

James 1:19-21: Quick to Listen, Slow to Anger Now. *“This you know, my beloved brethren. But everyone must be quick to hear, slow to speak and slow to anger; for the anger of man does not achieve the righteousness of God. Therefore, putting aside all filthiness and all that remains of wickedness, in humility receive the word implanted, which is able to save your souls.”*

There is an old saying that God gave a person two ears and one mouth. Therefore, a person should listen twice as much as he speaks. James words in verse 19 carries that same thought. It is surprising that very few people are good listeners. Too often, a person will listen to just enough to decide what the other person is going to say, and then either interrupts or does not pay careful attention to what else is being said; because he assumes that he already “knows” what the other person is going to say.

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In another example, two people may be having a mild disagreement. One will listen to just enough to give him “ammunition”, and then he comes out with a response without fully listening to what the person had to say. Then the other person does the same thing! Is there any wonder that miscommunication occurs so often?



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Careful listening is a skill that must be developed. Good listening requires a person to pay attention to what is being said and WAITING until the person is done. A person paying attention to a cell phone, a text message while “listening” to another person is not good listening. A good listener cares about what the other person has to say.

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Careless listening can lead to misunderstandings, arguments, and even anger. But James warned that a person must be slow to anger. There are times where anger may be appropriate, but that should be the exception and not the rule. “Slow to anger” means that a person listens, considers, and only then responds. A hasty comment rarely leads to good results.

James wrote in verse 20, “for the anger of man does not achieve the righteousness of God.” Passage after passage describes and commands that Christians are to love one another. Will there be disagreements among brethren? Of course there will be disagreements! Paul and Barnabas disagreed upon taking John Mark with them on their second journey.

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Luke recorded in [Acts 15:39-40](#) “And there occurred such a sharp disagreement that they separated from one another, and Barnabas took Mark with him and sailed away to Cyprus. But Paul chose Silas and left, being committed by the brethren to the grace of the Lord.” Their disagreement did not prevent them from serving the Lord, and over time the disagreement was resolved.

But if a disagreement results in anger between two Christians, and it is not resolved, then the result can go beyond a simple disagreement into sin! James said that the anger of man does not achieve righteousness. Anger based on worldly pride, arrogance, or ambition will not further the cause of Christ and the Father.

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In verse 21 James wrote, “Therefore, putting aside all filthiness and all that remains of wickedness, in humility receive the word implanted, which is able to save your souls.” The worldly nature, the old man of sin, will not disappear easily. The worldly nature will fight and struggle to retain the dominance. And, when a Christian may think that the world nature is finally gone, it can suddenly reappear.



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Growing and maturing as a Christian takes WORK. It is not easy, and sometimes it can be quite painful. But that nature MUST BE put aside. In [Matthew 6:24](#), Jesus said that a person cannot serve two masters. The focus must change from the world to the Lord. There can be no other way.

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Instead, a Christian must “put aside” the worldly and receive the word with humility (Some translations use the word “meekness”). Why humility? The answer is simple. God has given every person the information needed to be able to achieve salvation. James wrote that it is able to save your souls! It is a precious gift that was freely given to people that did not, and do not, deserve it!

Not only that, but James described the it as “the word implanted”. The “word implanted” sounds very much like the parable told of the sower of the seed. In the parable, the seed is the Word of God. The Word, the seed leading to life, has been sown.

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But now, what does the person do with that seed?

Will it fall on the road and be carried away?

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Will it fall on rocky soil, sprout quickly, but then wither and die?

Will it fall in soil, but the cares and worries of the world choke it out and it dies?

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Or will the seed, the Word of God, fall on good soil?

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Jesus said, “15 But the seed in the good soil, these are the ones who have heard the word in an honest and good heart, and hold it fast, and bear fruit with [perseverance](#).”

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