



## LET'S BEGIN HERE

You've likely heard someone say, "If you're going to talk the talk, you need to walk the walk."

The idea is that you simply cannot say you believe something is true if what you say does not align with how you act. James' New Testament letter to first-century Christians agrees! A faith declared but not expressed in obedience is no faith at all. In this study we will take a closer look at the great divorce between being a "hearer" of the Word but not a "doer" of the Word.



## Getting Started

When searching the Scriptures, a helpful first step is to gather resources that will guide you in your study. Make certain you have a Bible dictionary and a concordance handy, as well as a reliable commentary on the book of the Bible you're studying. For this study of James, we recommend you get a copy of *Swindoll's Living Insights New Testament Commentary: James, 1 & 2 Peter*. You'll find a description of that and other resources on the last page of this study.

NOTE: From time to time throughout this study, you'll notice bolded page numbers in parentheses next to a question or comment. These page numbers correspond to the section in *Swindoll's Living Insights New Testament Commentary: James, 1 & 2 Peter* where that particular point is discussed.

Take a few minutes to read through all of James chapter 1. Read it slowly, as if you're reading it for the very first time. You might try reading the same passage in a couple of different versions to spur your thoughts.

## Quotable

*Churches are filled with activist Christians who don't really know what God has said.*

*There are also churches filled with people who take in what God has said, but it doesn't change them, because they simply don't apply truth to their lives.*

— Charles R. Swindoll



**Try This:** Often a single verse helps put together the ingredients of the wider truth being presented in the passage. That happens to be the case with James 1:19. Using the technique of observation, Chuck Swindoll identifies four guiding principles for interpreting this section of James' letter.

- Imperative truth (a command) “This you know, . . .” is followed by a series of commands. Try to identify them here:  
1. \_\_\_\_\_ 2. \_\_\_\_\_ 3. \_\_\_\_\_
- Family truth (based on relationship) “. . . my beloved brethren.” An idiom is used to emphasize intimate relationship.
- Personal truth (the plural reference) “But everyone . . .” The commands to follow are to be applied personally.
- Logical truth (includes the force of progression) “. . . must be quick to hear, slow to speak and slow to anger.” There is a logical progression from one to the others.

Simply by incorporating the observations from above, you could prepare a ten-minute devotional on “Keeping Your Cool in Conflict.” Read through and study the following example:

**Devotional Title: Keeping Your Cool in Conflict**

**Passage: James 1:19**

*Opening thought:* If we are in relationship with other people, conflicts will be inevitable. Can you recall a time recently when you lost your cool? What elements of James 1:19 did you fail to abide by during the conflict? Were you slow to listen, and instead spoke too quickly and allowed your anger to rise up in a moment? That's usually how things get out of hand!

**Insert a brief, personal story (maybe use some humor) about a recent argument you had with someone close to you.**

Say: God has given us a better way:

First, be ready to listen to how the other person really feels. Few things help diffuse someone's frustration than when someone is willing to hear them out.

Second, hold your tongue! Be slow to speak. Even though the urge is strong to speak your mind, try waiting and consciously determining to remain silent.



Finally, manage your emotion. Find a way to keep your cool and not allow your anger to best you. This better way ensures that you maintain good relationships and avoid hurting someone you value.

Go back and read the entire verse, pointing out the words that emphasize the importance of relationships in the body of Christ. Close your devotional by making three applications:

1. Next time you find yourself in an argument or conflict

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2. Finish the following sentences:

I can be quick to hear by \_\_\_\_\_

I can be slow to speak by \_\_\_\_\_

I can be slow to anger by \_\_\_\_\_

3. Ask the Lord to help you \_\_\_\_\_



### Your Turn in the Scriptures

Now take a few minutes to respond to the following questions using the study resources you have available.

One of the reasons our lives are often divorced from the truth is because we do not really hear what God is saying. Hearing God's truth requires the necessary preparation as James outlined for us in James 1:19–27. Several key prerequisites are mentioned. Using the technique of correlation, look up the following related passages and make some notes about how they compare to what James teaches:

- An open ear . . . being willing to listen. Correlated passage: Matthew 15:8–11

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\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

- A controlled tongue . . . being slow to speak. Correlated passage: Mark 14:60–65

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\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_



- A calm spirit . . . a managed response. Correlated passage: Galatians 5:22–24

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- A clean heart . . . a pure spirit. Correlated passage: 2 Thessalonians 2:13

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James also made clear that our attitude when hearing God’s truth causes us either to be more receptive to His voice or resistant to it.

Read James 1:20–21 carefully. What “attitude” or “emotion” words did James use in these two verses?

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If I am angry at the point of hearing God’s truth, in what ways will that powerful negative emotion hinder my reception of it? Try to be as specific as possible. Give an example from your own experience when a negative attitude or emotion caused you to resist God’s truth.

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Now read James 1:21. What is the key mind-set James said is essential for willingly receiving the truth of God?

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How does genuine humility ensure you will receive God’s truth willingly and obediently?

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Write down examples of people in the Bible (Old and New Testaments) who resisted truth because of pride or anger.

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Write down examples of people in the Bible (Old and New Testaments) who in humility received truth and obeyed God’s voice.

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When our attitudes are right and we have genuine openness to God’s truth, it becomes much easier to move beyond being mere “hearers” of the Word to become enthusiastic “doers” of the Word. The image James used to communicate this powerful truth is a mirror. God’s Word, when it is read or heard, is a mirror that we can look into and see clearly how our lives measure up against God’s righteous standard. We either see what is revealed and choose to walk away or we receive the truth, accept the honest assessment of our lives as it is reflected in the mirror, and move toward making changes. That’s obedience. That’s faith in action. That’s a *hands-on Christianity*.



### A FINAL PRAYER

*Father, thank You for the truth of Your living Word. Put a desire in me to be a doer of Your Word and not just simply a hearer of it. Bring about lasting transformation, making me more and more into the image of Your Son, Jesus Christ, in whose mighty name I pray these things. Amen.*



# JAMES Hands-On Christianity

## The Great Divorce

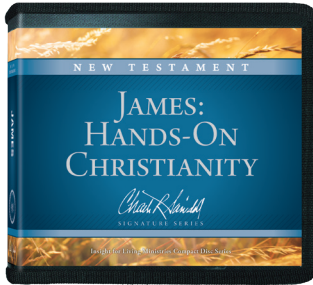
James 1:19–27

SEARCHING  
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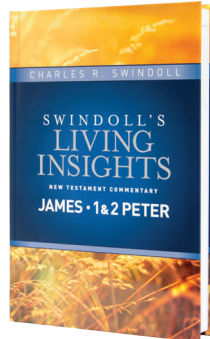
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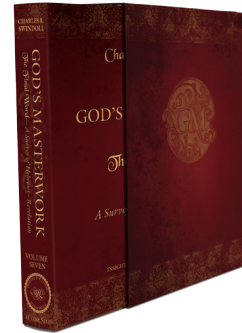
### Tools for Digging Deeper



**James: Hands-On  
Christianity**  
by Charles R. Swindoll  
CD series



**Swindoll's Living Insights  
New Testament Commentary:  
James, 1 & 2 Peter**  
by Charles R. Swindoll  
hardcover book



**God's Masterwork, Volume  
Seven: The Final Word—A  
Survey of Hebrews—Revelation**  
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For the 2016 broadcast, this Searching the Scriptures study was developed by Mark Tobey in collaboration with Charles R. Swindoll based upon the original outlines, charts, and sermon transcripts. It was released as a Message Mate through Insight for Living Ministries.



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