

Series Title: **'James: A Working Faith'**  
Message Title: **'Six Transforming Actions'**  
Scripture Source: **James 1:19-27**  
Speaker: John Garner  
Date: Sunday, September 28, 2014

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### **An Incredible Gift...and a Significant Responsibility**

James reminds us that followers of Jesus have received 'new life' through a relationship with Jesus. 1:18. A personal relationship with God as our Father on the basis of the sacrifice and resurrection of Jesus Christ has been given to us. The gift of living with new hope, opportunities, purpose, and incredible resources of strength and wisdom has been given to us, along with the presence of God's Spirit within us. The knowledge and experience of this relationship and new quality of life has been made possible by hearing and acting upon the message of God's grace and truth. We come to understand our need of a Saviour from the penalty and power of sin through the enlightening ministry of the Holy Spirit. 1 Peter 1:3, 2:24-25. This is an incredible gift offered to any and all who ask God for mercy and grace. Have you asked for this gift of forgiveness and a personal relationship with God? What holds you back? If you have questions, we would love to have a conversation with you!

Starting a relationship with Jesus isn't the end of the story or the completion of the journey. God's intent is that followers of His Son would become more and more like Jesus in character and conduct. Romans 8:29. Think of it...you, becoming more and more like Jesus in how you think, act, speak, react. Wow! I find this staggering, yet, God isn't teasing us. He isn't messing with our heads and hearts. Not for a second. Listen to his words:

*"God knew what he was doing from the very beginning.*

*He decided from the outset to shape the lives of those who love him along the same lines as the life of his Son. The Son stands first in the line of humanity he restored.*

*We see the original and intended shape of our lives there in him."*

Romans 8:29 (The Message)

So, how does God actually 'shape' and transform our lives into a fuller expression of the character of Jesus? In large part, through our active and ongoing cooperation with his Spirit. In today's passage of Scripture we will examine 6 transforming actions that we must consistently engage in if we would experience more fully the purpose and power of God in our lives. 6 transforming actions that we can do, if we choose to work with God's Spirit along the way, one day, one situation at a time.

Do you see areas in your life that need change? Are you enslaved by any attitude or action that you long to experience freedom from? There is hope for you and me! Which of these actions do you most need to get serious about? If you are not yet a Christ follower, this message will instruct you on what genuine Christianity is really about, hopefully giving you answers and a motivation to move towards Jesus and become a follower of His. That would be exciting!

### **Transforming Action # 1:** Listen Expectantly: James 1:19 Read – "Lead with your ears..." The Message

2 ears, 1 mouth, live accordingly. Incessant talking can be a huge barrier to hearing from God and others. We can create so much noise by our words and opinions. Proverbs 10:19 "When words are many, sin is not absent, but he who holds his tongue is wise." Also, Proverbs 12:15, Proverbs 22:24 And the link to destructive anger is easier to understand. "Ceaseless talkers may easily degenerate into fierce controversialists." (Ross) Ever witnessed that? Not honoring to God or helpful to others.

Some of us need the Spirit's strength and wisdom to know when to speak up and when to be silent. Ask God for that kind of discipline of speech...and for humility. We often speak way too much

because we think we are sources of brilliant insight. We need doses of perspective and respect for God and others. Cultivate a listening 'ear', with grateful expectation of what will be learned along the way...from God and others.

**Transforming Action # 2:** Repent Courageously: James 1:20-21 Read – Deal with sinful attitudes and actions honestly and specifically. Let's talk about the word 'repent'. It means to "feel sorry for past conduct, to be conscience stricken about a past action or attitude." Yet, in the Bible it also means that we actually change our ways in specifics, aligning our attitudes and actions with God's directions, commands and warnings. Proverbs 28:13 "He who conceals his sins does not prosper, but whoever confesses and renounces them finds mercy."

Our morality matters to God. He has established moral absolutes that do not evolve because culture says they should. The Ten Commandments have not devolved into Ten Suggestions. Moral and sexual purity still matter to God. Marriage between a man and a woman is still God's intention. Sexual activity is still to be enjoyed by a man and woman in a committed marriage covenant. God hasn't been swayed by cultural shifts. Ethical integrity still matter to God.

James uses vivid imagery to describe courageous repentance. "Get rid of..." image of old, worn clothing that doesn't belong; it is trashed.

Folks, it takes courage to admit when we have sinned against God's words and ways. It takes courage to come clean with God and change our ways. But...He is there for us, even in the beginning movements of repentance. He is ready to forgive us and give us the strength to follow through on our specific changes.

Any courageous acts of repentance required in your life? When we resist God, the power of His liberating and guiding word is greatly diminished in our lives.

**Transforming Action # 3:** Learn Diligently: James 1:22 Read – James referred to multiple Scripture sources in his letter. Be an avid learner of God's word, privately and with others, in larger settings and smaller gatherings. God's word is the foundation of a potentially strong, resilient, wise, and satisfied life. 1 Peter 2:2. Psalm 1. Journey Groups, Life University classes, Sunday mornings...

Again, disciplined action required. Choose a place to learn from God's word and about God's word. Check out our library. Listen on-line.

**Transforming Action # 4:** Obey Promptly: James 1:22b-25 Read – In many ways, vss. 22 is the heartbeat of this 5 chapter, 108 verse book. Memory work! Let's recite together.

He uses such a down-to-earth illustration to drive home the point of acting on what you have learned. "Listening to truth is not an end in itself any more than gazing at one's face in the mirror is an end in itself. The purpose of listening to truth is to act upon it." (Burdick)

Jesus powerfully made this point in his 'Sermon on the Mount' message recorded in Matthew 5-6-7. 7:24-27 The lifeblood of a growing and maturing life is trusting obedience to God's truth. A searing Old Testament passage that burns this message on the teachable and tender heart is Ezekiel 33:30-32.

Is there a specific act of obedience God is asking of you? Is it a relational or moral issue? A financial or resource commitment? Is there a 'stop' God is asking of you...or a 'start'?

Becoming more like Jesus requires our active cooperation with God...listening expectantly, repenting courageously, learning diligently and obeying promptly. And...2 more transforming actions!

**Transforming Action # 5:** Discern Accurately: James 1:26 Read – It is so easy to make claims of what we believe and who we are...about 67% of Canadians claim to be Christian. Yet, are we discerning reality accurately, with God's truth as our measuring stick? Already he has talked candidly about the potential

of self-deception. Vss.22, 26. We can claim to be religious, yet be missing the mark by a mile, in God's eyes. One recurring 'benchmark'? Loose lips. Stupid talk. God yearns for us to discern genuine Christ following accurately. 2 Corinthians 13:5. "Examine yourself to see if you are in the faith" A professing follower of Jesus who chronically speaks rashly and recklessly, thinking they are doing God a favour are both 'frauds and fools.' Their religion is utterly useless and worthless to God and others. Strong words. God's words. Proverbs 10:14, 12:1, 18, 14:3

I find these words very challenging. How about you? Do you need to engage in some serious self examination about the claims you make and use God's word as the measuring stick? If we all did this, relational and spiritual health would increase noticeably.

**Transforming Action # 6:** Engage Compassionately and Righteously: James 1:27 Read

Here is the kind of living and relating God is looking for, from you, me and us.

This kind of compassionate and righteous living delights God and meets real needs, revealing the heart of Jesus to people all around us. If we claim to be Christians, engaging with those suffering around us, as God enables us to is critical. Illustrate: last Sunday's service

Living according to God's truth will shape us along the lines of Jesus in a world marked by confusion and deception.

Is there a compassionate action God is asking of you? Is there growth in righteousness God is pointing out to you? In the strength of God's Spirit we can become more and more like Jesus, radiating compassion and righteousness. Illustrate: the Week of Compassion: October 26-November 2.

**You and 6 Transforming Actions**

Each of us needs to act as God's word directs, in all 6 areas. Which one really needs your attention TODAY? Which one do you need to start or re-start today? Seriously, today. Talk with God about that and do 'that' something you know God is asking of you. If we can support you, please talk with us. There is too much at stake to ignore these transforming actions; and there is a richer, fuller, more purposeful and satisfying life to be experienced...with God and others. What action, for you, today?