

Reach the world discussion guide

based on **James 1.27** (Linked to sermon from 22/9/19)

which can be accessed at www.stjamesbythepark.org/current-sermon-series

This was the third part of a series looking back over James through the lens of our church purpose statement: Love God, love each other, reach the world.

Intro: Think of a time when you've been moved to tears by someone's plight. How did that happen? How did you respond?

Summary of sermon:

- At this church, we 'reach the world' through our 7 mission focus areas: families and children, teenagers, older people, financial hardship, inter-cultural relations, environment and mental wellbeing
- True discipleship includes getting dirty hands looking after others (not because they are dirty; just because life is messy) – v27a
- 'orphans and widows' were financially vulnerable and socially isolated
- God has a heart for those in distress – he is 'Father to the fatherless and defender of widows' (Psalm 68)
- 'looking after' orphans and widows means 'visiting' them – something that cannot be delegated by giving money
- Looking after people 'in their distress' is distressing for us – we need to depend on God (up) and have the support of others (in) before we reach the world (out)
- True discipleship includes keeping clean lives – holiness of life is not an optional extra – v27b
- When we look after the vulnerable in their distress, it's easy to get dragged down by the world
- Pollution kills out witness, just as salt that loses its saltiness is good for nothing (Matthew 5.13)
- The pollution that seeps gradually into our lives is harder to spot and deal with
- Effective mission = dirty hands + clean lives

To think through / discuss with others:

1. How do you 'get your hands dirty' at the moment – at work? At home? With friends?
2. What would it look like for you to 'get your hands dirty' in your mission focus area?
3. To safeguard against burnout, how are you depending on God (up) and the support of others (in) as you try to reach the world (out)? Have you got enough Up and In to counter-balance your Out?
4. How could you get 'polluted' by your workplace into thinking and acting in a way that isn't godly?
5. How could you get 'polluted' by your friends or family into thinking and acting in a way that isn't godly?
6. What will be people's response to us if we have: a) clean hands and clean lives; b) clean hands and dirty lives; c) dirty hands and dirty lives; d) dirty hands and clean lives?
7. Think of your life as a glass of water, and compare it to your life 5 years ago. Think about: motives, language, how you treat those you disagree with, your attitude to money, ambitions. Do you think you are more polluted now, or less polluted now, than 5 years ago?
8. When you identify 'pollution' in your life, how do you enlist the help of God and others to eradicate it?