

PRAYER

- Thank God for His Word. Pray that you wouldn't just hear it, but obey it every day.
- As a believer, pray that you would put your faith in action and demonstrate the gospel by serving the poor and keeping yourself pure before God. Make a commitment to guard against impurity.
- Pray for the poor and afflicted. Ask God to bless you so you can be a blessing: to help meet others' needs, serve them, and preach the gospel to them.

NOTES

True Religion

WARM-UP

- Recall an instance when you helped a stranger. Share the story with us.
- Do you follow instructions quickly and well? Recall an instance explaining this.
- Tell us about the saddest news you heard this week. How did you respond?

WORD

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.

JAMES 1:27

(Read also **JAMES 1:19-26.**)

James wrote this letter to the believers in his time to challenge them to live out their faith: to not just hear the Word, but do it. The goal of Bible-reading and study is application, not information. We can be hearers who forget or doers who act, but the Bible promises the doers will be blessed (James 1:25). Because Christians are saved by grace through faith, we know that “doing” can not lead or add to our salvation. However, as Christians, we can now put our faith into action and practice true religion: serve the poor and afflicted, and guard against impurity.

1 Serve the poor and afflicted.

Religion that is pure and undefiled before God the Father is this: to visit orphans and widows in their affliction . . . **JAMES 1:27**

Orphans and widows of the first century were the poorest of the poor. Because they didn't have family and could not provide for themselves, they were left to starve, beg, and even become slaves. As Christians, regardless of our status in life, it is our responsibility to demonstrate the gospel to everyone, especially those who cannot help themselves or pay us back. Who are the poor and afflicted in your community and area? How can you serve them?

.....
.....
.....
.....
.....
.....
.....
.....
.....
.....

2 Guard against impurity.

. . . and to keep oneself unstained from the world. **JAMES 1:27**

Jesus said that His disciples are in the world, but *not of the world* (John 17:16). James charged the believers to *put away all filthiness and rampant wickedness* (James 1:21). Rather, we are to observe and obey God's Word, the highest standard of morality and authority that enables us to live a pure and holy life. How can the impurity of the world distract you from serving others, especially the afflicted?

.....
.....
.....
.....
.....
.....
.....
.....

APPLICATION

- What is your understanding of true religion, and how does this differ from what the Bible says? How will you apply what you learned today?
- Who are the poor and afflicted in your community, and how can you serve them?
- What is one thing you need to do starting this week to keep yourself unstained from the world?