

James 1:22-25  
July 7, 2024



### CONVERSATION STARTERS

What are some highs or lows you experienced this past week?

What Scripture has been shaping you recently?

Where have you seen God moving in your life this week?

What did you hear in today's sermon OR read in today's passage that you would like to discuss?

What did you learn about yourself in today's sermon/passage?

What did you learn about God in today's sermon/passage?

What convicted you as you listened to today's sermon OR read in today's passage?

### MAIN POINT

God's Word is full of information we need to know, but unless we are being transformed by it, we are missing the point. We are to receive the Word and then apply it to our lives.

### INTRODUCTION

*As your group time begins, use this section to introduce the topic of discussion.*

How do you know if people really understand what you tell them? Is it when they can repeat facts back to you? Not necessarily. Anyone who has raised kids or trained someone in a new skill can testify that merely repeating facts does not equal understanding. It can be frustrating to realize that although you have given your best in teaching or instructing, your listeners are not getting the point.

**How do you feel when you know the person you're talking to is not paying attention?**

**How do you know if someone is really hearing you when you talk or give instructions?**



When you teach or tell someone something, it is hard to know if they are receiving those instructions fully, but when you observe their actions after, things become clearer. It comes down to application. Although people may look like they are listening, unless their actions lineup with what you said, did they really hear you? There are even times when people can repeat the instructions given and yet, if there is no application, there is no real understanding. And this doesn't just apply to daily life instructions; sometimes it's the way we approach the Bible too.

## **UNDERSTANDING**

*Unpack the biblical text to discover what the Scripture says or means about a particular topic.*

 ASK A VOLUNTEER TO READ JAMES 1:22-25.

The Word of God is full of answers and instructions for living the Christian life. Anyone who wants to live for the Lord should look to Scripture as a guide for everything. As God's love letter to His children, it is meant to be studied, received, and applied to our lives. The goal of knowing God's Word is transformation. The more time we spend in the Word, the more we know God and the more we should become like Jesus.

**When have you tended to something in hopes that it will continue to grow (a plant, a bread starter, a new pet, a garden, etc.)? How well did you tend to it? Did it grow?**

Apply that experience to your spiritual life. We are to hear God's Word and receive it. The goal is to let it sink deeply into our lives and take root so it will live and grow. This is the concept of the Word being implanted. When you want a seed to grow and flourish in your flowerbed or yard, you do specific things so the seed will have the best chance of surviving and growing. You must be intentional about the planting process. Think of it like preparing the ground so the seed will be received.

**How well are you tending to your spiritual growth? What does it look like to tend to one's spiritual growth?**

**Has there ever been a period of your life when you were learning what the Bible teaches but not applying those truths to daily life? Why does that happen at times?**

In the contrast between the hearer of the Word who looks at his own face in a mirror and yet forgets, and the doer of the Word who looks intently into the perfect law of freedom and perseveres, the distinction is in whether the one who looks allows "the perfect law of freedom" (the gospel) to shape his or her life's course. Those who hear and do the Word put faith into action and are blessed; their worship influences their lives.



## **How are we to balance the responsibility of doing what God commands with the truth of being saved by grace through faith in Jesus?**

Once the planting has happened, the seed must be nourished so it can transform into the plant it is designed to be. A good gardener will give the seed the right amount of water and sunlight so it can flourish. Sometimes you may even need to protect the baby seedling from harm if adverse weather approaches. People cover their flowering bushes when a late frost is coming because they know how fragile new growth can be. Whatever the situation, the lesson is the same. If you want to see growth and transformation of the seed, then implanting it into the soil is the place to start.

Once God's Word is implanted in us, our faith in Christ should move us to action. It is not just theory or head knowledge we seek. James made it clear that real faith will be followed by action. The genuineness of our faith will be proven by our obedience. Without obedience, God's Word is just an inspirational idea. James said if you call yourself a Christian but don't put the Word into practice, you are deceiving yourself.

## **How do we deceive ourselves if we hear the Word but don't obey it?**

It is easy to say you believe something but another thing to live consistently with what you say you believe. We can talk about trusting God no matter what and being bold about what the Bible says, but what happens when real life hits? When things don't go as planned or you face opposition for your faith? Those are the moments faith either becomes real or shows we are deceiving ourselves. James knew this would be a challenge, and he sought to equip believers to be solid in their faith, to stand firm regardless of the circumstances they faced.

## **What illustration did James use to make his point?**

## **What are some examples of James 1:24—looking at truth but not letting it impact your life (hearing the Word without acting on it)?**

James compared hearers of the Word who don't act on the Word to a person looking in a mirror but then forgetting who he or she is. This is the same thing we do when we only observe God's words but never put them into practice. We do this when we read and talk about our faith inside the walls of the church but never engage in gospel conversations with coworkers and friends. We do this when we sing about God's grace shown to us but never extend grace to the people around us. Scripture demands and deserves a response. True believers should respond to God's Word with action and stop settling for simply knowing more about God. This is not about earning God's grace—that is a gift—but when you have received new life in Him, your life will show it. James said when you do this, you will be blessed.

## **How would you explain the mirror analogy James used? How do we do this when we only hear God's Word but don't respond in obedience?**



Where do you need to be more intentional so that you are not just hearing the Word of God but also doing it?

### **APPLICATION**

*Help your group identify how the truths from the Scripture passage apply directly to their lives.*

**How does a transformed life draw people to faith? How has this been attractive to you in others?**

**How do you need to be more intentional in seeking transformation as your goal?**

**Who is God calling you to have a gospel conversation with this week? How can you do what He calls you to do? To whom, as a group, is God leading us to minister to? What will obedience look like?**

### **PRAYER**

*Close your time together by sharing prayer requests, praying for each other, and the group.*

Thank the Lord for the mercies you have received from Him. Pray for wisdom to recognize where you need to be more focused on transformation than you have been on conforming to the world. Confess any ways you have been guilty of only hearing and not applying God's Word. Commit to obeying what God is prompting you to do differently.

### **LOOKING AHEAD**

*Encourage your group to look ahead to next week's scripture passage as we continue our study, **Faith and Works: A Study of James.***

**July 14, 2024 --- James 1:26-27**



## COMMENTARY

### James 1:22-25

**1:22.** James's command is literally to "keep on becoming doers of God's Word." He insisted on an obedience which lasts. This does not minimize the importance of hearing God's Word. It does emphasize strongly the need for acting. Too often Christians view a sermon as an interesting moral or theological lecture. We need to do something other than sitting and listening. Jesus pronounced a blessing only on those "who hear the word of God and obey it" (Luke 11:28).

The command to listen to God's Word describes someone who attends a lecture. The hearer could nod agreeably to the message but do nothing as a result. God wants a listener to become a disciple, an obedient follower of Jesus. One who hears the message without doing anything is self-deceived. Such a listener has made a false estimate of the situation. Jesus warned against this error (Matt.7:21–27).

**1:23–25.** James presented a negative and a positive illustration of a response to God's message. Via a vivid picture of listless listening, verses 23–24 compare those who only hear God's Word to people who gaze into a mirror and dash away with little memory of what they saw. Mirrors in New Testament times were made of polished metal. People used them to wash their faces, shave their beards, apply cosmetics, and comb their hair. Then they quickly left, giving little thought to the image they had seen. People can repeat this experience in the spiritual realm. We give a quick glance into God's Word, find a morsel of truth, and jump into another task without remembering or applying what we read.

Verse 25 uses the mirror metaphor with four verbs to picture the response of obedient listeners to God's message. First, obedient people look intently into the perfect law that gives freedom. This describes someone who gazes at God's message with a desire to learn. The same verb—translated as bent over—pictures the apostle John staring into Jesus' empty tomb (John 20:5). John's look led to an obedient faith (John 20:8).

Second, obedient people continued to do what God said. They put God's Word into practice and follow through with commitment. Third, obedient listeners do not forget what they hear. Spiritual amnesia never conquers their minds. Fourth, obedient listeners do what God's message instructs them to do.

Good listening, endurance, clear memory, and obedience characterize committed Christians. They are eager to receive and obey what God tells them to do.

God's Word is the perfect law that gives freedom. Obedience to Jesus' commands in Scripture brings freedom from sin and death. Whenever we submit to God's message, this law of liberty produces a disposition to obey God's will joyfully. We have freedom because we truly want to serve God. Jesus promised this freedom in John 8:31–32.



Obedient people are promised a blessing. We do not need to wait for a future blessing. We already have the blessing in our grasp. Doing what God requires brings a blessing with it.

