



Speaker: Pastor Matt

Series: James Faith/Works

Sermon Title: Three Marks of Wholehearted Religion

Scripture: [James 1:26-27](#)

## OUTLINE

1. **Problem of the Heart:** Outward “religiosity” can deceive us into thinking we are spiritually strong, while our words tell the true tale of hollow religion that lacks true inward transformation.
2. **Principle/Truth:** God-honoring religion is filled with integrity — a wholeness of heart where our tongue, heart, and hands align.
3. **Gospel (What Jesus' Substitution Accomplishes for Us):** Jesus lived with perfect integrity—His words, heart, and actions were always in sync with the Father—and through the cross, he fills our hollow places with his righteousness, compassion, and power.
4. **Response (Based on our Identity in Christ):** This means we no longer have to fake it — in union with Christ, the Spirit enables us to live with integrity from the inside out, loving others with sincerity and walking with “wholly-ness.”

## DISCUSSION GUIDE

**Icebreaker:** Have you ever seen a large tree that was hollow and susceptible to splitting or falling? Describe it.

Read James 1:19-27, and focus on 26-27.

**Problem of the Heart.** We begin with the problem b/c James begins with it in these verses.

1. How did Pastor Matt describe the relationship between one's words and the state of their heart?

2. What is the ultimate cause of the problem when our speech doesn't align with what we say we believe and practice?
3. Read Matthew 15:18 – How does Jesus' teaching affirm James' point?
4. Getting personal: Where do you notice a disconnect between your Sunday worship and weekday speech?
5. How can "religious" language become a mask that hides spiritual decay?

### **Principle/Truth**

1. Read Psalm 68:5; Deuteronomy 27:19. How does God's heart for orphans and widows shape our view of vulnerable people in today's society?  
Application: Who in your church or community could use a visit, encouragement, or advocacy?
2. Read *John 17:15–19*; *Colossians 2:8*. What does it practically mean to be “unstained from the world”? How can we remain engaged in culture without becoming shaped by its values?  
Share a time when you had to say “no” to a worldly influence—even at a cost.

### **Gospel (What Jesus' Substitution Accomplishes for Us)**

1. How does the gospel free us from trying to “look religious” and instead invite us into a life of integrity?
2. *Quote Reflection*: “For every one look at yourself, take ten looks at Christ.” (M'Cheyne) – What does this look like in your devotional life?
3. How did Jesus model the three marks of pure religion (speech, compassion, purity) during His ministry?
  1. See Luke 4:18; Ephesians 4:29; Romans 6:1–14
  2. What part of Christ's example most encourages or convicts you?

### **Response (Based on our Identity in Christ)**

1. What step can you take this week to care for someone vulnerable at Oak Grove, in your life or community?
2. How are you being called to resist conformity to the world this week (Romans 12:2). Think about decisions regarding media, money, or relationships. What does Spirit-empowered resistance look like?

**Close in Prayer**