we don't need to run from this God, because he's gonna hurt us, we need to run to this God because he's gonna help us. This is what he says in Romans, it's the kindness of God that leads to our repentance. When we know that God is loving, merciful, kind and slow to anger, when we've said or done something wrong, we go to him we don't run from him. Just so you know, this line that James quotes from Exodus 34, that God is quote, slow to anger, of all the verses in the Bible this is the verse that is quoted more than any other verse in the entire Bible. Now you think of everything that's in the Bible and the holy spirit decides, okay, there's one thing that they're going to forget so I need to tell them over and over and over and over and over, I'm slow to anger. If God is slow to anger, then you and I by God's grace need to learn to be slow to anger. So God does get angry. Does Jesus ever get angry? Jesus is perfect human being. He sets for us the perfect example of emotional health internally and word and deed coming out in behavior decision. And it tells us some 60 times in the new Testament, it tells us about Jesus' emotions and he has the full range of emotions. The number one emotion mentioned of Jesus in the New Testament, it's really good news for us, is compassion, because he's slow to anger. There are two occasions where Jesus' anger is expressly mentioned. One is in Mark chapter three, verse five. And what happens is it's the Sabbath day. So the way it worked, God created the world and in six days he worked and on one day he rested and he said, okay, we're gonna do a seven day week, six days you work one day you rest, he called it the Sabbath. What happens then is religious people come along. And what religious people do is they add to God's word. They add a lot of fine print and details. And religious people tend to think, oh God got a good start. He missed a few things. We'll fill in the errors and the oversights of God. So they create a long list of what you can do and not do on the Sabbath. Jesus shows up, he sees a guy who's sick. He's been unhealthy his whole life, his life is just devastated by health problems. And so what does Jesus wanna do? Heal the guy, but it's the Sabbath. So Jesus decides he's gonna heal this guy on the Sabbath and the religious people who made all the rules and enforced all the rules, not God's rules, their rules. They're hoping that Jesus heals the guy so that they can attack him, criticize him, malign him, punish him and diminish his ministry influence. Now, if you're the guy who's been sick for a long time, what do you want? You're like, today's a good day to be healed. Like pretty much any day's a good day to be healed. And it says that they were angry at Jesus because he was gonna help a guy. And Jesus was angry at them because they didn't want the guy to get helped. So what you've got here, you've got the religious leaders are angry and Jesus is angry and their anger is wrong and his anger is right. So it says this in various English translations, Mark 3:5, anger, grieved, anger and sorrow, anger and deeply distressed or angrily and deeply saddened. Jesus gets angry at manmade human religion and tradition. If you're here and you're like, oh, I don't know if I wanna join a religion. We're not here to give you a religion. We're here to give you a relationship with Jesus Christ. Religion is human beings making rules to control and punish one another through fear. Relationship with Jesus is love, grace, mercy forgiveness, and a changed life out of love that comes from God. Jesus gets angry when religion gets in the way of helping hurting people. In addition, there's one other occasion where Jesus gets angry. Jesus had two sisters and a brother that he was close friends with. The guy's name was Lazarus. And then the sisters were named Mary and Martha. And so for Jesus, they're like extended family. Some of you know

people like that, they're not your family of birth, but your family new birth. They love the Lord, you love the Lord. And they just feel like family. So as Jesus is traveling, he'd often stop by their house for dinner. He would lead Bible studies there. He would stay the night. He'd probably go there for the holidays. They were his friends. And then he's traveling and one of the sisters, Mary, she's more of the relational, emotional, intuitive feeler. She finds Jesus and she reports this tragic news, Lazarus died. Lazarus, his friend, and Jesus has this emotional response in John chapter 11, verse 33, "Angry in his spirit and deeply moved. "A deep anger welled up within him and he was deeply troubled." Jesus gets angry about death because sin leads to death. And when God made the world, there was no sin and there was no death. So when he sees sin bring death to people that he loves, it angers him. If somebody you love gets diagnosed with cancer and you're angry, you have the heart of God. You have the heart of God. Sin, death, hurts people that God loves and religion does not allow the help to go to people as is needed and so what angers Jesus is religion, sin, and death, which all harms people that he loves and wants to help. The point is this, if you're always angry, there's a problem. If you're never angry, there's a problem. If you're slow to anger, you are walking in the spirit. And if religion, sin, and death frustrate you, you're sharing the heart of God. Now the key is if you're gonna be angry at sin, you've got to start by being angry at your own. Shots fired. Okay. Some people are like, you're doing good pastor Mark, keep going. That last thing, I don't know, it's a glitch. So what happens is there's a trial around you, it triggers emotion in you oftentimes that dominant emotion is anger and anger is not just what we feel it's what we do with the words that we speak and the deeds that we choose. So he's gonna talk about our words and speaking out of anger. And Jesus says that out of the overflow of the heart, the mouth speaks. So the words that come out indicate the internal condition of the heart. So he's gonna tell us, we should be quick to hear, slow to speak, slow to anger. The anger of man does not produce the righteousness of God. Now the problem in our day is that we have technology. This allows angry people to trigger one another and escalate anger at an incredibly proficient rate. So social media, fake news, clickbait, social media platforms and comments and certain Pajamahadeen bloggers. What happens is that somebody gets angry and then they speak out of their anger and they trigger someone else. And the whole goal is to multiply anger because that multiplies clicks because that generates revenue. And the point is that we emotionally abuse people for profit. And that's the world that we live in. And so unlike the day of James, where you had to work a little bit, to hear what people are saying today, you need to work really hard not to hear what other people are saying, 'cause it's on your phone. Call, text, email, you know, like, comment forward a post. It's incredible. It's an onslaught toward the soul. And what you have online is a bunch of angry people yelling at each other. Everyone's talking, no one's listening. It's the complete inverse of James. Slow to speak quick, quick to listen. Online, it's quick to speak slow to listen. Someone once said that God gave us one mouth and two ears because that's the good ratio for living. We should do twice as much listening as we do talking. And some of you are saying, pastor Mark you're a hypocrite, Hey, overlook the obvious, okay. Now in saying this, part of the problem with technology, I was talking to a pastor named Rick Warren a few years ago. So the problem with technology is fourfold, it's instant, constant, global, permanent. Instant. So you have a trial around you. Some emotion gets triggered in you, perhaps anger, instantaneously you can communicate. You can post online, you can send a call, text, email,

whatever it's instant. And it's constant 24 hours a day, seven days a week. So every, constantly people are angry. And what people wake up and they decide is what's the rage of the day. Our whole culture now is driven by the rage of the day, who or what are we angry at? And there are whole influencers and platforms, and some would even call themselves ministries, but they're really miseries. And all they do is just decide the rage or the enemy of the day. Instant, constant, global. You're angry about someone or something you just let it fly. Now, somebody around the world who is maybe wounded, damaged, triggered, broken, frustrated, bitter, they align with you. The whole world can now be involved. And once it's out there, it's like a tattoo, it's permanent. So what happens is you get a trial, you get triggered, you get angry, you say something, and then you have to live with it. Is this true? Some of you are gonna say, Pastor Mark, how do you know this? I know a guy. I know a guy who on occasion, especially as a younger man, got angry and put some things on the internet that he can't take down. And what I would say is pray for that guy. And right now don't post anything about him. But what happens is, if you are younger, you're being born into a world that is a complete sociological experiment. And we have no idea what the outcome might be, but all indicators are not healthy. Not healthy or well. I got a communications degree before the internet, just process that. Rode my dinosaur, we'd communicate on tablets. It was interesting. If you are younger, all you know is this instant, constant, global, permanent angry people triggering one another and then bringing the entire universe into their troubles. And it's not a healthy way to live. It's just not. So what happens then is what dominates out of an angry heart are things like slander, you're just trashing somebody. Lying, you're just making stuff up. Bearing false witness, they said, or I heard. And it's like, that's not what happened. And gossip. And if you're a Christian, if you're a new Christian, let me tell you this, Christians will gossip and instead will use the word prayer request. And so it's a ninja move. Oh my gosh, have you heard about so-and-so so, you really need to pray for them. Let me tell you, it's gossip because it's not your news to tell. It's not your news to tell. As a pastor, people tell me things and other people who are gossips and busybodies will be like, well, tell me about so-and-so. If you wanna know about so-and-so go ask so-and-so. If you wanna know how their marriage is, go ask them. That's not my news to tell. Gossip is when we tell news that is not our news to tell. And we live online and this is the world that we live in and it's tragic. So you will have a trial around you. It will trigger emotion in you, perhaps even anger and you'll wanna communicate. You'll wanna say something. You wanna express yourself. But oftentimes when we do, it's unwise and it's unhelpful and it's unholy. So just a couple of questions, when you're triggered and you're angry and you're emotional, do you wanna make a point or do you wanna make a difference? It's really easy to make a point. It's really hard to make a difference. If you wanna make a difference in someone's life, you can't just be making points about their life. Do you wanna be a critic or a coach? If you go to a sporting event, let's say there's a player on the field, an athlete, and they blow it and we all know it. The coach sees it, sitting in the stands behind the coach is the critic who sees it. And they're both gonna talk to the athlete about their failure, but very differently. The critic is just going to mock them, is going to malign them, is going to frustrate them. The coach is gonna walk out on the field and help them. The difference between a critic and a coach is not what you see but what you say. If you walk in love, you're gonna be a coach. If you walk in anger, you're gonna be a critic. Coach walks out and he's like, okay, we all saw it, it's on the jumbotron. So here, I want you to know, I believe in you. Here's

what you need to do next time. Here's how we're gonna fix it. Here's how you're gonna do better. You wanna be a critic or a coach? Let me say this, if you're a parent, the worst thing you can do is be your child's critic. The most, 'cause they have plenty of critics. The most important thing we can do is be their coach. Do you wanna beat people down or you wanna build people up? Do you wanna win the argument? Or do you wanna win the person? You can win an argument and lose a relationship. And what you wanna do is you wanna win the person and you wanna preserve the relationship. And so it's not just about getting angry and making your point and beating them down and winning the argument, it's about having the heart of God to help them rather than harm them, to listen to them rather than yell at them. And one other question when we hit these moments, will we keep private things private or will we make them public? What happens when you have a trial, you are triggered, you get emotional and angry, you tend to take things that should be private and you make them public. Because you're trying to do harm toward others. And we live in this world where the more, let me say, there's a difference between secrecy and privacy. Secrecy is you're hiding things that are bad. Privacy is it's none of your business. It's why we shower at home not the grocery store. You don't go over to the produce aisle, Oh, look a hose, oh, good. I need to shower. Please don't do that. That's privacy. Meaning we don't need to be involved. There are lots of things in life that are just privacy. And we betray, out of anger, when we take something that is private and we make it public. And let me just say this, when you get angry, when I get angry, oftentimes our first response, is it in the flesh or the spirit? The flesh. I don't know why. I don't know if the flesh runs all the red lights and the holy spirit drives the speed limit so he shows up later. I don't know why. How many of you though, when you get angry, the first thing you wanna say and do is not a good idea. Okay. And if you're like, I don't know, ask your spouse. They will testify that most of the things that we say and do that we regret are out of anger when we're triggered in the moment and then the holy spirit shows up a little later and we're like, oh gosh, I just, I just torpedoed my own life. In addition, what he's saying is, before you talk to them, talk to him. When he says quick to listen, slow to speak. The point is this, sometimes you need to have a hard conversation. So have that hard conversation with God and have him instruct you how to have that conversation with them. God can handle your anger. God can handle your frustration. God can be the lightning rod that grounds out the storm that you're in. The problem is we're feeling emotional, like I need to talk about, I need to say something. And how many of you are like me, you're verbal processors. I am. Every weekend, the man's like, where are you going? I don't know. I'm excited to see. I don't know. I'm just gonna talk and we'll see where it ends up. Some of you like me, you need to talk about it. You need to process it. You need to think it through. You need to be emotional, need to be passionate. You know what neat with God, just turn your phone off. Don't invite the universe in. Don't create an unholy alliance. Don't just leak or vent to whomever is in front of you. So you know what, I'm gonna go meet with God. I'm angry. I'm frustrated. I'm emotional. I got to think this through. I'm pretty sure what I'm gonna say and do is not gonna be the will of God. And I need to get with God to find his will. So it's not that you do nothing. It's that you process it with God first. For me, this looks like prayer walks and hikes in the woods and journaling it out. And it's like, okay, God, is my anger godly? If not, I need to repent of my anger. My anger is godly and I need to talk to them. Do I need to talk to them? And sometimes God's like, you don't need to talk to them I'm gonna talk to them. Okay, great. Well, yeah, you are the

Lord. So you can tap yourself in whenever you want. And Grace used to do this to me too when we first got married, she would pray for me, not tell me. And then I would just get convicted and I'd walk in and be like, were you praying for me again? I called it seeking the holy spirit on me. That's what she would do. Mark's been a little grumpy. Holy spirit, get him. Amen. Works every time. And sometimes as you're praying for them, your heart is changing and God is also working on them to prepare you to have the conversation so you're not triggering anger in one another. There is an old prayer from St. Francis of Assisi. He says, "Oh, divine master, "grant that I may not so much seek to be understood "as to understand." We live in a world where it's like, I want you to understand me. I want you to hear me. I want you to listen to me. And everybody's feeling that way. Everybody's talking, nobody's listening. So as we listen to God, it opens our ears to start to listen to others. And what this will do, it'll increase empathy because sometimes people are going through something or they've triggered us and we didn't get the full picture of where they were. I give a kind of an interesting analogy. Last night, I was thinking about it. There was a time I was teaching and I got up to teach and my mic wasn't on. There's just, I'm like, Hey, can you guys turn the mic on? You know, Hey, mute, unmute. I mean, and nothing. So afterward, you know, finally somebody goes in the booth, they unmute the mic and I teach God's word. And afterward I'm like, what happened? The sound person came up and he said, "I'm so sorry. "I got a text that my mom had been in a car wreck "and was in ICU and I just froze." I was like, oh, well that that's, how's your mom? See in that moment, they were going through something that I had no idea about. And oftentimes it's that way. And what happens is we know when other people are not being considerate toward us and we don't know when we're being inconsiderate toward them. And sometimes listening starts with just asking good questions. What's going on? What happened? What's your day like? Asking good questions allows us to listen. It can give us empathy, it could give us perspective. Sometimes we rush to conclusions. You're like, well, I got some more data and I was wrong. And let me say this. Most people don't expect to be agreed with, but they want to be heard. That's where he says, be slow to speak quick to listen. Especially when there's a trial that triggers an emotion like anger. What happens when we get angry is our mouth opens and our ears close. And when God says, no, no, no, no, no. You need to close your mouth and open your ears. And most of the time, people don't expect to be agreed with they just wanna be heard. There's even a whole category of therapy. It's called Rogerian therapy, it's from Carl Rogers. I don't necessarily endorse it, but it is this. When people come in, don't give them any advice or tell them anything, just let them talk, listen, and then repeat to them in your own words what they said. So there's a whole form of therapy that says, actually some people if you just listen, that helps them. There are people that are so desperate just to be heard, just to be cared for. And when you're angry, oftentimes you wanna let them have it and you don't wanna let them have a few words. So let me say the key to marriage is well, it's learning to listen and you won't always agree. So let me say this, Grace and I we've been married 29 years, we're coming up on 30 years. Are there things that we disagree about? Yes or no? Yeah. So pray for Grace. She's working some stuff out. So, no, I'm kidding. And there will be times that she'll be like, okay, I just want you to hear me out and I'll hear her out. And then I'll say, okay, I want you to hear me out and then we'll come back and she's like, I disagree with you. And I was like, I disagree with you. Can we go to dinner now? We've loved one another. We've considered one another. We've heard one another, but we don't necessarily

come to agreement. But we come to love and appreciation and understanding and mutual respect, that's what listening provides. Now, what happens is there's a trial around you, it triggers emotion in you, and then you want to speak and act. And so out of the trial, the trigger, the emotion comes word and deed. He's gonna talk about behavior next. What's your trial trigger behavior? James 1:21 through 25, "Therefore put away all filthiness and rampant wickedness." And especially when we're angry, we're more vulnerable and susceptible. "And receive with meekness, you gotta be humble, "the implanted word, which is able to save your souls." What he's saying is rather than yelling at them, open the word of God and listen to him. "But be doers of the word and not hearers only "deceiving yourselves." He's back to religious people. "For if anyone is a hearer of the word and not a doer, "he's like a man who looks intently at his natural face "in a mirror for he looks at himself and goes away "and at once forgets what he was like. "But the one who looks into the perfect law, "the word of God, the law of liberty "and perseveres being no hearer who forgets, "but a doer who acts, "he will be blessed in his doing." So, here's the process, trial around you, trigger, emotional, you wanna say something, you wanna do something. First thing you need to do, be quiet, listen, and start with the word of God. You meet with God before you meet with them. You hear from God before you speak to them. And what he's talking about here is timing God's word. Listening is an art form that is required to be a maturing disciple of Jesus Christ. If you won't listen, you can't learn. Faith comes by hearing the word of God. As you listen to the word of God, you get a transforming of your mind and you start to think what God thinks and you start to feel what God feels, 'cause what happens when there's a trial and a trigger, an emotional response like here's what I'm thinking. Here's what I'm feeling. You've got to go to God and go like, okay, God, what should I be thinking and what should I be feeling? What should I be thinking? And what should I be feeling? And then what should I be saying? And what should I be doing? And so it's fine to study the Bible if you'll let the Bible study you. The problem with many people is they study the Bible for information, not for transformation. And the Bible says that knowledge puffs up, but love builds up. Love is doing the word of God. What religious people will do, they will study the word of God, but not allow it to study them. And it's fine to be in the word so long as the word is in you. And he uses this analogy that the Bible rightly understood should be a mirror. And what a mirror does, it reveals who we are. So you open the word of God you're like, okay, I'm angry. I'm upset. I'm tempted. I'm making bad decisions. I'm in some bad habits. Okay. This is who I really am Lord, I need help. Instead, what happens with religious people they read the Bible, not as a mirror, but as binoculars. Okay. Oh, yep. Okay, yup. I see your sin. That was an error. You said that wrong quoted the wrong verse. You are a little emotional. Didn't use your turn signal. You're looking at naughty stuff on the internet. Okay, you yelled at your dog. I see all your problems. But as long as it's binoculars for you and not mirror for me, I don't see anything in my life that needs to change and I become judgmental, I become proud, I become hypocritical, I become idealistic, which causes me to become legalistic. Now these are the people that murdered Jesus. They quoted verses to murder God. And what they were doing is they were criticizing Jesus' life rather than examining their own. And the result was they were deceived. He's gonna use this language over and over in James chapter one. Religious people who use the Bible as binoculars for others, rather than mirror for themselves, they're religious and they are deceived. I'm godly, I'm holy, I'm biblical. Let me just say this, I don't know if you know this. I really like the

Bible. I believe in it. And people who have a verse for everything scare me because sometimes they use the word of God like a fig leaf to cover up who they truly are. And they're trying to exercise spiritual authority and control by claiming that they're speaking on behalf of God. But I do know the Bible and oftentimes they're misquoting it or they're applying it to someone else rather than to themselves. So as you open the word of God, it's like before I think about you, I got to deal with me. Jesus calls this perennial game of plank speck, religious people love it. It's an annual favorite. So you've got, let's say the equivalent of a center beam that holds up the second floor of a home protruding from your head. Don't know how it got there, but there it is. Okay. And then somebody else, Jesus says has got a little speck of sawdust. And you're like, oh my gosh, look at that. And it's a diversionary tactic. It's like, well, actually you've got a whole lumber yard. So let's start there. And what this is is he says, you need to receive the word of God with meekness. Let it study you, reveal you and then be honest about who you are and then invite God to change who you are now. The American Bible society, I've shared this before, but they did a large data survey. And they came up with something called the rule of four. And it was unexpected result. But what they found was if you are a Christian and you're in God's word and God's word is in you, one to three days a week, negligible effect on your behavior, your emotional, mental, spiritual health and wellbeing. Once you're in God's word and God's word is in you four days a week, all the variables change. All the data improves. Your emotional health, your mental health, your addiction, your relationships, everything improves. The point is when God's word is in the majority of your week, your week begins to change. And what he's saying here is this, when there's a trial around you, there's emotion in you, you need more of God's word. Just like you feed your body and let's say, you're working hard at a job, or you're an athlete under duress. You need more calories 'cause you're burning more fuel in your body when you're in a trial, that same thing is true of your soul. You're burning more spiritual energy. So Jesus says, man does not live on bread alone but every word that proceeds from the mouth of God. When you're in a trial, you need more Bible. You need more sustenance and nourishment. This is why Jesus tells Peter feed my sheep and it's not to be junk food. I was talking to some pastors of larger churches. They let me just sort of eavesdrop on a zoom call and, you know, with elections and COVID and craziness, and a lot of them were in shutdown cities. And it's been a hard year for people. It's been a hard couple of years for people. The question was asked, what are you guys seeing? What they testified was this, our people want longer sermons through books of the Bible. Their appetite has changed from just a pithy little encouragement. It's your greeting card of the day to like that ain't working, man. I mean, do you remember the election? Right? Some of you are just triggered thinking about it. You're like, oh, there's a situation. Okay. And the point is this, when things get darker, God's people need to go deeper. And so what we're finding is as well, there was a data survey that was done, and it was reported this last week, younger generations that are living online, struggling in this season with mental health and anxiety, those who are Christians are the ones who are asking for the deepest, longest Bible teaching because their soul's malnourished. So part of the reason that we go through books of the Bible is to, I want you to be healthy. I want me to be healthy. The reason why the sermons are long is, I mean, I do tell jokes so it takes a few minutes. But in addition, you know, it takes a little while to come to deep understanding of the heart and mind of God. And some things don't fit in 140 some characters. Okay? So I wanna thank you for letting

me teach you God's word. And what he's saying is this, open it up and have God reveal to you who you are. Now, what'll happen is oftentimes you're like, that's a great sermon, that's a great blog, that's a great devotion. I got to send it to my friends. The point is feel free, but CC yourself. Don't just think these are great concepts for other people, first and foremost for me. And what he's saying is this, some people need more Bible teaching, some people need to obey the Bible teaching they already have. This is one of my favorite things to do when I sit down with somebody in counseling. I'll be like, okay, what has God told you to do? They're like, well, God told me to do this. Are you doing it? No. Okay, great. Let me pray that you'll do it. I mean, I do 30 second drive by counseling, it's easy. 'Cause if God already told you to do it, what's the point? That's what you need to do. I had a guy recently, he's like, well, I was wondering if you had anything else. Anything else that contradicts God? No. I am allergic to lightening. You know, I don't wanna get struck. Like if he told you to do something, do it. Right. And so you open the word and part of it is, even as you listen to a sermon or a podcast or a blog or a devotional or a book always be thinking, what is God telling me to do? Okay. That's why it's good to take notes. And it's good to have points of obedience. And so for us, what we do is we spend time together on the weekend, going through the word of God. And then that's the hearing of the word of God. And then the doing works itself out in what we call life groups. We have men's, women's, students', home life groups, singles life groups. We try to get something for everybody, whatever works for you, works for us. And this is where people get together, they pray for, they love one another. They listen to one another and then they figure out what are you supposed to do? So the hearing is on the weekend and the doing is in the life groups. And what he says is if you hear the word of God, you are not automatically blessed. If you do the word of God, you will be blessed. He said, blessed are those who do the word of God. James here is quoting his big brother, Jesus, in Luke 11:28, "Jesus said, blessed are those who hear the word of God "and obey it." See it's fine to have a good sermon, but you need to do what the word of God says. In the same way it's good to have a gym membership if you? Go to the gym. It's great to buy vitamins, if you? Eat the vitamins. A seatbelt is awesome, if you? Buckle it. The word of God is amazing if you obey it. And so what he's saying is if you wanna be blessed, God doesn't bless people, He blesses people who place themselves under his word in obedience. So if you're married and the husband and the wife will commit to obey the word of God, you have 100% guaranteed success rate for your marriage. And let's say, you're friends and you wanna have a good friendship, if you will both submit and surrender yourself to the word of God and obey it, you have 100% guaranteed success rate. Because God's way always works and God blesses those who are seeking his will and his way. So the question is not are you hearing the word, are you coming under its authority and obeying it? So trial, trigger, emotion, word, deed and then you look at the result, the consequence of this cycle of events. So what's your trial trigger behavior result? Trying to build one concept on another. James 1:26 and 27, "If anyone thinks he is religious." So everything God creates Satan counterfeits. There's this true form of religion, which is relationship with Jesus and then there's this false form, which is man-made tradition. "If anyone thinks he is religious, "does not bridle his tongue." You ever seen a horse just running loose out of the barn. Your tongue is like that. You need to bridle it. You need to reign it in. "Doesn't bridle his tongue, but he deceives his heart. "This person's religion is, worthless." That's a big statement. Think of highly devout religious people, whatever the religion might be,

they give their money, they change their diet, they organize their schedule, they take pilgrimages, they discipline themselves, they criticize one another for nothing. One guy chuckles. Okay. All right. "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 by the world." What he's saying is this, if your spiritual commitments don't result in two things, it's all garbage. The two things are, does it help others and make you holy? Does it help others? That's why Jesus got angry at religious people, he's like, I'm trying to help people and you're angry that I'm helping them. Your religion actually is worthless because it's not helpful to those who are hurting. And so the question is, is your relationship with God working itself out so that as you're looking at people, let me say this, this is deeply convicting. Oftentimes the people that anger you are the people that God has called you to minister to. So you can be angry at them or you can try and help them. And what he's talking about here is those who have the greatest need. Widows and orphans in that day had no legal standing or financial status. In our day this would be new immigrants who are just getting settled into the country. This would be single parents. This would be widows, people who are in a tough place. And let me say this, right now a lot of people are in a tough place. And we have plenty of angry people yelling. We need more helpful people serving. You could spend all your time online arguing with people you'll never meet or put your phone down, lift your eyes up, find some people who are hurting and help them. It's real practical. This can be informal where you're just like, okay, Lord Jesus, where are my appointments today? You're gonna put somebody in front of me, how do I help? Buy them groceries, pray for them, encourage them, have a cup of coffee. Maybe I'm just gonna listen. Send them a scripture, just checking in. And sometimes this is formal. And so what we've got organized and coming together, you'll be hearing about it. Service projects, food, clothing, care for those who are in need in our valley and you'll be asked to bring good services donate and then we're gonna deploy life groups to go serve in these areas. So this can be formal and informal. And this is the helpfulness. The other point that he's driving at is holiness. And what happens is we have a trial, we get triggered, we get emotional, we say and do things that don't make us holy and are of no help to them. If that is the worthless result, then we've got to rethink the entire sequencing. When he's talking about holiness, what he's talking about is purity in the sight of God. And he says that pure religion keeps you from being stained by the world. So he uses sin in synonymous terms with stain, about a dozen words in the Bible refer to sin as a stain, defilement or uncleanness or filthiness would be three of the most frequent candidates. What happens, let me ask. Maybe it's the moms. Okay, so moms, you got a little kid and they spill something on their white shirt. The longer they wait, what? The worse it gets. So the key is, if you spill something, you stain something to get it cleaned up as soon as possible, because the longer it sits there, the deeper it settles in. Sin is like that in your life. It starts to stain the longer you let it settle. Now, what I love in this phrase, and this is a mind-bending concept. What he doesn't say is make yourself pure, undefiled and unstained in the sight of God. He says to keep yourself. The difference between making yourself and keeping yourself is realizing Jesus has already made you clean. And this is where Jesus not only died on the cross to forgive you, but to cleanse you. In your sight, you are pure and undefiled before God, to quote James one. In the sight of God, you are beloved by God. So what happened on the cross? Jesus not only took your sin, He took your stain. Many Christians don't know this. It's such an honor for me to tell

you, the doctrinal category it's called expiation, it's cleansing. On the cross, it says in 2 Corinthians 5:21, "The Lord Jesus, "God made him who knew no sin to become sin "so that in him, we might become the righteousness of God." Not only did he take your sin, he placed upon you his righteousness. So now you are seen as pure, undefiled, clean in the sight of God. 1 John says it this way, "If we confess our sins, "he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins "and cleanse us from all, no stain, unrighteousness." In the old Testament, people when they would go to worship God at the temple, they would wash their body, they'd wash their clothes, showing that Jesus Christ makes me clean at the soul level. And then they would wear white. And they would ascend up into God's presence to worship. And even at the end of time, when Jesus returns, the church will be wearing white because Jesus Christ not only forgives sin, but he makes you clean. Let me tell you this, what you used to do you don't need to do that anymore because who you used to be is not who you are anymore if you belong to Jesus Christ. And I've been praying for you all week, I really love you whether you're present or online, I believe that this message could change your whole life. If the spirit of God would allow me to effectively communicate it and for you to obediently apply it because there are people who are forgiven and they do belong to Jesus, but they're stuck. They've got some bad habits, some patterns. Under a trial with a trigger in emotion, they say and do things that create a negative result and bring pain and harm to their life. They're frustrated by it. They're stuck. They don't know how to get out. They don't know what to do. Am I really a Christian? Does God really love me? Is the Bible really true? Do I even have the holy spirit? I know that God loves me, but how come I'm stuck? This is incredible. Let me summarize for you James chapter one. And what I wanna do as I'm studying James, I'm also doing some study on the latest brain science for addictions and behaviors. And lo and behold, it took about 2000 years for science to catch up with James, but it did. So here's what the leading summary of James chapter one. How do people change a bad habit? This is the latest on secular brain science. And let me explain this briefly, the brain science would tell you that we basically have two brains. I'll call it the old brain and the new brain. When you have a trial and a trigger and then a response pattern with a result. Once you do that process, it becomes habituated like muscle memory in the brain. So it lives in the old part of the brain. How many of you, you're like something triggers me and I just become somebody I don't even like. I do things I'm ashamed of. I'm embarrassed by, I'm convicted of, things I don't even wanna do. I say things I can't even believe what comes out of my mouth. What the heck is going on there? That's the old brain. It's an old pattern. And then the new brain is where we learn new information, we make new decisions. And so what happens is once we have a habit loop, it then resides in the old brain to free up space in the new brain to learn new things. I'll give you an example. So this morning you got up and you brushed your teeth. You brushed your teeth not out of the new brain, out of the old brain. You've done it so many times you don't even have to think about it. So the old brain is overseeing the brushing of the teeth so that the new brain can process all the decisions you need to make today. So here's the brain science. The old habit loop and I'm just taking it actually out of, what I just brought you through is actually what the clinicians have now decided. The old habit loop, there's a trigger, anger and fear. And usually fear is our protective measure over something that we're angry about. Anger and fear hit the panic button. So there's a trial, there's a trigger and then the response is I need to act now, I need to say something, I need to do something, I'm very emotional I need to

respond. The result short and long-term consequences, oftentimes negative. Maybe even what feels temporarily like a positive becomes a negative. So you go to work, you have a bad day, people are triggering you, driving you crazy, but you don't wanna blow up and lose your job. So you come home, your wife does something very, very little. You get angry at her. You trigger her, she gets angry at you, mushroom pot over your house. And so you go to separate rooms, you pour yourself a drink, you self-soothe, you hit a dopamine spot in the front, you feel better and then you wake up the next day with a hangover, an angry wife, and you got to go back to work. Testify brother. And you did something, but it didn't make it better. But then when you keep doing that, it becomes a habit loop. And it seems crazy because if we step back and look at it it's like it's not working. Well, we've all got things like this. So what they say is over time, this becomes an unconscious loop in part of the brain, forming a new response habit in a new part of the brain, they would say requires two things, mindfulness and meditation, because they don't know God. And so mindfulness they'll say, well, you just need to stop and think about it. And what he says is, no, you need to bring God's mind into your situation. You need more than the three pounds of fallen meat between your ears. You need God to show up through his word and you need to get the mind of Christ. This is where you're transformed by the renewing of your mind. This is where you take every thought captive in obedience to Christ and the counterfeit of prayer is meditation. People who don't know there's a God they're like, we'll just, you know, think about it and stop and breathe and just center yourself. No, you need more than self-help. You need God help. And so literally because they don't have the Bible and prayer, they're like, well, as close to the Bible and prayer as you can get, that'll fix it. Well, what that means is we've got an even greater solution. We don't need to just have our mindfulness, we can have God's mind. And we don't need to just meditate, we can pray and invite the holy spirit, the power of God, to show up and to rehard-wire our brains to create new neural pathways so that we choose new habits. Let me take all of this and summarize James chapter one on changing a bad habit. So my summary is in James one, the words, trial temptation, and test all appear. A trial comes both as a temptation to go down in evil, your old habit loop and your old part of the brain, or a test to go up in faith, new habit loop, new part of the brain. So James uses these words, so the old habit loop response to a trial. There's a trigger, anger. He says, the anger of man does not produce the righteousness of God. If you get angry and you get fearful and hit the panic button act now, you need to say something, you need to do something. These are the actual words that James uses. The response is we become double-minded. He uses that word twice in James chapter one. What he's literally saying is, you got the old brain, you got the new brain. And in that moment, when you have a trial and you're triggered, you're emotional, you're literally bouncing between your brains. Am I gonna go with the old habit loop or a new habit loop? Am I gonna say and do what I've always done? Will I say, or do something differently based upon obedience to the word of God by the power of the holy spirit? I looked at the linguistic studies would indicate that this concept of double mindedness never appeared in literature until James chapter one. James, it seems categorically created a brand new word to explain the believer who needs to change a bad habit into a new habit. He literally said, we're double brained. The brain science comes along 2000 years later and says, you know what, we're double brained. I know. I know a guy who made the brain and he wrote a book and he tells us that we're double brained. We're double minded. Goes on, as a result, we're unstable if we live in the old patterns

and then we blame God, well, God made me this way. It's his fault. He didn't show up. I got an excuse. We only hear the word, I'm not gonna do what it says. We have anger, an unbridled tongue, we're self deceived. We bring death into our life, our marriage, our family, our relationships. Everything that is good starts to pass away and we're just left with a worthless religion. Say, how do you have a new habit loop in response to a trial. Same trigger. Anger and fear hit the panic button to act now. These are the exact words that James uses and if you will obey the word of God, it literally will rehard-wire your brain. It'll go from the new brain and then over time, it just becomes part of your life. I used to yell at them, now I pray to him. I used to just let everybody know what I'm thinking and then I opened the word of God and I wanna figure out what he's thinking. I used to get really bitter and now I forgive and love my enemies. It starts in the new brain and then it becomes habit forming. So let me say this, if you've got some bad habits and you're trying to change them and you slip back into the old patterns, don't be discouraged. Keep building those new pathways, keep architecting those new response patterns. So how do you respond differently? He said earlier in James, count it all joy. God, thank you for this opportunity to get out of that loop and get into this loop. Thank you God, that who I was is not who I am. Thank you God, that this is an opportunity for my whole life to pivot. Ask God for wisdom, James 1:5. Okay, God, I don't know what to do. Help me out here. Tell me what to do. I'm listening. Quick to listen, slow to speak. I'm gonna shut my mouth. I'm gonna open my ears. I'm gonna be a doer of the word. I'm gonna seek wise counsel. I'm gonna intentionally take dominion over my emotional life and decision-making and I'm gonna do what the word of God says. The result, steadfastness. Perfect and complete lacking in nothing. God's got you in a perfection process. Gifts from the father. He's gonna help you, he's even gonna send the holy spirit down and he's gonna bless you. And when all is said and done, you're gonna stand before him and he's gonna put new eternal crown of life on your head. You don't need to hide it anymore. You don't need to deny it anymore. You don't need to minimize it anymore. You don't need to excuse it anymore because you don't need to do it anymore. The key to forming a new habit in the new part of the brain is to have the holy spirit literally rehard-wire your brain. That is the renewing of your mind because you are beloved, you're pure and undefiled before God and I love you, so do not lose faith when you go back to an old habit loop in the flesh, but press forward to create a new habit loop in the spirit. Father, we thank you that I get to teach the word of God and God I pray for these dear people that they would not merely hear the word, but do what it says. That holy spirit, you would point out to them specifically, practically, what is it that they need to do with what they have learned today. And God, I pray for deliverance from old patterns and mindsets. I pray for a renewing and a rehard-wiring and a reprogramming and a reformatting of the brain. And God, I pray for these dear people that they would know that they are beloved, that they are pure and undefiled, that you are a good father who gives gifts and wants to bless and drops wisdom and is there to help. And God, I thank you that the way we have responded is not the way we need to respond because we've been made new and we can follow your example and how you've responded to us and how we respond to others and the trials in our life. And God, I just pray for these dear people, you love them so much that you sent Jesus to die for them. I pray that you would encourage them and speak to them and give them their assignment now in Jesus good name. Amen.