

## 3Ts4U

WONDERING ABOUT THE TITLE OF THE MESSAGE? MANY PEOPLE LOOK AT VANITY PLATES AND TRY TO FIGURE WHAT IS BEING SAID, SOME ARE OBVIOUS OTHERS ARE NOT. MY PLATE IS SHORT FOR **TRIALS, TEMPTATIONS, AND TRUTH FOR YOU**, WHICH ARE SUBJECTS IN THE LETTER OF JAMES.

A QUESTION OFTEN ASKED BY PEOPLE WHO DO NOT ATTEND CHURCH IS **“HOW CAN I USE ANY OF THAT STUFF IN THE BIBLE?” DO YOU OR I HAVE ANSWER FOR THAT PERSON?** IT IS NOT IMPORTANT WHETHER WE CAN QUOTE SCRIPTURE OR NOT. **WHAT IS IMPORTANT TO THAT PERSON IS THAT WHATEVER ANSWERS YOU GIVE ARE AUTHENTIC, IN YOUR WORDS, AND FROM THE HEART.**

PEOPLE ARE VERY PERCEPTIVE. AFTER ALL HOW MANY OF US HAVE WALKED INTO CHURCH AND BEEN ASKED *“HOW ARE YOU?”* AND OUR ANSWER IS *“FINE”*. HOWEVER, THE LOOK ON OUR FACE AND THE TONE OF OUR WORDS GIVE US AWAY. ISN'T THIS A PLACE WHERE WE CAN FIND SHELTER FROM THE WORLD AND FIND SUPPORT FROM EACH OTHER? WE ARE ENCOURAGED IN MANY PASSAGES OF THE BIBLE TO DO JUST THAT! *ARE WE SUPPORTING ONE ANOTHER OR ARE WE SO WRAPPED UP IN OUR OWN LIVES WE HAVE NO TIME FOR ANYONE ELSE?*

JUST A FEW WEEKS AGO IN EPHESIANS **WE WERE ENCOURAGED TO WALK IN WISDOM BY “MAKING THE MOST OF OUR TIME”**. THERE IS A COMMERCIAL ON THE RADIO ABOUT LEARNING A NEW LANGUAGE INSTEAD OF GETTING “ONE MORE THING”. WE CAN USE THAT SAME THOUGHT ABOUT LEARNING AND APPLYING THE “LANGUAGE” OF THE BIBLE TO OUR LIVES AND REACHING OUT TO OTHERS. THEN WHEN A QUESTION IS ASKED OF YOU, YOU HAVE THAT HONEST AND SINCERE ANSWER FOR THEM, NOT SOMETHING YOU HAVE MEMORIZED.

SOME OF THE MOST SOUGHT AFTER BOOKS BOUGHT TODAY ARE *“HOW TO”* BOOKS. THERE IS FOR MANY PEOPLE A YEARNING TO LEARN HOW TO DO SOMETHING. THE LETTER OF JAMES IS ADDRESSED TO CHRISTIANS WHO HAVE BEEN SCATTERED AROUND THE KNOWN WORLD. **IT IS A LETTER WRITTEN WITH PRACTICAL ADVICE ON LIVING AS A DISCIPLE BY HOW TO PROFIT FROM TRIALS, HOW TO OVERCOME TEMPTATIONS, AND HOW TO OBTAIN WISDOM ALSO DEFINED AS TRUTH.**

JAMES' PURPOSE IN WRITING HIS LETTER IS SO PEOPLE COULD KNOW HOW TO LIVE AS AN ACTIVE AND VITAL LIFE OF A DISCIPLE. **IT IS NOT ENOUGH TO BELIEVE, WE MUST DO!!!** AS JAMES POINTS OUT IN VERSES 22 *“But be doers of the Word [obey the message], and not merely listeners to it, betraying yourselves [into deception by reasoning contrary to the Truth]”* TO PUT IT ANOTHER WAY, IT GOES IN ONE EAR AND OUT THE OTHER!

**IF WE STUDY THE PRACTICAL ADVICE GIVEN TO US BY JAMES AND USE IT IN OUR DAILY LIVES THEN WE WILL MAKE A DIFFERENCE** SOMEWHERE, SOMETIME IN ANOTHER'S LIFE, AND ISN'T THAT WHY WE ARE HERE?

THE OPENING VERSES TODAY MAKE A CLEAR AND PRACTICAL STATEMENT AND KEY TO THE ADVICE THAT FOLLOWS. IN VERSE 17 *WE ARE TOLD THAT EVERY GOOD THING IS FROM ABOVE, FROM A GOD THAT DOES NOT CHANGE.* DAVID, IN THE PSALMS, CONSTANTLY WROTE OF *GOD'S FAITHFULNESS TO US.*

WHEN WE RECOGNIZE THE FACT THAT **GOD IS GOOD AND ONLY DESIRES THE BEST FOR US**, THEN AND ONLY THEN **CAN WE VIEW THE TRUTH OF SCRIPTURES** AS GIVING US FREEDOM TO LIVE, NOT A BOOK OF RULES TO

RUIN OUR LIVES. WE CAN GET PRETTY BASIC HERE, THE TEN COMMANDMENTS. *HOW MANY LIVES HAVE BEEN RUINED OR PEOPLE AFFECTED BY THOSE WHO BREAK THE COMMANDMENTS?*

THE SAD STORY IN RECENT HEADLINES OF THE TWO REPORTERS KILLED, THE NEVER ENDING STORIES OF TEACHERS AND SEXUAL ENCOUNTERS WITH STUDENTS OR THE DESIRE BY ONE TO WANT WHAT OTHERS HAVE, WHICH THE BIBLE CALLS "COVETING". THESE SAD EVENTS ARE ALL THE RESULT OF BREAKING COMMANDMENTS GIVEN TO US BY GOD FOR NOT ONLY OUR BENEFIT BUT OTHERS.

IN THE METHODIST TRADITION WESLEY'S THREE SIMPLE RULES OF **DO GOOD, DO NO HARM, AND OBEY GOD'S RULES** WOULD MAKE FOR A BETTER WORLD IF FOLLOWED. IF WE DON'T VIEW **SCRIPTURE AS THE TRUTH** THAT IS IN IT WE WILL NEVER SEE LET ALONE LIVE THAT WAY. I HAVE SAID BEFORE THAT **RELIGION IS NOT ABOUT RULES, IT IS ABOUT RELATIONSHIPS, AND THAT IS REALLY ALL THE SCRIPTURES ARE ABOUT.** GOD KNEW BEING IN RELATIONSHIP WITH OTHERS ISN'T EASY, BUT HE REMAINS IN RELATIONSHIP WITH US!

YOU CAN ARGUE THEOLOGY ALL DAY AND ALL NIGHT, BUT THAT IS NOT WHAT IT IS ABOUT. **GOD DESIRES A RELATIONSHIP WITH HIS CHILDREN, SO MUCH SO THAT HE GAVE UP HIS ONLY SON TO MAKE THAT RELATIONSHIP RIGHT.** AS DISCIPLES OF JESUS, WE ARE **TO TAKE THOSE TRUTHS AND LIVE OUT OUR LIVES IN RELATIONSHIPS WITH OTHERS.** WE HEAR SO MUCH TALK ABOUT DOING THE RIGHT THING, BUT HOW MUCH DO WE ACTUALLY SEE? THIS BOOK, **THE BIBLE HAS THE TRUTH AS TO HOW WE ARE TO LIVE OUR LIVES, BUT TOO MANY OF US HAVE NOT SHOWN IT BY THE WAY WE LIVE.**

*IF WE CANNOT SHOW IT HERE ON SUNDAY MORNING I DOUBT WE WILL SHOW IT OUR THERE! A REASON GIVEN BY PEOPLE FOR NOT RETURNING AFTER VISITING A CHURCH IS "NOT FRIENDLY MEMBERS". WHEN I SEE A VISITOR OR A FAMILY SITTING BY THEMSELVES I ASK "HOW WOULD I FEEL?" I HAVE ASKED THIS BEFORE, THIS IS A SMALL CHURCH, IS THERE ANYONE I DON'T KNOW BY NAME, IF NOT WHY NOT?*

*I KNOW SUNDAY MAY BE THE ONLY TIME YOU SEE SOMEONE, BUT IF YOU SEE SOMEONE SITTING ALONE AT A TABLE OR SEE SOMEONE YOU DO NOT KNOW OR DON'T KNOW THEIR NAME, WE ARE TO GET UP, GO OVER AND TALK TO THAT PERSON OR FAMILY AND HAVE THEM SENSE OUR "COMMUNITY". EVERYONE THAT COMES IN OUR DOOR SHOULD SENSE THEY ARE IN THE FAMILY OF GOD THAT GOES BY THE NAME OF CENTENNIAL.*

BACK TO JAMES, I WAS SAYING THAT THE **SCRIPTURE CONTAINS TRUTH, AND THEREFORE, IS A STANDARD FOR US TO FOLLOW.** YET, WITH FREE WILL WE CAN CHOSE NOT TO FOLLOW THE TRUTH OF SCRIPTURE. WHEN WE DON'T FOLLOW A BIBLICAL STANDARD THEN WHAT DO WE FOLLOW? BY WHAT DO WE LIVE? ONE WE CAN FOLLOW IS **THE CULTURE**, BECAUSE "EVERYONE IS DOING IT". WE CAN **FOLLOW TRADITION**, BECAUSE "WE'VE ALWAYS DONE IT", OR **FOLLOW REASON**, BECAUSE "IT SEEMED LOGICAL" AND THE WORST OF THEM ALL – **EMOTION**, BECAUSE "IT JUST FELT RIGHT". IN 2 TIMOTHY 3:16 *"All Scripture is inspired by God and is useful to teach us what is true and to make us realize what is wrong in our lives. It corrects us when we are wrong and teaches us to do what is right."*

**WHEN WE BELIEVE, IN NOT JUST OUR MINDS, BUT OUR HEARTS THAT THOSE WORDS ARE TRUE, THEN WHEN TRIALS AND TEMPTATIONS COME OUR WAY, AS THEY MOST CERTAINLY WILL, WE CAN MAKE IT THROUGH AND BE STRONGER ON THE OTHER END.**

I REMEMBER LONG AGO RUNNING TRACK AND FINALLY BREAKING A CERTAIN TIME BARRIER AFTER MUCH HARD WORK AND EFFORT. IT IS THAT WAY IN OUR SPIRITUAL JOURNEY TOO. WHEN WE FINALLY PUSH THROUGH THE CIRCUMSTANCES OR OVERCOME THE TEMPTATIONS THERE IS A QUIET JOY WITHIN.

THERE IS A PROMISE IN I CORINTHIANS 10:13 *“The temptations in your life are no different from what others experience. And God is faithful. He will not allow the temptation to be more than you can stand. When you are tempted, He will show you a way out so that you can endure.”*

LOOKING AT VERSE 19 OF JAMES, THERE IS SOME VERY PRACTICAL ADVICE I DOUBT ANYONE HERE OR IN BUSINESS CAN ARGUE WITH **“Let everyone be quick to hear, slow to speak and slow to anger”** THERE HAVE BEEN NUMEROUS BOOKS WRITTEN IN THE FIELD OF EFFECTIVE COMMUNICATION, BUT RIGHT HERE IN THIS VERSE ARE THREE SUGGESTIONS FOR EFFECTIVE COMMUNICATION THAT CAN BE HELPFUL IN ANY RELATIONSHIP WE HAVE.

Studies indicate that our listening skill suffers as we get older. "if we define the good listener as one giving full attention to the speaker, first-grade children are the best listeners of all." An experiment conducted with the cooperation of teachers from first grade - high school. Each teacher involved was asked to interrupt classes & suddenly ask pupils "what were you thinking about?" or "what was I talking about?" The answers of first & second graders showed that more than 90% were listening. Percentages dropped in higher grades. In junior high school classes, only 44 % of the students were listening. In high school classes, the average dropped to 28%.

IF WE ARE QUICK TO HEAR, WHICH MEANS WE ARE LISTENING THEN WE HAVE TO THINK ON IT. IF WE HAVE HEARD WHAT WAS SAID AND NOT WHAT WE THINK WAS SAID, THEN THE CHANCE OF MISUNDERSTANDING GOES WAY DOWN AND WE WILL BE SLOW TO ANGER AND SLOW TO SPEAK. THE SCRIPTURE IS FULL OF TRUTH THAT WE CAN USE IN OUR DAILY LIVING WITH POSITIVE RESULTS.

*HOWEVER, THE IMPORTANT THING IS SOMETHING JAMES STATES IN VERSES 22 AND 23 WHEN HE WRITES OF NOT JUST BEING A HEARER OF THE WORD BUT A DOER, JUST AS HEARER WE ARE JUST FOOLING OURSELVES. WHEN WE LOOK IN THE MIRROR AND SAY “I’M NOT AS BAD AS SO AND SO” OR “I’M BETTER THAN SO AND SO” WHOSE STANDARDS ARE WE USING?*

**WE CAN COME TO CHURCH EVERY SUNDAY AND SING HYMNS, LISTEN TO THE READINGS, AND LISTEN TO THE SERMON, BUT IF WE DON’T GO OUT AND USE THE IDEAS IN THE HYMNS OR THE READINGS OR THE SERMON THEN WE MIGHT AS WELL NEVER HAD SUNG IT OR HEARD IT IN THE FIRST PLACE.** LATER IN VERSES 26 JAMES SAYS IN PART *“NOT BECOMING A FORGETFUL HEARER, BUT AN EFFECTIVE DOER IS BLESSED IN WHAT THEY DO”*

I WANT TO DRAW YOUR ATTENTION TO THE LAST VERSE OF TODAY’S READING, VERSES 27 *“Religion that God our Father accepts as pure and faultless is this: to look after fatherless and widows in their distress and to keep oneself from being polluted by the world.”* WHEN WAS THE LAST TIME YOU VISITED SUCH A PERSON? WE HAVE THEM IN NURSING HOMES, RETIREMENT HOUSING AND IN HOMES. **JAMES IS TELLING US THAT THIS IS REAL RELIGION – RELATIONSHIPS.**

WE HAVE THE **TRUTH** IN SCRIPTURE IF WE TAKE THE TIME TO READ IT AND LIVE IT. WE KNOW OF THE PROMISES THAT WHEN **TRIALS** AND **TEMPTATIONS** COME GOD WILL BE THERE FOR YOU AND ME. PRAY WE MAY ALL BE DOERS TO **“MAKE CHRIST KNOWN IN OUR COMMUNITY”**. AMEN.