

Bible Reading Plan

WEEK OF JANUARY 10, 2021

WEEKLY READING: JOHN 20-21; JAMES 1-3

PASSAGES REFERENCED: JAMES 1:19-25

My dear brothers and sisters, take note of this: Everyone should be quick to listen, slow to speak and slow to become angry. – James 1:19

I'm just going to assume you agree with me when I say, "that is one challenging verse." I need to pretend you're with me to make myself feel better. And I'm an introverted, internal processor. I can't imagine what it's like for you extroverted, external processors. And while I might feel I have the quick to listen, slow to speak aspect down because of my introverted ways, it's the slow to become angry part that trips me up. But what about you? Which one(s) do you struggle with?

I'm not sure when I first heard, "you have two ears and one mouth; use them accordingly," but it's something that often plays through my mind when I want to react to things people are saying or doing. It's always a good reminder to pause and think about what we really want to say. We can ask ourselves if what we're considering saying is kind, necessary, or true. And we can ask ourselves what it will add to or subtract from the conversation.

And now that third part about being slow to become angry. I may be able to control actually saying something, but that doesn't mean I'm really doing much to stop myself from having those strong reactions in the first place. What about you? Why do you think we have such strong (negative) responses to people's words and actions? And what can and should we do about it? Let's take a look at the next few verses to see if they offer help:

¹⁹My dear brothers and sisters, take note of this: Everyone should be quick to listen, slow to speak and slow to become angry, ²⁰because human anger does not produce the righteousness that God desires. ²¹Therefore, get rid of all moral filth and the evil that is so prevalent and humbly accept the word planted in you, which can save you.

²²Do not merely listen to the word, and so deceive yourselves. Do what it says. ²³Anyone who listens to the word but does not do what it says is like someone who looks at his face in a mirror ²⁴and, after looking at himself, goes away and immediately forgets what he looks like. ²⁵But whoever looks intently into the perfect law that gives freedom, and continues in it—not forgetting what they have heard, but doing it—they will be blessed in what they do. (James 1:19-25)

So when we're struggling to be quick to listen, slow to speak, and slow to become angry, we need to go to scripture. We need to get in God's Word and then let it get into us. We need not just to be hearers but doers of the Word. And we need to remember that this is a lifelong process of surrendering to God's Spirit and letting Him work in and through us. So, let's work towards surrendering, letting God transform us from the inside out, and becoming people who truly are quick to listen, slow to speak, and slow to become angry.

– Sarah Neel