

James - Do Something!
Sign Title: Do Something!

June 12, 2011

Good morning Faith Church! This morning, we are back in the book of James. I want to begin by asking a few questions.

- **Did you look in a mirror before you came to church today?** Raise your hand if you looked in a mirror before coming to church this morning. Now raise your hand if you think the person sitting next to you should have looked in the mirror longer.
- **Were you ever accused of having something go in one ear and out the other?** Of course that is not literal, it is an expression for hearing something but not paying attention to it. Like the flight attendant's explanation of what to do with oxygen masks in the event of loss in cabin pressure or your wife's talking about her feelings while you are watching a good football game. If you were ever accused of this, raise your hand.
- **Do you want to grow as a Christian to become more pleasing to Christ?** If you have no desire to grow, then nothing I say this morning will make a difference in your life. On the other hand, if you want to grow, this is an important message to hear.

We are still in the first chapter of James and already this book has challenged us in practical ways. Two weeks ago, we learned about dealing with our anger. Nothing good comes from our life when we are controlled by anger. We tend to say and do things we regret when we are emotionally jacked up. When we were last in James, we learned the practicalities of getting our anger

under control by asking the Holy Spirit to control our hearts. It was an important lesson. This morning, we are looking at the next verses of the book this morning.

James 1:22-25

James is describing two kinds of people, *hearers* compared to *doers*. Hearers and doers of what? The Word. It was two messages ago when the mega-theme of James began to shift. Let me show you.

Of his own will he brought us forth by the word of truth, that we should be a kind of firstfruits of his creatures. James 1:18 (ESV)

God begins spiritual life in a person through the Holy Spirit regenerating our lives. The chosen instrument God uses to do this is *the word of truth*. This book (hold up Bible) is what God uses to create spiritual life in us. So, if you have friends who do not know Jesus, what is the best way to lead them to Christ? Get them in the Bible any way you can. God's word is the way the Holy Spirit brings about spiritual life.

Last time we were in the book of James, that mega-theme of *the word of God* was also talked about, though we didn't spend time with it.

Therefore put away all filthiness and rampant wickedness and receive with meekness the implanted word, which is able to save your souls. James 1:21 (ESV)

This is a farming picture. The implanted word of God in our lives is like corn seed. When it is allowed to take root in our life and grow, it saves us. The word *save* is not talking about the initial point salvation. To save in this context means *to make whole, to restore to its original intended purpose*. God's Word is used by God to create spiritual life, but this verse tells us that it is also what God

uses in our life every day to grow up in Christ. It is the way God restores and transforms us. It is God's chosen method of bringing about spiritual maturity.

I don't know if you take time to read the Word of God on a daily basis, but every one of us should strive to spend a daily time with Christ by reading a chapter in the Bible and talking with God in prayer. I know some of you think your schedules are too busy, but we all do what is important to us. Time in God's Word is important because *it is the way God will transform us*.

This morning we come to a great danger for those who are seasoned Christians. It is a pressing danger for those who are accustomed to the Bible. That is just hearing the word of God but it goes in one ear and out the other. We do nothing about it. Let me explain it this way. These verses tell us about two kinds of men.

Two kinds of Men

Mr. Hearer

But be doers of the word, and not hearers only, deceiving yourselves. James 1:22 (ESV)

I like the way James says this because he points out that people who think it is good enough to just hear the word of God but not bother to do what it says are just lying to themselves. Let me describe to you what somebody like this often looks like.

They have gone to church for years. In the basement, they still have their awards from Vacation Bible School. They still have their Sunday School attendance pins. They have read through the Bible once in their life, and if not, they at least know all the stories. They usually have a few key verses memorized

like John 3:16. On occasions, they even listen to Christian radio. They may even follow the podcasts of their favorite preacher.

Mr. Hearer is no dummy. He has good answers in Faith U. class. He is a card carrying, Bible toting, Bible Conference attending Christian. What is the problem? If God convicts him on something and he knows he has to do the hard work of obeying the Word of God,... he drowns out that convicting feeling with another Bible study. He has deceived himself into thinking God is looking for people who have lots of information and a good attendance record. In reality, God is looking for obedience, not just Bible studies. You see, for Mr. Hearer, if the Bible says something that cramps his style, that's something he likes to ignore. He is in love with the Christian warm fuzzies not the hard spade work of surrender and obedience.

Mr. Hearer, you are not fooling anybody other than yourself.

Mr. Doer

But be doers of the word,... James 1:22 (ESV)

Mr. Doer begins the same way as Mr. Hearer. They both go to church and hear the pastor speak. They are both involved in reading the Bible. The difference is Mr. Doer doesn't just hear the word but he does the hard work of applying the Word to his life. When he reads the Bible his bottom line question is: *What does God want me to do about this?* His theme verse is...

So whether we are at home or away, we make it our aim to please him. 2 Corinthians 5:9 (ESV)

So who do you most closely resemble? Mr. Hearer or Mr. Doer?

To help us understand the difference between these two guys, James gives us an illustration we can all relate to.

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. James 1:23–24 (ESV)

Over lunch, Cindy and I go to the YMCA to lift weights. If you have been to the YMCA weight room, you know it has a lot of mirrors. Sometimes it is fun to watch people look at themselves in the mirror when they don't think you are looking. They pose. They flex. They enjoy the view from every angle. Some occasionally pop a pimple. It is obvious they are concerned about the way they look.

While all of us don't flex in front of the mirrors at the YMCA, we all have mirrors we gaze into. Even guys use a mirror. Some of us wake up with a major case of bed-head, we see fuzz growing on our teeth and something is hanging from our nose. Thank goodness for the mirror which shows us what we look like because we will fix our face before we walk out the door. If guys are self-conscious enough to do something about what they see in the mirror each morning, we all know how exponentially more self-conscious the women among us are. I am still waiting to meet a woman who can pass a mirror and not try to stop and fix something about her face.

James says, Mr. Hearer is like someone who looks in the mirror, sees the bed-head, the fuzz on the teeth and the stuff in the nose, but walks away and forgets about it. That is obscured. Even guys don't do that!

Here is James point. *The mirror on our walls tell us the honest truth about what we look like on the outside. The mirror of God's Word tells us the honest truth of what we look like on the inside.* Many times it shows us the truth about our heart and it is not a pretty picture. It shows us we are more prideful than we thought. It shows us we are much more selfish than we first realized. It shows us our sexual integrity is not what we once thought because we watch the same movies and laugh at the same jokes as everyone else.

James says, if God's Word shows us we have a serious case of spiritual bed-head and we walk away and do nothing about it, that is a really sad state of affairs. Churches around the world are filled with Mr. and Mrs. Hearer. They like the church. They love the people, but as soon as the Bible reveals their case of spiritual bed-head, they drown out those thoughts with another Bible study.

In fact, even though we are talking about it today, if you are a Hearer and not a Doer, as soon as I am done preaching you will walk out the door, spend the afternoon on the boat and never think about this message again. Some of you might comment to your friends in the foyer over coffee that the message was convicting but nothing will change, *because it never does.*

Mr. Doer lets the Word confront him.

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.
James 1:25 (ESV)

Apparently, in the first-century people were into looking at themselves. Not much has changed. The mirrors they had in the first-century were different from the ones we have today. Ours are glass and give a clear picture. Glass

didn't come along until the 14th century. First century mirrors were made of brushed silver or bronze so the pictures were fuzzy. Also, they didn't hang mirrors on the wall, like we do. They put them on a table and you had to lean over the table to see your reflection.

The Greek word here for *looks into* means to stoop down and stare at intently. It means to study. Remember, the mirrors in that day were on the table and you had to lean over and study your face if you wanted to use them. This is saying that a doer of God's Word is somebody who doesn't read his Bible as fast as they can, but he/she takes the time to read it slowly, to think about it, to study it, much like someone would look at their face in a first-century mirror. This is hard to do, especially when it comes to the Word of God which is the mirror to our inner world.

Let's face it, the motto of the day is "I'm a good person, you're a good person." We don't like anybody to point out our short-comings and nobody wants to talk about sin and the need to repent. But when God's Word points out our sin and our need to repent, that is a good thing! Think of it this way. If they made a mirror which made you look 20 pounds thinner and 20 years younger, would you use it? I hope not. If you actually looked like you were annihilated in a paintball war, you wouldn't want the mirror to lie to you, you would want to know the truth! God's Word is just as honest about what we are like on the inside as the mirror in your bathroom was this morning about the way you looked on the outside. We want our mirror to be honest. That is the only way we can fix things.

Tomorrow morning, you will spend time in the mirror fixing your face? Will you spend time in the mirror of God's Word fixing the blemishes on your soul?

Do you believe God's law is good?

For many of us, we are reticent to look into the mirror of the Word of God. The reason we stay away is we would rather live with the blemishes on our soul than do the hard work of trying to change them. We think we will be happier and freer without the Word of God.

I love you. I want to drill this into your head because we need to believe this with all of our heart. *God's commands give us freedom, they do not take it away.* James calls God's law *the law of liberty*. Other translations use, *the law that gives freedom*. This is not talking about faith vs. the law from Paul. This is talking about the moral goodness of God's law. Listen to me. Do you believe the commandments of God are for our freedom or do you think God is some kind of cosmic grumpy pants in the sky? Do you think God loves us so much that he sent his son to die in our place for our sins but now he sits in heaven with a perverted grin on his face watching us be bound and restricted by God's laws which are there to ruin our life? God is not a cosmic scrooge. He loves us. His plans are always for our good. When God says something in his moral law, it is always for our good, for our freedom. This is where sin deceives us. Sin lies to us and tells us that we know better than God does about what is right and good and what will make us happy. Nothing could be further from the truth.

Get this through your head.

...I came that they may have life and have it abundantly. John 10:10 (ESV)

God wants us to experience joy. God's Word guides us into a lifestyle and way to understand life that holds the most possible fulfillment, happiness and blessing. *The problem is we don't believe this.* We think God is trying to ruin our life, not to make it better. It is like a parent that tells their child not to play in traffic, and we are like kids that think we know better.

Please believe this. It would totally change my job and your life. When I counsel people, this is almost always the bottom line in the counseling. People think they know better than God about what will produce the most happiness and fulfillment in their life.

What do you mean, I have to love my wife? I don't want to honor my parents. What do you mean I can't have sex outside of marriage. Everybody is doing it. I am not gossiping, I am just getting my friends opinion on the situation. I couldn't talk to the person I have trouble with because it would hurt them too much.

Please get this point, there is more freedom and joy in obedience than sin can ever offer. That is why it is called the law of liberty.

Mr. Doer knows he needs a mirror every day.

James says the Mr. Doer *perseveres*. I will not spend much time here other than to say, I need a mirror every morning, sometimes even need a mirror more than once a day because it doesn't take long for me to develop appearance issues. If we need to fix our face every day, it is scary to think how unkept we will become if we look into the mirror to our soul only once a week. How often do you read the Word of God? Let me just shoot straight. If you are a Christian,

who wants to be a Doer not just a hearer, read at least one chapter of the Bible a day. For some of you, that will cramp your style because it means you will lose 15 minutes of television time. The mirror of this book is much better than another 15 minutes watching *Dancing with the Stars*.

God only blesses doing, not hearing.

...being no hearer who forgets but a doer who acts, he will be blessed in his doing. James 1:25 (ESV)

This is really important. Does anybody wants God's blessing in their life? Blessing means God's favor. In other words, God is working for you, not against you.

If you have ever ridden a road bike, you know the different the wind can make. When the wind is at your back, you are a stud. When we are riding into the wind, progress feels impossible. God's blessing in your life is like a good tailwind. I think it is safe to assume everybody here wants that. I don't care who you are. I don't care how many years you have followed Christ. *The only way God will bestow his blessing upon our life is when we do the hard work of obeying God's word, not just listening to it.*

But he said, "Blessed rather are those who hear the word of God and keep it!" Luke 11:28 (ESV)

The only way to unlock God's favor upon your life is obedience, not just more information. This morning, what has God been speaking to you about? Is it an issue of forgiveness? Who is it that God is calling you to forgive? Is it an issue of purity? Is it an issue with your attitude? Maybe you are angry at your parents so you are copping a bad attitude and just being a general pain in

the neck at home. You know it is wrong, but today is the day to apologize, ask forgiveness and make a change. There is no other way to have God blessing your life than *obeying* the Word.

Is it an issue of your mouth? Maybe the Holy Spirit is riding your case this morning about things you said earlier this week. You know you need to apologize and ask for the Holy Spirit's strength every day to control your attitude and your anger, but unless you do something about it, don't expect God's favor.

God blesses my doing, not my hearing.



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