JAMES 1:19-27
KEEP IT SIMPLE

TEACH IT **COLLEGE AGE** SESSION 3

1. Materials

For this session each student will need—

- the James 1 Scripture sheet
- the student journal page for Session 3
- his or her own Bible, pen, and notebook

You'll also need—

- a whiteboard and markers
- colored pencils (at least two colors per student)
- optional: your church directory or local phone book

2. Session Intro

GOALS OF SESSION 3

As students experience this session, they will—

- discover the detailed instructions James gives for living out the Christian faith.
- explore what these instructions teach us about God and about obedience.
- be challenged to use these detailed instructions as a gateway for discovering what God wants them to do.

PRAYER

After your students have gathered, open your session in prayer. Pray they'll see the instructions given to us by James as a simple path to discovering God's will in their lives.

OPEN

God's Will Primer

After opening with prayer, get the discussion rolling with a few questions:

What are some ways people can know God's will?

As you've moved into your college-age years, have you begun asking questions about knowing God's will for your life?

How do you discover God's will for your life?

Transition into the next exercise by saying something like—

By the time we finish this session, we may find that discovering God's will is easier than we think.

3. Digging In

Read Instructions before Engaging Life

Draw your students' attention to their Scripture sheets and share—

1. **James often indicates a change in subject with the phrase *my brothers*. So think about what we could conclude about James 1:19.**

2. **Read James 1:19-27.**

3. **Using colored pencil, draw a cloud** **in one color over every reference to God.**

4. **Use another color to underline every mention of the readers of the letter.**

While the students are reading, draw the framework for the following two-column chart on the whiteboard. This is what it will look like after the students tell you the instructions found in James 1:19-27.

Instructions	Next 30 Days
Be quick to listen, slow to speak (1:19).	
Be slow to become angry (1:19).	
Get rid of all moral filth and evil (1:21).	
Humbly accept the Word planted in you (1:21).	
Do what the Word says (1:22).	
Keep a tight rein on your tongue (1:26).	
Look after orphans and widows in distress (1:27).	
Keep from being polluted by the world (1:27).	

After a few minutes, ask the group members to look back at the clouds they marked and discuss these questions:

What do you learn about God in this passage?
-He desires that we live a righteous life (1:20).
-He wants us to look after orphans and widows and keep ourselves from being polluted by the world (1:27).

Look back at the verses you marked about James' readers. What commands or instructions does James give his audience? As we list these on the whiteboard, we'll begin to see a picture of the righteous life James is referring to.

List their responses in the first column on the whiteboard, one instruction per line. Ask the students to write the same information on their journal pages.

4. Taking It Inward

From the Inside Out

Share with your students—

> **Take a couple of minutes to mull over these instructions and see if you notice any themes that might tie some or all of these instructions together.**
> *Ideas might include: They cover interaction with people; some are on the defense (keep from being polluted) and some are on the offense (look after orphans and widows). Eventually elicit the observation that these instructions can be classified in two categories: our inner life and our outer life.*

After you've noted the inner and outer nature of these instructions, ask students to tell you which are which. As they do so, circle the inner-related instructions and draw a box around the outer-related instructions on the whiteboard. Possible observations from the passage are noted in the following chart, but you may come to different conclusions about which category some instructions fit into.

Inner	Outer
-Be slow to become angry (1:19). *-Get rid of all moral filth and evil (1:21).* *-Humbly accept the Word planted in you (1:21).* *-Keep yourself from being polluted by the world (1:27).*	*-Be quick to listen, slow to speak (1:19).* *-Do what the Word says (1:22).* *-Keep a tight rein on your tongue (1:26).* *-Look after orphans and widows in distress (1:27).*

Then discuss these questions:

> **Which of these instructions do you habitually ignore or disobey?**
>
> **Which of these instructions, if obeyed, would do the most good in the world?**
>
> **Which of these instructions has led to the most trouble for you when you didn't obey it?**
>
> **What did James say will happen if we do these things?**
> *We will be blessed in what we do (1:25).*

5. Digging Deeper

Hear, Then Do

God has always put a premium on doing his commands, which is why James could promise that we'll be blessed when we obey God's Word. Share that students are going to spend some time in solitude now, studying what Jesus had to say on this subject.

Explain—

> **1. Take your Bibles to places where you can have a little privacy with God.**
>
> **2. Be sure to have your journal pages and pens.**

3. **Follow the instructions for the Digging Deeper exercise on your journal pages, and interact with God through prayer about the connection between hearing his Word and doing what it says.**

After about 10 minutes, call the group back together. Ask—

In the passages you just read, what two-step process does Jesus apply to his words and commands?
We need to know his commands and obey them.

Respond to this statement: If there is no evidence in your life that you are doing Jesus' commands, then you really don't *know* Jesus, even though you say you do.

How have you been doing lately with these two steps of knowing and doing?

Ask volunteers to share where they rated themselves on the scales and what their rationale is.

HEARING SCALE:

1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
I haven't cracked a Bible in weeks <								> I have regular, invigorating time in God's Word	

DOING SCALE:

1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
In one ear, out the other <								> Making every effort to please God	

What hinders us from taking these steps? Why do these hindrances hold more weight than the promises Jesus gave us for knowing and doing his commands?
Answers might include: busyness, not taking knowing or doing seriously. The fact that most of us would rate low on these scales shows that these hindrances outweigh the blessing of knowing and doing. Maybe it's because we see the hindrances daily but the blessings are less tangible.

Explain that Jesus attaches some hefty promises to these two steps—a good indicator that they're crucial for Christians. Ask—

What adjustments do you need to make in your life in order to experience these promises?

6. Taking It Inward

So Act Already!

Granted, you and your group members are busy. The whole world is busy! But could it be that God is waiting for us to take James 1:22 more seriously? Spend the next few minutes strategizing ways you and your students can listen to the Word and put into practice the instructions they've uncovered in James 1. The following are some examples to help the group get out of the starting block. Tell the group—

We're going to close with a group work session to help each of us crank up the intensity for hearing and doing the Word. What are some practical steps we can take to hear the Word better? What are some things we can do to put the Word into practice?

As the group discusses the action steps they can take for hearing the Word, have them jot down notes in the space provided on the journal pages. Here are some suggestions:

Hear the Word

- Spend the next 30 days reading one of the four Gospels—Matthew, Mark, Luke, or John. Keep a journal of everything Jesus commanded and taught. As you read each parable, write down the main point Jesus is making.
- Immerse yourself in an entire book of the Bible. Start small, say a one-chapter book like 2 John or 3 John. Make that book a part of your life for the next few weeks. Look for things like warnings, instructions, and info about God, Jesus, and the Holy Spirit. Then move to a book like Titus (three chapters).

Do the Word

Refer to the instructions you have listed on the whiteboard, and ask students to refer to the column on the journal pages labeled Next 30 Days. Then ask—

James gives us a great to-do list. How can we—as a group or as individuals—start obeying these instructions, or obey them more consistently? Give me two or three ideas for each instruction.

Students should have some ideas listed from the Digging Deeper exercise they did earlier in the session. Encourage them to be specific and practical, and write their ideas on the whiteboard in the column labeled Next 30 Days. Here are some examples and ideas:

- When you get to the widows and orphans in 1:27, write down names of specific people the group can help, and ask the students to write them on their journal pages. Have a church directory or phone book handy. Divvy up the names and phone numbers of these people. Have one or two students make a phone call, drop in for a visit, or volunteer to help with some chores.
- Check with your area's Big Brothers/Big Sisters program. Perhaps you can provide a group birthday party, Christmas party, or game night for the children they're serving.
- Take a 10-day fast from being polluted by the world. Your students will know what has the potential to pollute them—what they read, watch, listen to, or talk about. Ask them to write two or three things to avoid on their Do the Word list.

7. Wrapping It Up

Start Simple

Use these questions to take your group back to the discussion at the beginning of the session:

Did today's Scripture make it easier to know God's will for your life? If so, in what ways?

Steer the discussion to conclude that when we do what God reveals in his Word, we're doing his will. When we look after widows and orphans in their distress and keep from being polluted by the world, we're doing what God accepts as pure and faultless—his will.

So if you want to discover God's will for your life, based on James, how would you get started?

Let the group discuss this one for a minute, and then wrap up with thoughts like this—

Obeying God in the simple things is a great starting point for obeying him in the bigger areas of life. For example, as you help out a widow in your neighborhood, God may see he can trust you with something else. He may move you on to another ministry that defines your life's calling, or he may simply bring more orphans and widows your way. By faithfully obeying God, you'll soon discover that you're doing his will for your life—and you'll be blessed in all you do.

Before closing in prayer, ask this question:

> **In this session we've touched on many practical things we can do to be better hearers and doers of God's Word. Now let's pin it down. What is one action you can do within the next 24 hours that would be an improvement in hearing and doing God's Word?**
> *Sample answers: Get phone number/address of a widow, start in on a book of the Bible, be intentionally slow to speak.*

If it's appropriate for your group, go around the room and ask each student to give a response. Then create an accountability plan. Have students create a plan to remind each other by this time tomorrow of the action they just shared.

Ask for a volunteer to close your session in prayer. He or she may want to pray for wisdom for the entire group in seeing practical ways they can be hearers and doers of God's Word.