

Senior-Believer Religious Litmus Test

Three Keys for a Successful New Year (2025)

A Helpful Self-Inventory for Retirees and Pre-Retirees

ADEL Monthly Program (AMP)

Continuous Learning - Self-Learning Resource

January 2025



**Your life is like a ship on the open seas!
Without guidance, you can hopelessly lost!
The Bible is a COMPASS to help you from this life to eternity!**



Jame's Short but Powerful Appeal to Christian Believers

James 1:26-27

James, the brother of Jesus has three (3) critical challenges for mature believers:

1. Do I *control* my speech from inside-out?
2. Do I *share* compassion to everyone I can?
3. Do I *pursue* purity in a polluted world?

True religion, James argues, isn't defined by impressive acts or outward rituals; it is revealed through everyday speech, sacrificial love, and a commitment to practical and intentional holiness.

These challenges are not simply moral check items but reflect the depth and sincerity of our God walk.

- ✓ REMEMBER: God's grace always covers you.
- ✓ CLAIM: Doing these three facilitates goodness.
- ✓ STRATEGY: Three useful tools in divisive times.

A hand holding a pencil is positioned over a document with a grid pattern. The image is overlaid with several thick, white, horizontal brushstrokes that create a layered, artistic effect. The background is a soft-focus photograph of a desk with a pen and a book.

Senior Believer Religious Litmus Test
Three Checks for 2024-2025
A Powerful Self-Check for Believers

A group of five people are shown in a state of intense communication. On the left, a woman in a pink top and a woman in a white tank top are shouting. In the center, a man in a dark suit looks distressed, holding his hand to his forehead. To his right, a woman with glasses and a ponytail is shouting into a mobile phone. On the far right, a man in a white shirt and a man in a dark shirt with glasses are also shouting. Several hand-drawn sketches of megaphones with sound waves are overlaid on the scene, suggesting a loud or chaotic communication environment.

1st Test: COMMUNICATION

1st Test: COMMUNICATION (i.e., internal self-talk & external speech)

“If anyone thinks he is religious and does not bridle his tongue but deceives his heart, this person’s religion is worthless.”

1. **“Religious”** here refers to external expressions of devotion—praying, worshiping; public acts of devotion fade if they coexist with a harmful tongue.
 2. **“Bridling”** the tongue or speech suggests the graphic image of a horse guided by a bit and bridle—controlled, disciplined, directed; so, we must control our talk
 3. Communication and **speech left unchecked** is not merely an oversight; it’s a sign of self-deception. Our speech reflects the state of our hearts (Luke 6:45).
*Gossip, slander, angry outbursts, or untruths no matter our age and stage do not align with godly character of those who claim to follow Christ.
 4. **True faith** brings a transformation that includes our words, which are to be life-giving and build-up rather than destroy and tear down.
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Digging Deeper: Communication—Managing Your Speech-*In & Out*

How can I better control my speech in realistic, practical ways?

Why it Matters: Your words reflect your heart (Luke 6:45) and can either build up or tear down. A controlled tongue honors God and blesses others.

1. How to I evaluate my speech daily?

- Take a moment each evening to reflect: *Did my thoughts, desires and words today honor God and others?*
- Keep a speech journal for a week, noting when you spoke positively, when you used gossip, criticism, or anger.

2. How can I guard my words in tense situations?

- *Think about your thinking, pause before speaking. Ask yourself: Is this true? Is it kind? Is it necessary?*
- Memorize and pray Psalm 141:3: *“Set a guard, O Lord, over my mouth; keep watch over the door of my lips.”*

3. What practical habits help with speaking thoughtfully?

- Practice active listening: focus more on understanding others than responding quickly.

3. Cont.

- Replace negative speech with praise and gratitude.
- Use the “two-second rule”: deliberately pause before responding, especially when you feel defensive.

4. How appropriately handle criticism or confrontations?

- Respond calmly, avoiding harsh or defensive words. Say: *“Let me think about that and get back to you.”*
- When in doubt, choose silence: Proverbs 17:28 says, *“Even a fool who keeps silent is considered wise.”*

5. What’s a quick test to measure progress?

- Ask a close friend or family member for feedback: *“Do my words build you up or tear you down?”*
- Reflect on Colossians 4:6: *“Let your speech always be gracious, seasoned with salt.”*



2nd Test: **COMPASSION**

2nd Test: **COMPASSION** (i.e., empathy & kindness toward any in need)

“Religion that is pure and undefiled before God the Father is this: to visit orphans and widows in their affliction...”

1. James moves from the **negative** (control your speech) to the **positive** by defining “pure and undefiled” religion—faith that pleases God!; “before God the Father” emphasizes that our faith must be lived out with Him as the ultimate audience.
 2. Caring for orphans and widows *represents* compassion toward any vulnerable group in your circle or environment; **under your sphere of influence**.
 - *This principle extends to the sick, poor, lonely, or marginalized, oppressed.
 - Compassion is not optional for those who belong to a loving God (Psalm 68:5).
 3. True faith, is **active and tangible**, not indifferent. It doesn't do like harsh talk and does things like showing love and kindness. This is the believer's constant goal.
 4. Compassion is **not a way to earn salvation** but we do it because **we are saved**; it is because we do love Christ and do love others.
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Digging Deeper: Compassion—How to Help Others Effectively

How can I show real compassion and make it meaningful?

Why it Matters: Compassion, kindness and love mirrors God’s heart. The real test of your faith is helping others and shifting the focus from self to service.

1. Who should I help?

- Start with people close to you—family, friends, neighbors, and your church community; Identify “forgotten people” in your circles: widows, orphans, single parents, the elderly, or sick.; Broaden your reach: serve people outside your comfort zone, like the homeless, immigrants or prisoners

2. When do I help?

- Create “compassion appointments”: set aside regular time each month to volunteer or visit someone in need.; Be spontaneous: when God puts a need on your heart, act immediately.

3. How do I help practically?

- Time: Visit, listen, encourage someone lonely or hurting.

3. Cont.

- Resources: Donate to causes, buy groceries, help someone struggling financially; Skills: Use your talents—teach, mentor, or provide a service someone needs

4. How do I balance compassion with boundaries?

- Pray for discernment; focus on helping *where you’re called*; you’re not the Savior—trust God for the outcome.

5. What’s a simple act of compassion I can practice weekly?

- Send a note of encouragement; cook a meal for someone in need; Offer a listening ear and prayer during a tough time.

6. How do I make compassion a lifestyle, not just a moment?

- Develop a “compassion mindset”—pray each morning: “*Lord, who can I serve today?*”; Involve your family in regular acts of service to make helping others a habit.



3rd Test: CIRCUMSPECTION

3rd Test: CIRCUMSPECTION (i.e., purity, morality in avenues in & out)

“...and to keep oneself unstained from the world.”

1. The final mark of believers three-fold true religion check, is a **personal, intentional and deliberate purity**—a goal that is life-long regardless of age and stage.
 2. “Unstained from the world” means **resisting** the values, temptations, and moral decay that characterize the world system opposed to God.
 3. “World” here refers not to people or creation but to the **attitudes, ambitions, and behaviors** that are contrary to God’s kingdom.
 4. While compassion involves stepping into the brokenness of the world, **purity requires a steadfast refusal to adopt its stains**. Accepting the challenge is to resist the temptation to compromise for acceptance, success, or comfort. James calls us to vigilance—to live holy lives set apart for God (1 Peter 1:15-16).
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Digging Deeper: Circumspection—Living in Purity and Integrity

How to guard my heart, habits to pursue purity in mind, speech, actions?

Purity reflects God's nature. Being "unstained by the world" is about guarding the avenues and avoiding moral compromise, staying spiritually alert.

1. How do I guard what comes into my mind?

- Media and Content: Filter what you watch, read, and listen to. Ask: *"Does this honor God? Would I watch this with Him?"*; practice Philippians 4:8: focus on what is true, honorable, and pure; install accountability software, limit your exposure to negative influences.

2. How can I develop better habits of purity?

- Replace bad habits with good ones: if you struggle with negative content, replace it with Scripture or uplifting podcasts; spend the first 15 minutes of your day with God instead of on your phone; set achievable goals: commit to daily prayer and Bible study, even if just for 10 minutes.

3. How do I stay pure in actions and decisions?

- Have an "integrity checklist": ask yourself before acting, *"Is this consistent with my faith?"*

3. Cont.

- Surround yourself with godly accountability partners.; when tempted, find 1 Cor 10:13 the escape—look for and act on it!

4. How do I identify and break sinful habits?

- Be honest with God and yourself. Pray Psalm 139:23-24: *"Search me, O God."*; Identify triggers, avoid situations or influences that lead to sin.; Replace idle time with godly pursuits—serving others, learning Scripture, or exercising.

5. How do I know if I'm making progress in purity?

- Ask yourself daily: *"Did I honor God with my thoughts, words, and actions today?"*; Celebrate progress—thank God for grace.; Draw closer to Christ or away from Him?

Pray for circumspection. Prayer is first response, Ps 51:10: *"Create in me a clean heart, O God."*; Pray for a renewed mind (Rom 12:2).

THREE Cs CHECKUP

Prayerfully examine yourself with James 1:26-27. Invite the Holy Spirit to speak to you, answer each question honestly, respond/act on each question...

1. Communication Controlled

- a. Have my words this year been marked by truth, kindness, and grace, or have I struggled with gossip, harshness, or dishonesty?
- b. Is there anyone I need to apologize to for the ways my words may have hurt them?

2. Compassion Spread

- a. How have I demonstrated care for those in need this year (the poor, widows, orphans, and others who are vulnerable, marginalized, neglected and overlooked)?
- b. In 2024 past, 2025 future what areas of need and assistance may be calling for my care?

3. Circumspection Pursued

- a. Have I allowed any worldly media-attitudes, habits, or compromises to creep into my life?
- b. Where have I struggled and where can I succeed by God's grace to pursue godliness, both in my private and public spheres, as acts of love and worship to God?

Leader's Prayer for 2025

Dear Lord,

As I reflect on the past year and prepare to serve in the coming year, search and know my heart.

Help me to see my need and speak with wisdom, to love with compassion, and to live with purity.

Align my faith and plans with Your will, so that I may honor You and serve others faithfully.

In Jesus' name, Amen.



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