

The Mirror on the Wall

1. When you glance at yourself in the mirror and see a flaw that you can correct do you ever walk away without making any adjustments? Explain.

So far James has talked about the testing of our faith that produces endurance and that endurance in turn can produce a perfect product—a perfected faith. But faith that is truly authentic must also be translated into “works;” it must be enacted in deeds. This is the aspect of faith’s life that we will be exploring in this lesson. (Recall the definition of “perfect” from lesson 2.)

Prepare Your Heart: Sit quietly in God’s presence in communion with Him. Remember there is no limit to what God can accomplish in your life when you open your heart to His Holy Word.

2. After **reading** James 1:19-27, record the key words and phrases you find in this section.
3. Review James 1:18 and note the phrase that links 1:18 to 1:21-27.

In 1:19a James again addresses his audience with endearing words; then calls for his readers’ attention.

4. Consider carefully the directives given in verse 19. Ask God to convict you where needed.
 - a. To what and to whom should we be quick to listen?
 - b. What do you think characterizes a good listener?
 - c. Contrast below the positive results of listening well to God and to others with the consequences of unrestrained speech. Reflect on Proverbs 10:19-21; 13:3 and 18:13.

Consider how each admonition in James 1:19 can help you develop spiritual maturity, a maturity that will enrich your relationship with God and your fellow human beings.

5. Which quality in verse 19 do you need to cultivate more and how will you do so this week?

Read James 1:19 together with 1:20. Note the connective “for” at the beginning of verse 20.

6. What can “man’s anger” never accomplish? Describe a time when you experienced this truth.

James says that those who have been given new life through His Word (1:18) must cultivate a heart that is receptive to His Word (1:21).

7. What further steps do we need to take to have a receptive heart according to James 1:21?
Give yourself several minutes of silence, listening to what God might want to say to you.

Note: The phrase “planted in you” (NIV) suggests that the readers were believers who already possessed the truth. The phrase “which can save you” simply describes the truth as saving truth and has the entire process of salvation in mind.

Consider how *accepting* the Word (verse 21) is different from merely *listening* to it. Thoughtfully **read** and **reread** James 1:22-27.

8. Many people have the idea that listening to a good sermon or studying the Bible is what makes us grow. But James informs us that more is required to prove faith genuine. Explain the meaning of James 1:22 in your own words.

To drive home the importance of the matter James uses a compelling illustration to make his point.

9. From verses 23-25 what is identified as the mirror?

Note: The Greek verb for “look” in James 1:23 (*katanoeo*) refers to a careful observation. In 1:25 James uses a stronger verb for looking (*parakupto*) which means to examine something from the clearest possible vantage point.

10. Contrast the acts that are described in James 1:23-25, then consider the spiritual lessons James has in mind.

Illustrative act/result (James 1:23-24)

Spiritual lessons

Illustrative act/result (James 1:25)

Spiritual lessons

Pause and Reflect: *Are you willing to look into the full length mirror of God’s Word to get an accurate picture of what you look like? Do you desire to correct the problems in your life that His Word reveals? Do you act on those desires making amendments in your attitude and actions, or do you turn and forget what you saw?*

James completes this section by identifying three marks of true faith—joining one negative statement with two positive statements. **Read** James 1:26-27, reflecting carefully on his words.

11. Describe in personal/practical terms the characteristics we would see in one who practices a genuine life-changing religion. (In this context religion means external religious activity.)

12. If listening and hearing God’s Word does not lead to “doing” what are we to conclude?

This is the point at which many close the book on James' epistle. Although his teachings are very clear we struggle to resolve the tension between the stringency of his demands and our inability to meet them. So it becomes important to keep in mind James' purpose in writing. James is telling us how to live in light of the gospel; he goes straight to the practical. He thinks his readers know and understand the gospel but they don't fully understand its implications for daily life. We know from reading the rest of the New Testament that it is only through the power of the risen Christ and the indwelling Holy Spirit that we can live out the "high calling" of James' teachings.

Doing the Word

13. Do you know any fatherless children or husbandless women? How can you help look out for them—or other needy people in their distress (1:27)?

14. What can you identify in your *speaking, thinking* or *acting* that indicates that you are influenced too much by the world?

15. What will you do this week to be a "doer" of these truths, acting on them and beginning to make them a habit?

16. What evidence does Jesus look for in one who claims to be His disciple (John 14:15)?

James has focused much attention on the Word of God in this section of his letter—using descriptive terms that show us the role of His Word in transforming our walk with God—that we may truly become "doers" not just "hearers."

17. Take some time to meditate on the wonderful descriptive terms James refers to: *the Word of truth (1:18), the Word implanted (1:21), the mirror (1:23), the perfect law that gives freedom (1:25)*. As you contemplate these images (individually and collectively) ask God to show you how each facet of the Word can help transform your life as a believer.

18. In closing, share your insights from question 17 with your group. Also share any prayer requests you have for application of this lesson in the coming days.

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