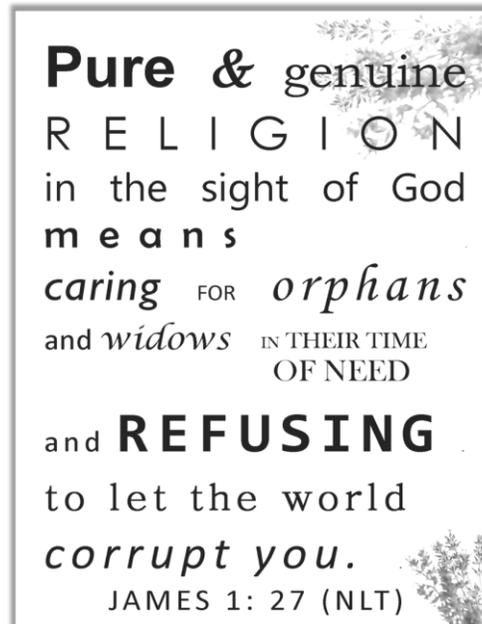


POWERFUL WORDS
FAITH AND HEALTH SUNDAY



Scripture:

Deuteronomy 4:1-2, 6-9

¹So now, Israel, give heed to the statutes and ordinances that I am teaching you to observe, so that you may live to enter and occupy the land that the LORD, the God of your ancestors, is giving you. ²You must neither add anything to what I command you nor take away anything from it, but keep the commandments of the LORD your God with which I am charging you.

⁶You must observe them diligently, for this will show your wisdom and discernment to the peoples, who, when they hear all these statutes, will say, “Surely this great nation is a wise and discerning people!” ⁷For what other great nation has a god so near to it as the LORD our God is whenever we call to him? ⁸And what other great nation has statutes and ordinances as just as this entire law that I am setting before you today?

⁹But take care and watch yourselves closely, so as neither to forget the things that your eyes have seen nor to let them slip from your mind all the days of your life; make them known to your children and your children’s children—

James 1:17-27

¹⁷Every generous act of giving, with every perfect gift, is from above, coming down from the Father of lights, with whom there is no variation or shadow due to change. ¹⁸In fulfillment of his own purpose he gave us birth by the word of truth, so that we would become a kind of first fruits of his creatures.

¹⁹You must understand this, my beloved: let everyone be quick to listen, slow to speak, slow to anger; ^{20c}for your anger does not produce God's righteousness. ²¹Therefore rid yourselves of all sordidness and rank growth of wickedness, and welcome with meekness the implanted word that has the power to save your souls.

²²But be doers of the word, and not merely hearers who deceive themselves. ²³For if any are hearers of the word and not doers, they are like those who look at themselves in a mirror; ^{24f}for they look at themselves and, on going away, immediately forget what they were like. ²⁵But those who look into the perfect law, the law of liberty, and persevere, being not hearers who forget but doers who act—they will be blessed in their doing.

²⁶If any think they are religious, and do not bridle their tongues but deceive their hearts, their religion is worthless. ²⁷Religion that is pure and undefiled before God, the Father, is this: to care for orphans and widows in their distress, and to keep oneself unstained by the world.

This is the Powerful Word of the Lord! Thanks be to God!



POWERFUL WORDS

Wow! What do you think when you hear these words? Each verse is a sermon in itself, very powerful and very important to pay attention to, don't you agree?

I am going to read this passage again as we do in Lectio Divina. (Latin for Divine Reading, St. Ignatius origin.) Close your eyes and listen to the words.

Pay attention to what jumps out or some say listen to what sparkles for you. Consider how God may be speaking to you through these words that have the potential to connect your faith to the health of your soul.

Close your eyes and listen again carefully. (James was read again.)

Did anything jump out, any word or phrase sparkle for you that has some meaning in your life today? Consider the power in these words from James.

Bible scholars believe the author of this book is James, the brother of Jesus. They estimate it was written about seventy years after Christ's birth.

James basically states that we must show our faith in our daily lives or our faith isn't real.

Martin Luther and John Calvin thought James put too much emphasis on deeds because God's grace inspires our faith as Paul taught in Ephesians 2:8: "For by grace you have been saved through faith. And this is not your own doing; it is the gift of God."

TOP TEN

Yet in our action oriented culture here in the United States, we gravitate towards action and we love lists that help us to improve ourselves. We are a self-help oriented society. The powerful words of James are appealing to us because we like guides and lists of ways to be better. Many lists on the internet or in articles of magazines use the number ten like David Letterman's top ten.

I decided to Google lists of "Ten Ways" to see what the top ten were. The lists that were at the top show us what is important in American culture:

Ten ways to be happier.

Ten ways to make more money without working.

Ten ways to catch a liar.

Ten ways to live healthier and save money while doing it!

Ten ways to live a more fulfilling life.

Ten ways to soothe a sore throat.

Ten ways to be more confident.
Ten ways to annoy people.
Ten ways to lose weight.
Ten ways to control your blood pressure.

Looking at these lists from an anthropological perspective, our culture has two main priorities: Health and Wealth. Do you think that is a fair assessment?

Back in the days of Jesus and James, the priorities in that culture were health and wealth, too. We strive for the same things two-thousand years later.

TOP TEN WAYS TO LIVE AS FAITHFUL CHRIST FOLLOWERS

If we take the Bible seriously as a guide book for healthy living, which it is, then let's see how our passage from James today breaks down into the Top ten ways to live as faithful Christ followers: (Notice how James generally addresses health and wealth!)

- #1 Be generous in your giving, acknowledging that everything you have comes from God.
- #2 Think of yourself as one of the first fruits of God. That means you are a cherished beloved child of God.
- #3 Be quick to listen.
- #4 Be slow to speak, and slow to anger, for your anger does not produce God's righteousness.
- #5 Rid yourselves of all sordidness and rank wickedness.
- #6 Welcome with meekness the implanted Word of God that has the power to save your souls.
- #7 Be doers of the word, and not merely hearers; you will be blessed.
- #8 Bridle your tongue.
- #9 Care for orphans and widows.

#10 Keep yourself unstained (or uncorrupted) by the world.

If you follow these Top Ten Ways consistently, I guarantee your life will be healthier and happier.

FAITH AND HEALTH SUNDAY

Today we are highlighting our Roses' Health Ministry with this Faith and Health Sunday.

Yet every Sunday is Faith and Health Sunday. When you are worshipping God in a supportive community and developing your faith through prayer and learning more about your relationship with God, then your body, mind, and spirit are all enhanced.

Consider a few more of the scriptures in the Bible that instruct about the faith and health connection. I am using the New Living Translation:

1st Timothy 4 says: "Spend your time and energy in training yourself for spiritual fitness. Physical exercise has some value, but spiritual exercise is much more important for it promises a reward in both this life and the next. This is true and everyone should accept it." 1 Timothy 4:7-9 (NLT)

Proverbs 14 says: "A peaceful heart leads to a healthy body; jealousy is like cancer in the bones." Proverbs 14:30 (NLT)

Proverbs 3 says: "Don't be impressed with your own wisdom. Instead, fear the Lord and turn away from evil. Then you will have healing for your body and strength for your bones." Proverbs 3:7-8 (NLT)

Then Jesus said, "Come to me, all of you who are weary and carry heavy burdens, and I will give you rest. Take my yoke upon you. Let me teach you, because I am humble

and gentle at heart, and you will find rest for your souls.” Matthew 11:28-29 (NLT)

(A video was shown.)

Faith and health connections are now being acknowledged by the most renowned health sciences organizations in the world. The National Institutes of Health, Mayo Clinic, the World Health Organization, and Duke University Medical School all clearly promote the development of faith practices including regularly attending worship to improve overall health and wellbeing.

Benediction: Remember the powerful words in James’ Top Ten ways to demonstrate your faith in Jesus. When you do what you have heard, your health will benefit and so will your soul.

And may the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, the love of God and the fellowship of the Holy Spirit be with us now and forever more. Amen

They quote studies that show, for example, prayer-like meditation decreases stress and enhances resilience. The social support network inherent in a church community has been scientifically proven to help people have more fulfilling lives with a meaningful sense of purpose. One of Duke’s recent studies found that when a person becomes ill, they are likely to heal faster if they are part of a supportive faith community.

Due to all the positive health connections to faith, Duke University developed a new research center for Spirituality, Theology and Health.



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It is exciting to see the scientific community acknowledge these connections that Jesus and James and many others in the Bible acknowledged thousands of years ago.