

# Empire Church of the Brethren

## Sunday Service Sermons

18 January 2026

### Things Truly Christian

Text: "If anyone considers himself religious and yet does not keep a tight rein on his tongue, he deceives himself and his religion is worthless. Religion that God our Father accepts as pure and faultless is this: to look after orphans and widows in their distress and to keep oneself from being polluted by the world." *James 1:26-27.*

A famous artist from France was traveling in Europe when he lost his passport.

The customs official insisted on him showing the document to identify himself.

He insisted that he was a very famous artist.

The officer could not just believe him because a lot of people who lose their passports claim to be someone that they are not.

He then gave the man a pencil and a piece of paper and told him to prove that he was an artist. Taking the pencil, the man quickly sketched scenes of the immediate area and handed the paper back to the officer.

The official was convinced with just one glance at the picture.

He let the man pass.

No one else can draw like that, he commented.

It is easy for a Christian to claim that they are a Christian, a follower of Jesus the Christ.

But that is not enough.

If one is truly Christian their life and actions must show it to be true.

According to the teachings of the New Testament, a genuine Christian will produce Christ like fruit. In today's text James lists three things that must be an integral part of every Christian's life.

A controlled tongue.

James says that mere conformity to a Christian code does not necessarily mean that one is a true Christian.

To illustrate, he pictures a person who gives the outward appearance of being a believer, giving scrupulous attention to the externals of the Christian faith.

A modern example of this type of person would be as follows.

They are careful to be in church on Sunday morning.

They judiciously figure their tithe on Saturday night and pompously place it in the collection plate on Sunday morning.

They sing the hymns loudly and closes their eyes during the prayers.

Looking at them other believers would say, "My, my! Aren't they a fine Christian".

But James says a true Christian is very different from this type of person.

James writes that genuine Christianity expresses itself in some simple, down-to-earth ways.

One of those ways is controlling the tongue.

If one fails to do that, James sternly warns, "this person's religion is vain."

Though the tongue is small, it is powerful. *James 3:3*

It is like a small match that starts a fire that may destroy thousands of acres of timber.

Though the tongue can do well, it can also do much evil. *James 3:6-9*

"Blessing and cursing" both are products of the tongue.

Though the tongue is in people, people alone can tame it. *James 3:7-8*

Only the Holy Spirit can ultimately control the tongue.

Henry Van Dyke gives two rules we should put into practice.

First he says we should never believe a bad report about anybody unless we positively know it to be true.

Second, we should never give a bad report to anybody unless we feel it is absolutely necessary. If we do tell it, we must remember that God is listening.

A compassionate spirit.

James states that genuine Christianity is more than words: it reaches out in love to those who are in need, "the orphans and widows".

True Christians will be concerned for others.

This is the attitude of Jesus; he was always concerned about people in need.

It is not enough to say simply to the hungry, "Go and be well fed."

We have to help feed them.

True Christians will respond to the needs of others.

James writes that true Christianity expresses itself by visiting the fatherless and widows.

Dr. Harold S. Songer says in "The Broadman Bible Commentary" that this means "to look after" them.

Just giving a turkey at Christmas is not "looking after" their needs.

Looking after these people involves continual sacrifice.

Genuine Christianity has eyes that see, arms that embrace, and a purse that opens.

In his book, Love's Meaning, Archibald Rutledge wrote about attending a worship service in which everything was proper.

The singing was contagious.

The prayers were splendid.

The minister read the Scriptures unusually well.

As worshipers left the service they saw an unkempt woman weeping by the churchyard fence.

Only one of the worshipers paid any attention to the poor woman,

Kneeling beside her, the church lady dried the tears of the desperate individual.

Rutledge's conclusion was simple yet profound: "The only one of all of us who really knew how to worship God" was the woman who did something to help that person.

A clean life.

In the last part of verse 27, James declares that a genuine Christian will keep from being polluted by the world.

In other words, one who is a true follower of Jesus will live a clean life.

Christians are people whose lives have been purified.

Christians will live in the world.

We are to be salt and light to the world, Jesus says.

Our purity needs to be seen by the world.

A monastic type of life is contrary to Scripture.

We are to be like yeast that leavens the whole lump of dough.

Christians will not let the world live in them.

Although we are all sinners, Christians are commanded to live upright moral lives.

We can do this only through the strength that the indwelling Holy Spirit gives to us. (Gal. 5:22 and Eph. 5:15)

How are we to define Christianity?

The meaning is obvious only in the charitable words from our mouths and in the loving acts done from our hearts will prove us to be Christ Like.