



Actions Speak Louder Than Words – Sometimes

Bible Study

[**Please provide:** Bibles and copies of the Bible study for attendees.]

This is a study on some of our attitudes, actions, words, and reactions examining some verses from the book of James. We will particularly focus on our listening skills, our chosen words, and our envious and selfish attitude. Think about Job; he didn't blame God. At times he felt a little worry for himself, but he never stopped trusting God. What does God say in the Bible and what does He expect us to do and say?

Think about this question: do you need an attitude adjustment? If you answered no, you're probably not being honest with yourself. I don't think any one of us doesn't need an attitude adjustment in one area or another.

What is your favorite attitude expression? Do you raise your eyebrow, sigh, fold your arms, put hands on hips, purse your lips, or glare? Or what about your posture – do you slouch when down or stand very erect when you think you are right? Do you slink away or stomp? These are just a few outward “adornments” that give away our inner attitudes. Now let's take a Biblical look at three attitudes.

Listening or Not:

When someone is speaking to you, whether it is family, friend, or acquaintance, what are you doing? Are you also texting? Checking Facebook? Are you half-listening, but thinking about what you will say next or the rest of your schedule for the day? Do you constantly interrupt?

Sometimes we don't mean to, but we can come across as uncaring, insensitive, or even appear “holier than thou” by the attitude we project when we're supposed to be listening.

Do you know any people who fit those descriptions? Might one be yourself? That's the hard part, admitting to ourselves our own shortcomings. Our friends love us and usually put up with our little quirks, but how do we come across to people we first meet?

Read James 1:19-20. This also applies to sermons and Bible studies.

(Find a partner with which to work.) **Read** James 1:22-25.

- Are you blessed by being a good listener? Be honest – do you think you fall into any of the above categories?
- How can you (and that means all of us) change to be a better listener?

(End working with your partner.)

Our Tongue:

Such a small part of our anatomy, but it can do so much! Unfortunately, it's not all good. A quick tongue and an ugly attitude can take their toll.

Our tongue speaks what our physical demeanor sometimes displays. Think about it. How often are either the quick tongue or the attitude stance really necessary, especially if it causes someone else hurt?

We have all done it countless times to family, friends, and even strangers – speak harshly without thinking. What kind of impression of Christians does that give unbelievers? I shudder to think. Most would probably say, “If that’s what it is like to be a Christian, I don’t want to be one.”

Read James 1:26-27.

- What do you think the last phrase of verse 27 means?
- What does it mean to you personally to keep one’s self from being polluted by the world?

Read James 3:1. *Not many of you should presume to be teachers, my brothers, because you know that we who teach will be judged more strictly.* Then the beginning of verse 2 says, *We all stumble in many ways.* Are you a teacher either by profession or in Sunday school? Think about it. We are examples to many, whether it be good or bad.

James really makes us look at our attitudes and actions. Maybe he had some of the same problems we have.

Read James 3:3-12. Verses 3 and 4 compare how small pieces of equipment control the direction of a horse or boat. The same is true for the steering of a car or an airplane.

- How does our tongue control our direction?

Verse 10 says, *Out of the same mouth come praise and cursing ... this should not be.*

- What might help us control our tongue?

Envy, Selfish Ambition, and Humility:

These three are definitely not equal. We need to get rid of the first two to find the third.

Read James 3:13-18. Are all of our deeds done in humility? It would be nice if we could say yes, but we often have selfish motives. If we do act out of humility, that is true wisdom, a godly attitude, and definitely not a selfish attitude.

Verses 14 and 15 really cut deep. We act nice, look nice, and even smell nice on the outside, but what is on the inside? What does God see? Do you harbor bitter envy and selfish ambition in your heart? Do not boast about it or deny the truth. Give it to God to trash.

(Find your partner again.)

- When asked to serve where there is a lot of visible exposure, do you say yes out of selfishness or to give glory to God?
- When you are quick to say no, why is it? Are you afraid to trust God? When He wants us to do something, He always equips and enables us.
- How about when you are asked to be “behind the scenes”? What is your reaction? Do you grumble to yourself and/or others? Do you envy those in the limelight?
- What should your reaction be?
- When asked to serve in any capacity, what should be the first thing you do?

Don't be too quick to answer. Tell the person asking that you need time to find out if that is what God wants you to do. Many times the jobs we want least are the jobs where God put us to grow.

Read verses 17 and 18 out loud. The wisdom spoken of here will change our attitude. Remember, it comes from God, but we must first be willing to submit.
(End working with your partner.)

Closing:

Are you aware of Christ's presence in your life? When you are, you can draw from His reserve to become truly a gentlewoman of God. Jesus, our Lord and Savior, will be at work in you. Go in peace, serve the Lord!

Prayer: Heavenly Father, we are all guilty of displaying wrong attitudes. After being made more aware of some of them, help us to call on You for the assistance we need to be reflections of Christ's love. Thank you for being so patient with us. In Christ's name we pray. Amen.

Scripture references are from the NIV.

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