



## Faith and Obedience

James 1:19-27 |

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### SUMMARY

James tells us to be quick to hear, and we observed that this hearing (shema) was at the heart of Israel's worship of God. It was a hearing that elicits only one proper response: loving, wholehearted obedience (Deut. 6:5). Russ Ramsey put it this way: God's people were to...

*"...worship the Lord, and they were to understand why they should. The call to worship wasn't a detached decree to render affection to an unknown deity—the God who called them was anything but detached. This command was a call to remember. They were to rehearse in their minds and hearts and homes this story—their story—the story of how the Maker of heaven and earth had called their people to himself and bound himself to them as their God."*

This story of God's covenantal calling extends all the way back to Genesis 1. As Robert Alter translates it, "When God began to create heaven and earth, and the earth then was welter and waste and darkness over the deep and God's breath hovering over the waters, God said..."

**God began to create and the first thing that he does is speak.** If you've been reading your Bible for a while, this is nothing new, but try to consider it again as if for the first time. God creating comes from from his speech. Literally, God speaks, and everything springs forth in obedient response to his words. Why am I telling you this?

This is the Creation framework from which James is writing. All of Creation understands how to respond rightly to its Creator's voice. That is until the pinnacle of his Creation, human beings, rebel against his voice. They become slow to hear the word of the Lord, and quick to speak their own understandings, quick to get angry and turn on one another, quick to use their words to blame, and at least one of their children becomes quick to murder. So when James says, "take note of this: Everyone should be quick to listen..." he is calling everyone to a response that we've been slow to give ever since the Fall.

**Biblical hearing always starts with listening to God, heeding what he's saying to us,** and only then moves on to others. In other words, our relationship with God (hear|obeying his words) is what gives the proper framing for how we relate to other people. And when we stop hearing and obeying him, the early history of humanity reminds us that we are more quick to kill with both our words and our fists than we ever dared believe.

Our hearing is worse than we thought! But what we saw is that God's grace to us in the gospel changes everything as we learn to "humbly accept the word planted in you..."

Take some time as a group to read through James 1:1-27 and then ask these questions:

1. What stood out to you as you read today?
2. What point does James seem to be making?
3. How does this portion of Scripture connect to what came before? How does it connect to what comes after?
4. What didn't make sense? What do you still wonder about?
5. If it's true that all of Creation understands how to respond rightly to its Creator's voice, how would you describe the way that sin has damaged humanity's hearing? How have you experienced restoration to your hearing in Christ?