

## TAKING A CLOSER LOOK

### James 1:22-27

People respond various ways when they hear God's Word

3 common approaches to teaching of God's Word:

1. **Leaven** approach—“**sit, soak, & sour!**”

Yeast that sits for days, not mixed in anything,  
because it isn't used, ferments & spoils.

2. **Cafeteria** approach—“**pick & choose!**”

*“I'd like a little of this & some of this, but NOT that!”*

We'll take parts we like; leave what we don't want!

3. **Basketball** approach—“**pass to next guy!**”

“Nudge thy neighbor!”

James has different approach: “James' mirror”

Writing to church under siege on acct. of Christ

Scattered everywhere—many have lost everything.

Tempted to “throw in towel” It's everyone for himself.

Pastor caring for flock; shares word of encouragement:

**When pressure rises, respond by listening to God's Word; doing what He says 22 “Do not merely listen to the word, & so deceive yourselves. Do what it says.”**

**To listen to God's Word without doing what it says is to deceive ourselves.**

Makes us feel good=>“warm fuzzy feeling” Does nothing

**Be doers of God's Word; not just hearers.**

### WHY SHOULD WE OBEY GOD'S WORD?

=>**JAMES' MIRROR:**

Several alternatives when we see ourselves in a mirror.

Few of us get up in a.m. Look at selves in mirror & say, “*I sure am a handsome dude!*”

1<sup>st</sup> impression looking in mirror is disappointing

We could respond to what we see in a variety of ways:

1. Break mirror—mad at it for revealing problem—*smash it!*
2. Cry! Get discouraged about what we see
3. Ignore it & walk away

I woke at 1 a.m., looked in mirror, saw I needed to shave, walked away, *forgot* what I’d seen. At office, I brushed hand against face; realized ***I forgot to shave!*** At times, even after we see what needs done, we walk away & forget!

Another way: Look carefully at what we see; decide...

4. Work on *improving* what we see=>corrective action

**Listening to God’s Word without doing what it says accomplishes nothing 23-24** “Anyone

*who listens to the word but does not do what it says, is like a man who looks at his face in a mirror<sup>24</sup> &, after looking at himself, goes away & immediately forgets what he looks like.”*

**Listening to God’s Word & not doing anything: like looking at self in mirror, walking away without doing anything about it.**

You soon forget what you saw.

Neither response changes anything!

[Positive exhortation:] **Looking into God’s Word & doing what it says produces blessing. 25**

*“The man who looks intently into the perfect law that gives freedom, & continues to do this, not forgetting what he has heard, but doing it—he will be blessed in what he does.”*

**Look carefully into God’s Word;**

**then do something about what you see.**

God’s Word is perfect. It brings liberty—true freedom

We think: law takes away our liberty!

People think God limits our freedom! *Ruins our fun!*

God’s word establishes parameters for us to enjoy life.

**Contemplating God’s Word changes our life.**

**Obedying what God says leads to blessing.**

NOT: “Blessed are those who never face pressure!”

Blessed’re those who *face* pressure; *do* what God says

**How does principle apply to living?**

3 exx. show us what this looks like in life under pressure:

**Example #1 26** *“If anyone considers himself religious & yet doesn’t keep a tight rein on his tongue, he deceives himself and his religion is worthless.”*

**True religion causes us to control our tongue**

If our faith doesn’t reach our tongue, it’s meaningless!

When tension rises, when we’re “couped up” together around the clock, how do WE handle it?

Husband criticizes: your stroganoff doesn’t taste like mom’s; wife nags you for not picking up clothes. Husband doesn’t think you, or the kids, should go out.

*How do we respond?*

When friend laughs at you, because you think we can just trust God in facing the pandemic.

How do we respond? Does our faith **control our tongue**?

If walk with God can't control our tongue, it's *worthless!*

**Example #2: 27a** *“Religion that God our Father accepts as pure & faultless is this: to look after orphans & widows in their distress.”*

**Worthwhile religion causes us to care for people who can't care for themselves.**

–drives us to help people who may *never* pay us back.

When **we** face hard times, do **we care about other people & what *they're* going through?**

People selflessly serving others; no hope of being repaid!

Pure religion looks like that! –causes us to **care about people who can't care for themselves**

**Example #3:**

In persecution, people want to look like everybody else.

Last thing we want is to stand out like a sore thumb!

**27b** *“Religion that God our Father accepts as pure & faultless is this: ...to keep oneself from being polluted by the world.*

**Worthwhile religion causes us to be different – to keep ourselves free from pollution**

Man visiting coal mine. Coal dust covered everything. He noticed a beautiful flower. Petals were pure.

Foreman took handful of dust; threw it on flower. Dust fell off; left flower stainless. “Plant has enamel which prevents dust from clinging to it. It must have been created for a place like this!”

God makes His people so we can resist pollution that contaminates society, so it won't cling to us either!

Religion God accepts isn't conformed to our culture!

**It's free from environmental pollution of this world!**

Our society is marching to beat of different drummer. Does *our* religion make a difference in choices we make? If it doesn't make a difference, it's worthless.

Listening to God's Word, doing what it says, helps us avoid “environmental pollution.” It keeps us away from garbage that contaminates our culture.

*If God's Word speaks about honesty & faithfulness, about sexual purity, about **honest** business dealings, gossip, anger & greed, it ought to make **us** different in a world polluted by ungodly living!*

**I don't expect pagans to act like God's people,  
but I do expect God's people to be different!**

Faced with pressure, it ought to make difference in how we respond to difficult, uncertain times.

**Pure religion will cause us to be different—keep US free from pollution by the world.**

**Swindoll:** Imagine you're my assistant. I want to establish new office=>move to Europe leaving you in charge. Months pass. I send letters spelling out expectations. I return, drive to office, stunned by what I see! Grass high; windows broken. Receptionist is doing her nails, chewing gum, & listening to ipod. Waste baskets

overflowing; carpet hasn't been vacuumed. I ask where you are & someone points down the hall. I call you into office.

"What's going on, man?" "What d' ya' mean?"

"Look at this place! Didn't you get my letters?" "Letters? Yeah! We got'em. We have letter study every Fri. night. We've divided people into small groups to discuss them. Some memorized sentences & paragraphs. Great stuff!

"Okay, okay— you got my letters, studied them, discussed & even memorized them. What did you DO about them?" "Do? Uh – we didn't DO anything about them."

**God calls us to look in His mirror, see our-selves as He sees us, & *do something* – take appropriate steps to correct what we see!**

Exhortation is applied to affliction/pressure they face

It applies for similar reasons to our current situation

***So how should WE respond to our situation today?***

***What will we DO about what God says?***

***–when pressure rises in our life?***