Am I A Hearer or A Doer?
Message 5 of 17: Practical Wisdom For Daily Living series from James
James 1:22-25

As we continue with our sermon series from the Book of James, let’s move on in our study to James chapter one, verses 22-25.

READ: James 1:22-25

PRAYER

Introduction

The late Vance Havner used to say, “Sitting in a church house doesn’t make someone a Christian any more than sitting in a hen house makes one a chicken.”

Many people have been sitting in a Church house for years and years. They have heard hundreds of sermons. They have observed the Lord’s Supper each week. And they have even put money in the offering plate each week.

And yet when you look at the habits and the lifestyle and the attitudes of many of these same people, one has to wonder what difference, if any, all that “church going” has made in their lives.

There is a world of difference between those who claim to be Christians and those who genuinely are Christians. There is a world of difference between those who just go to Church and those who are truly following Jesus Christ.
And the difference all comes down to this issue of how one chooses to respond to the word of God.

If you will remember in last week’s message, James admonished us in verse 19 to “be quick to listen……slow to speak…..and slow to become angry.”

And do you remember we learned that “being quick to listen” wasn’t talking about being attentive to what people are saying, but rather being attentive to what God is saying to us in His word.

Now in VERSES 22-25 James continues with this matter of how we respond to the word of God, only he goes one step further. In these verses James tells us that while LISTENING to the word of God is important, what we do with it once we have heard it is even more important.

Tonight I want you to reflect on your answer to this soul-searching question:

“Am I a Hearer of God’s Word or Am I A Doer of God’s Word?”

To help us answer that question, JAMES gives us two portraits in verses 22-25.

In verses 22-24 James gives us THE PORTRAIT OF A HEARER. And in verse 25 he gives us THE PORTRAIT OF A DOER.
First, let’s look at……….

I. The Portrait of A Hearer vs. 22-24

1. We must remember James is not writing to pagans who had never heard the word of God. He is writing this letter to Christians……or as we might call them, they were “Church going folks.”

2. One thing we have already learned in this study is that James “tells it like is.” He doesn’t tap dance around the truth or sugar coat his message to stroke the fur of people.

3. In verses 22-24 James addresses those Christians who evidently had a “sense of pride” that all their “church going” made them better off than all the heathens who sat at home on Sundays.

First of all, in verse 22 James talks about……

(A) The Hearer’s Casual Response To The Word

verse 22 “Do not merely listen to the word, and so deceive yourselves. Do what it says.”

Now for those of you who are observant, those words are very familiar to you because this is the verse of scripture that appears at the top of your Disciple Maker sheets each week.

The King James Version, the New King James Version and The New American Standard all translate this verse, “Do not be HEARERS only…….”
That word “hearers” is an interesting word. It comes from the Greek word, *akroatai* (*Uh-Crow-Uh-Tie*). This is actually the name the early Christians gave to people who would come to *hear the word of God* but would never become true disciples or followers of Christ.

So basically what James is saying to them is this: “*When you just listen to the word of God and don’t do what it says you are no different than the AKROATAI.*” You are no different than those people who come to hear God’s word but refuse to become true disciples of Jesus Christ.

A “hearer” may take great pride in the “marks” he or she has made in their Bible. But what matters most is how many “marks” their Bible has left on them.

James goes on to say, If you believe you are a true disciple just because you *merely listen to the word, you are deceiving yourselves.*

That word “deceive” comes from a mile long Greek word, *paralogizmai* (*PARE-UH-LOW-GIZ-UH-MY*) which is a mathematical term meaning “to make a gross miscalculation.”

To believe all we have to do is show up for Church to hear the word of God each week, but that we don’t have to change or adjust our lives to line up with the word of God is to make a gross miscalculation!

**IS HEARING THE WORD OF GOD EACH WEEK IMPORTANT? ABSOLUTELY!!! BUT TO BELIEVE SITTING IN CHURCH LISTENING TO SERMONS IS ALL THERE IS TO BEING A DISCIPLE OF JESUS CHRIST IS TO MAKE A GROSS MISCALCULATION!**
Now in verses 23, 24 James talks about……

(B) The Hearer’s Careless Remembrance of The Word vs. 23, 24

23 Anyone who listens to the word but does not do what it says is like a man who looks at his face in the mirror

24 and, after looking at himself, goes away and immediately forgets what he looks like.

To illustrate the carelessness of one who “merely listens to the word” James uses the analogy of someone looking into a mirror.

First century mirrors were not made of glass but rather of some kind of metal such as bronze or silver-----or gold if you were real wealthy. The metal would be beaten until it was flat and then polished to a high gloss, and although the reflection of the image was adequate, it certainly wasn’t perfect.

I find it very interesting that James uses A MAN to illustrate his point rather than A WOMAN. You see, men and women don’t look at a mirror the same way do they?

Women spend considerable more time looking into a mirror than a man.

Ladies, if your hair is out of place or your makeup isn’t just right or your eyebrows need plucking or you have some spots or wrinkles that need covering…….you will stand in front of a mirror for as long as necessary until you have made all the adjustments you need to make. In fact, many of you ladies probably wouldn’t even think of leaving the house until everything is just right.
Us guys aren’t like that! I mean think about it ladies, have you ever seen your husband primp in front of a mirror for an hour or hour and half? (If you have, don’t answer that question)

And do you know why they don’t put vanity mirrors on the driver’s side visors? Its not just for safety reasons. Its because US guys wouldn’t use them even if they were there.

You see, spending a lot of time in front of a mirror is not nearly as important to A MAN as it is a woman.

And even if the mirror says, “Hey buddy, you need to brush your hair……or you need to shave that stubble off your face……or you need to wipe that toothpaste off your chin……….or you need a haircut………..or you need to change your shirt because that one has a spot on it…………If we’re in a hurry to go do something else we may just walk away and forget all about what we just saw in the mirror.

Its not so much a matter of POOR MEMORY as it is a matter of POOR PRIORITIES.

GOD’S WORD IS A MIRROR……..A MIRROR TO OUR SOUL.
And just like a mirror reveals every spot, every wrinkle and every blemish…………GOD’S WORD reveals every sin, every flaw, every imperfection and every shortcoming.

THE MIRROR DOESN’T LIE!

And if God’s word reveals something in our lives that needs changing or correcting and we just walk away from “the mirror” and forget about it, then is there really any difference between us and the non-Christian who never darkens the doors of a Church building?

Ask yourself this soul-searching question: Am I just a hearer of God’s word?
Now James gives us………

II. The Portrait of A Doer  vs. 25

*But the man who looks intently into the perfect law that gives freedom, and continues to do this, not forgetting what he has heard, but doing it---he will be blessed in what he does.*

First of all notice………

(A) The Response of A Doer

The “Doers” response to the word of God is two-fold:

(1) First, he responds with careful EXAMINATION.

James says, “*but the man who looks INTENTLY.*”

The Greek word for intently is the word *parakysas* (*PARE-UH-KIP-SUSS*) which literally means “*to stoop down in order to have a good close look.*”

This is the same term that was used to describe how the apostle John and Mary looked inside the tomb of Jesus after the resurrection in John chapter 20, “*they stooped down to have a good close look*” inside the tomb.

This is how a “*doer*” examines the word of God. Unlike the “*hearer*” in *verse 22* who just “casually glances” into the mirror of God’s word once a week during a church service, **the doer looks into the mirror of God’s word each day and carefully examines himself.**
ILLUSTRATION: I have been having trouble with the air-conditioner on my truck. You might know it would stop working in 95 degree weather.

Well this past Thursday I took my truck to a mechanic who does cooling-system repairs. He hooked his diagnostic equipment up to the high pressure and low pressure sides, and shot some ultra-violet dye into my air-conditioner lines and after letting that dye run through the lines for about 20-30 minutes he took an ultra-violet light and started carefully examining for “leaks in the line.” Well as it turned out the clutch on my compressor had gone bad, so it will have to be replaced.

The word of God is just like an ultra-violet dye that penetrates to the inner most parts of our being. And if there are any “leaks” in our spiritual life, the Bible will reveal it.

HEBREWS 4:12 For the word of God is living and active, sharper than any double-edged sword, it PENETRATES even to dividing soul and spirit, joints and marrow, it judges (OR REVEALS) the thoughts and attitudes of the heart.

But not only does a “DOER” respond with CAREFUL EXAMINATION………

(2) A “Doer” responds with COMPLETE TRANSFORMATION.

verse 25 But the man who looks intently into the perfect law that gives freedom and (now listen carefully!) …… AND CONTINUES TO DO THIS, NOT FORGETTING WHAT HE HAS HEARD………

A “doer” of God’s word is always making corrections and adjustments and fine-tuning and tweaking his or her spiritual life to line up with the word of God.
If the mirror of God’s word reveals they have pride in their heart, the DOER will seek to change.

If the mirror of God’s word reveals they need to do something about that bitterness or that resentment in their heart, the DOER will seek to change.

If the mirror of God’s word reveals they need to be more caring, the DOER will seek to become more caring.

If the mirror of God’s word reveals they need to be more forgiving, the DOER will seek to be more forgiving.

The Prayer of David in Psalm 139:23,24 will be on the lips and heart of every DOER OF GOD’S WORD each day:

*Search me, O God, and know my heart; test me and know my anxious thoughts. See if there is any offensive way in me, and lead me in the way everlasting.*

Well James has revealed THE RESPONSE OF A DOER……..

Finally James reveals………. 
(B) THE REWARD OF A DOER

vs. 25 b  He will be blessed in what he does.

The truth here is obvious........

GOD RESERVES HIS RICHEST BLESSINGS

........For the DOER, not the hearer.

........For the ONE WHO OBEYS, not the one who disobedys.

...... For the one who PUTS THE WORD INTO PRACTICE IN THEIR DAILY LIFE, not the one who is satisfied to just come to Church for one hour on Sunday to listen to a sermon.

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CONCLUSION

Let me share this and I will close.

Back in the late 1980’s when I was working at National Spinning Company during the week and preaching on weekends, I met a very godly black man in my engineering department by the name of Bryant Coward.

Bryant did not have a Bible College education like me, and yet he taught me one of the most practical lessons I’ve ever learned about being a “a doer of God’s word.”

Bryant told me that each day when he read his Bible he would pick out one key word in the passage he read.  For example, one day his key word might be PATIENCE.
And he would pray, “Lord, help me to learn about patience today.”
Help me to be patient in my work. Help me to be patient with those who work with me. Reveal areas of my life where I am impatient. Help me to be more patient like you.”

The next day his key word might be LOVE.....”Lord help me to learn about LOVE today. Help me to show love to those I work with....... Reveal areas where I need to grow in my love. Help me to love like you.

And every day it would be a new key word.

And you know what? God’s word made a daily transformation in Bryant Coward. Bryant Coward was a “DOER OF THE WORD.”

Am I A Hearer or A Doer?

That’s the question I leave you with tonight.