Keep Becoming:
Doers of the Word, Not Hearers Only

James 1:19-27

Key Thoughts

1. **Hearing means obeying.** To James's first readers, "swift to hear" meant swift to obey the Lord and His Word. In a speak-first culture, James reverses the order: hear first, then let our words be few, weighed, and directed by God's truth.
2. **Our anger does not produce God's righteousness.** God's anger is His settled, holy opposition to evil. Ours is easily corrupted into resentment, revenge, and bitterness, so we are to be slow to anger, as He is.
3. **Take off malice; welcome the Word.** We lay aside filthiness and malice like dirty clothes, and God gives His people the ability to do it. Malice keeps us from loving people, and so from loving God as we should. In its place we welcome the implanted Word with meekness: power under control.
4. **Be doers: keep becoming.** We are still in process, but process is no excuse for not doing what the Word says. Hearing only, saying "Amen" and living as if we never heard, deceives us. The Word is the mirror that shows us who we are in Christ, and doers remember it.
5. **Pure religion is lived, not performed.** Religion that does not bridle the tongue is useless. Pure religion goes into the world's mess to help the most vulnerable, like orphans and widows, and comes out without the world's stains.

Discussion Questions

1. Read James 1:19 and Proverbs 10:19. If "swift to hear" meant swift to obey, how does that change what it means to listen to God's Word? Where are you quick to speak, post, or react when you should be slow?
2. Read James 1:20 and Ephesians 4:26-27, 31. What is the difference between God's settled anger against evil and the anger that turns into resentment in us? Is there anger you have been carrying that has started to become bitterness?
3. Read James 1:21 alongside Matthew 5:44-45 and Luke 23:34. James's first readers had every reason to hold ill will toward the people persecuting them. Who would it be easiest for you to hold ill will toward, and what would it look like to lay that aside this week?
4. Read James 1:22. What are some ways we say "Amen" on Sunday and live on Monday as if we never heard it? Where have you been living your faith through someone else's obedience instead of your own?
5. Read James 1:23-25. If God's Word is the mirror that shows us who we are in Christ, what does it show you? What happens to the way you see yourself when you stop doing what it says?
6. Read James 1:26-27. Who are the most vulnerable people within your reach right now, and what would it look like to look after them in their trouble, not just stop by to say hello?

Applications

1. **Listen before you speak.** Before you reply, post, or react this week, stop and ask what God′s Word says first. Let your words be few and weighed.
2. **Take off the grudge.** Name the person you hold resentment toward. Pray for them by name every day this week, and ask God to help you lay aside the malice.
3. **Visit someone in their trouble.** Find one vulnerable person in your church or neighborhood, a widow, a child in need, or someone who has been set aside, and do something practical to help them this week.

Closing Prayer

Father, make us swift to hear You, slow to speak, and slow to anger. Forgive us for the words we spoke too quickly and for the resentment we have held too long. Help us lay aside all filthiness and malice like dirty clothes, and clothe us with the meekness of Christ, power under control. Plant Your Word deep in us and let it keep saving us, shaping us into the image of Your Son. Keep us from being hearers only, deceiving ourselves. When we look into the mirror of Your Word, let us remember who we are in Christ, and let us continue in the perfect law of liberty. Bridle our tongues. Send us into the world′s mess to care for the orphan, the widow, and the one set aside, and keep us unspotted from the world. In Jesus′ name, amen.