

JAMES: FAITH WORKS / RIGHTEOUSNESS IN OVERALLS #8
“The Keys to God-Honoring Communication” Part 1 (James 1:19-20)
 Mission Bible Fellowship (November 17, 2019) Pastor Larry Nelson

Introduction:

1. Please open your Bibles this morning to James Chapter 1.
2. It has been a great privilege for me to fill in for Pastor Brian throughout this year, and this is now the 8th message in a verse-by-verse study of James 1, which I have called, **“FAITH WORKS, or, RIGHTEOUSNESS IN OVERALLS”** a **“BELIEF that BEHAVES.”**
3. Although I have been studying this Epistle for the better part of 50 years, I never cease to be amazed by its down-to-earth practicality, and the passage before us today is certainly no exception!
4. From the time we were children, most of us can remember being in arguments, where we gave someone an angry ***piece-of-our-mind***, that we could not spare.
 - a. Or perhaps you can recall when someone unloaded their anger on you.
 - b. That said, all of us, even on our best days, are infected with the idol of pride, which always wants to have its own way.
 - c. Now I don’t know about your kids, but I think most children learn to say **“NO!”** long before they learn to say *“Mommy”* or *“Daddy.”*
 - d. Clearly, none of our parents ever had to teach us to be disobedient, or to have a ***“DRA” “Dirty Rotten Attitude.”***
 - e. Our mom’s never said to any of us, *“You are just being **too good today**. So I guess I’m going to have to teach you how to have a DRA. Its time for you to learn how to argue and fight with your brother or sister, how to steal cookies, how to throw temper tantrums, how to be lazy, and how to abuse the dog!”*
 - f. The reason why nobody ever had to teach us these things, is because we are all infected with selfishness from birth.

*Psalm 58:3 “The wicked are estranged from the womb;
 These who speak lies go astray from birth.”*

- g. Our fallen minds are factories of sin, and were it not for God’s sovereign grace, calling us to salvation in Christ, all of us would spend our entire lives fulfilling the selfish desires of our sinful hearts.

Ephesians 2:3 “Among them we too all formerly lived in the lusts of our flesh, indulging the desires of the flesh and of the mind, and were by nature children of wrath, even as the rest.”

5. I think that one of my granddaughters, (who will remain nameless, in order to protect the guilty), was born with a fist clenched in defiance.
 - a. She fought her parents constantly, always demanding to have her own way, And no amount of reason or discipline would reach her rebellious heart.

- b. But when she was four years old, by the grace of God, she submitted her stubborn will to Jesus Christ as her Lord and Savior, and it was like this kid went out and got a brain transplant!
- c. Almost over night, she became a delightful, loving, and obedient child, who is now a joyful, radiant young woman!

2 Corinthians 5:17 *“Therefore if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creature; the old things passed away; behold, new things have come.”*

- d. This is the miracle of salvation that every Christian parent prays for.
- e. And once a man or woman, a boy or a girl, receives Christ as Lord and Savior, we are then called to participate, with the indwelling Holy Spirit, in the sanctification process, where we spend the rest of our earthly lives learning how to love God and others, not just ourselves.

TRANS> So with this as a background, let’s read our text.

James 1:19-20

19 *This you know, my beloved brethren. But everyone must be quick to hear, slow to speak and slow to anger;*

20 *for the anger of man does not achieve the righteousness of God.*

PROP> I have called this message: **“Keys to God-Honoring Communication”**

- 6. Here is a simple truth:, One of the reasons that even Christian adults struggle to practice of God-honoring communication in our churches, and in our marriages, and with our children, is because most of us learned our selfish habits as kids.
 - a. This was certainly true in my case, where as children, growing up in a non-Christian home, we were allowed to yell insults at each other, and no instruction or help was ever given, as to how we could resolve our conflicts in a godly way.
 - b. And so here is your first *Nelsonism* for the day: *“The grave of relationships is most often dug with little digs.”* **<REPEAT>**
 - i. Instead of being taught to love and treasure one another, we were constantly fighting, name calling, and insulting each other.
 - ii. And I couldn’t wait to grow up and leave all that turmoil behind me.
 - iii. But thankfully, God has a much better way for us, and every wise Christian parent should teach these truths to their children.

TRANS> Today’s James text, pretty much outlines itself with **Three Commands** and **One Warning**.

7. But before we get to the Commands or the Warning, James says in:

James 1:19 “This you know, my beloved brethren ...”

- a. Some of us are old enough to remember the time when, we used to refer to “common sense” and “common courtesy”, but unfortunately there is nothing **“common”** about **either** of these today!

- b. However, what James is about to say, is very simple to understand, and we all know in our hearts the truth of it, without needing to be convinced.
 - i. Clearly, its not the **understanding** that is hard, its the **doing!**
 - ii. Mom & Dad, we can all remember times when we were trying to explain these truths about God-honoring communication to a child who was struggling with their sinful desires to have their own way.
 - iii. And in such times, it is not uncommon for a child to express frustration over their personal inability to speak respectfully, either to you or to a sibling.
 - (1) Perhaps you can remember the response of your child, who said something like, “*I know that I should be kind, but Mommy, it is so hard, when he gets into my stuff!*”
 - iv. But these can be precious opportunities for evangelism, where we explain to our child that without Christ as their Lord and Savior, they will continue to be slaves to their own selfishness, and they will continue to sin against God and others.

8. Next, please notice how James reaches out in kindness and gentleness to his readers, as he refers to them as, “*my beloved brethren.*”

- a. There is no self-righteousness or pride in what he is about to say.
- b. Please listen to Paul’s kind and pastoral words to the Galatian church:

Galatians 6:1 Brethren, even if anyone is caught in any trespass, you who are spiritual, restore such a one in a spirit of gentleness; each one looking to yourself, so that you too will not be tempted.

- c. The word “*restore*” that Paul uses here is <kat-ar-^ltid-zō>, which in the Greek, is often used as a medical term, where it refers to the setting of a broken bone, or putting dislocated joint back into service.
 - i. It is also used for mending nets.
- d. This is a beautiful picture of one member of the body of Christ gently and lovingly working to bring another broken or disjointed member of the body back into useful service.
- e. And this is what is missing in so much of our communication with one another today, even among Christians, who should know better.
- f. Simply put, “*People don’t care how much you know, until they know how much you care!”*
<REPEAT>

1 Corinthians 13:1-8

- 1 *If I speak with the tongues of men and of angels, but do not have love, I have become a noisy gong or a clanging cymbal.*
- 2 *If I have the gift of prophecy, and know all mysteries and all knowledge; and if I have all faith, so as to remove mountains, but do not have love, I am nothing.*
- 3 *And if I give all my possessions to feed the poor, and if I surrender my body to be burned, but do not have love, it profits me nothing.*
- 4 *Love is patient, love is kind and is not jealous; love does not brag and is not arrogant,*

- 5 *does not act unbecomingly; it does not seek its own, is not provoked, does not take into account a wrong suffered,*
- 6 *does not rejoice in unrighteousness, but rejoices with the truth;*
- 7 *bears all things, believes all things, hopes all things, endures all things.*
- 8 *Love never fails ...*

Ephesians 4:15 but speaking the truth in love, we are to grow up in all aspects into Him who is the head, even Christ,

- g. Simply put, mature godly Christians are to be known for our practice of speaking God's truth with love and kindness.
- h. Or to put it negatively, those who see themselves as being mature godly Christians, but who have not learned to exhort others with love and gentleness, are neither **mature**, nor **godly**.
- i. So whether we are speaking to our children, or to our spouse, or to someone at church, or to an unbeliever, our words must be bathed in love, spoken with **gentleness**, and delivered with **kindness**.

TRANS> So with this as an introduction, let's begin to unpack the 3 Commands of our James text.

James 1:19 "This you know, my beloved brethren. But everyone must be quick to hear, slow to speak and slow to anger;"

I. THE COMMANDS

A. BE QUICK TO HEAR (James 1:19c)

- 1. Simply put, we all are commanded here to be **careful listeners**.
- 2. So let's begin with two very powerful warnings from the Book of Proverbs.

*Proverbs 29:20 "Do you see a man who is hasty in his words?
There is more hope for a fool than for him." <AND>*

*Proverbs 18:13 "He who gives an answer before he hears,
It is folly and shame to him."*

- 3. We have all been in conversations where the other person is constantly interrupting and trying to talk over the top of us, Where without making any attempts to clarify matters by asking questions, they just arrogantly unload their point of view, Where you are wrong and they are right, and that's the end of it!

*Proverbs 18:13 "He who gives an answer before he hears,
It is folly and shame to him."*

- a. Why is it *folly* (*foolish*) and *shameful* to speak before we listen?
- b. It is foolish, because we cannot read another person's mind, and we cannot know anything about what they are thinking unless they tell us.

- c. And since only God can read our thoughts, it is **shameful** on our part to assume we know what the other person is thinking, when they have not told us, and we have not asked!
 - d. For us to **shamefully** do so, is to put **ourselves** in the **place of God**, who never has to ask any questions or anyone!
4. As you know, I have been biblical counselor for a very long time.
- a. And before I will enter into formal counseling with anyone, I have them fill out my “*Personal Data Inventory*,” which is 6 pages of questions.
 - b. I then spend a lot of time studying their answers, before setting up our 1st appointment, where I ask them **more** questions.
 - c. It is only after I have listened carefully, that I endeavor to provide biblical counsel, and I continue to ask questions throughout our sessions together.
 - d. So now I want to give you a bunch of examples of what being “*quick to hear*” actually looks like in our daily lives.
5. Being “*quick to hear*,” is not just sitting in silence, while your mind is off somewhere else.
- a. It involves listening carefully, even when we think we know what the other person is going to say.
 - b. Even though I have not heard a new problem in dozens of years, I still must listen as though this is the 1st time I have heard it.
6. Being “*quick to hear*” also means that you are giving the other person your undivided attention, where you turn away from the TV or computer, you put down your book or smart phone, you stop doing what you were doing, and you turn around to **look** at them.
7. Being “*quick to hear*” means that you are not thinking about what you are going to say, when you can finally get a word in.
8. Being “*quick to hear*” means that we are assuming the **best**, not the **worst**, about the other person’s words and motives.

1 Corinthians 13:7 (Love) bears all things, believes all things, hopes all things, endures all things.

- a. This means that love believes and hopes for the best about the other person’s words and motives, not the worst.
9. Parents, please listen carefully, and teach this to your kids.
- a. For **children**, being “*quick to hear*” means that when Mom or Dad calls them, they must stop what they are doing, and quickly go to where you are, and say, “*Yes Mommy*” or “*Yes Daddy*.”
 - b. It does **not** mean that you allow your children, or teens, to yell, “**What?**” from the next room, expecting you to come to them.

TRANS> Now let's move on to James' 2nd command:

II. BE SLOW TO SPEAK (James 1:19d)

A. It should go without saying that if you are being "quick to hear," you will also need to be "slow to speak."

1. These are two sides of the same coin, because if you are **talking**, then you aren't, **listening**. If you are **talking**, then you aren't **listening**!

1 Corinthians 13:3 (Love) does not act unbecomingly; it **does not seek its own**, is **not provoked**, and does not take into account a wrong suffered,

B. So here are 10 examples of what being "slow to speak" actually looks like, **and**, what it does not look like.

1. Being "slow to speak" is not demanding your own way or monopolizing the conversation.
2. Even if you are **not** talking, being "slow to speak" is **not** folding your arms, clenching your teeth, setting your jaw, pursing your lips, clenching your fists, tapping your foot, throwing things, or slamming doors.
 - a. This person is speaking volumes of disagreement and disrespect, even though he or she may not be saying anything.
3. Being "slow to speak" is all about assuming the best about the other person's motives, not the worst.
4. Being "slow to speak" means that we do not jump to conclusions assuming that we know, when we may not actually know anything.
5. Being "slow to speak" is the humble acknowledgment in our own mind, which admits that **I** could be the one who is at least partially **wrong** here.
6. Being "slow to speak" recognizes the possibility that I may not have all the facts, or, that I may have misinterpreted them.
7. Being "slow to speak" will cause us to remember and apply:

Ephesians 4:1-3

- 1 *Therefore I, the prisoner of the Lord, implore you to walk in a manner worthy of the calling with which you have been called,*
- 2 *with all humility and gentleness, with patience, showing (forbearance) tolerance for one another in love,*
- 3 *being diligent to preserve the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace.*

a. Now please be assured that this text is **not** commanding tolerance and unity and peace at **any** price, even when the truth of God's Word are being twisted or compromised.

b. In such cases, we **must** speak up, but even when we must confront false teachers, Paul exhorted Pastor Timothy in:

2 Timothy 2:24-25

- 24 The Lord's bond-servant (slave) must not be quarrelsome, but be **kind** to all, able to teach, **patient** when wronged,
 25 with **gentleness** correcting those who are in opposition, if perhaps God may grant them repentance leading to the knowledge of the truth,

c. But **much** to my sadness, there are times when confrontational Christians ask no questions, or quite unnecessarily insist on making **majors** out of **minors**, even to the point of making Law where God has made no Law, which we call "Legalism."

8. Being "slow to speak," will cause us to remember that not all Christians are at the same stage of spiritual growth.

a. Please notice how Paul begins *Romans 14* with:

Romans 14:1 "Now accept the one who is weak in faith, but not for the purpose of passing judgment on his opinions."

b. Although there may be a time and a place for bringing correction to a brother or sister in the Lord, all such words must be given in the spirit of:

Ephesians 4:2-3

- 2 with all **humility** and **gentleness**, with **patience**, showing (**forbearance**) **tolerance** for one another in **love**,
 3 being **diligent** to **preserve** the unity of the Spirit in the bond of **peace**.

c. Otherwise, we are just a "noisy gong or a clanging cymbal.", BANG - BANG - BANG!, PLEASE LISTEN CAREFULLY TO:

*Proverbs 25:11 "Like apples of gold in settings of silver
 Is a word spoken in right circumstances."*

9. Being "slow to speak" also means that we work hard at not interrupting or talking over the top of the other person.

a. ¿ Why?, because, say it with me, "If you are talking, you aren't listening!!"

10. Being "slow to speak" will usually cause your hearers to want to hear **more** of what you have to say, **not less**.

a. Listen to Paul's exhortation in: *Colossians 4:6*

*Colossians 4:6 "Let your speech always be with **grace**, as though seasoned with **salt**, so that you will know how you should respond to each person."*

b. Salt is one of God's most wonderful gifts to us.

(1) Not only does it bring out the flavor in food, but it also causes us to be thirsty.

(2) Paul's point here is that Holy Spirit-controlled words will be so gracious, so wise, so loving, so patient, and so gentle, that they will hopefully leave our hearers **thirsty**, wanting to hear **more**, **not** ducking for cover, and looking for the nearest exit.

- c. Years ago, I was an Associate Pastor, who was brought into a church to develop the Biblical Counseling Ministry.
- (1) However, after a couple of years I ended up leaving, in large part because the Teaching Pastor's idea of counseling was to **ridicule, bully, condescend**, and even **yell** at his counselees.
 - (2) Needless to say, after one "counseling" session with this guy, they never came back, and most of them ended up leaving the church.
- d. ¿ Husbands and Wives, Moms and Dads, May I please ask you a very personal question?
- (1) ¿ How **salty** are your words with each other, and with your children, and with others at church?
 - (2) ¿ Do they look forward to what you have to say, or do they dread it?
- e. Dear Christian friends, in case you have not noticed it yet, churches are full of imperfect people, who can sometimes be **very irritating**.
- (1) ¿ Have you ever heard this limerick?
 - (a) To live above with the saints I love, that will be glory! But to live below with the ones I know, that's a different story!
 - (2) Now of course, I am not referring to any of you – No-No-No!, but there are other people who can be a real pain.
 - (3) ¿ So I ask you, When you feel that there is the need for instruction or correction, How **salty** are your words?
 - (4) ¿ Do your hearers thank you for loving and caring for them , and taking the time to share a word of correction or exhortation with them, or do they thank God when you are finally done, so they can go tend to their wounds?

TRANS> Now as I studied and meditated on this text, I knew that today was going to be one of those Sundays, when I would have way more sermon than time to share it.

So as our Lord enables, I am looking forward to finishing it 6 Sundays from now, when Pastor Brian is planning to be away again.

CONCLUSION>

1. Now lest any of you think that I am somehow trying to preach down to you, please know that the only reason I know what you can be like, is because I know what I used to be like, and what I would still be like today, were it not for the grace of God, and good men who patiently disciplined me., So here is another chapter from the "**LarryNelson Hall of Shame!**"
2. 44 years ago, I was coming to the end of my first year of Bible College, and there was a Christian Camp out in the Okanagan, who had asked if I would consider flying out to interview for their Camp Director position.

3. Now I had no idea how they got my name, and their request made absolutely no sense to me, because I had never been a Camp Director, and for that matter, I had never even been to a Christian Camp before in my life.
4. But because I had some ideas of what a good Christian Camping ministry should look like, and we had a teacher at the school who taught courses in Christian Camping, who agreed to give me a crash course, I decided to check it out.
5. So after spending over two hours with this teacher, I asked him, *“Well Mr. Meyer, Do you think I have what it takes to do this job?”*
6. To which he answered: *“Larry, I have absolutely no doubt that you can direct this camp. My only question is how many **dead bodies** you are going to leave in your wake?”*
7. So here is one of the greatest understatements since God said to Noah that it was going to rain.
8. To put it mildly, and to my shame, back then, I had a lot to learn about *“speaking the truth in love.”*
9. But I am so grateful for godly men, like Mr. Meyer, who loved me enough to help me see my sinful blind-spots, men who taught me by their kind words and patient example, how to have *“salty”* speech.
10. And I am even more grateful to the Lord for His grace, which opened my eyes to my own sin, and enabled me to repent and to change.
11. So, whatever your need, whatever your sin problem is today, I want to encourage and assure you, that if God can save and sanctify prideful hard-heads like me and Saul of Tarsus, He can do the same for you.
12. Finally this morning, I want to take just a moment to drill down on a simple *Nelsonism* that I call, *Nelson 1:1*, which says, *“Thou shalt have **balance!**”*
 - a. Now I am not talking about balancing truth with error, NO - NO - NO!
 - b. I am speaking about balancing truth with truth.
 - c. Remember that James has said, *“... be slow to speak ...”*, and I have spent a great deal of time explaining what that looks like.
 - d. But there are some, who never speak God’s truth to those who are violating it.
 - i. In point of fact, most Christians never share the saving gospel of Christ with anyone.
 - ii. And, there are many who will never speak truth to power in the church, even when teachers, and elders, and even pastors are violating God’s Word.
 - iii. It was over 25 years ago, as I was pastoring in northern Idaho, when 3 couples, who had never been to our church before, came up to me after the morning service to seek my help.

- iv. They were longtime members of the largest church in a nearby city, where everyone in the church knew that the mayor of that city had deserted his wife and children, and was shacking up with a married woman, who had deserted her husband and children.
- v. And there they were, in every Sunday service, and none of the leadership would do or say anything about it.
- vi. That church was not “slow to speak”, but from the leadership on down, they had refused to speak!
- vii. In the face of such cowardice, silence is not golden, it is just plain yellow.
- viii. But this church had an annual tradition, where on Youth Sunday the young people would lead the entire worship service, including the morning sermon.
- ix. ¿ Can you imagine the surprise of everyone in the congregation, when a 16 year old boy preached from *1 Corinthians 5*, where he rebuked these adulterers for their disgraceful behavior, and the entire congregation, including the leadership of the church, for doing nothing about it?
- x. Apparently this boy was unaware of the 4-step *Matthew 18:15-17 Process* of dealing with sin in the church, and although I cannot condone his jumping ahead to step 3 “*tell it to the church*”, before completing steps 1 and 2, I do applaud his courage.
- xi. I explained the *Matthew 18 Process* to these 3 couples, and the men decided who would go first to confront the man (Step 1), and then the three would go to him if he refused to listen (Step 2).
- xii. When Steps 1 & 2 failed, these 3 men brought the matter to the pastor and his Leadership Board, but the pastor’s response was, “*Well if we deal with this man, where will it all end?”*
- xiii. Apparently fornication and adultery were epidemic in this church.
- xiv. So why am I telling you all this?
- xv. Our text commands us to be “...quick to hear and slow to speak...”
- xvi. But sometimes, we have to speak, even when we know that no one wants to listen.
- xvii. And in this case, when the church leadership would take no action, these 3 couples eventually voted with their feet, as they left that apostate assembly of so-called-believers, and found a church that honored God and His Word.
- xviii. I am so grateful that the leadership of this church, not only believes God’s Word, but they also have the courage to faithfully teach it, and call the congregation to holy living.