

Hearers and Doers

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[0 : 00] All right, thank you so much, Lisa. Like she said, my name is Jesse. I'm one of the pastors here at One Harbor Church here in New Bern. And if you're new with us, I'm so glad that you came today. Actually, you came at a great time.

So we just launched into a new sermon series. We were going through this short little book in the New Testament, which is like, if you have a Bible, it's on the right side, more to the end. And it's a book called James.

It's a letter written to the church and one of the earliest actually letters written that we have on account. And so if you got your Bible, go ahead and open to James chapter one, verses 19.

I love the book of James. It's one of those great ones. It's easy to commend to anybody, whether you are a follower of Jesus and not yet a follower of Jesus. And the reason is, is James is like, he makes these like short, punchy, like pithy statements that are so profound.

He would be like the apostle of Twitter today. He's like that. He can say a lot by, and yet not say a lot. I mean, he's just that good. I mean, he has a lot to teach us preachers, right?

[1 : 01] He kind of ramble on way too long. Today's passage, what I love about this passage, and again, man, I think it's great for everybody, wherever you're at, in your relationship with Jesus, where it's discovering, looking in, or you've been following him for any length of time, is James gets at this idea of what religion is.

And he uses that word religion a few times in the passage we're gonna read. And you hear that word religion, and in this room, I guarantee that that means a lot of different things to a lot of different people.

But what James means by it, when he uses that particular word, is what he's getting at is your relationship with God. And he asks this question, he poses this question in here.

Is it real, is your relationship with God, is it real or is it worthless? And that's something we should really care about, because that matters the most at the end of the day. And so that's the big topic for today.

It's gonna be fun. So James 1, verse 19, it says this. 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.

[2 : 10] Therefore, put away all filthiness and rampant wickedness, and receive with meekness the implanted word, which is able to save your souls. But be doers of the word, and not hearers only, deceiving yourselves.

For if anyone is a hearer of the word and not a doer, he is like a man who looks intently at his natural face in a mirror. For he looks at himself and goes away, and at once forgets what he was like.

But the one who looks into the perfect law, the law of liberty, and perseveres, being no hearer who forgets, but a doer who acts, he will be blessed in his doing. If anyone thinks he is religious and does not bridle his tongue, but deceives his heart, this person's religion is worthless.

Religion that is pure and undefiled before God the Father is this, to visit orphans and widows in their affliction, and to keep oneself unstained from the world.

This is God's word. So James, he goes and he answers the unspoken question that many of us are dying to know, and it's this, what does it mean to be a disciple of Jesus?

[3 : 15] What does it mean to follow him? And we all have an opinion about this. Some will say it's all about believing the right things. It's all about having the right theology. That's the most important thing.

And others would say, yeah, that's not as much of a big deal. It's actually about what you do. It's about what you're doing with your life. And here we see that James says yes and amen to both, right?

He says the two are actually inseparable. What you believe matters and what you do matters.

James, he just, in a simple way, he says it's called hearing and doing.

Verse 19, 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.

And I want us to draw us to two things that stand out in that little passage I just read. They're positive commands that James gives us. He says, do these things more. First, be quick to hear. [4 : 18] He says that in verse 19, but he ends with this, receive with meekness the implanted word. Now, it is easy to miss the eagerness implied by that word receive that James uses.

Other translations, I think, pick up on it better. A lot of them prefer the word welcome, right? So think about this. It could read this way. And many translations say, welcome with humility, the implanted word.

Now, that word receive, receive versus welcome. Think about it this way. I might have to receive a traffic ticket from a state trooper if I'm speeding. And this isn't a confession.

All right. There's state troopers or policemen. Like, I'm not running red lights and like driving around way too fast. And if you still don't believe me, my name is Phillip. I drive a black Tesla.

All right. So I may have to receive a traffic ticket, right? But I welcome good friends into my house.

[5 : 19] See the difference there? There's a big difference. One is an imposition. The other is embraced with excitement and joyful anticipation. And that's what James is getting at here.

He might pose the question to us this way. Are you eagerly welcoming God's word? Are you eagerly welcoming God's word? He starts verse 19 with this strong admonition to us.

He starts with this phrase, know this, which really means, Hey, anybody hearing this and reading this, you need to fully grasp and understand and pay attention to what I'm about to say because it's that important.

And then in classic James style, he gets simple and earthy and he uses this very helpful metaphor when talking about the word and welcoming the word. He says, man, welcome it. It's an implanted word.

And he wants us to think of seed planted in soil, which is God's word. It's like that. That's what we're meant to think of it as. It comes in to our hearts.

[6 : 23] It gets planted in there, but it's meant to like a seed. It's meant to grow and produce. And what does it produce? It produces God's righteousness. Now, before we start thinking like, okay, well, the word comes in, I got to obey it because I need to be righteous.

Otherwise I'm not saved. Like, hold on a second. Just push pause on that because that is a different kind of righteousness, right? There is a different, there's a righteousness that is belongs to Christ. There's a righteousness of Christ. It's by which you and I are justified before a holy God. And that comes through faith alone. That comes through believing. And that's the horror. The historic church doctrine is, has called that definitive sanctification, right?

To get fancy with y'all. But that whole idea, that, that idea of definitive sanctification being made holy, it is, it's a one and done. It's decisive. It's decisive. It's conclusive. And when you put your faith in Jesus, that's what happened.

You were made holy by his righteousness. And therefore God could declare you righteous before him, set apart unto salvation. That's the kind of once and for all righteousness by which you and I are justified.

[7 : 26] But then there's this other kind of righteousness. And that's what James is getting at here. It's a righteousness that grows. And this is called progressive sanctification.

And this growing righteousness comes from God's word growing in us. As we hear it and learn it and obey it. And in this way, what happens is we become more and more like Jesus, which means we display Jesus more and more.

And James is saying, Hey, there's both happening here. There is definitive sanctification, which means you belong to God. And there is progressive sanctification, which means you are becoming like him.

But James makes this uncomfortable proposition to us at the same time. He, he asks and poses it this way. If you're not becoming more like him, are you sure you belong to him?

Now the seed and soil is such a helpful metaphor for understanding. Understanding this. So you think about this, like a seed gets put into soil, right? And it's there.

[8 : 27] And then it has to die to open up and to start growing. And then it pushes through the ground. And you see this little seedling or sapling. And at that moment, when it's that young, it's really hard to tell what kind of plant it is.

We know it's alive, but it's hard to tell what kind of plant it is. Right. But as it grows into its fullness, that becomes more obvious, right? You say, oh, that's an oak or that's an elm, or that is a maple tree.

But in the early stages, when it's like, yay, hi, man, it's hard to tell. It's hard to say. I mean, you really have to study it and look closely to figure out what kind of plant it is. But man, a full grown oak, man, that distinguishes itself from a far distance.

You don't have to get up close, but that's the idea of God's word getting into us. It starts small, but it's alive and it grows and it keeps growing.

And the implication here is that for you and me, we never stop welcoming his word into our hearts. We never stop welcoming that word of truth. It may start small like that seed and that sapling, but it is meant to grow up into a mighty oak.

[9 : 36] And that metamorphosis is real. That's what God's word can do in us. And when we eagerly welcome the word, it will change us. Now, if you're here and you're wondering, oh, okay, cool.

What does that change looks like? You're not like sprouting leaves all of a sudden, right? But James helps us out. What does that change looks like? He does the preacher's work for us. Here's some markers of the transformation he mentions, right?

Become quick to listen, slow to speak, slow to anger. Now, what's interesting about this is James is like the, the new Testament version of Proverbs, right?

And he actually leans heavily on Proverbs here. He references three things that are like continually repeated throughout Proverbs as, as markers of what a wise man is.

Those three things. And that's the thing. And God's word will, will make you wiser. It changes your very instincts. You do become quick to listen, slow to speak, slow to anger.

[10 : 36] And Proverbs draws it out this way. The fool's instinct is to close their ears and open their mouths. That's the fool's instinct. But the instinct of the wise is the opposite. It is to close their mouth and open their ears.

And this is to everybody's benefit, including your own. See, nothing stirs up anger and strife more than closed ears and open mouths. I don't have to work that hard to prove it.

Just, just consider our current political climate today. On both sides, I'm picking on both sides of the aisle here. Both sides. There's a lot of talking, a lot of finger pointing, not a lot of listening, but that is the way of the world.

That is normalized. Their wisdom says, it's better to dominate the conversation, not to listen to one another, and to be outraged. And that outrage comes from a need.

And that need, anger, anger is typically the manifestation of a self-righteous heart. See, you and me, everybody, whether you're saved, not saved, everybody who is alive, we have this innate need to be declared righteous.

[11 : 42] We have this innate need to be considered righteous, and we want to consider ourselves as righteous. Now, we have two options. As we live life this way, and desire this, you can depend on the righteousness that comes from God, that God gives you.

And if you don't do that, guess what? It's on you to get it for yourself. And when you don't have God's righteousness, you have to go about looking for ways to find it.

So we pin righteousness on what we believe or what we do, which makes, think about this. If that's how you're choosing to live, what that does is, if I'm like, oh, my righteousness is gonna come from my politics, by necessity, the people that disagree with me now are bad people.

And I have to see them not as people that disagree with me, but actually have to see them as enemies, and treat them that way. That is the danger of living self-righteously.

It forces us into that either or scenario, into us versus them. In so much of our politics, what it is today, it is simply a pathway to a false righteousness, apart from God.

[12 : 54] Now, I wanna say this, it isn't just politics in our day. There are, we are in an age where everyone is looking and finding a righteousness for themselves. They're looking for some kind of righteous cause to get behind. So that they could say, look at me and look how righteous I am.

And it comes with an open mouth, closed ears, and a lot of anger. But God's word leads us another way. It says, don't do that. Followers of Jesus, that isn't the way for you.

James says here, lay aside all filthiness and rampant wickedness. And that word lay aside means to renounce. And that renounce means that you have to notice it, name it, and to reject it as worthless.

That's real repentance. That's what James is calling us to do. And any other kind of repentance that's being peddled out there is counterfeit. Real repentance is naming, noticing, rejecting. Anything that doesn't align to the word of God. And Hebrew uses the same encouraging words for us. It says, lay aside every weight, renounce every weight and sin, which clings so closely, and let us run with perseverance the race that is set before us.

[14 : 06] See, this renouncing is so important when you think about like, oh man, who wants to run with like a bunch of extra weight? We wouldn't want to. It wouldn't make any sense. There's this famous backpacking trail called the Camino de Santiago.

And you just say, Jesse, why do you even know that's a thing? Well, when you get to my age, you have to start looking into hobbies where you can actually walk. And it's a thing, right? Because it's just harder when you get older. So I got into backpacking.

So anyways, this Camino de Santiago, it is like, it is like the, the Tour de France of backpacking. It's a big deal in the backpacking world. It's, it's in Spain. It's 500 miles of hilly terrain.

If you're going to do it, it's going to take you, it's like a full month commitment. And hikers who take this on, they begin with loaded backpacks of all the things they need for the journey. But as you go into the trail, miles and days in, you start to see what actually is really needed because the ground is littered with all the unnecessary things that people at hikers realize wasn't worth the added weight, right?

It's like, hey, I guess I didn't need that 20 pound jar of peanut butter. As much as I wanted it, you know, God's word, what it does, it gives us wisdom. It trains us in wisdom for knowing what to keep and what not to keep.

[15 : 23] What is good and what is worthless because following Jesus is talked about in this terms of persevering and endurance. It's walking in the way. It's running the race that is set before you, which is another way of like realizing that, you know what, God's word, it calls us into something, which means it demands a response.

And the word that gets into you, that's implanted into you is this word that calls you to action as well, which is why what James says, and the very next thing he says in verse 22 is, but be doers of the word and not hearers only deceiving yourselves.

And that little phrase right there is very similar to how Jesus ends his sermon on the mount. Jesus says, you know what? The wise men, they hear the words I just said and they put it into action. The foolish man doesn't, which means this for you and me.

God's word isn't information. We study for a theology test to get into heaven. All right. It is truth that is meant to direct our lives. Anything else, any other way of living is not true.

It actually, what it ends up doing, it makes a caricature of God's word and of who Jesus is. Now think about this. Think about what a caricature is. Have you ever seen a character of yourself or somebody famous? Right?

[16 : 35] We, we probably have. And the method of drawing requires that you take one feature of the person, and you magnify it. So it stands out above the rest. And now in the end, you have something that looks similar to their likeness, but it's a very silly looking version.

You wouldn't take it like seriously and think like, Oh, I now know what that person looks like in detail. Like we don't, we don't, we don't equate like a caricature with the serious portrait. We realize those two things are very different, but that's what we are in danger of doing.

If we hear the word of God and don't live in, instead of this beautiful symmetry, we could portray. Instead, we portray a silly caricature. And then the world doesn't take us seriously.

And we wonder why. Yet as bad as that is, James tells us that there isn't even greater danger to this. Verse 23, it says, for if anyone is a hearer of the word and not a doer, he is like a man.

He looks intently at his natural face in a mirror. For he looks at himself and goes away and at once forgets what he was like, but the one who looks into the perfect law, the law of liberty and perseveres, being no hearer who forgets, but a doer who acts, he will be blessed in his doing.

[17 : 50] And I love this little passage. And I want to say this to you in my study and preparing for this, I've come to see this as one of the most beautiful, compelling, conviction, convicting, challenging, provoking passages in the whole of the Bible.

It's like one of those where you're just like, oh man, this hurts so good kind of thing, you know? And James, what James isn't saying there is like, hey, y'all better do, y'all better do, you better, how come I can't say this?

He isn't saying, do better, try harder. There we go. He's holding out a calling that is so compelling that it is hard to resist. What he is saying is that the one who hears and obeys the word is blessed. Why? Because they see Jesus. Now, James, he is brilliant because he references mirrors here to, to make this land, to make his point land.

and back in those days, it's important for us to realize, to make sense of this. It's important for us to realize that mirror technology wasn't as refined, as it is today. The best a mirror back then could do was offer a very dim reflection.

[18 : 55] That's it. And so, if you had a mirror in James's day, you would be like, you would be looking at it very intently for a long time to be able to get a good look at yourself.

You know, today we call that going to the gym. Let's be honest. But back then, we didn't have a wall of mirrors and a place to go look at ourselves. Mirrors were just big enough to be able to frame your face.

That was it. James says, the one who studies the word of God doesn't, and doesn't obey its command is like a man who studies himself in the mirror, walks away, and immediately forgets what he looks like.

And then he makes this clever shift and he connects it this way. He says, there is a blessing for those who look into the law of liberty, a.k.a. God's word, and also obeys it.

Well, what is that blessing, James? Well, when you look into the word, and it's a mirror, whose reflection are you seeing? Whose reflection are you studying? It isn't your own.

[19 : 54] It is Jesus. But James warns us, all that studying and then intensely looking into the word and seeing Jesus, if you go out and you don't obey, poof, it's gone.

You lose it. But for the one who hears and obeys, here's the blessing. You get to continually behold the glory of Jesus Christ.

That is compelling. That alone is worth the hearing and the doing. And yet there's still more blessing that James gives us. It says it makes us, he implies that it makes us more wise and mature because the more we see and obey Jesus, the more we become like him, which is the essence of discipleship.

Discipleship isn't about you doing all the things so you can pad your spiritual resume. So when you get to heaven, you can show God and say, look at all the things that I did. And God looks at it and said, like, oh, you get the big mansion. Welcome.

That's not what discipleship is about. Discipleship is about who you are becoming. That is the most important thing that we need to realize. And the disciple who loves Jesus is going to want to be like him.

[21 : 07] You know, prior to the industrial revolution, most people, when they wanted to learn a craft or a trade, they had to apprentice. There wasn't like universities you went to study at. An apprentice, he would, he would go and he would study under a master craftsman for years and years and years.

And they would watch the apprentice's job was to be taught by the person and to watch how he did it. And then that master craftsman would let him do some things and he would guide him and help him and correct him and all these things.

And then at the end, after all this learning and practicing, the apprentice would be ready to do the trade. Now, the influence of a good master craftsman upon a diligent apprentice would mean that it would show up in the apprentice's work.

And let me explain it with this parable. Long ago, there was a rich man that had a banquet hall with this beautifully crafted table that was made by a local craftsman.

And one day, his banquet hall burned down and in a fire along with the table and the table was lost. And so the rich man, he sent word to the craftsman in the town and said, Hey, I lost this table. Can you build me another one?

[22 : 09] But the craftsman, he was too old and wasn't able to do the work himself. And so he gave it to his apprentice to do. And the table finished. And the apprentice brought the new table to the new banquet hall.

And the rich man looked at the table and praised the work of the master craftsman, not knowing that it had been done by the apprentice. And the apprentice, not having received any of the praise, nevertheless, went away joyfully satisfied.

See, the rich man, he saw the master craftsman in the apprentice's table. And that was all the apprentice wanted. Who do people see when they look at your life?

Is it the values of the Republican party or the Democrat party? Is it the beliefs of your favorite podcaster? Is it greed or lust or crude talk or anger?

Is it someone who lives for themselves, who is controlling and commanding and self-referential in all that they do? Now, I want to say this. You can live that way. And you can know Jesus.

[23 : 13] And you can believe that everything's going to be okay. But James says, actually here, you'd be deceiving yourself. You'd be lying to yourself. He said earlier, those who are hearers and not doers, man, they live in deceit.

He says again in verse 26, if anyone thinks he's religious and does not bridle his tongue, but deceives his heart, this person's religion is worthless. And that should shake us up more than a little.

And that should cause us to be vigilant about this thing he's talking about with hearing and doing. Because there, friends, there is nothing worse than finding out something that you worked hard for is worthless.

There's a show that I like to watch and our family watches called Gold Rush. And it's just about these miners in Alaska that are just busting their humps to find gold in difficult conditions.

And like things are always breaking down. It's not easy to get at it. And so for months out of the year, they work endless hours. I mean, 14, 16 hour days in terrible conditions together.

[24 : 14] Now imagine at the end of that season and they finish and they bring all their gold and they give it to the person who, you know, weighs it up and gives them money back. And the person looks at it and says, oh, sorry guys, this is all fool's gold.

This is all worthless. That's the danger of mixing the Christian faith with the world's ethics and values. If your religion doesn't make you kinder, more caring, more loving, more humble, if it isn't leading you to renounce sinful ways, if it makes you more proud and arrogant, if it isn't producing God's righteousness, if people can't see Jesus through your life, I'm going to warn you that you might be working very hard for nothing, for something that is absolutely worthless.

And I want to hold out to you and say, friends, don't waste your life. Don't waste your life following your own religious system that serves you and your appetites.

Believing in a God that never challenges you or convicts you to change, that is not the God of the Bible. That's a God of your own making. And it means if you do that, you won't become more like Jesus in doing that.

You aren't seeing Jesus living like that. Now, as dire as that sounds, there is hope for all of us here. It's never too late to turn. And I want to say to any of us in the room, make that choice today.

[25 : 41] When we start to look intently at God's word and begin to obey it, that's our chance. We can start that today. We become more like Jesus, which means we're going to be caring about the stuff he cares about and the people he cares for.

And he says it in this way, religion that is pure and undefiled before God the Father is this, to visit orphans and widows in their affliction and to keep oneself unstained from the world.

So James uses these three words, pure, undefiled, unstained, to describe what is unacceptable to God.

And that sounds radical, but that's the point. Jesus makes no allowances for compromise. Now, if you're like me, you are always looking for ways to avoid obedience.

You're always looking for ways to compromise and not obey Jesus and following it, right? And here's, if you're like me, you do that because you want things that give you pleasure and significance and safety.

[26 : 39] And let's be honest, it's hard to deny ourselves of those things, isn't it? We want those rewards. And that's why following Jesus is this life of sacrifice and surrender.

It's an everyday step of making yet another surrender to him, another submission, another sacrifice is saying, okay, man, Lord, I'm not going to do it my own way. I'm going to choose to follow you. And I don't know how that's going to turn out or what that's going to look like. And it doesn't seem that easy, but I'm going to trust you because you said you are good and you've proven yourself faithful.

And Jesus says, man, trust me in this way. You want to know what true religion is? Visit the orphan and widow in their affliction. Now, this is probably more prescriptive than descriptive because it's getting at a type of people, some groups here that people that are vulnerable, people that are poor and powerless.

That's the people that Jesus loves us for us to move toward. And I think we can read orphan and widow and just be too far removed for seeing how desperate those people, their situation was in the first century.

[27 : 42] See, they were the bottom of the social strata. They were the lowest of the low. They were doomed to a life of suffering and shame. And associating with them didn't bring you any social capital.

In fact, it would probably hurt. It would probably give you negative social capital. Judaism of James's day, the Jewish religious system, they saw all suffering that anybody was enduring.

That was because of sin. So in their religious system, the orphan and the widow would have been sinners being punished by God. They just got it honest. That's it. And the other big religious system was the Greeks and the Greeks, their religious system and their ethics was they saw wealth and power and prominence, prominence adds virtues unto themselves.

So there was no such thing as charity or compassion toward the poor and the powerless in the Greek world, ancient Greek world, because in their religious system, the orphan and the widow was just a fate doled out by the cosmos.

Tough being you, but sorry, can't do anything about that. And it's our job as the rich and powerful to actually take advantage of you and use you and not help you. That was their religious system.

[28 : 51] And James says, you know what? Those two religious systems, they are wrong and they are worthless. See, Jesus, that's what he does. He comes into the things that are normalized in our society.

In any time of history that we live in, and he upends it and he says, nope, they ain't got it all right.

And his way, and he upends that religious, those two religious system, his way was to come in and to move toward the lowest, not avoid them and ignore them and take advantage of them.

He moved toward to help them, but he also, he said, visit them. James says, go and visit them.

Don't throw money at them from a distance. Be in their junk with them. Be in their pain with them. Be in their poverty with them.

Suffer with them. Sit in it with them. See, Jesus, that was his way, wasn't it? His way was sacrifice, going low, showing up. That's what he did.

He came and he left heaven and he showed up to us. The spiritually impoverished, we were all a wreck. We were all suffering. He put on our weakness. He walked among the poor and powerless. He moved into our neighborhood, so to speak, right?

[29 : 55] Why? Because we were impoverished. We were hopeless. We were the poor and powerless towards sin and death. That none of us can get out of. And he moves into our neighborhood. And he doesn't come and throw money at us, snap some pictures, grab a souvenir, and go back to heaven and say, hey, look at all this cool stuff I did.

No, no, no. He put on our suffering. He went low and then he went lower. He didn't just visit. He took our place. He went to the cross. He died in our place for us.

He did that for you and me. So we could be set free. The poor and the powerless, we're given what we don't deserve. And he calls us to follow his example.

Not to earn our place as his disciples, but because we are his disciples, we are his apprentices.

And when people look at our lives, they see the master craftsman.

Friends, I want to leave us with this. Let's take up our cross. Following Jesus is the way of the cross. Let's take it up. And follow our savior, savior without compromise. As the band comes up and we respond, in a moment, we are going to take communion.

[31 : 02] But before we do that, I just want to prepare our hearts. And I want to end with these two questions ringing in our ears. The first is, do you know Jesus? Friends, do you know Jesus?

And the second is, is your life reflecting him? And I want to say to those of us in the room or hearing this online, if you're not yet a follower of Jesus, the invitation for you is not to come to the communion tables.

They just point to Jesus. Come to the ones that appoint, come to the one that appoints to. It's him. And he invites you to come to him. He is here. He is present. And he, man, he is offering you salvation.

Today. By faith in him. And there's going to be a prayer up on the screen that you can pray. Pray to renounce your sin, to renounce your unrighteousness, and turn to him and trust your savior and follow after him.

Now, I want to say, if you're here and you're already a follower of Jesus, before we come to the table, the Bible says, before you come and you commune with the savior through what we're about to do in this meal, we're meant to examine our hearts.

[32 : 10] How do we examine our hearts? Is your life, is my life, is it reflecting Jesus? In what ways isn't? What adjustments do we need to make?

But let me encourage you with this. Jesus is inviting us to do this, right? Because he loves us. He does, he's not trying to like club us over the head and say, you guys are a bunch of losers. What is wrong with you?

He loves us so much that he's not surprised when we don't do it right and don't do it perfectly. But you know what? He also loves us enough to say, you know what? It's okay. Come. There's forgiveness here.

There's healing here. There's restoration here. There's renewal here. I can clean you off. I can dust you off. I can embrace you and love you and say, you know what? Let's get back at it.

Follow me out there. Walking in the way. Running that race with perseverance. So in a moment, what I want us to do is I'm gonna pray and then go to the table, get the elements, come back and just spend some time with Jesus.

[33 : 11] And then when you're ready, take communion. Let's pray together. Jesus, we are coming to this meal in faith. And as we come, I would pray that we would very much sense your presence in this moment.

Be present with us as we reflect, as we confess, as we renounce the things we need to renounce, but always moving towards receiving your grace that forgives and heals and strengthens and encourages and launches us out with great excitement and hope.

The Lord Jesus, on the night when he was betrayed, he took bread and when he had given thanks, he broke it and said, this is my body which is for you. Do this in remembrance of me. In the same way also, he took the cup after supper saying, this is, this cup is the new covenant in my blood. Do this as often as you drink it in remembrance of me. His body broken for you, his blood shed for you. Friends, go to the table.

Amen.