

# What Kind of First Fruit Are We?



**James 1:19-21**

Let me just say publicly that I am so thankful that my son, Kory, and my daughter-in-law, Katie, have kids. Wow! What a blessing those kids are to me and Memish. I don't think that Crider, Finley, Garnet, and Evie Kate understand this principle yet, but they owe their existence to their parents. Without Kory and Katie deciding to have kids, there would not be a Crider, Finley, Garnet, and Evie Kate. In other words, those four kids, my grandkids, had nothing to do with their birth. They are blessed kids that their parents are Kory and Katie. I can't tell you how many times they have been over to our house and one of them will do something, especially Crider, and Celisa will look at me and say that's just like Kory. Every once in a while, he will do something and she look at me and say, "Don't say anything; he's just like you." Little Evie Kate, God bless her, she is just in that stage now where she's turning flip after flip, cartwheel after cartwheel, all through our house. Many times, when I see her do that and see that little grin, I can't help but believe that's probably what Katie did when she was a little girl too. It's so neat to see Kory and Katie trying to parent them, stepping into their lives with their word, with their example because

I believe it's dawning on Kory and Katie that those kids of theirs are actually a reflection of them as parents. I just want to publicly say I am so thankful Kory and Katie decided to have kids.

Let me also follow that up by saying I'm thankful God decided to have kids. What we're going to talk about this morning ties in to who God is. As we begin verse 19, we can't forget verse 18, "Of His own will (talking about God) He brought us forth by the word of truth, that we should be a kind of firstfruits of His creatures." I know this is hard for a lot of us to grasp, but James believes what the rest of Scripture teaches, and that is ultimately you and I were not birthed into the family of God because of our will; we were birthed into God's family because of His will. He wanted you and me to be a part of His family, and He brought us into existence just as He spoke the word when there was nothing and brought everything into being, without Him speaking there wouldn't have been anything made that was made. By the same way, He spoke into our lives through the gospel and transformed us from a sinner to a saint for the very purpose that we would be a kind of first fruit of His creation. I want you to remember that first fruit was very meaningful in the biblical world. When a crop was ready to be harvested, there would just be some of the crop that would be ready to harvest first, so the harvesters would go into the harvest and they would harvest that first fruit. When they saw that first fruit, it gave them an indication of what the rest of the harvest was going to be like. Do you realize that? God brought you into the family so that you and I would be firstfruits. In other words, the people who are going to come to know Christ in the future, the community can look at us and know what the rest of the harvest of God is going to be like. Can I ask you this question? What kind of first fruit are you? If someone moved into our area, knew nothing about a Christian, and found out you were a Christian, what would they be like if they believed you were an example of what their life could be if they come to know Christ? Throughout this whole message, I want you to understand the premise. What James is going to say next is so that we'll understand we're a first fruit of God's creation. Someone is going to see you and ultimately believe that's what their life could be like because they're part of the same family you're a part of.

Let's read James 1:19-21, keeping in mind the larger context goes through the end of this chapter. Because of time, we're going to just do three verses this morning.

## Scripture

***"Know this, my beloved brothers: let every person be quick to hear, slow to speak, slow to anger; for the anger of man does not produce the righteousness of God. Therefore put away all filthiness and rampant wickedness and receive with meekness the implanted word, which is able to save your souls."***

We're going to do a different format this morning than we normally do. Normally, we open up a book of the Bible, read a text, and we just dive into it word for word, verse by verse. This morning, I think it's so important that we get the big picture, so I'm going to give you the big picture before we start looking at the details. The reason I'm telling you about it is because I don't want you to look down at your watch in about ten minutes and think I did the whole three verses in ten minutes! Based on the truth that you and I were brought into the family by the Word of God, according to God's will, so that we would be a kind of first fruit, he wants us to know this. Who is he speaking to? He's speaking to brothers and sisters in Christ. He's speaking to the family of God. If you're part of the family of God, James wants you to know that every one of the family members should listen more, talk less, and stay calm. Why? Because the anger of you does not produce the righteousness of God. God wants you and I to understand every situation we're in, every situation we face, whether it's a trial that's testing our faith or a temptation to sin, it is an opportunity for us to respond with the same kind of action God would respond with, God kind of righteousness. Because as a family member you and I have been made right with God, God wants us to know that every action we have, every reaction we have, should be a right behavior. It should mirror the righteousness of God that He has bestowed upon us. Because He's made us right with Him, we can be right with others. Therefore, knowing this is

true, you and I should put away everything that's within us that contributes to moral pollution, moral filth that makes us dirty on the inside. We should get rid of it, put it away, and get it out of our lives. Anything externally that we're involved in that is any way related to wickedness or evil or sin, we should put it all away, and then receive with meekness. The picture of strength under control is the picture of a horse that's been bridled so we receive with meekness the word that's been implanted in us. Why? Because the word that's being implanted in us is able to rescue our souls, to save our souls, to move us further and further away from the image of Adam, and more and more into the image of Christ. That's the big picture.

So that you and I understand how important hearing is, the next paragraph is going to say be a doer of the Word, not a hearer only. If you hear the Word and don't do the Word, you deceive yourself if you are part of the family of God. Then, he's going to get us here next...James is going to say if you think you're religious and you can't bridle your tongue, you've deceived yourself. Your religion is useless; it's not doing you any good. Whoa! Are you ready for the details? This English phrase, 'know this,' translated into our ESV Bible literally means to take note of. It means to write down. It's the opposite of letting words pass in one ear and out the other. To be a first fruit of God's creation, he wants us to take note. He wants us write this down. He wants you to let this sink in! Has it sunk in on you that God wants to use you as an example of His creation? Just as when He spoke everything into existence and when He examined it He said this is good, God spoke your spiritual life into existence through the gospel of Jesus Christ. He wants others to see that what He did in your life is good. You need to listen more, talk less, and stay calm. Why? Because when anger is controlling you instead of you controlling it, James promises that what you're getting ready to say, or to do, is not going to picture or produce a God kind of righteousness. I think if we examine this and turn it over and look inside it, he is saying if you're slow to listen and quick to talk, quick to get angry, you're going to sin every time. What kind of first fruit are you going to be? What kind of example are you going to be in your home, in your place of business, in the schools, in the community, and places of recreation? So James says write this down. You need to listen more, talk less, and stay calm.

How do you do when it comes to listening? I want to make sure you understand this. Because God birthed you by His Word, you have an ability that many people do not have, and that is the ability to spiritually hear from Him. You have the ability to spiritually discern spiritual things. That's why when Jesus was teaching in parables and He gave the parable of the soils; (by the way, there are four soil types and only one of those soil types is a believer, and that's the fourth one that brings forth the good harvest. The rest of those soil types that never bring fruit are not Christians; they're not believers) so after speaking that parable, they come to Jesus and want to know why He is speaking in parables. Now, this will be contrary to what some of us have been taught. Some of us have been taught that Jesus spoke in parables because He wanted to make it easy for us to understand spiritual things. But what Jesus said was that He spoke in parables because to some of you it has been given to hear, and to some of you it's not been given. Whoa, that's a shock! That's make you stop, but it also makes you realize that if we've been born of God we have this ability to understand spiritual things. We have this ability to understand the things of God. This is why when Jesus gave that Revelation of Himself to those seven churches in Asia Minor, He ends every one of His personal remarks to the seven churches with this: "He who has an ear to hear, let him hear." Right now, I pray you and I have the ability to hear and the ability to listen because, ultimately, what James wants us to understand is the same word of God that brought our birth is the same word that by which God parents us, bringing us more and more into the image of Christ and further and further away from the image of Adam. Therefore, if I'm going to look more like Christ, I've got to listen more. It's got to be my first default in relationships. My default in my relationship with God is not for me to talk to God; my first default is for me to listen to God. What would happen if from this relationship that I have with God where I listen more to Him, I brought that into my relationship with my wife, my children, my friends, and my church members? Being in the community, what if I listened more? Why do I not listen more?

I'm not a psychologist, I'm not a psychiatrist, but here is what I think. I think every time I'm at home, Celisa has to say, "Did you hear me?" Sometimes she says, "Are you listening to me?" Most of the time being

under the control of the Spirit, she doesn't say it that way, she will say, "Did you not hear me?" why would Celisa believe I didn't hear her? Why would she assume I wasn't listening? In our relationship, when Celisa asks me to do something, if I do it, she thinks I heard her. If I don't do it, she thinks I didn't hear her. She completely believes that I should not be a hearer only, but I should be a doer of her word. There's nothing wrong with that. Why do I sometimes not listen? It's because I'm selfish. I'm mean, overall I'm not selfish, but there are times in my life when I'm consumed with whatever I'm doing. And then she says something, and because I'm in whatever I'm in, I don't really hear her; I don't really listen. Does that make sense? Was Christ selfish? How many times do we read in the gospel where He was wanting to go here, and then someone comes into His life and He drops everything for that person? That's what Christians do. You and I have the ability to not see life from our perspective, but to have a desire to want to see life from someone else's perspective; first God's and then our spouses, our children, the people we work with, the people we work for, and our friends. It starts by listening. Here is what I've learned to do with Celisa. To make sure I get out of my world into her world, when she starts to talk I try to be a mirror that's not going to reflect my views onto her in the conversation; I'm going to mirror back her views, her beliefs, or whatever she's talking about. So, if I'm in a conversation with my wife, I'm the mirror, and from time to time, I have to stop and say, "Honey, it seems to me that you..." I don't repeat it back word for word, but I paraphrase in Dexter language what she just said. Then I watch her, and she nods. I'm not just listening; I'm watching because when we talk, she doesn't just talk verbally, she talks nonverbally.

**1-5 counted**