

## 2024 Kickoff pt2- Obeying

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2024 Kickoff / James 1:22–25

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How do you do with instructions? Directions? I'm talking to all of you, not just the fellas.

I am an instruction reader. My biggest issue is not following the instructions it is when I find the instructions to be incomplete or incomprehensible. Or written in Latin rather than English.

But in other areas of life, I am more prone to go my own way. Especially when it comes to driving and I think I know where I am going. The maps app may think it knows best, but I am sometimes sure I know better. And that has landed me in more than one traffic jam...if I had only listened... (coming home from Texas from Christmas)

We talked, extensively, about listening last week. But kicking off 2024 listening, while important, is only going to be helpful if we do something with what we hear...like obey...

As in, follow the instructions, directions, guidance, commands, etc

And that is where I think we often fall prey to the idea that God does not speak to us, not because He is silent, but **because we do not like what He said and we pretend to not hear Him or outright ignore Him and then do our own thing, and blame Him for the outcome.**

Y'all been there? I have.

So turn with me to [James 1:22-25](#) this morning. Let's see how the half brother of Jesus addresses this very issue.

So that first verse, 22, is strong, no. When we hear but don't obey we are lying to ourselves.

How do we lie to ourselves about God's Word:

1. We pretend it is not for us
2. We proof-text another verse to contradict what God has said
3. We elevate our opinion or culture as superior over what God has said

### **James (3) The Liberating Mirror (1:22–25)**

If the Word implanted is dynamic, working salvation, it is imperative that believers do what the Word says (the verse in Gk. reads lit., "Become doers of the word and not only hearers, deceiving yourselves"). Certainly there is a sense of development or growth here. Being doers of the Word involves becoming, but the force here is in being who one is because the Word is resident within. **Disciples are to "receive" the Word of God by "being" believers who do what that Word requires**

There may be others, but those are the most common. Why do we do those things?

We are in an internal war. Our old self, our sin nature, wants one thing and tells us that if we can have that thing, we will be better, rather than dealing with the root of the issue, **we attempt to make ourselves feel better by indulging in a fantasy.**

When you are a follower of Jesus, that fight does not go away, but you have an ally in the fight- the Holy Spirit- who wants to fight for you, but if you ignore the Spirit you have abandoned your ally in the fight.

### **James (3) The Liberating Mirror (1:22–25)**

The problem of self-deception recurs here. Believers can act against the Word of God and sin. Yet they simply must do what it says. For James, fruit must be produced, that is, acts of mercy. **Hearing, listening to the Word of God, is right, but it can become wrong when another type of self-deception arises. Doing what Scripture says is not a question of acting quickly or slowly but acting at all.** To be a hearer or to have faith only (cf. 2:24) is self-deceiving. Faith must be demonstrated (cf. 3:13), and to miss this is a fundamental flaw in understanding

So what does James compare this disobedience to? Misremembering what we look like. (v23-24)

Now, if I am being honest, we all have a slightly skewed vision of what we look like. We get into the comparison game when it comes to looks, in the same way we do when it comes to sin (I will get there shortly) We see ourselves as older or younger than we are, more fit or less fit, we focus on flaws or overaccentuate things we like (talk about my ears and laugh)

But this is more than that. It is not just having a false assessment, it is imagining you have long flowing Brad Pitt in Legends of the Fall hair, when you look like Kingpin in Daredevil. It is thinking you have brown eyes, when your icy blues can cut glass. It is walking around telling yourself you are 6'4" when you barely scrape 5' in heels. **It is a distorted view that convinces us that God made a mistake.**

And we do that when we are disobedient to what God has told us...**when we ignore His word for our own counsel.**

### **James (3) The Liberating Mirror (1:22–25)**

There is a double mistake implied here by the believer who does not act upon the Word. First, **the Word is being treated like a mere vision, a “theory,” in the sense of a detached mental image with no connection to the external world.** The Word is like a theory, but it is a practical one that both reflects reality, that is, the natural face, and directs the beholder to act in a certain way. The second mistake we make regarding the Word is to ignore its message once it is received. The mere **glancing at the Word without corrective action is of little use**

- And we often do it, by getting into the comparison game- this is a little sin, not a big deal, look at what so and so does, says, gets away with.
- Or we compare God’s word with a different philosophy, cultural norms, or other guidance that contradicts scripture.
- Or we distort the Word to make it mean something it cannot (hermeneutics)

But in all of these things, ultimately, **we are forgetting what our identity is...what we look like...a child of God.**

Your identity is found in Him when you follow Jesus and He is not going to speak to you without a reason for His commands. He has your BEST interests at heart. And when we look in the mirror of His word, we need to see ourselves clearly, but Him as well.

### **James (3) The Liberating Mirror (1:22–25)**

Such an unconcerned quick checking and leaving, almost to see if the Word still condemns him, is meant to convey how terribly wrong this exercise is. The abruptness of the process is intensified by the immediate forgetting of what was seen

Which brings us to verse 25. What happens when we obey. Well the long term end is good, so good in fact, that it has the same ending, as we discussed last week.

We are blessed, happy.

So happiness is based on circumstances, and sometimes when we obey God our circumstances do not always get better in the near term. So how can we be happy? Because **we know we are in the middle of those circumstances with the God who loves us and died for us.**

### **James (3) The Liberating Mirror (1:22–25)**

the believer who learns about himself and what God requires by concentrating on the mirror of the Word will be blessed. The sense here is of an intense looking into Scripture for the purpose of self-change. The exercise is one of careful attention to learn what is wrong and to discern what ought to be done to correct it. **This kind of continual gazing into the Word—which is really a kind of hearing—guards against forgetting and motivates doing**

So outwardly, it may look awful, but in the midst, we find the happiness of those who are in the fire with the Lord.

### **James (3) The Liberating Mirror (1:22–25)**

Every believer walks back into life and away from moments of hearing the Word of God in preaching or reading, but not in the same way. Through humble, attentive, and continual exposure to the Word of God the believer will find a quickness to apply it both in the midst of trials of faith and in the temptation to give in to wealth and privilege

How is God speaking to you as this year begins? Are you obeying?