"FAITH WITH BOOTS ON"
Big Idea . . . Part 4: Rightly Responding to God's Word
(James 1:19-27)

INTRO: Reviewing . . . Anyone own more than one NT/Bible? On average Christians own four. I own 30! In America, Bibles are everywhere. Can find in bookstores, grocery stores, motels, etc. Every year, Bible still outsells every other best seller. Annually some 500mm are published in 18,000 different languages. Yet, many still miss its blessings of comfort, joy, hope, wisdom and power. Why? Ownership does NOT equal Discipleship. We must develop the skill of rightly responding to it if going to mature as a Christian. James, Mr. Practical, states three responsibilities we have to rightly respond to God's Word. I MUST . . .

I. RECEIVE GOD'S WORD (vv. 19-21)

A. (v. 21) *EXPLAIN* "Receive with meekness the implanted word, which is able to save your souls" (cp. v. 18). *Accept* or receive is word for hospitality, esp. in the welcoming of strangers. James says to make the seed of God's Word at home. Why can you plant same seed and get different crops? One soil is prepared, other is not. Some hearts are ready to accept, some are not (Mk. 4:3-8, 13-20).

B. *ESSENTIALS* to receiving (preparing the soil):

1. (19a) LISTENING EAR – must give Word my attention and listen to it even before I speak it (3:1). Having two ears and one mouth says I must listen twice as much. There should be an eagerness to listen – a hunger and desire to hear. We speak too much (Zip It!)
2. (19b) RECEPTIVE SPIRIT – God's Word must be received with a calm spirit, not an angry one. Should be no hostility or resentment when it confronts me – such a response will never produce the righteousness God desires. Calmness increases receptivity. Arrive on Sunday upset and distracted?
3. (21a) CLEAN HEART – Before seed can be planted, need to do a little weeding. "Filth" in Greek Word for "ear wax." Sin blocks hearing and receiving. Confession is answer.
4. (21b) HUMBLE ATTITUDE – Humbly receive God's Word means to be yielded, submissive, teachable, open to change. Opposite of anger.

SUMMARY: If I am to receive (welcome-make at home) God's Word, I must have a listening ear, receptive spirit, clean heart, humble attitude. But, receiving is not enough.

II. REFLECT ON GOD'S WORD (vv. 23-25) – James illustrates God's Word using a mirror. God's Word is like a mirror, whose purpose is to evaluate. God's Word does on the inside what a mirror does to our outside. God's Word is a mirror that reflects our lives. James gives us three practical ways to reflect on God's Word:

A. *READ* IT (v. 25 "looks intently into the perfect law") – God's Word must be read. "Looks" means to stoop down and gaze into research or investigate. Two ways to look at a mirror: casual glance (v. 23) or careful gaze. Plans?

B. *REPEAT* IT (v. 25 "and continues to do this") – Go over and over it. Review it again and again – called "meditation." If you know how to worry, you can meditate. Negative ideas thought about over and over is worry. Review it continually (Joshua 1:8; Isa. 28:10; Psa. 119:97; John 8:31-32). Be careful not to spend more time reading or watching what you don't believe than something you do believe! Repeated Bible reading is key – same portion same Bible for days.

C. *REMEMBER* IT (v. 25 "not forgetting what he has heard") – learn to memorize. Too old? Bad memory? We remember what's important to us? Take notes, write things down, watch video. "Blessed."

III. REPRODUCE GOD'S WORD (vv. 22, 25c) – Obedient reproduction is the only right response to God's Word when read, received and reflected on. God wants us to do something with it – else we are deceiving ourselves. We must not just listen (audit). If not changed, then deceived. Mirror is no good if we don't *do* something about what it shows. Awards for reading and memorizing – why not for doing? James gives three examples of practicing it. "Religion" – public worship. He comes back to each later in the book. These three put boots on your faith:

A. A *CONTROLLED MOUTH* (v. 26) – One test of being a doer of the Word is "do you control your words?" Lie, gossip, complain, criticize, slander, . . . ? Watch out for social media!

B. A *CARING HEART* (v. 27a) – "Do you care about the needy and helpless?" Talking about service! Meet people's needs.

C. A *CLEAN LIFE* (v. 27b) – Spiritual integrity. "Are you able to live in this sin-stained world without compromise?" Live pure? Rom. 12:1-2.

SUMMARY, THREE APPLICATIONS: Speech, Service, & Separation.

CONC: – This is how to rightly respond to God's Word: Receive it, reflect on it, and reproduce it. An essential skill to be developed by every believer. Any RESULTS? *Freedom* is experienced and *Blessings* are enjoyed (v. 25). Jesus said in John 8:32 and 13:17 . . .

ILLUS: A. W. Tozer wrote . . .