

# JESUS' BROTHER, CHALLENGES OUR HEARTS

## Talk 2 – Look in the mirror – James 1:16-27

### Small group questions

Leaders – if the questions make no sense or you don't know the answer – please contact [bishop@bathurstanglican.org.au](mailto:bishop@bathurstanglican.org.au)

1. What resonated with you from the message, or was there something you found challenging or unclear?

Look in the mirror and see:

**We are his because of him** – read vv16-18

2. How do you usually think about God's gifts? Have you ever associated challenges or trials as gifts from God?
3. Discuss the concept of believers being the "first fruits" of all God created. What are the implications for this image?

**...therefore, we are outstanding** – read vv19-21

4. How do you feel about the fact that we are to radically stand out in the world because we are quick to listen, slow to speak, slow to become angry and get rid of moral filth and evil in our lives? That's a big call!!!
5. How do you think this will happen? (Clue – v21b! – but what does this actually mean?)
6. Mark said that the closer we walk with our Heavenly Father, the more open we are to the Holy Spirit's transforming work within us, then we WILL change. Discuss.

**...because we listen and do** – read vv22-25

7. Discuss the absurdity of looking in the mirror, yet not acting on what we see. Discuss the absurdity of looking into God's word, yet never acting on what we see!
8. Discuss the irony or surprise in James' description of the law as that which gives freedom. Why do we find great blessing in putting God's word into practice?

**Eg: our tongue, our care, our heart** – read vv26-27

9. Discuss the challenges of controlling the tongue and what difference – according to Mark's examples – it may make.
10. Why does James choose the example of caring for the vulnerable as a key indication as to the reality of true religion?
11. What IS "true religion"?
12. Share practical ways you guard your heart from worldly influences. Why is this something that James highlights as another indication of true religion that God accepts as pure and faultless?

*End the session with a time of prayer. Pray for grace to live as God's "first fruits" in the world. Ask for strength to act on God's Word, control our tongues, and remain unpolluted by the world's influences. Celebrate the blessings that come from living in line with God's design. See over for a prayer you may want to use throughout the week.*

Heavenly Father,

We come before you, grateful for your word that serves as a mirror, reflecting our true selves, and revealing areas where we are called to grow and change. We thank you for the clarity and challenge presented to us by James, reminding us that our faith is not merely about hearing, but actively living out Your truth in our daily lives.

Lord, as we have delved deep into these scriptures, we recognise the times we've merely listened without acting, the moments our patience ran thin, and the days we've let worldly pollution taint our hearts. Yet, in the face of our shortcomings, we are humbled and amazed by Your grace, which prompts new birth and transformation.

We pray for the strength and courage to be doers of your word, to control our tongues, to extend care to the vulnerable, and to guard our hearts from worldly distractions. As we endeavour to stand out as your first fruits, may our actions and lives be a testament to your transforming love.

Lord, as we go into this week, help us reflect on today's message, inspire us to action, and draw us closer to you. Let our lives be marked by genuine faith, resulting in freedom, blessing, and a deepened relationship with You.

In the precious name of Jesus Christ, our Saviour and Redeemer, we pray. **Amen.**