

Name: _____

New Hope Baptist Church Bible Study
LESSONS FROM JAMES
Week 8: *What Are you doing with what you HEAR?*
JAMES 1:22-25

JAMES 1:22

Do not merely listen to the word. (NIV)

The *word* is the gospel taught by Jesus and proclaimed by his followers.

- Simply reading, even studying, God’s Word does not profit us if we don’t do what it says.
- We learn God’s Word not just to *know* it, but also to *do* it.

And so deceive yourselves. (NIV)

It is self-deception to congratulate ourselves about knowledge of Scripture if that’s all there is to it.

- This is the second kind of deception that James warns against. In 1:16 he tells us not to be deceived about **God’s character (God is Good)** and nature of temptation
- Here James is concerned that we not be deceived about the **character of God’s Word (God’s word leads us to be like His Son)**. We are not to engage in passive listening, but rather in an active attentiveness that leads to action.

Be doers of the word. (NKJV)

- Worthwhile knowledge is a prelude to action; God’s Word can only grow in the soil of obedience.
- It is important to hear God’s Word, but it is much more important to obey it.
- We can measure the effectiveness of our Bible study time by the effect it has on our behavior and attitudes.
- How do we put into action what we have studied?

Jesus himself said, “Blessed rather are those who hear the word of God and obey it” (Luke 11:28 NRSV).

How often do we merely “hear” the Word with no intention whatsoever of obeying it?

JAMES 1:23-24

Anyone who listens to the word but does not do what it says is like a person who looks at his face in a mirror and, after looking at himself, goes away and immediately forgets what he looks like. (NIV)

These and the following verses show different ways of handling God's Word.

- Some people take a casual look at God's Word without letting it affect their lives, like the person who looks so quickly into a mirror that flaws go undetected and nothing is changed.
- They listen but don't act.
- The other approach is the intent look, the deep and continued study of God's Word that allows a person to see flaws and change his or her life in line with God's standards.

The repeated use of the word *listens* is significant. Most of the audience to whom James was writing probably did not read the Scriptures themselves but were accustomed to hearing the Scriptures read aloud. Their exposure to God's Word was through repeatedly hearing it read until they had memorized it.

- a. The verbs *looking* and *forgets* picture something that naturally or repeatedly occurs.
- b. *Goes away* pictures casualness and immediacy—at once he is gone and forgets. It would be silly to leave dirt on your face or your hair in a mess after seeing yourself in a mirror. It is just as silly to look into God's Word and make no changes in your life.

Whether we read God's Word for ourselves or hear it read, our listening must have an attitude of seriousness and submission that will lead to obedience.

Barriers to Listening

Certain approaches or attitudes almost ensure that we will not be listening carefully to God's Word:

- Some are able to read God's Word, but don't, or won't.
- Some rely on difficult translations of Scripture that is difficult to understand.
- Some allow so many distractions that they cannot possibly listen.
- Some are not accountable to anyone for their obedience to God's Word.
- Some have become insensitive to their need for spiritual input.

The kind of mirror that God's Word provides is unique. **It shows us our inner nature in the same way that a regular mirror shows our exterior features.** Both mirrors reflect what is there.

When God's Word points out something in us that needs correction, we had better listen and act.

A. Seven Ways to Listen Intently to God's Word

An intent look at God's Word is more likely to help us than casual attention will:

1. Read the Bible aloud to yourself with expression.
2. Use small cards with verses printed on them to refer to throughout the day.
3. Whenever a verse includes a command, think of at least three ways you can put that command into action that same day.
4. Ask someone else to comment on the verse that you are trying to understand and obey.
5. Ask for an explanation when someone mentions a verse or passage you do not understand.
6. Memorize sections of God's Word.
7. Meditate on the parts of God's Word you have memorized.

JAMES 1:25

The person who looks intently and continues to do this. (NIV)

This person looks with serious attention and then makes God's Word his chosen life-style. He studies with attention not only once, but continuously; as a result, he remembers God's Word and does what it says. The mirror of God's Word has shown his flaws, so he can correct them.

Into the perfect law of liberty. (NKJV) This word is perfect because:

- It is God's law.
 - It cannot be improved.
 - It works toward a given end.
- a. Obeying our emotions and giving in to all our desires is true bondage.
 - b. In accepting God's will, way, and Word, we are truly free to be what God created us to be.
 - c. Believers respond to God because they want to, not because they have to.
 - We are free to obey (1 Corinthians 9:20; Galatians 5:13; 6:2).

What exactly is this *perfect law*?

- a. It is the foundational principle that the Lord Jesus spelled out: "Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind." This is the first and greatest commandment.
- b. And the second is like it: 'Love your neighbor as yourself.' All the Law and the Prophets hang on these two commandments" (Matthew 22:37-40 NIV).

The perfect law calls us to love God unconditionally and to love others as we would ourselves. It is a law with almost unlimited applications.

It seems paradoxical that a law could give us freedom, but God's law points out sin in us and gives us the opportunity to ask for God's forgiveness (see Romans 7:7-8).

As Christians, we are saved by God's grace, and salvation frees us from sin's control. As believers we are free to live as God created us to live. Of course, this does not mean that we are free to do as we please (1 Peter 2:16)—we are now free to obey God.

This one will be blessed in what he/she does. (NKJV) The person is blessed because:

- He/She looks intently at God's Word.
- He/She continues to do this.
- He/She does not forget what he has heard.
- He/She acts on it, letting it make a difference in his life.
- He/She then reaps the benefits of having done what God required.