

## What Are We Famous For?

**“My dear brothers and sisters, take note of this: ... produce the righteousness that God desires.” James 1:19-20 (TNIV)**

The end goal: produce the righteousness that God desires. (See Matt 5:10)

The problem: “Christianity has an image crisis... We have become famous for what we oppose, rather than who we are for... We are known for having an us-versus-them mentality... Christianity, outsiders say, is no longer in pure form, and so they reject it. It has gotten off track and is not what Christ intended.” - “Unchristian” by Kinnaman & Lyons

**“Religion that God our Father accepts as pure and faultless is this: to look after orphans and widows in their distress and to keep oneself from being polluted by the world.” James 1:27 (TNIV)**

Pure [kathara] = integrity; no deceit; no hypocrisy. (See Matt. 5:8)

Faultless [amiantos] = undefiled, unstained. (See 1Peter 1:4; Heb. 7:26, 13:4)

Distress [thlibo] = affliction, suffering, anguish, oppression, discomfort, wounded.  
= pressed, squashed, narrowed (See Matt. 7:14)

“What is the Christian faith about? Going to church every Sunday, saying grace before meals, and avoiding sin – or does God expect more? What kind of Gospel have we embraced? The whole Gospel or one with a hole in it? The good news of the Gospel was a staggering vision that Christ had for the world, a social revolution where his followers would go into the world like salt and light... Belief is not enough. Worship is not enough. Personal morality is not enough. And Christian community is not enough. God has always demanded more. When we committed ourselves to following Christ, we also committed to living our lives in such a way that a watching world would catch a glimpse of God’s character – His love, justice, and mercy – through our words, actions, and behavior... Living out our faith privately was never meant to be an option.” - “The Hole in our Gospel” by Richard Stearns

Pure – stand with the distressed and offer them Biblical hope.

Undefiled – live in the world with integrity, intelligence and civility.

**“Those who consider themselves religious and yet do not keep a tight rein on their tongues deceive themselves, and their religion is worthless.” James 1:26 (TNIV)**

Anything other than pure and undefiled is worthless. This is the standard of Christ not convenience! So we must move from profession(als) to practice:

Birthed by the Word.

Matured through words, actions, and behavior

1. Lay aside the quick answers, easy solutions, prideful positions and anger

**“Everyone should be quick to listen, slow to speak and slow to become angry, because our anger does not produce the righteousness that God desires.” James 1:19-20 (TNIV) (See also 1John 3:18)**

2. Get rid of the filthy hands and stained heart

**“Therefore, 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.” James 1:21 (TNIV) (See also Psalm 24:3-4; Zechariah 3:3-5)**

3. Stop the self-deception and superficial treatment of God and his Word.

**“Do not merely listen to the word, and so deceive yourselves. Do what it says. Those who listen to the word but do not do what it says are like people who look at their faces in a mirror and, after looking at themselves, go away and immediately forget what they look like.” James 1:22-24 (TNIV) (See also Psalm 119:9-16, 32. Acts 17:11)**

Look intently into God’s perfect law:

**“But those who look intently into the perfect law that gives freedom and continue in it—not forgetting what they have heard but doing it—they will be blessed in what they do.” James 1:25 (TNIV) (See John 8:6, 8; Luke 24:12; John 20:5)**

**“Be perfect, as your heavenly Father is perfect.” Matthew 5:48 (TNIV)**

### Small Group & Personal Reflection Questions:

1. There are 14 scripture passages given in the notes in addition to James. Take the time to read them on your own. As you read them, jot down notes of how they tie into the message of James 1:19-27. (If you are using this in small group – split them up and do the exercise then share back together what you noted).
2. Read the quotes from “Unchristian” and “The Hole in our Gospel”. How are they related and what parts are most challenging to you?
3. In verse 27, we spent time on the word “distress” used to describe orphans and widows. Using the definition discussed, who are other people you have seen or developed a heart for who are distressed? What have you done or considered doing to “look after” them?
4. Would you say that you struggle more with being pure or undefiled?
5. Which of the 3 areas discussed in verses 19-24 do you struggle with most?
6. What does it mean to you to “look intently into God’s perfect law”? Is there anything specific you could do that you are not doing now?