

Listen...and...Obey!

Hearing and Doing Part 3
James 1:22-24 1-18-2015

Summary: In verse 21 we are told to receive the Word, and in verses 22-25 James expands on that and shows that receiving involves two components: hearing and doing. All Christians seek to obey to some degree, but it's easy to get out of balance with way more learning than doing. When we learn things and don't do them, that has a deceiving effect on the soul – making us think we are doing much better than we are spiritually. This is a huge theme in Scripture and especially in Jesus' teaching. The way to become a doer is to avoid forgetting (the kind of forgetting where you can still recall it if you try, but it doesn't spring to mind at the moment it's needed). That is done by making sure the truth is ingrained in your belief system like your belief in gravity. That way it will come to mind when you need it.

Listen...and...Obey!	1
Introduction.....	1
Degrees	2
Self-Deceit	2
The Solution Is Not To Decrease Hearing	3
Pedals.....	3
Doing Without Hearing	3
Hearing without Doing.....	3
Today I Will.....	4
Obedience Is Not Legalism.....	4
Heart Issues	4
From Jesus.....	5
How to Become a Doer.....	6
Remember!.....	7
Forgetting.....	7
Ingrain the Truth into Your Outlook/Belief System	9
How to Remember	10
Devotionals	10
James 1:25 Groups	10
Conclusion	11
Application Questions (James 1:25)	11
Devotionals	12

James 1:22 But be doers of the word and not hearers only, deceiving yourselves. 23 Because if anyone is a hearer of the word and not a doer, he is like a man looking at his own face in a mirror. 24 For he looks at himself, goes away, and immediately forgets what kind of man he was. 25 But the one who looks intently into the perfect law of freedom and perseveres in it, and is not a forgetful hearer but one who does good works-- this person will be blessed in what he does.

Introduction

One of my favorite moments in Old Testament history is the response of the people of Israel when Moses first gave them the law of God.

Exodus 24:3 When Moses went and told the people all the LORD's words and laws, they responded with one voice, "Everything the LORD has said we will do." ... 7 Then he took the Book

of the Covenant and read it to the people. They responded, “Everything the LORD has said we will do; we will obey.”

We will listen, and we will obey. We have been studying verse by verse through the book of James, and we left off last time in 1:21, where James talks about humbly receiving God’s Word. We found that your spiritual life and health and growth and even your ultimate salvation on the last day all depend on a lifestyle of receiving the Word – welcoming it into your heart and letting it penetrate. Now, starting in verse 22, James is going to remind us that there are two crucial parts to receiving the Word: listening and doing. You have not received the Word until you have done both of those. One of the biggest mistakes Christians make in their effort to receive the Word, is that we get so wrapped up in learning the Bible that we do not put nearly enough energy into putting what we learn into practice. So James tells us, “Devote yourself to receiving the Word…”

James 1:22 But be doers of the word and not hearers only

In verses 22-25 James is expanding on what he said in verse 21 about receiving the Word.¹ If you want spiritual life and health you have to receive God’s Word. But receiving is more than just hearing. It is more than hearing and understanding. It is more than hearing and understanding and agreeing. Receiving God’s Word means hearing, understanding, agreeing, and *doing*. And if it stops short of the doing, it is worthless.

Suppose one of your friends convinced himself that he is doing well by just gathering information about the gym – even though he never actually goes and works out. He gets the address, phone number, directions, costs, rules and regulations. But he never actually does any exercise. You would tell him, “Look, if you think that will get you in shape, you’re kidding yourself.” The information in Scripture is the same way. If it does not result in you training yourself to be godly, what good has it done?

Degrees

Now, this is a really dangerous moment in the sermon right here. Because if you are a Christian then you already understand that. You might be sitting there thinking, “Of course I need to both listen and obey. That’s obvious.” Every Christian knows that or they couldn’t be a Christian. If a person never put any of God’s Word into practice, that person would never come to Jesus and repent of his sins, never trust God, and so he would never be saved. So every Christian knows this, and yet, James is speaking to Christians here. The message of this passage is for believers. So don’t look at this passage and say, “Oh, this doesn’t apply to me. I already try to put what I learn from the Bible into practice every day.” All Christians are putting some effort into doing. James is not speaking here to people who do absolutely nothing that the Bible says. He is giving a basic wisdom principle that can be applied in varying degrees. Every Christian is trying to put God’s Word into practice to some degree, but one of the most common errors we make as Christians is to get out of balance in this area. We get so caught up with the studying and learning and reading and listening to sermons and going to classes and reading articles and books, and we keep packing more and more information into our skulls, that we fail to give adequate effort to putting it all into practice.

Self-Deceit

When we do that, James wants us to know – that actually does damage to your soul.

22 But be doers of the word and not hearers only, deceiving yourselves.²

¹ The Greek word, *de*, can be translated either way. If we take it as “but,” the meaning is, “I just told you in the last verse to receive the word, but when you receive it, don’t just hear it – also do it.” So verse 23 is a contrast with verse 22. If we take it as “and,” then verse 23 is an expansion of verse 21 rather than a contrast. “Receive the word, and realize that receiving is more than mere hearing – it also involves doing.”

² The source of deception (like the power of temptation) is self.

Every time we listen to God's Word and do not put it into practice, it has a deceiving effect. It tricks you into thinking that mere listening has some value. When you learn something from the Bible about a change you need to make in your life, it seems like spiritual progress. And so each time that happens, but you don't actually make the change, it ends up deceiving you into feeling like you are growing when you're not. That is why there are people in the church whose character is right where it was 10 years ago, and yet they think they are doing pretty well spiritually. The sins in their life are not any different from what they were 10 years ago, but if you ask them about their walk with the Lord, they will say, "It's going pretty well." And they think that, because they keep on learning and learning and learning, and they have deceived themselves into thinking that is spiritual progress.

The Solution Is Not To Decrease Hearing

So what is the solution if you are out of balance – lots and lots of learning and not much doing? I was in a church once where the pastor preached really basic, shallow sermons every week. And I asked him about it once, and he said he did that because of this principle. He said, "I don't want to create a bunch of Pharisees whose knowledge is way ahead of their obedience." I applaud that pastor for wanting to make sure that scale doesn't get out of balance, but his solution was addressing the wrong side of the scale. If people have a lot of learning and not enough doing, the solution is not to reduce the learning. It is to increase the doing. The solution James gives us is not "stop being hearers," but rather, **be doers**.

Pedals

Knowing and doing are like two pedals on a bike. You push one, then the other, etc. If you only have one pedal on your bike, it doesn't work.

Doing Without Hearing

Some people just want to push the doing pedal.

"I don't want to read, I don't want to study – I'm not the academic type; I just want to love people and serve and live a holy life."

The problem is they don't know much about what God requires or what a holy life is. They are all about obeying God, but they don't have much success with it because they don't know what God's Word teaches about how to obey. A friend of mine called me just the other night and told me about how he was having so much more victory now over his lust problem because he studied Ephesians 5 and learned about how you can overcome lust with gratitude. But he said, "All these years I've never understood how gratitude can help defeat lust." If you try to obey God's Word without an ever-increasing knowledge and understanding of it, you will never succeed. (Not to mention you will be easy prey for false teachers.) So pushing that doing pedal without the hearing pedal does not work.

Hearing without Doing

And neither does pushing the hearing pedal without the doing pedal. That is the point James is making here. There are some who only want to push that pedal. All they want to do is study. They go to a conference or retreat and they say, "Man, I grew so much at that retreat." They learned a lot at the retreat, and in their mind, that is the same thing as growing. And they just keep pushing the knowing pedal. They can ace any theology exam; they know things about the book of Ezekiel that Ezekiel didn't even know. They have memorized so many verses – they are like a walking concordance. But their anger problem is just as severe today as it was five years ago. Lots of knowing; not much doing.

"I know the Greek word for love your wife."

Then why does she look so miserable?

You cannot do the Word without knowing the Word, and there is no point in knowing the Word without doing the Word. Pedals on a bike - hear the Word; do the Word, hear the Word; do the Word.

You got up early and spent an hour studying your Bible. Fantastic! Is your life different? Are your relationships different now? Did it have an impact on your speech? Are you loving and serving people more now? Or did you just ... hear? Did you just have a great time in front of God's mirror for an hour, then walked away and immediately forgot about what needed attention?

Today I Will...

One of the best insights I have ever heard on how to do your personal daily devotions is something Sam told me a couple months ago. He said whatever you do for your devotions, when you are finished, get a piece of paper or your notebook and write the words, "Today I will..." and write out the specifics of how you are going to put what you learned from God's Word into practice today.

How many times do you read your Bible in the morning and all it really does is move the bookmark forward? So many people are deceived into thinking that the goal is to just keep that bookmark moving all the way from Genesis through Revelation. If your daily devotions do not include a plan of action, they are incomplete. And the more specific your plan, the more helpful it will be. Proverbs has a lot to say about the wisdom of making plans. And if that is important for business or building or projects, how much more important to plan for spiritual growth? So instead of saying, "Today I'm going to try to be more of a servant," say, "Today I will ... do three acts of loving service I wouldn't normally do." Instead of saying, "I need to use my mouth to build people up instead of finding fault all the time," say, "Today I will say something uplifting about someone else at least five different times. And I am going to write about each one in my prayer journal." Or it can be something as simple as, "I read this morning about the importance of loving God's Word, and my attitude toward Scripture isn't nearly what it should be - Today I will make a phone call to my prayer group leader or a biblical counselor and just ask, 'What are some practical steps I could take to increase my desire for God's Word?' And I'm not going to eat another meal until I've made that phone call."

You could do the same thing with sermons. Why not take the Q&A time after the sermon each week to jot down on your bulletin, in response to what you heard from God's Word in the sermon, "This week I will..." And make it as specific and measurable as possible.

Obedience Is Not Legalism

And if that strikes you as being legalistic, you are misunderstanding legalism. I think one of the big reasons why so many people do not have good success in putting God's Word into practice is a confused idea of legalism. Coming up with a specific idea of how to obey God's Word is not legalistic. Legalism is when you impose your ideas on someone else. Or when you rely on those kinds of things to maintain favor with God, rather than relying on your association with Christ to give you favor with God. That would be legalistic. But it is not legalistic to see something in God's Word and think through specific ways to obey it.

Heart Issues

Now, I am not suggesting that this is all there is to spiritual growth. Sometimes you decide to put a principle into action and for some reason it just does not work. In those cases you need to track down what heart attitude, or out-of-control desire, or misconception of God's nature might be hindering your obedience in that area. And a good biblical counselor can help with that.

So I am not saying that obedience is only a matter of just deciding to do something specific. But I am saying that deciding to do something specific is a crucial part of it. Deal with heart issues, yes, but also make some plans and take some action.

Hear the Word, do the Word. Or to use the words of that great theologian Tracy Ferguson, listen and obey. That is the phrase Tracy would always use when she would discipline our kids when they were little. If they disobeyed they would always get three swats – LISTEN...AND...OBEY! She just really wanted the kids to understand that the spankings were because of disobedience. She did that for years, and now, whenever I read James 1:22-25, I cannot read it without hearing her voice because isn't that exactly what James is saying here? Don't just be a Hearer of God's Word – put it into practice. James is telling us exactly the same thing Tracy was telling our kids: LISTEN...AND...OBEY! If you can remember those three words, you have got the point of this paragraph.

And Tracy wasn't the first one to come up with that phrase. It actually dates all the way back to 1500 BC when the people of Israel said it to Moses.

Deuteronomy 5:27 Go near and listen to all that the LORD our God says. Then tell us whatever the LORD our God tells you. We will listen and obey.

That is the posture we are to have before our God – “Speak, Lord. I will listen and obey.” That attitude is so supremely pleasing to God. Look how God responds in the next verse.

28 ...The LORD said to me, “I have heard what this people said to you. Everything they said was good. 29 Oh, that their hearts would be inclined to fear me and keep all my commands always, so that it might go well with them and their children forever!

Whenever we have a heart that says, “I want to listen and obey,” God is in heaven saying, “Don't lose that! I want so much for you to keep that attitude so that it will go well with you!” Let that be the controlling motto of our lives: Listen and obey.

From Jesus

That sort of thing was a major concern in the heart of Jesus. He taught about this a lot. Remember last week I told you that Peter stole a lot of material from James? Well, James stole all his material from Jesus.³ See if you can pick up on any similarities between James 1:25 and Jesus' words in Luke 11.

James 1:25 But the one who looks intently into the perfect law of freedom ... and is not a forgetful hearer but one who does good works-- this person will be blessed

Luke 11:28 He replied, “Blessed rather are those who hear the word of God and obey it.”

John 13:17 If you know these things, you are blessed if you do them.

Matthew 7:24 “Therefore everyone who hears these words of mine and does them is like a wise man who built his house on the rock. 25 The rain came down, the streams rose, and the winds blew and beat against that house; yet it did not fall, because it had its foundation on the rock. 26 But everyone who hears these words of mine and does not do them is like a foolish man who built his house on sand. 27 The rain came down, the streams rose, and the winds blew and beat against that house, and it fell with a great crash.”

What is the difference between the wise man and the foolish man? Your first thought might be that the one guy had God's Word and the other guy did not. But that is not the case. Look how the wise man is described in verse 24. Jesus says **he hears these words of mine**. Now look at how the foolish man is described in verse 26.

³ When I say that James got all his material from Jesus – the truth is, all the Apostles did. It is a little more obvious in James because he uses the same terminology that we read in Jesus' words in the gospels. So it is always easy to go back to Matthew, Mark, Luke, or John and find something very similar to each passage in James. But whether or not you can find some matching words in the gospels – it is important to understand that everything in all the epistles came from Jesus. **Matthew 10:27 What I tell you in the dark, speak in the daylight; what is whispered in your ear, proclaim from the roofs.** Not everything Jesus taught the Apostles was written down in Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John. But a lot of it He just whispered quietly to them, and it was their job to make it known after He was gone. And that is what they did when they wrote the New Testament.

...everyone who hears these words of mine and does them is like a wise man who built his house on the rock. ... 26 But everyone who hears these words of mine and does not do them is like a foolish man who built his house on sand...

Their knowledge of God's Word is described in identical terms. The only difference is doing or not doing. That was a major theme in Jesus' teaching.

Do you remember the little Sunday school song from that verse?

"The wise man built his house on the rock ... And the rains came down and the floods came up and the

house on the rock stood fast."

I heard this week about a woman who used to clean her church every week, and she would bring her little boy with her, and he would help her clean. And you could always tell when they were there because that little boy, as he cleaned, would sing that old Sunday school song from Matthew 7.

I don't know if that little boy had exceptional hermeneutical skills, or if that just happened to be his favorite song – but there is not a more fitting song to sing while you are serving and putting your faith into practice than that song. It is a song about doing the Word. He was singing a song about being a doer of the Word while he was doing the Word. He may not have known it, but while he was singing that song, that little boy was actually building his house on the rock.

Such a basic principle, and yet so easy to forget. Imagine a guy gets up in the morning and writes a little note to his kids to remind them about their chores.

"Hey kids, don't forget it's trash day today. Make sure you get all the wastebaskets in the house emptied, and remember to take the garbage can from the garage out to the street before you leave for school. I love you, kids. Have a great day. See you tonight - Dad." He gets home that night, and the trash can is not out on the curb, and all the wastebaskets in the house are overflowing with trash. Family meeting.

"Did you get my note?"

"Oh yeah, Dad, it was amazing. The prose, the punctuation, the use of imagery – it is easily the greatest note on trash removal ever written. And that part at the end about how much you love us – that was the interpretive key to understanding the entire note. It brought us to tears. We love you too, Dad! The fact is, we were so inspired by the note that we spent the day studying all about trash removal. We found it is a theme in the Bible – in ancient Israel the trash had to be removed from the camp because it was a symbol of sin. That was such an amazing insight. And it reminded us of what Paul said in Philippians about how all his former religious activity was compared to rubbish. And we were really convicted that we need to get the word out about how to think about trash in a gospel-centered way and not a legalistic way. So we started a web site; we've actually launched a ministry..."

Meanwhile Dad is just looking around at the overflowing garbage cans all over the house. Were those kids honoring that note? No, because they ignored the purpose.

God wrote us a note. It has a purpose. Should we listen? And study? And memorize and read books about it and listen to sermons? Absolutely! But only so that we can do what it says. Only so we can honor the purpose God had in mind when He gave us the note.

How to Become a Doer

So how is this done? What insights can we gain from this passage of Scripture on how to be more successful in putting God's Word into practice? One of the most important keys to putting God's Word into practice is you have to overcome enemy number one. For the person who really wants to obey God's Word, enemy number one is forgetting. That is what the rest of this passage is about.

Remember!

23 Because if anyone is a hearer of the word and not a doer, he is like a man looking at his natural face in a mirror. 24 For he looks at himself, goes away, and immediately forgets what kind of man he was.

Underline that word **forgets**. That is the point James wants us to focus on. The problem here is not lack of willingness, it is not lack of knowledge, it is not lack of resolve – it is forgetting.

And James paints kind of a funny picture here. You are getting ready for church, you look in the mirror, and you say, “Oh! My hair looks like a modern art sculpture. And there’s a little breakfast still stuck right there in my front teeth. Oh, and my fly is down – need to zip that up for sure before I go.” You see all these things about you that need attention, then you step away from the mirror and instantly forget about all of it, and just get in the car and go to church looking like that. Has that ever happen to you? You show up at church in your pajamas and someone in prayer group asks you about it, and you say, “Oh – yeah. I noticed that when I looked in the mirror this morning, but I have kind of a memory problem?”

It is kind of a silly illustration. Some of us are pretty forgetful, but usually not quite that forgetful. But I think James is giving us a ridiculous illustration on purpose to show us how ridiculous it is when we do that very same thing with the mirror of God’s Word. A physical mirror shows you what is wrong with your face; the Bible shows you what is wrong with your heart. And so often we sit in a sermon and say, “Wow, I have got to fix these problems,” but then the second we hit that parking lot, that is the last we think about it all week.

Forgetting

And it’s not that we haven’t learned the information. If we took a test, we could get the answers right. You see, there are different kinds of forgetting. One kind is total inability to recall something.

“What is that guy’s name? I can’t remember.”

That is one kind of forgetting. But there is another kind. There are some times when the information is in your memory banks, and you could easily recall it if you tried, but it just doesn’t come to mind at the moment you need it to come to mind. Your wife asks you to stop on the way home and get milk, you say, “Sure, I’ll do that.” But by the time you are driving home you are thinking about something else, and you go right past the store without even thinking about it. If, at that moment, someone said, “Ok, pop quiz – what did your wife ask you to do on the way home?” you would easily remember. You know it – it’s just not popping up in your thinking at the right moment. A kid shows up at school, and if someone asked him at that moment, “Are you supposed to turn in your homework assignment?” he would easily remember – “The answer is yes.” But it just does not come to mind for whatever reason, and he gets home from school that day and there the assignment is still sitting in his backpack. That is the kind of forgetting James is talking about here.

There are so many principles from God’s Word that we know – we have them down cold – we could easily teach them; but they just don’t seem to come to mind in those moments when we most need them. You know for a fact – God has graciously forgiven an infinite debt of sin that you owed. We all know that. It is one of the most basic truths in Christianity. And yet – just think of how many situations in your life would go differently if that fact popped into your mind at the right moment. Think of the most helpful principles you have heard in sermons over the years. Just think how different your life would be if those principles popped up in your mind right at the moment when you most need them.

This kind of remembering – the kind that brings something you know to the front burner right when you need it (instead of 10 minutes later when it’s too late) – that kind of remembering is one of the most crucial elements of success in living the Christian life. And if the lack of that kind of remembering is what is causing some spiritual problem in your life, the solution is not necessarily learning more principles or different principles. The solution is to get the principles you already know to be there in your consciousness at the right moment.

There are some Christians who are reading book after book, going to counselor after counselor, doing one study after another looking for more answers, and they don't realize that the answers they already have would work if they could get them to come to mind at the right time. We are like a man who goes to the optometrist every single day for a new prescription because he keeps forgetting to put on the glasses he got on the first visit.

Please do not hear me saying that we need to learn less or study less. Very few people are spending too much time studying the Bible. That is not what I'm saying. We don't need to learn *less*; we need to learn *better*. We need to get the new prescription, but then remember to put the glasses on the next day. And that is what James is going to help us learn how to do.

How many times in the Bible does God say, "Do not forget"?

Deuteronomy 4:9 be careful, and watch yourselves closely so that you do not forget the things your eyes have seen or let them slip from your heart

He even gave them some memory aids to wear.

Numbers 15:39 You will have these tassels to look at and so you will remember all the commands of the LORD, that you may obey them ... 40 Then you will remember to obey all my commands

What is the key to obeying? Remembering. And so God constantly reminded them.

Deuteronomy 5:15 Remember that you were slaves in Egypt and that the LORD your God brought you out

Deuteronomy 7:18 remember well what the LORD your God did

Deuteronomy 8:2 Remember how the LORD your God led you

Deuteronomy 9:7 Remember this and never forget

Deuteronomy 6:12 be careful that you do not forget

Deuteronomy 15:15 Remember... that the LORD redeemed you

Deuteronomy 16:12 Remember...

Deuteronomy 24:18 Remember... 22 Remember...

So then what happened?

Psalms 78:11 They forgot what he had done

Judges 8:34 They did not remember the LORD their God, who had rescued them from the hands of all their enemies

You know how long it took the Israelites to forget the parting of the Red Sea? Three days. God delivered them from what seemed to be certain death, and destroyed Pharaoh's entire army in the sea while letting Israel walk through on dry ground, and three days later they got to Marah and the water was bitter, and they grumbled. Three days.

If you were to read Psalm 106:12, you would think the people were doing great.

Psalms 106:12 they believed his promises and sang his praise.

Faith and worship – that's pretty good, right? Seems like if you have those two things – faith in God and heartfelt, joyful praise and worship, you are doing pretty well. But not even faith will help you if you forget what God has done and what He has promised. But look at the next verse:

13 But they soon forgot what he had done and did not wait for his counsel.

How often we are like that - so few steps between our singing and sinning. I just think of how many times I have been moved to tears here in worship over some marvelous thing about God, and hours later it is the farthest thing from my mind. Or in the middle of the week I'm walking through my day - a temptation hits, and suddenly years of theological training evaporates. In that moment I cannot think of a good reason to choose God's way over the sinful path. Every Christian struggles with this. Even David had to preach to his soul and call upon his soul to forget not the Lord's benefits (Ps.103:2). It was the last thing God said to the people when He ended the Old Testament. In the last chapter of the last book:

Malachi 4:4 Remember the law of my servant Moses

And so it is no surprise that when the Messiah came He said:

John 16:4 I have told you this, so that when the time comes you will remember

I could go on and on – this is such a huge theme in Scripture. And it makes perfect sense. Which would be better: to learn 100 principles and forget 95, or to learn 10 and remember all of them? Work hard at learning as much from Scripture as you can, but also work hard at remembering. Work at getting those truths and principles so deeply integrated into your belief system that they control your attitudes and feelings and actions.

Ingrain the Truth into Your Outlook/Belief System

Every time you learn some new truth from Scripture, the goal is to make enough connections between that truth and other things you know to be true, so that that truth becomes integrated into your belief system like your belief in gravity. Over the years you have experienced the reality of gravity in relationship to every aspect of life so that now, your belief in gravity is so integrated into your outlook on life, and your belief system that it controls your actions and your feelings without you even having to consciously think about it. If you are walking through the woods, and a huge branch breaks off of a tree directly above you, you don't stand there and think, "Ok, now what did my seventh grade science teacher say about gravity? According to my notes, it should start accelerating towards me at about 9.8 m/s^2 which means I have about a second and a half before I am hit and crushed to death. Hmmm, I wonder what a good life application for that knowledge might be right now? How could I put the principle into practice?"

You don't think any of that. You just jump out of the way. Your belief in gravity is so ingrained in your outlook on life that you take gravity into consideration without even thinking about it. Your belief in gravity controls not only your actions, but even your emotions. You walk up to 1000 foot cliff and almost go over the edge, and instantly you experience fear. You haven't done any calculations; you haven't reviewed your science notes, just instant fear.

Isn't it true that there are some principles in Scripture that are ingrained into your soul like that and there are other truths in Scripture that are not? For some of you, your belief in the power of God is like your belief in gravity, but your belief in the kindness of God is not. When it comes to the kindness of God, you have to keep reminding yourself of what the Bible says about that, and even then it does not really seem like it is true. In your mind you accept it as true – if someone asks you, "Do you believe that God is kind?" you would say, "Absolutely!" But when it comes to your knee-jerk reactions to things in your emotions, you have to really work to press that truth into your thinking because it is not automatically there.

Maybe for some of you your belief in the kindness of God is like your belief in gravity, but your belief in His wisdom is not. Or maybe when the Bible says that lying is evil, that truth is integrated deep in your soul so that it really seems true, but when the Bible says that looking lustfully at a woman is evil, you believe it in your head but it just does not seem as true. Which truths from God's Word have not become fully integrated into your soul so that they control your outlook like your belief in gravity? Maybe it is your belief that opening up your Bible and spending time in prayer will be more satisfying

than turning on the TV? Maybe it is the fact that the sins you have committed against God that He has forgiven are much worse than the sins people are committing against you?

Whenever we learn some truth from Scripture and it does not become integrated into our outlook and belief system, it just kind of sits there on the shelf of your mind and before long you will forget it. Or when that moment comes when you really need it, it won't come to mind. When you don't understand how that truth relates to all the other things you know to be true, it gets shoved to the side and you forget it.

How to Remember

So how do you make truths from Scripture sink down into your heart and integrate into your outlook and belief system so that they come to mind when you need them? James is going to give us several instructions for that in verse 25. He is going to tell us to look intently into the Word. The manner in which you study God's Word determines how deep into your heart it goes.

Secondly, he says we need to continue or persevere in our study. Then he talks about not forgetting, but doing. And he also points us to a certain way of thinking about the nature of God's law. We need to see it as a **law of freedom**. Knowing what that means will help you hear and remember and do. Then he points us to the reward – God's blessing on your work serves as a motivation. So there is a handful of principles James gives us to help us become doers of the Word. Our time is gone today, so we will plan on taking a more in-depth look at those next time. Then we can talk about some specifics in how to approach your daily Bible reading, some study methods and tools – all the various aspects of looking intently into the perfect law of freedom. But for now let me just close our time by reminding you about a couple tools we already have in place that are designed for this exact purpose.

Devotionals

The first is the sermon devotionals. The last few weeks I have been putting daily devotionals at the end of the sermon manuscript. Those devotionals are designed around the various components of spiritual training that bring about real change and they will help you remember principles like always having a "Today I will..." at the end of your daily devotions. If you want to get those, just mark the box on your prayer slip that says, "I want to receive the sermon manuscript."

James 1:25 Groups

The other tool is what we call our James 1:25 groups. We named those groups after this very passage because they were designed for this purpose. They are small groups that meet in homes on a regular basis designed to help you take the principles you are learning from Scripture and press them deep into your soul so that you become a doer and not just a hearer. There are already a few of those groups that are meeting, but what we would like to do now is expand the number so that we have one in each area of town, so that there will be one near your house. Our plan is to set them up after the Fellowship Family model they have been using down at the south campus. You get together in a home, eat a meal together, pray together, and then go over the sermon application questions in the bulletin that are designed to help you become a doer rather than a forgetful hearer. When you go around the circle and hear each person's answer to those application questions, you find that it drills that principle deeper into your heart because you have spent an evening looking at it from numerous different angles and thinking hard about how it applies in your life.

Our goal is to launch the new groups ideally around the beginning of March. First we need to get a feel for where everyone lives, so please put a pin with your name and address and phone number on the map in the foyer before you leave today. And if you would be interested in hosting one of those groups in your home, please express that on your prayer slip.

Conclusion

If one of your kids came and asked you for \$500, your first question would be, “What are you going to do with it? Before I give it to you, I need to know what you’re going to use it for.” I think God asks the same question when we ask Him for insight into His Word.

“If I give you this insight you’re seeking, what are you going to do with it?”

What are you going to do with what you have learned this morning?

I told you about that little boy who sang the song from Mathew 7 while he cleaned the church. That little boy died at age three. And at the funeral, when they were carrying out his tiny little casket, they played that song because he sang it so much that he was just known by that song. Wouldn’t it be wonderful if someday, when we carry your casket out of here, and we pick a song that is the most fitting song to describe your life, it would be a song about being a doer of the Word?

Benediction: Deuteronomy 5:27 [the people said to Moses] Go near and listen to all that the LORD our God says. Then tell us whatever the LORD our God tells you. We will listen and obey.”
28 ...the LORD said to me, “I have heard what this people said to you. Everything they said was good. 29 Oh, that their hearts would be inclined to fear me and keep all my commands always, so that it might go well with them and their children forever!

Application Questions (James 1:25)

1. What are one or two truths you would love to have come to mind more readily than they do now?
2. A good practice is, after your devotions or after hearing a sermon, to write down, “I will...” followed by some specific way you plan to put what you have learned into practice. From this sermon, or your recent devotions, what is one of your “I will’s”?
3. If you were to establish a routine of writing out a specific “I will...” each day after your devotions, what would be the best way for you to do that (a white board at your desk, an app on your phone, a piece of paper in your pocket, etc.)? Why not give it a try this week?

Devotionals

Day 1

Preparation:

Pray S.I.O.U.S.

S is for Seek

Psalm 119:176 I have strayed like a lost sheep. Seek your servant, for I have not forgotten your commands.

All our seeking after God will be worthless if He does not seek us. Begin by asking God to come near to you.

I is for Incline

Psalm 119:36 Incline my heart toward your statutes.

Inclination has to do with what you like and dislike. We do not observe life with a detached, robotic analysis. We have a sense of liking and being attracted to some things and disliking and being inclined away from others.

Before you open your Bible take a moment to remind yourself that you could begin reading, come across some wonderful truth about God, and be bored by it. Horror! What could be worse than being unable to be delighted by the glory of God? Before reading, ask the Lord to incline your heart toward whatever it is He is about to show you so that when you see it you will love it.

O is for Open

Psalm 119:18 Open my eyes that I may see wonderful things in your law.

When you read something in Scripture about God and it does not thrill your soul and cause great joy, peace, comfort, or awe, there is only one explanation: your eyes are blind to what is wonderful about that truth. Every truth about God in Scripture would absolutely thrill you if your eyes were opened to see what is so wonderful about it. And only God can do that. So before reading, pray—"God, open my eyes."

U is for Unite

Psalm 86:11 Unite my heart, that I may fear your name.

When we come to the Word of God, we usually come with a scattered, distracted heart. We must pray, "Dear God, please unite my heart so for this brief little time I can focus my entire being on You."

S is for Satisfy

Psalm 90:14 Satisfy us in the morning with your unfailing love, that we may sing for joy and be glad all our days.

The presence of God is like food—it always satisfies the soul. If you go away from your time in the Word unsatisfied, then, it is because you did not experience the presence of God. It is good, before we open the Bible, to remind ourselves of the purpose of coming to God's banquet table. The goal is not just to gather information, but to leave the table with our souls satisfied!

Scripture Reading:

James 2 – watch how James develops the idea of being doers of the Word.

Sermon segment:

In James 1:21 we found that your spiritual life and health and growth and even your ultimate salvation on the last day all depend on a lifestyle of receiving the Word – welcoming it into your heart and letting it penetrate. Now, starting in verse 22, James is going to remind us that there are two crucial parts to receiving the Word: listening and doing. You have not received the Word until you have done both of those. One of the biggest mistakes Christians make in their effort to receive the Word, is that we get so wrapped up in learning the Bible that we don't put nearly enough energy into putting what we learn into practice. So James tells us, "Devote yourself to receiving the Word..."

James 1:22 But be doers of the word and not hearers only

So in verses 22-25 James is expanding on what he said in verse 21 about receiving the Word. If you want spiritual life and health you have to receive God's Word. But receiving is more than just hearing. It is more than hearing and understanding. It is more than hearing and understanding and agreeing. Receiving God's Word means hearing, understanding, agreeing, and *doing*. And if it stops short of the doing, it's worthless.

Suppose one of your friends convinced himself that he is doing well by just gathering information about the gym – even though he never actually goes and works out. He gets the address, phone number, directions, costs, rules and regulations. But he never actually does any exercise. You would tell him, "Look, if you think that will get you in shape, you're kidding yourself." The information in Scripture is the same way. If it does not result in you training yourself to be godly, what good has it done?

Of course, you know this already. Every Christian knows that or they couldn't be a Christian. If a person never put any of God's Word into practice, that person would never come to Jesus and repent of his sins, never trust God, and so he would never be saved. But even though every Christian understands this to some degree, the message of this passage is for believers. James is not speaking here to people who do absolutely nothing that the Bible says. He is giving a basic wisdom principle that can be applied in varying degrees. Every Christian is trying to put God's Word into practice to some degree, but one of the most common errors we make as Christians is to get out of balance in this area. We get so caught up with the studying and learning and reading and listening to sermons and going to classes and reading articles and books, and we keep packing more and more information into our skulls, that we fail to give adequate effort to putting it all into practice.

When we do that, James wants us to know – that actually does damage to your soul.

22 But be doers of the word and not hearers only, deceiving yourselves.

Every time we listen to God's Word and don't put it into practice, it has a deceiving effect. It tricks you into thinking that mere listening has some value. When you learn something from the Bible about a change you need to make in your life, that seems like spiritual progress. And so each time that happens,

but you don't actually make the change, it ends up deceiving you into feeling like you are growing when you're not. That is why there are people in the church whose character is right where it was 10 years ago, and yet they think they are doing pretty well spiritually. The sins in their life are not any different from what they were 10 years ago, but if you ask them about their walk with the Lord, they will say, "It's going pretty well." And they think that, because they keep on learning and learning and learning, and they have deceived themselves into thinking that's spiritual progress.

Memorize James 1:22. Say it five times from memory word for word. Then say James 1:21-22 ten times from memory word for word. Review it twice later today - once in the middle of the day and again before bed.

Prayer:

Before praying, think for a while about the claims God makes about His Word (Ps.19:9-11 will help with this). Then think deeply about what the implications are about the nature of God. What does it say about God that the Words out of His mouth have that kind of effect? Spend some time talking to God about this.

Doing: Do not be a forgetful hearer, but a doer of the Word (James 1:22-25)

- Write down at least one specific thing you will do to do to put what you have learned from God's Word into practice.
- Check this box when you have done it.

Fellowship:

Try to have a conversation with someone today about the most helpful thoughts that came out of your time with the Lord today.

Further Study:

The biblical counseling movement is doing some excellent work writing books on ways to put God's Word into practice in relationship to specific spiritual problems. If you have a problematic area in your life, check out the Biblical Counseling Coalition website and find a good book on that topic and read it. (<http://biblicalcounselingcoalition.org/books/lists/>)

Day 2

Preparation:

Pray S.I.O.U.S.

Scripture Reading:

Matthew 5 (The first portion of the Sermon on the Mount)

Sermon segment:

James calls us to be doers of the Word and not hearers only. So what is the solution if you are out of balance – lots and lots of learning and not much doing? Less hearing? No! More doing! James doesn't say, "stop being hearers," but rather, **be doers**.

Knowing and doing are like two pedals on a bike. You push one, then the other, etc. If you only have one pedal on your bike, it doesn't work.

Some people just want to push the doing pedal.

"I don't want to read, I don't want to study – I'm not the academic type; I just want to love people and serve and live a holy life."

The problem is they don't know much about what God requires or what a holy life is. They are all about obeying God, but they have don't much success with it because they don't know what God's Word teaches about how to obey. A friend of mine called me just the other night and told me about how he was having so much more victory now over his lust problem because he studied Ephesians 5 and learned about how you can all overcome lust with gratitude. But he said, "All these years I've never understood how gratitude can help defeat lust." If you try to obey God's Word without an ever-increasing knowledge and understanding of it, you will never succeed. (Not to mention you will be easy prey for false teachers.) So pushing that doing pedal without the hearing pedal doesn't work.

And neither does pushing the hearing pedal without the doing pedal. That is the point James is making here. There are some who only want to push that pedal. All they want to do is study. They go to a conference or retreat and they say, "Man, I grew so much that that retreat." They learned a lot at the retreat, and in their mind, that is the same thing as growing. And they just keep pushing the knowing pedal. They can ace any theology exam; they know things about the book of Ezekiel that Ezekiel didn't even know. They have memorized so many verses – they are like a walking concordance. But their anger problem is just as severe today as it was five years ago. Lots of knowing; not much doing.

"I know the Greek word for love your wife."

Then why does she look so miserable?

You cannot do the Word without knowing the Word, and there is no point in knowing the Word without doing the Word. Pedals on a bike - hear the Word; do the Word, hear the Word; do the Word.

You got up early and spent an hour studying your Bible. Fantastic! Is your life different? Are your relationships different now? Did it have an impact on your speech? Are you loving and serving people more now? Or did you just ... hear? Did you just have a great time in front of God's mirror for an hour, then walked away and immediately forgot about what needed attention?

One of the best insights I have ever heard on how to do your personal daily, devotions is something Sam told me a couple months ago. He said whatever you do for your devotions, when you are finished, get a piece of paper or your notebook and write the words, "Today I will..." and write out the specifics of how you are going to put what you learned from God's Word into practice today.

How many times do you read your Bible in the morning and all it really does is move the bookmark forward? So many people are deceived into thinking that the goal is to just keep that bookmark moving all the way from Genesis through Revelation. If your daily devotions do not include a plan of action, they are incomplete. And the more specific your plan, the more helpful it will be. Proverbs has a lot to say about the wisdom of making plans. And if that is important for business or building or projects, how much more important to plan for spiritual growth? So instead of saying, "Today I'm going to try to be more of a servant," say, "Today I will ... do three acts of loving service I wouldn't normally do." Instead of saying, "I need to use my mouth to build people up instead of finding fault all the time," say, "Today I will say something uplifting about someone else at least five different times. And I'm going to write about each one in my prayer journal." Or it can be something as simple as, "I read this morning about the importance of loving God's Word, and my attitude toward Scripture is not nearly what it should be – Today I will make a phone call to my prayer group leader or a biblical counselor and just ask, 'What are some practical steps I could take to increase my desire for God's Word?' And I'm not going to eat another meal until I've made that phone call."

You could do the same thing with sermons. Why not take the Q&A time after the sermon each week to jot down on your bulletin, in response to what you heard from God's Word in the sermon, "This week I will..." And make it as specific and measurable as possible.

Review James 1:21-22 ten times from memory word for word. Then review it two more times today, separated by at least an hour.

Prayer:

Pray through Matthew 5 paragraph by paragraph, asking God to show you what principle He would have you put into practice in a practical way today.

Doing: Do not be a forgetful hearer, but a doer of the Word (James 1:22-25)

- Write down at least one specific thing you will do to do to put what you have learned from God's Word into practice. (Today I will...)
- Check this box when you have done it.

Fellowship:

Try to have a conversation with someone today about the most helpful thoughts that came out of your time with the Lord today.

Day 3

Preparation:

Pray S.I.O.U.S.

Scripture Reading:

Matthew 6

Sermon segment:

When James tells us to be doers of the Word, the question might arise, "Isn't there more to obedience than just deciding to do the Word? What about heart issues?" As we will see in the next passage, James is not suggesting that this is all there is to spiritual growth. Sometimes you decide to put a principle into action and for some reason it just does not work. In those cases you need to track down what heart attitude, or out-of-control desire, or misconception of God's nature might be hindering your obedience in that area. And a good biblical counselor can help with that.

So I am not saying that obedience is only a matter of just deciding to do something specific. But I am saying that deciding to do something specific is a crucial part of it. Deal with a heart issues, yes, but also make some plans and take some action.

Hear the Word, do the Word. Or, in the words of the ancient Israelites, "listen and obey."

Deuteronomy 5:27 Go near and listen to all that the LORD our God says. Then tell us whatever the LORD our God tells you. We will listen and obey.

That is the posture we are to have before our God – “Speak, Lord. I will listen and obey.” That attitude is so supremely pleasing to God. Look how God responds in the next verse.

28 ...The LORD said to me, “I have heard what this people said to you. Everything they said was good. 29 Oh, that their hearts would be inclined to fear me and keep all my commands always, so that it might go well with them and their children forever!”

Whenever we have a heart that says, “I want to listen and obey,” God is in heaven saying, “Don’t lose that! I want so much for you to keep that attitude so that it will go well with you!” Let that be the controlling motto of our lives: Listen and obey.

That sort of thing was a major concern in the heart of Jesus. He taught about this a lot.

Luke 11:28 He replied, “Blessed rather are those who hear the word of God and obey it.”

John 13:17 If you know these things, you are blessed if you do them.

Matthew 7:24 “Therefore everyone who hears these words of mine and does them is like a wise man who built his house on the rock. 25 The rain came down, the streams rose, and the winds blew and beat against that house; yet it did not fall, because it had its foundation on the rock. 26 But everyone who hears these words of mine and does not do them is like a foolish man who built his house on sand. 27 The rain came down, the streams rose, and the winds blew and beat against that house, and it fell with a great crash.”

What is the difference between the wise man and the foolish man? Their knowledge of God’s Word is described in identical terms. The only difference is doing or not doing. That was a major theme in Jesus’ teaching.

Remember the little Sunday school song from that verse?

“The wise man built his house on the rock ... And the rains came down in the floods came up and the house on the rock stood fast.”

I heard this week about a woman who used to clean her church every week, and she would bring her little boy with her, and he would help her clean. And you could always tell when they were there because that little boy, as he cleaned, would sing that old Sunday school song from Matthew 7.

I don’t know if that little boy had exceptional hermeneutical skills or if that just happened to be his favorite song – but there is not a more fitting song to sing while you are serving and putting your faith into practice than that song. It is a song about doing the Word. He was singing a song about being a doer of the Word while he was doing the Word. He may not have known it, but while he was singing that song, that little boy was actually building his house on the rock.

Such a basic principle, and yet so easy to forget. Imagine a guy gets up in the morning and writes little note to his kids to remind them about their chores.

“Hey kids, don’t forget it’s trash day today. Make sure you get all the wastebaskets in the house emptied, and remember to take the garbage can from the garage out to the street before you leave for school. I love you, kids. Have a great day. See you tonight - Dad.”

He gets home that night, and the trash can is not out on the curb, and all the wastebaskets in the house are overflowing with trash. Family meeting.

“Did you get my note?”

“Oh yeah, Dad, it was amazing. The prose, the punctuation, the use of imagery – it is easily the greatest note on trash removal ever written. And that part at the end about how much you love us – that was the interpretive key to understanding the entire note. It brought us to tears. We love you too, Dad! The fact is, we were so inspired by the note that we spent the day studying all about trash removal. We found it is a theme in the Bible – in ancient Israel the trash had to be removed from the camp because it was a symbol of sin. That was such an amazing insight. And it reminded us of what Paul said in Philippians about how all his former religious activity was compared to rubbish. And we were really convicted that we need to get the word out about how to think about trash in a gospel-centered way and not a legalistic way. So we started a web site; we’ve actually launched a ministry...”

Meanwhile Dad is just looking around at the overflowing garbage cans all over the house. Were those kids honoring that note? No, because they ignored the purpose.

God wrote us a note. It has a purpose. Should we listen? And study? And memorize and read books about it and listen to sermons? Absolutely! But only so that we can do what it says. Only so we can honor the purpose God had in mind when He gave us the note.

Review James 1:21-22 at least three different times today.

Prayer:

Pray through Matthew 6 paragraph by paragraph, asking God to show you what principle He would have you put into practice in a practical way today.

Doing: Do not be a forgetful hearer, but a doer of the Word (James 1:22-25)

- Write down at least one specific thing you will do to do to put what you have learned from God's Word into practice. (Today I will...)
- Check this box when you have done it.

Fellowship:

Give someone in your prayer group a call or send an email to encourage them from God's Word.

Day 4

Preparation:

Pray S.I.O.U.S.

Scripture Reading:

Read Matthew 7

Sermon segment:

What insights can we gain from James 1:22-25 on how to be more successful in putting God's Word into practice? Most of the passage focuses on defeating enemy number in obeying God's Word, namely, forgetting.

James 1:23 Because if anyone is a hearer of the word and not a doer, he is like a man looking at his natural face in a mirror. 24 For he looks at himself, goes away, and immediately forgets what kind of man he was.

Underline that word **forgets**. That is the point James wants to focus on. The problem here is not lack of willingness, it is not lack of knowledge, it is not lack of resolve – it is forgetting.

And James paints kind of a funny picture here. You are getting ready for church, you look in the mirror, and see that your hair is a mess, you are still in your pajamas, something is stuck in your teeth, but then you step away from the mirror and instantly forget about all of it, and just go to church looking like that. James is giving us a ridiculous illustration on purpose to show you us how ridiculous it is when we

do that very same thing with the mirror of God's Word. A physical mirror shows you what is wrong with your face; the Bible shows you what is wrong with your heart. And so often we sit in a sermon and say, "Wow, I have got to fix these problems," but then the second we hit that parking lot, that is the last we think about it all week.

And it is not that we haven't learned the information. If we took a test, we could get the answers right. You see, there are different kinds of forgetting. One kind is total inability to recall something.

"What is that guy's name? I can't remember."

That is one kind of forgetting. But there is another kind. There are some times when the information is in your memory banks, and you could easily recall it if you tried, but it just doesn't come to mind at the moment you need it to come to mind. Your wife asks you to stop on the way home and get milk, you say, "Sure, I'll do that." But by the time you are driving home you are thinking about something else, and you go right past the store without even thinking about it. If, at that moment, someone said, "Ok, pop quiz – what did your wife ask you to do on the way home?" you would easily remember. You know it – it is just not popping up in your thinking at the right moment. A kid shows up at school, and if someone asked him at that moment, "Are you supposed to turn in your homework assignment?" he would easily remember – "The answer is yes." But it just does not come to mind for whatever reason, and he gets home from school that day and there the assignment is still sitting in his backpack. That's the kind of forgetting James is talking about here.

There are so many principles from God's Word that we know – we have them down cold – we could easily teach them; but they just don't seem to come to mind in those moments when we most need them. You know for a fact – God has graciously forgiven an infinite debt of sin that you owed. We all know that. It is one of the most basic truths in Christianity. And yet – just think of how many situations in your life would go differently if that fact popped into your mind at the right moment. Think of the most helpful principles you have heard in sermons over the years. Just think how different your life would be if those principles popped up in your mind right at the moment when you most need them.

This kind of remembering – the kind that brings something you know to the front burner right when you need it (instead of 10 minutes later when it's too late) – that kind of remembering is one of the most crucial elements of success in living the Christian life. And if the lack of that kind of remembering is what is causing some spiritual problem in your life, the solution is not necessarily learning more principles or different principles. The solution is to get the principles you already know to be there in your consciousness at the right moment.

There are some Christians who are reading book after book, going to counselor after counselor, doing one study after another looking for more answers, and they don't realize that the answers they already have would work if they could get them to come to mind at the right time. We are like a man who goes to the optometrist every single day for a new prescription because he keeps forgetting to put on the glasses he got at the first visit.

Please do not hear me saying that we need to learn less or study less. Very few people are spending too much time studying the Bible. That is not what I'm saying. We do not need to learn *less*; we need to learn *better*. We need to get the new prescription, but then remember to put the glasses on the next day. And that is what James is going to help us learn how to do.

How many times in the Bible does God say, "Do not forget"?

Deuteronomy 4:9 be careful, and watch yourselves closely so that you do not forget the things your eyes have seen or let them slip from your heart

He even gave them some memory aids to wear.

Numbers 15:39 You will have these tassels to look at and so you will remember all the commands of the LORD, that you may obey them ... 40 Then you will remember to obey all my commands

What is the key to obeying? Remembering. And so God constantly reminded them.

Deuteronomy 5:15 Remember that you were slaves in Egypt and that the LORD your God brought you out

Deuteronomy 7:18 remember well what the LORD your God did

Deuteronomy 8:2 Remember how the LORD your God led you

Deuteronomy 9:7 Remember this and never forget

Deuteronomy 6:12 be careful that you do not forget

Deuteronomy 15:15 Remember... that the LORD redeemed you

Deuteronomy 16:12 Remember...

Deuteronomy 24:18 Remember... 22 Remember...

So then what happened?

Psalms 78:11 They forgot what he had done

Judges 8:34 They did not remember the LORD their God, who had rescued them from the hands of all their enemies

You know how long it took the Israelites to forget the parting of the Red Sea? Three days. God delivered them from what seemed to be certain death, and destroyed Pharaoh's entire army in the sea while letting Israel walk through on dry ground, and three days later they got to Marah and the water was bitter, and they grumbled. Three days.

If you were to read Psalm 106:12, you would think the people were doing great.

Psalm 106:12 they believed his promises and sang his praise.

Faith and worship – that's pretty good, right? Seems like if you have those two things – faith in God and heartfelt, joyful praise and worship, you are doing pretty well. But not even faith will help you if you forget what God has done and what He has promised. But look at the next verse:

13 But they soon forgot what he had done and did not wait for his counsel.

How often we are like that - so few steps between our singing and sinning. I just think of how many times I have been moved to tears here in worship over some marvelous thing about God, and hours later it is the farthest thing from my mind. Or in the middle of the week I am walking through my day - a temptation hits, and suddenly years of theological training evaporates. In that moment I can't think of a good reason to choose God's way over the sinful path.

Review James 1:21-22 at least three different times today.

Prayer:

Pray through Matthew 7 paragraph by paragraph, asking God to show you what principle He would have you put into practice in a practical way today.

Doing: Do not be a forgetful hearer, but a doer of the Word (James 1:22-25)

- Write down at least one specific thing you will do to do to put what you have learned from God's Word into practice. (Today I will...)
- Check this box when you have done it.

Fellowship:

Try to have a conversation with someone today about the most helpful thoughts that came out of your time with the Lord today.

Day 5

Preparation:

Pray S.I.O.U.S.

Scripture Reading:

Deuteronomy 28. This famous chapter is known as the Blessings and Cursings chapter.

Sermon segment:

Every time you learn some new truth from Scripture, the goal is to make enough connections between that truth and other things you know to be true, so that that truth becomes integrated into your belief system like your belief in gravity. Over the years you have experienced the reality of gravity in relationship to every aspect of life so that now, your belief in gravity is so integrated into your outlook on life, and your belief system that it controls your actions and your feelings without you even having to consciously think about it. If you are walking through the woods, and a huge branch breaks off of a tree directly above you, you don't stand there and think, "Ok, now what did my seventh grade science teacher say about gravity? According to my notes, that bring it should start accelerating towards me at about 9.8 m/s^2 which means I have about a second and a half before I am hit and crushed to death. Hmmm, I wonder what a good life application for that knowledge might be right now? How could I put the principle into practice?" You don't think any of that. You just jump out of the way. Your belief in gravity is so ingrained in your outlook on life that you take gravity into consideration without even thinking about it. Your belief in gravity controls not only your actions, but even your emotions. You walk up to 1000 foot cliff and almost go over the edge, and instantly you experience fear. You haven't done any calculations; you haven't reviewed your science notes, just instant fear.

Isn't it true that there are some principles in Scripture that are ingrained into your soul like that and there are other truths in Scripture that are not? For some of you, your belief in the power of God is like your belief in gravity, but your belief in the kindness of God is not. When it comes to the kindness of God, you have to keep reminding yourself of what the Bible says about that, and even then it doesn't really seem like it's true. In your mind you accept it as true – if someone asks you, "Do you believe that God is kind?" you would say, "Absolutely!" But when it comes to your knee-jerk reactions to things in your emotions, you have to really work to press that truth into your thinking because it's not automatically there.

Maybe for some of you your belief in the kindness of God is like your belief in gravity, but your belief in His wisdom is not. Or maybe when the Bible says that lying is evil, that truth is integrated deep in your soul so that it really seems true, but when the Bible says that looking lustfully at a woman is evil, you believe it in your head but it just does not seem as true. Which truths from God's Word have not become fully integrated into your soul so that they control your outlook like your belief in gravity? Maybe it's your belief that opening up your Bible and spending time in prayer will be more satisfying than turning on the TV? Maybe it is the fact that the sins you have committed against God that He has forgiven are much worse than the sins people are committing against you?

Whenever we learn some truth from Scripture and it does not become integrated into our outlook and belief system, it just kind of sits there on the shelf of your mind and before long you will forget it. Or when that moment comes when you really need it, it won't come to mind. When you don't understand how that truth relates to all the other things you know to be true, it gets shoved to the side and you forget it.

If one of your kids came and asked you for \$500, your first question would be, "What are you going to do with it? Before I give it to you, I need to know what you're going to use it for." I think God asks the same question when we ask Him for insight into His Word.

"If I give you this insight you're seeking, what are you going to do with it?"

What are you going to do with what you have learned this morning?

That little boy who sang the song from Matthew 7 while he cleaned the church died at age three. And at the funeral, when they were carrying out his tiny little casket, they played that song because he saying it so much that he was just known by that song. Wouldn't it be wonderful if someday, when we carry your casket out of here, and we pick a song that is the most fitting song to describe your life, it would be a song about being a doer of the Word?

Review James 1:21-22 at least three different times today.

Prayer:

Pray through Deuteronomy 28, asking God to show you what principle He would have you put into practice in a practical way today.

Doing: Do not be a forgetful hearer, but a doer of the Word (James 1:22-25)

- Write down at least one specific thing you will do to do to put what you have learned from God's Word into practice. (Today I will...)
- Check this box when you have done it.

Fellowship:

Try to have a conversation with someone today about the most helpful thoughts that came out of your time with the Lord today.