

JUST DO IT!

Scripture Reading: Read James 1

Many years ago, the Nike shoe company developed an advertising campaign around the slogan, "Just do it." It was remarkably successful and increased the market share of the company. While I'm sure whoever came up with the campaign probably was paid well for their services, they weren't the first to trademark the slogan. James, the author of the book that bears his name, had them beat by almost 2,000 years. Check out what he wrote in verse 22 of today's chapter reading: "*Do not merely listen to the word, and so deceive yourselves. Do what it says.*" For James, as well as for Nike, talking a good talk isn't good enough. It has to be translated into action.

When James wrote his letter "to the twelve tribes scattered among the nations," he was serving as leader of the church in Jerusalem. Many of the believers had been previously scattered as a result of the persecution instituted by Saul following the death of Stephen, the first martyr of the church (see Acts 8:1). Instead of having the benefit of gathering daily in the temple courts to be taught by the disciples and regularly joining together in each other's homes as they did in Jerusalem, these believers were forced to strike out on their own and, apparently, their fiery passion for the Lord was beginning to dim. Oh, they could still talk a good talk, but they weren't following through with action. Their faith had no feet to it. They were backsliding and falling in love with the world. They were trying to have it both ways and were living double-minded lives.

This deteriorating spiritual condition became known to James (along with other problems these believers were experiencing) and he wrote as one who still saw himself as their pastor at heart to challenge them to rekindle their passion for Christ. Doing the word and not just hearing it would require them to face their trials with joy and persevere in them (1:2-4, 12; 5:7-11), listen more and talk less (1:19, 26) and when they did speak to bless rather than curse (3:2-12), to lengthen a short fuse of anger and get rid of an immoral and compromising lifestyle (1:19-21, 27; 4:1-9), to love practically (1:27; 2:8) without favoritism (2:1-7, 9-11) or judging others (4:11-12), and to live humbly (4:10) without boasting (4:13-17).

This challenge speaks as clearly and loudly to a 21st century audience as it did to a 1st century church. We still face trials and a joyful attitude is required. We could all benefit from talking less and listening more, blessing others instead of cursing them, and loving people instead of judging them. Finally, many of us still struggle at times when it comes to our angry outbursts, prideful self-sufficiency, and temptations to compromise. The need to live our faith and not just hear it and talk it applies to all of us. In short, we all need to be reminded to "just do it!"

Action Step & Prayer Focus: Go back through the list above from James and compare it to your own lifestyle choices. Do you see areas where you have been a talker but not a walker when it comes to doing the Word? Write those areas down on a piece of paper and take them to the Lord in prayer today. It's time to stop making excuses and just do it!

Take-a-way: *Just do it! (through the power of the Holy Spirit ☺)*