A PUBLIC RELIGION

With the cultural shift toward the privatization of religion, faith practices have become more and more inward focused. Children are told to silently accept Jesus into their heart; prayers of thanksgiving for a meal are said with a bowed head and unmoving lips; and some believers may even search for another way to answer the question, “What are you doing this weekend?” when their plans are filled with ministry and godly fellowship. Silent prayers of surrender are welcome, and even tactful conversations about spirituality are a good thing; the danger comes when small habits build up a mindset of, I don’t share this part of my life. It’s just private.

James, as a whole, is a practical book. Philosophy and abstract concepts are only touched on as a precursor for the explanation of a tangible expression in the Christian life. This life of surrender and following Jesus has consequences: real, in-your-face, pervasive consequences. If it doesn’t look as though it does, there’s something wrong on the implementation part. Living the Christian life shouldn’t just have internal consequences either. Spheres of influence should be dramatically impacted for good, constantly touched by the outpouring of a life of love for God. Such a life cannot be kept private; it naturally bears expression.
Write out James 1:19–27 from the Bible translation of your choice. If you’re pressed for time, write out James 1:22, 27. You may also rewrite the passage in your own words, or outline or mind-map the chapter.
Go back to your scribed text and study the passage.

**Circle** repeated words/ phrases/ideas

**Underline** words/phrases that are important and have meaning to you

Draw **Arrows** to connect words/ phrases to other associated or related words/phrases

What special insights do your marks seem overall to point to?

Memorize your favorite verse in James 1:19–27. Write it out multiple times to help memorization.

Make note of all the verbs in this passage. What pattern emerges?

Why are reactions necessary?
Could it be better sometimes to ignore certain things altogether?
Why or why not?

Read more at www.inversebible.org/jam03-3
After looking at your scribed and annotated text, what special insights do your marks seem to point to overall?

What questions emerge after studying this week's passage?
What parts are difficult?

What other principles and conclusions do you find?

Why do you think James chose the word religion for v. 26 and v. 27?

Read more at www.inversebible.org/jam03-4
What relationship do the following verses have with the primary passage?

Proverbs 15:1
Ephesians 4:26
Luke 11:28
Matthew 7:24–27
Matthew 5:16
Matthew 4:23
Luke 15 (especially verses 1, 2)

What other verses/promises come to mind in connection with James 1:19–27?

Review your memorized verse from James 1:19–27.
Where do you see Jesus in James 1:19–27?

What is Jesus saying to you through the main text?

Why do you think people felt threatened by Jesus’ proximity to the world, or to people they saw as sinners?

Prayer: How do you respond to seeing Jesus in this way?

Read more at www.inversebible.org/jam03-6
Review the memory verse. How does it apply to your life this week?

After this week’s study of the passage, what are you impressed with most personally?

What are impressions that can be applied socially and practically?

Read more inSight from the Spirit of Prophecy at www.inversebible.org/jam03-7
Share insights from this week’s memory verse and Bible study as well as any discoveries, observations, and questions with your Sabbath School class (or Bible study group). Consider these discussion questions with the rest of the group.

Should our religion be private? What about our spirituality? Does it matter? Why or why not?

Why does “the wrath of man” not produce the righteousness of God? Does that mean we should never get angry? Why or why not?

Why do you think James talks about bridling the tongue specifically when explaining a useless religion?

Give an example of a time you tried to deceive yourself about something.

Give an example of someone who exemplifies pure and undefiled religion.

What’s the difference between hearing and listening to truth?

Why does it require meekness to receive truth from God?

Why does “Just believe!” fall short of encompassing God’s will for us?