

Just Do It

Not only survive in trials but thrive in them

We have been learning how to persevere through trials so that through trials we can become complete and lacking nothing. We have spoken about the importance of abiding...of being present with the Holy Spirit.

James has told us that when we are in trials we should listen very carefully...to what the world is telling us....to what others are telling us...but primarily we are to listen for that quiet voice of the Holy Spirit that we know well. We are listening for the voice of our Shepherd who will tell us what to do.

Now in this passage, James is adding the final instruction to us about thriving in trials....After we are quick to listen....after we have been slow to speak...after we have been slow to anger....then James says...there is another area to focus on...

James not only instructs us on what to do, but he puts equal emphasis on how we do it. Our attitude going into a trial is critical. James knows that a teachable spirit is a humble spirit. You see it is our attitude and focus as we do these things that allow us to abide in Christ. It is our attitude...we spoke of last week....meekness and humility.

James 1:21 (ESV) 21 Therefore put away all filthiness and rampant wickedness and receive with meekness the implanted word, which is able to save your souls.

We must receive the Word of God that has been implanted into us...

Note that the seed of our salvation is placed in us at our conversion....it is implanted in us. It is part of our new Spiritual existence. When we are regenerated we receive the Holy Spirit and the implanted Word of God. . The word of God grows in us as we mature spiritually. While we don't make it happen, we can certainly hinder its growth.

We must continually receive it, in the sense of allowing it to direct and control our lives. Another way of saying it is that we must continually surrender to that truth and receive it...allow the truth to change the very essence of who we are.

So the Word of God is in us and growing but receiving it is not enough....we must obey it.

Obedience to the Word is the most basic spiritual requirement and is the common denominator for all true believers.

Evidence of our salvation is not based on our knowledge of or familiarity with the word of God. It is based on how we consistently obey that Word daily.

It is not based on what you know....it is based on how what you know makes you do.

James 1:22–27 (ESV) 22 But be doers of the word, and not hearers only, deceiving yourselves.

I like the NIV translation of James verse...Be quick to listen, slow to speak and slow to anger. Many translations use be quick to hear...but the original is closer to listen. This is a critical distinction. I hear really well in both ears....but I can only listen in my good ear.

Hearing vs Listening

Hearing is simply the process of perceiving sound through your ears. Hearing can happen in just a split second. I am almost deaf in my left ear, but I hear stuff all the time.

For those blessed with hearing, we hear everything all the time. You may or may not listen. If you're in a crowded room, you may hear the sound of people talking and laughing all around you, and have no idea what they actually said.

This last week I went in to get fitted for hearing aids again. I am incredibly excited about the new technology and what it can do for me, but there is a moment in the test where they say a word and then ask you to repeat it....it is very funny sometimes

They say Vegan and you say Leaving. They say party and you say pottie...that kind of thing. You are hearing but you are not listening...Sound is being conveyed but the content is not. Often I want to say,...I heard you...I just have no idea what you said.

We buy hearing aids but what we are really looking for is listening aids.

Unlike hearing, listening is an active process that involves actively focusing on what you hear and giving your full attention to the person or people speaking. It also requires understanding what you're hearing and processing it so that you can respond appropriately. This means being able to filter out distracting noises or other sounds to fully concentrate on what you're hearing.

Listening involves tuning in before there is a sound. Listening has the goal of understanding....of receiving correctly the communication presented to you. James tells us to not just be hearers of the word but to also be quick to Listen.

Hearing vs Listening

Hearing is a passive process, while listening is active.

Hearing does not require understanding, but listening does.

Hearing can happen without any effort, but listening requires concentration and focus.

Hearing is simply the physical process of perceiving sound, while listening involves understanding and responding to what you've heard. We may hear dogs barking but listen to another person talk and respond accordingly.

You can hear many things concurrently (cars, barking, TV in another room, people chatting), but can only listen to one thing at a time.

So James tell us to be doers of the Word. The only way you can do what God's word says is to hear it, listen to it, understand it, and then obey it.

In trials, the only thing we should really be focused on is not hearing but listening to God's voice...listening to and understanding His truth....and then obeying or doing what He had directed you to do.

So imagine you are in a trial....not too hard to do....you realize that you have fallen into a trial. You consider this an opportunity of joy to grow, to kill part of your old self, and to grow through and closer to God.

You will immediately begin to hear all kinds of things. Advice from your friends...advice from your spouse or family...Pundits on TV or on podcasts who tell you what you should do....people who have been through the same trial...everyone it seems has an opinion and urgency to share it with you.....Yes...You will hear all kinds of things....some of it truly ignorant. I am amazed at how many people hear of a disease and then tell the person...oh my brother died from that and boy did he suffer. Our world will broadcast tons of stuff to you. People quickly get overwhelmed by it and just shut down. Paralysis by analysis. I see it as a physician all the time.

Last week you were deciding if you wanted butter on your popcorn...this week you are deciding between three treatment options for the potentially fatal disease that you just found out that you had and know nothing about. You are googling medical information that you don't understand....trying to find something to anchor to in the storm that is now your life.

God tells us through James....when you find that I have allowed you to enter a trial...the only voice to listen to is mine. No one else knows your future. No one else allowed this trial into your life and will get you through it. No one else knows the exact right answers every time.

So James says...be quick to listen. Remember that we can hear lots of things but we can only listen to one thing at a time. You and I need to listen for and to God's voice.

But listening to God is not enough.... we must decide in advance that we are only going to do what God directs us to do. We are going to commit to obedience before we listen. Anything else is to deceive yourself.

If you hear God's word...not really listen to it...but just hear it...and then don't do it...you are essentially telling God He has no place in your trial.

I see this a lot in trials related to our personal sins. We choose to sin...our lives begin to fall apart...we are in the consequences of our sin....People tell me often...I heard what God wants me to do....I know I should confess repent and obey..but I am not doing that.

Translated....I heard God's word...didn't listen to it...but heard it...I am not going to obey it. Because deep down..I am still the God of my life. Every time I hear that...I think...you haven't even begun to understand the depths of the trials that God has coming your way.

The reason is that you can't really listen to God unless you have already committed to obeying Him. James teaches us to be quick to listen and then to be doers of the Word. Anything else is deception.

Think about it this way....Listening involves focused concentration...making sure that you have heard and interpreted the message correctly...blocking out all distractions....listening involves concentration, focus, understanding and responding.

Think about a time when you really wanted to communicate with someone and they were distracted. You knew they were not focused on you...you knew that they were not truly interested in what you were saying and you knew they were not going to do what you hoped they would do because while they heard you...they didn't listen to you.

Now think about your prayer life and your time in God's word. He has something that He really wants to communicate to you...He is speaking but you are not listening....You are checking off God time on your to do list for the day....but you have no intentions of really listening much less obeying.

Ok..lets go there...When was the last time you truly listened to God? When did He last have your full, undivided, desperate attention? I bet it was in a trial. Sometimes it takes trials to get us focused and willing to obey. Most of the time if we are honest...we ask God for insight on things we have already decided to do or not do. We want His stamp of approval on our genius ideas.

James calls that being deceived. lacking wisdom...lacking understanding of what God is doing...that is why he told us...

James 1:5-8 (ESV) 5 If any of you lacks wisdom, let him ask God, who gives generously to all without reproach, and it will be given him. 6 But let him ask in faith, with no doubting, for the one who doubts is like a wave of the sea that is driven and tossed by the wind. 7 For that person must not suppose that he will receive anything from the Lord; 8 he is a double-minded man, unstable in all his ways.

In a trial James teaches us that we are either laser focused on God's truth, listening for His voice, surrendered and abiding in His presence...determined to do whatever God reveals and to persevere as long as it takes.....OR...we are double minded, unstable, self absorbed, selective hearers of what we want to hear...doers of what we want to do....and worshipers of ourselves.

Everyone going through a trial...or going through life actually....is either a surrendered obedient follower of Christ....or you are a surrendered obedient follower of Satan. Hearers of the word who don't the Word.

Hearer or Listener? Have you ever audited a class instead of taking it as a student?

Hearers are like those who audit a college class, which they are required to attend and presumably listen to, but for which they are not required to do outside study, write papers, or take any tests. In other words, they are not held accountable for what they hear.

Tragically, most churches have many "auditors," members who willingly expose themselves to the teaching and preaching of the Word but have no desire for that knowledge to alter their day-by-day lives. They take advantage of the privilege of hearing God's Word but have no desire for obeying it

When followed consistently, that attitude gives evidence that they are not Christians at all, but only pretenders. Such people, who are merely hearers and not also doers, think they belong to God, when, in reality, they do not.

In the long run, how we behave is proof of our salvation or not. In light of that truth, there is good reason to believe that there are countless men, women, and children who come to church regularly and make a strong profession of being a Christian, but whose lives testify that they are not. They regularly listen to the preaching of the Word, claim to believe it, and discuss it favorably with fellow church members. But their hearts are devoid of obedience

Sometimes when people are blessed with regular, in-depth preaching and teaching of Scripture, they may become so enamored with their knowledge of God's Word that they become self satisfied with knowledge and never actually apply any of it to their own lives.

But a true believer will never be comfortable just knowing the Word. His conscience and the prompting of the indwelling Holy Spirit will keep him miserable until he becomes obedient.

The Greek word for doers carries the characterization of the whole personality, all of a person's inner being—mind, soul, spirit, and emotions. Here James is speaking of Christian doers of the word, emphasizing what they are rather than just what they do. There are people whose very lives are dedicated not only to learning God's Word but also to faithful and continual obedience to it.

The character of men is evidenced primarily by their conduct. Over time, conduct is always a reliable test of the inner person, for inevitably the true nature of the person will express itself outwardly.

Matthew 7:16–17 (ESV) 16 You will recognize them by their fruits. Are grapes gathered from thornbushes, or figs from thistles? 17 So, every healthy tree bears good fruit, but the diseased tree bears bad fruit.

Matthew 12:34–35 (ESV) 34 You brood of vipers! How can you speak good, when you are evil? For out of the abundance of the heart the mouth speaks. 35 The good person out of his good treasure brings forth good, and the evil person out of his evil treasure brings forth evil.

John 15:14 (ESV) 14 You are my friends if you do what I command you.

John 14:23–24 (ESV) 23 Jesus answered him, "If anyone loves me, he will keep my word, and my Father will love him, and we will come to him and make our home with him. 24 Whoever does not love me does not keep my words. And the word that you hear is not mine but the Father's who sent me.

1 John 2:4–6 (ESV) 4 Whoever says “I know him” but does not keep his commandments is a liar, and the truth is not in him, 5 but whoever keeps his word, in him truly the love of God is perfected. By this we may know that we are in him: 6 whoever says he abides in him ought to walk in the same way in which he walked.

Thus, the true believer, the hearer and doer of the Word, proves his faith by apply the whole word of God without deception

Any response to the Word other than faithful, unqualified obedience is self-deceptive

The Greek word for delude literally means to reason beside, or alongside. In other words, you are adding your ideas, your opinions and your truths to God's Word in order to avoid having to obey it.. It carries with it the idea of deliberate false reasoning for the purpose of deceiving. In mathematics, the meaning is that of miscalculation. Professing Christians who hear the Word without obeying it make a serious spiritual miscalculation, which causes them to delude themselves.

Any response to the gospel that does not include obedience is self-deception. If a profession of faith in Christ does not result in a changed life that hungers and thirsts for God's Word and desires to obey that Word, the profession is only that—empty words from a heart that is not following God.

In order to explain this self-deception, James uses a simple analogy:

James 1:23–24 (ESV) 23 For 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. 24 For he looks at himself and goes away and at once forgets what he was like.

Notice the description here. This is not someone who glances in the mirror...this is someone who looks intently.

The compound verb James uses here, however, carries the additional idea of careful, cautious consideration of what is being looked at.

In New Testament times, mirrors were typically made of highly polished brass or bronze, although a wealthy person could buy one of silver or gold. But even the most expensive mirrors were primitive compared to glass ones, which were not developed until the fourteenth century.

But by carefully turning the mirror and finding the best light, a person could eventually see a fairly accurate image of his face, and that is the idea James has in mind. By careful and patient observation he could eventually discover what he actually looked like.

A person who looks at God's Word, even if it is carefully and accurately done, and yet does not apply the truths he has discovered to his own life, is like someone who immediately forgets what he has just seen in a mirror—except that the consequences are immeasurably worse.

James 1:25 (ESV) 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.

James here uses an even stronger verb for looking than in verse 23. This Greek Word (looks intently) means to bend over and carefully examine something from the clearest possible vantage point. It is the verb used by Luke to describe Peter's looking into the empty tomb after Jesus' resurrection (Luke 24:12) and by John of both Peter's and Mary's looking into the same tomb (John 20:5, 11).

The person who looks intently at God's Word, the perfect law, the law of liberty, examines it to discover its deepest and most complete meaning. For him it is not a mere exercise of curiosity, as with the forgetful person just mentioned. When he discovers a truth, he abides by it, understanding that this is the purpose for the Lord's revealing it to men.

The key to James's analogy is this: The faithful hearer and doer of the Word does not study the mirror itself but rather what the mirror reveals, namely, God's revealed will and truth.

The perfect law, so called because Scripture is inerrant, sufficient, and comprehensive, encompasses all of God's revealed Word. But by referring to it as law, James laid particular emphasis on the Lord's commands to men, His requirement for our immediate and full obedience to those commands. And by referring to the Word as the law of liberty, James focused on the power of the applied word of God in freeing believers from the bondage of sin and then freeing them to righteous obedience

John 8:34–36 (ESV) 34 Jesus answered them, "Truly, truly, I say to you, everyone who practices sin is a slave to sin. 35 The slave does not remain in the house forever; the son remains forever. 36 So if the Son sets you free, you will be free indeed.

God's Law...God's truth...allows us to serve God not out of fear, guilt or duty, but out of gratitude and love. One day it also will free us from this world and its corruption; from our fallenness; from our flesh; from temptation; and from the curses of sin, death, and hell. God's law is thought of by some as bringing bondage; but in reality it brings great liberty

God's law still reflects His holy will and His standards for human conduct. It provides all the truth and guidance we need to live godly lives. It is consummate, flawless, without error or omission, and will meet every need, touch every part of life, fulfill every godly desire of true believers, the children of God. As we look to that law, it liberates us to forsake sin and to pursue righteousness. The true believer abides by God's perfect law ... of liberty because that is His heavenly Father's will, and above all else he seeks to please and honor Him.

It becomes obvious that your motive and attitude in studying God's Word becomes evident by the response to what is learned. A person who pays no mind to what he learns from Scripture proves his motive for studying it is not godly. At best, he is interested in mere factual knowledge, and even that he soon forgets. In doing so, he brings even greater judgment on himself than a person receives who has never been exposed to the Word. He also gives strong evidence that, despite a profession of belief in Christ, he is not really saved.

One of most serious and common obstacles to salvation is fallen man's natural aversion to serious spiritual thought. He may love to study philosophy and man-made religions and

theology. But he is not inclined to seriously search for God's truth, realizing, even if subconsciously, that his life falls short of God's standards and that God will demand perhaps more than he is willing to give. Men are not naturally inclined to look at themselves honestly, to perform a self-evaluation under the bright and perfect light of God's Word. They know instinctively that their pride, self-will, and love of sin will be exposed under the the light of God's word.

On the other hand, the person who humbles himself, by figuratively stooping over to get a better look at the Word, proves his right spiritual motive and attitude. His concern is not with bare facts but with divine truth, and he therefore obeys what he learns. In doing so, he is blessed and God is glorified.

He also detests the reflection of himself that he sees in the mirror of the Word, and his overriding desire is to have every sin, every spiritual and moral blemish, removed and replaced with God's righteousness. But he is brutally honest about what the Word of God reveals about him. The genuine believer sees things as they really are, and agrees with God before he even looks. He loves to do what the Bible commands him to do, because that is the will of his heavenly Father.

Moving away from the analogy of the mirror, James makes clear that the doer of the Word is not simply someone who is involved in religious activity.

James 1:26 (ESV) 26 If anyone thinks he is religious and does not bridle his tongue but deceives his heart, this person's religion is worthless.

The Greek word of religious here refers to external religious rituals, liturgies, routines, and ceremonies. The famous Jewish historian Josephus used the word to describe worship in the temple at Jerusalem. Paul used the noun form of this term when speaking of his former life as a zealous Pharisee. The word here implies strict adherence to rituals.

By contrast, the word most commonly used in the New Testament for genuine, God-honoring and God-pleasing worship is eusebeia, whose basic meaning is that of godliness and holiness.

We all have experienced self professed Christians who are just going through the motions. Checking off ritual after ritual. Their actions are no where near what they say they believe. And James says that you can only fake it so long. Because the tongue is untamable my man

They focus on attending church services and activities, doing volunteer work, following various rituals and ceremonies, saying prayers, and even may know the right theology. They have their own motives to pretend like they are followers of Jesus but their hearts are still selfish and they still want to be in control. The person who trusts in those outward things sooner or later will expose his faithlessness with his mouth, because he does not have the inner power to bridle his tongue.

Trusting in those things to please God and receive His blessing are deceptive and worthless. A corrupt and unholy heart eventually will be exposed by corrupt and unholy speech.

The tongue is not the only indicator of true spirituality but is one of the most reliable. It has been estimated that the average person will speak some 18,000 words in a day, enough for a fifty-four-page book. In a year that amounts to sixty-six 800-page volumes! Many people, of course, speak much more than that. Up to one-fifth of the average person's life is spent talking.

If the tongue is not controlled by God, it is a sure indicator that the heart is not, either. Jesus told the self-righteous Pharisees

Matthew 12:34–37 (ESV) 34 You brood of vipers! How can you speak good, when you are evil? For out of the abundance of the heart the mouth speaks. 35 The good person out of his good treasure brings forth good, and the evil person out of his evil treasure brings forth evil. 36 I tell you, on the day of judgment people will give account for every careless word they speak, 37 for by your words you will be justified, and by your words you will be condemned."

So our words give away our hearts. No human can control His tongue...James will expand on this later...

James 3:7–8 (ESV) 7 For every kind of beast and bird, of reptile and sea creature, can be tamed and has been tamed by mankind, 8 but no human being can tame the tongue. It is a restless evil, full of deadly poison.

The only thing that controls the tongue is the Spirit of God changing the heart. So if you listen to people talk their tongue will eventually reveal the status of the Spirit in their hearts.

The truth of God is in us...Our obedience to that truth transforms us...evidence of that transformation is the control of our tongue and our actions. We actually do what God's word says to do. We not only speak of God's truth but we submit to it. Our religion is true.

That leads us to one of the verses that we focused on when we started Remnant.

James 1:27 (ESV) 27 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 from the world.

When we started Remnant we focused on this as one of our primary verses. Many people were bombarding us with ways to start a church plant, effective marketing plans, and strategies to grow and support a church. They told us that homeless people don't tithe and people who do tithe don't want to be with the homeless. But we ignored those voices and listened to verses. This was one of them. God defines in this verse what pure religion and thus a pure church is in God's eyes.

We wanted to develop a church that would meet people in their trials and show them Jesus. We wanted a church that did what James teaches. We wanted to be doers of the Word. We wanted to be that church which was pure and undefiled before God. We knew that if we chased the heart of God, He would meet our needs spiritually and financially.

James teaches us that true religion cares for widows and orphans.

Generally, the neediest people in the early church were orphans and widows. There were no life insurance or welfare programs to support them. Jobs for either group were scarce, and if they had no close kin, or at least none who would help them, they were in desperate straits. God's people should focus on caring for those who are weak, taken advantage of, and overlooked. In the first century, this would be orphans and widows. Today we would add the poor, the needy, the homeless, those suffering with addiction, and anyone that the world has shunned and cast aside. We wanted to be the church that would do what Jesus commanded.

So we focus on helping those who are in great need. However, our goal was not to just provide food, showers, and clothes...but to create a place of rest...a place where people were loved and comfortable...so that they could gradually become open to a relationship with Christ.

We knew that God never gives up on anyone and neither should His followers. Ministry is messy because our sinful world is messy. We welcome refugees from a spiritual war that they don't even know they are fleeing from.

We struggle financially because most of the people we serve have no resources. They pay us with gratitude. Remnant and the Remnant Cafe live financially month to month. I don't manipulate people to give. But if you are not contributing significantly to what God is doing here.....you probably need to check your heart...

James says we should visit the orphans and widows....but the Greek word for visit means much more than to drop by for a chat. It carries the ideas of caring for others, exercising oversight on their behalf, and of helping them in whatever way is needed. This word is used frequently in the New Testament of God's visiting His people in order to help, strengthen, and encourage them

Just as God visited His people we wanted to visit and care for those He puts in our path. We wanted to explore the truth of God's word and to live it out in the lives of those who we encounter here at Remnant. We were going to be doers of the word and to do it by having a genuine concern for the welfare of others...especially those in great need.

John 13:35 (ESV) 35 By this all people will know that you are my disciples, if you have love for one another."

True Christianity is manifested from a pure and loving heart by the way believers talk and by the way they act. It is manifested by how they love and care for those who are in need, not by how they love and care for those they prefer, those who are close to them, or those with whom they share common traits and interests. Love is to be the central and most visible manifestation of salvation

And, as John makes clear, love for God cannot be separated from love for others, especially for fellow believers and most especially for those who are in ... distress. The professed Christian who does not show such compassion has reason to doubt that he is born again. A truly redeemed heart reaches out to others. Once you commit to obedience to God's word you can help but help others.

If you have no compassion for those who are hurting or in need...you better double check your salvation. People who obey God's word and follow His heart always find themselves caring for the outcasts. Why? Because that is what Jesus did.

You may ask what does that look like?

Every Saturday night we have our largest church service. Ed has become the pastor of this congregation as Tammy Kevin Keith Angel Tom Anne and so many others serve them during the week. I encourage each of you to attend on Saturday nights. It is an incredible display of this verse being lived out.

Last night the power of God was palpable in this place. We heard testimony after testimony of how the love of the people of Remnant...who poured out God's love on those others had left behind....How that love transformed their lives. How they now understand the God that they had rejected. How they have found peace in the midst of trials. I wish you could all have been here...but let me show you a glimpse of what it means to visit the orphans and widows of society.

Video

We see the potential in every person who God allows us to serve in this church. Most come hurt and angry at God....but over time....while bathed in love and patience...we see them literally transformed by God. Like a butterfly busting forth from their cocoon. These people shed their past and boldly step into their new future. They came to this place and through Christ's love and a lot of patience...they found what they had lost.... Hope.

They do so because God has regenerated them....literally born again as new spiritual beings...full of all the potential that God had planned of them. It is incredible as a church to be honored to play a part in what God is doing to save the lost. If you know of an investment better than investing in this church, please let me know what it is.

But there was a second truth in this verse that we modeled as Remnant started.

James 1:27 (ESV) 27 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 from the world.

to keep oneself unstained from the world

We wanted to be a church that obeyed God's word no matter what the world said. We wanted to be the church that was in the world but not of it. We were committed to not allowing our culture to change the truth of God's Word. We wanted to be the church that would never conform to this world but would instead be transformed by the renewing of our minds. We were going to obey the Word at all costs.

When Covid struck we chose to follow God's word instead of the world. We kept our doors open for the homeless and for anyone who wanted to attend. Why?

Hebrews 10:24–25 (ESV) 24 And let us consider how to stir up one another to love and good works, 25 not neglecting to meet together, as is the habit of some, but encouraging one another, and all the more as you see the Day drawing near.

About half of our church walked out because we were not obeying our authorities.

They failed to realize that we were. We have an audience of One and we strive to keep ourselves personally and corporately unstained by the world.

Keeping oneself unstained by the world is the perpetual obligation of Christians, allowing for no exception or qualification. Those who belong to God are to be characterized by moral and spiritual purity, by unstained and unblemished holiness.

We try our best, but we know that we are not perfect. Even the most faithful and loving believer does not always show as much compassion as he should, love his fellow believers as he should, or love God as he should. God looks at our heart...He knows that we desire to serve Him as best we can. We realize that we are still messed up people who are being transformed by God's truth.

We are committed to trying our best. Our deepest desire will be to love and care for others and to confess our selfish sin to the Lord when we do not. The genuine Christian cannot be happy or content when he fails to show compassion for others. We must hate it when we fall short of God's truth.

Please hear this... It is not our perfection that proves our salvation but rather our hating our imperfections and seeking, with God's help and power, to correct them.

In his inmost heart, the genuine Christian longs to speak and do only those things that are holy, pure, loving, honest, truthful, and upright, things that are uncorrupted and unstained by the world.

Subtopic

In my opinion, too many churches lack a love for those who are hard to love. Ministry is hard work and requires great sacrifice. It has to come from obedient surrender to God's Word. A person or church that does not have compassion for others, who is not concerned about living righteously, and whose satisfaction is found in his justifying or excusing sin, cannot be a true disciple of Christ, child of God, or collectively Jesus' church.

1 John 2:15–16 (ESV) 15 Do not love the world or the things in the world. If anyone loves the world, the love of the Father is not in him. 16 For all that is in the world—the desires of the flesh and the desires of the eyes and pride of life—is not from the Father but is from the world.

Love of God and love of the world and the things of the world are totally incompatible and mutually exclusive. We are called to be in the world but not of it. We are not to isolate ourselves as frozen chosen behind stained glass. We engage the world because we love God not because we love what the world offers.

Godly religion, that is, biblical Christianity, is a matter of total obedience to God's Word—reflected, among other ways, by our honesty in regard to ourselves, by our selflessness in regard to the needs of others, and by our uncompromising moral and spiritual stand in regard to the world.

Closing

Subtopic