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The Key To A Blessed Life

JAMES 1:22-25

Introduction

1. I believe that everyone in this room tonight has been on one end or the other of the illustration I am about to share with you.
2. On one side, you were the parent, teacher, coach, supervisor or employer who said told someone to do something and one of two things happened:
 - a. Either the person failed to hear what you told them to do, or
 - b. They indicated they heard you and promised to do whatever it was you told them to do but never did.
3. The other side of this is that you were that person who feigned hearing or simply ignored what was being said to you.
4. Personally, I have been on both sides of this.
 - a. During my adult life, I have given instructions, directions, or whatever else you may call it only to realize later that the person to whom I was speaking either did not hear or was not paying attention to what I was saying.
 - b. I also remember a specific time in my life when I was watching television and my mother told me to carry out a task.
 - c. My father was in the room as well. When I didn't acknowledge my mother's instructions, my father simply said, "Son, did you hear your mother?"
 - d. I immediately knew I had better figure out what my mother had said to me or I was going to be in trouble.

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5. Here, we find James writing these words:

"But prove yourselves doers of the word and not merely hearers who delude

themselves" (*James 1:22, NASB95*)

6. Perhaps James was simply repeating something which he had heard Jesus say, "blessed are those who hear the word of God and observe it" (*Luke 11:28*).

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I. A Concern of Our Lord

A. HIS SERMON ON THE MOUNT

²⁴"Therefore everyone who hears these words of Mine and acts on them, may be compared to a wise man who built his house on the rock.

²⁵"And the rain fell, and the floods came, and the winds blew and slammed against that house; and yet it did not fall, for it had been founded on the rock.

²⁶"Everyone who hears these words of Mine and does not act on them, will be like a foolish man who built his house on the sand.

²⁷"The rain fell, and the floods came, and the winds blew and slammed against that house; and it fell—and great was its fall."

(*Matthew 7:24–27 , NASB95*)

1. At the end of His Sermon on the Mount, Jesus compares those who have heard his words and choose to act upon them to a wise builder who built his house upon a solid foundation.
2. That person's life would withstand the assaults which Satan would hurl at him because His life was being lived out in obedience to the Lord's teaching.
3. On the other hand, the person who heard what Jesus said but chose not to direct his or her life by His divine counsel would be like a foolish builder who built his house on an unstable foundation.
4. In the storms of life, this person would find himself overwhelmed.
5. It wasn't enough just to hear His Words, they must be hidden in the heart and treasured if they were to have the needed effect.

Slide 4**B. HIS SERMON ON THE PLAIN**

⁴⁶“Why do you call Me, ‘Lord, Lord,’ and do not do what I say?”

⁴⁷“Everyone who comes to Me and hears My words and acts on them, I will show you whom he is like:

⁴⁸he is like a man building a house, who dug deep and laid a foundation on the rock; and when a flood occurred, the torrent burst against that house and could not shake it, because it had been well built.

⁴⁹“But the one who has heard and has not acted accordingly, is like a man who built a house on the ground without any foundation; and the torrent burst against it and immediately it collapsed, and the ruin of that house was great.”

(Luke 6:46–49, NASB95)

1. Jesus’ words on this occasion were similar to those from His Sermon on the Mount, but were apparently delivered at a later point in His ministry.
2. On this occasion, He asked the people, “Why do you call Me, ‘Lord, Lord,’ and do not do what I say?” (Luke 6:46, NASB95)
3. Jesus knew that the adulation of the crowd was not the same as their obedience to His teaching.

Slide 5**C. FOLLOWING VARIOUS TEACHINGS**

1. A number of times following various statement or parables, we find Jesus saying:
 - a. “He who has ears to hear, let him hear” (Matthew 11:15; Mark 4:9; Luke 14:35)
 - b. “He who has ears, let him hear” (Matthew 13:9, 43)
 - c. “If anyone has ears to hear, let him hear” (Mark 4:23; 7:16)
2. When Jesus exhorted the people to hear, he wanted them not only to understand but to act upon what His teaching in a positive way.

- ❑ All of this brings us to James and what he has to say on this same subject.

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II. Listless Listening

A. KEEP ON BECOMING DOERS OF GOD'S WORD

“But prove yourselves doers of the word, and not merely hearers who delude themselves.” (James 1:22, NASB95)

1. When James says this, he isn't minimizing the importance of hearing God's Word.
2. Instead, he is insisting on an obedience which lasts.
3. Luke tells us of a time when Jesus' mother and brothers were standing outside the house where He was teaching, trying to get to Him.
 - a. Someone said, “Your mother and Your brothers are standing outside, wishing to see You.” (Luke 8:20).
 - b. Jesus answered them, “My mother and My brothers are these who hear the word of God and do it” (Luke 8:21).
4. On another occasion, Luke records Jesus as saying, “blessed are those who hear the word of God and observe it” (Luke 11:28).
5. God wants us to become obedient followers of His Son.
6. To hear His word without doing anything it calls upon us to do is to deceive ourselves.

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B. THE WRONG APPROACH

“For if anyone is a hearer of the word and not a doer, he is like a man who looks at his natural face in a mirror; for once he has looked at himself and gone away, he has immediately forgotten what kind of person he was.” (James 1:23–24, NASB95)

1. James illustrates what he means by a “listless listener” with an illustration from his own time.
2. The mirrors of James’ day were not like our modern glass mirrors.
3. They were made of polished metal — typically bronze, but sometimes silver or even gold.
4. These mirrors, however, did not enable a person to get a good look at himself.
5. People used these mirrors in much the same way we use them today — wash their faces, shave their beards, comb their hair.
6. Notice that James compares his “listless listener” to a man, not a woman, who carries out these various tasks in front of this mirror.
7. I dare say it is because women tend to spend more time paying attention to their appearance than a man typically would.
8. This man “looks at himself” (NASB95, ESV, NIV84), “observes himself” (NKJV) then turns and walks away, quickly forgetting what he has just seen.
9. His point is that there are those who give a cursory glance at God’s Word, find a morsel of truth, but then quickly engage in something else without remembering or applying what they have read.

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II. Effectual Doing

“But one who looks intently at the perfect law, the law of liberty, and abides by it, not having become a forgetful hearer but an effectual doer, this man will be blessed in what he does.” (James 1:25, NASB95)

A. AN INTENT LOOK

“But one who looks intently at the perfect law, the law of liberty . . .”

1. This is someone who spends time in God’s Word with a desire to learn.
2. The word translated “looks intently” (NASB95, NIV84), “looks into” (ESV,

NKJV)

3. James uses the same word here that John used to describe the what that the apostle John looked into the empty tomb following Jesus' resurrection.
4. He "looked into," "stared into" the empty tomb (John 20:5).
5. The result was that "he saw and believed" (John 20:8).
6. If we are going to be effectual doers of God's Word, we must "stare into it," we must "study it" (2 Timothy 2:15) and "meditate upon it day and night" (Psalm 1:2).

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B. AN ABIDING LIFE

"and abides by it, not having become a forgetful hearer but an effectual doer,"

1. Not only must we seek to understand it, we must also work to conform our lives to its teachings.
2. The psalmist wrote, "Your word I have treasured in my heart, that I may not sin against You" (Psalm 119:11, NASB95).

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C. A BLESSED DOER

"this man will be blessed in what he does."

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1. The psalmist describes the life of such an individual in Psalm 1:3.

"He will be like a tree firmly planted by streams of water,
Which yields its fruit in its season
And its leaf does not wither;
And in whatever he does, he prospers."

(Psalm 1:3, NASB95)

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2. The beginning of Psalm 119 also describes this blessed doer.

“How blessed are those whose way is blameless,
Who walk in the law of the Lord.
How blessed are those who observe His testimonies,
Who seek Him with all their heart.
They also do no unrighteousness;
They walk in His ways.”

(Psalm 119:1–3, NASB95)

Conclusion

1. When it comes to God’s Word, how would you describe yourself?
2. Would James call you “a forgetful hearer” or “an effectual doer”?
3. Your answer matters because it determines whether or not your life will be blessed in what you do.