

New Life Habits: Obedience

James 1:22-27

Week of September 20

As you enter into prayer now, take a moment to settle your mind. Put aside your concerns and what needs to get done today, or what didn't get done today. Take a slow, deep breath. Center yourself in His Peace. He is the Alpha and Omega. The Beginning and End. You are found in Him.

Be Still.

Lord, open my heart and mind to hear and understand Your Word. I invite your Spirit to speak to me as I meditate on your Word.

Last week in the first chapter of James, our focus was perseverance. Brian talked about life in the Spirit being “a slow life, a steadfast life, a persevering life.” Having habits that draw us close to Jesus, and doing those habits over and over again will change who we are. Today we shift our focus to obedience. Obedience is the listening AND the doing. In both chapter 1 and 2, James returns over and over again to the idea that our faith must be active. We begin with chapter 1, verses 22-27.

²² Do not merely listen to the word, and so deceive yourselves. Do what it says. ²³ Anyone who listens to the word but does not do what it says is like someone who looks at his face in a mirror ²⁴ and, after looking at himself, goes away and immediately forgets what he looks like. ²⁵ But whoever looks intently into the perfect law that gives freedom and continues in it—not forgetting what they have heard but doing it—they will be blessed in what they do.

²⁶ Those who consider themselves religious and yet do not keep a tight rein on their tongues deceive themselves, and their religion is worthless. ²⁷ Religion that God our Father accepts as pure and faultless is this: to look after orphans and widows in their distress and to keep oneself from being polluted by the world.

Pause and Pray.

Jesus, I am here because I want to experience You. As I meditate on this passage, draw to mind those things that You would have me become more aware of. Center my heart and mind on Yourself. Use your Word to draw my heart to You. Amen.

REFLECT.

In the next few minutes, we invite the Spirit to be at work through these Scriptures. Use the questions as prompts to reflect.

Listen to the Word. Do what it says. Lord, speak to my heart. Have I been listening? Have I been doing? (PAUSE)

Lord, do I remember your Word? In my day-to-day life, am I taking time to reset myself regularly by engaging You through the Scripture? (PAUSE)

How am I looking intently into your Freedom and engaging it? How am I not? (PAUSE)

Do I practice a religion that keeps my tongue in check? (PAUSE)

Do I love those who are right in front of me with mercy and grace in my words? (PAUSE)

Am I pursuing the good of others who have less than I have? (PAUSE)

Am I pursuing You, to keep myself from being polluted by the world? (PAUSE)

PAUSE, PRAY AND ASK.

Lord, in what you have revealed, I ask for your forgiveness. I lay before you any area of sin that came to mind. (PAUSE)

Lord, in your forgiveness, I rejoice. I receive your grace, your mercy, your forgiveness. I let the warmth of that reality wash over me, and I thank you. (PAUSE).

Lord, I lay before you now these areas where I need your movement. Areas where I need you to empower me, to make me faithful to listen to your Word. To make me faithful to be obedient to Your Word. (PAUSE).

Lord, I thank you in advance for what You will do, and I wait in eager anticipation to watch You move. (PAUSE)

YIELD.

I return now to the text:

¹⁹ My dear brothers and sisters, take note of this: Everyone should be quick to listen, slow to speak and slow to become angry, ²⁰ because human anger does not produce the righteousness that God desires. ²¹ Therefore, get rid of all moral filth and the evil that is so prevalent and humbly accept the word planted in you, which can save you.

²² Do not merely listen to the word, and so deceive yourselves. Do what it says. ²³ Anyone who listens to the word but does not do what it says is like someone who looks at his face in a mirror ²⁴ and, after looking at himself, goes away and immediately forgets what he looks like. ²⁵ But whoever looks intently into the perfect law that gives freedom, and continues in it—not forgetting what they have heard, but doing it—they will be blessed in what they do.

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As I yield to your will in my life this week, I ask you to bring to mind—is there anyone I have hurt with my words, action or inaction? (PAUSE)

Show me how to make it right, Lord. (PAUSE)

Is there anyone I know who is an orphan or widow in distress in some way that I can assist? (PAUSE)

Show me how to help, Lord. (PAUSE)

I commit now to these actions this week, Lord. Amen.

CLOSE IN PRAYER.

We close by praying a modified version of Psalm 40-

I wait patiently for the LORD;
he turns to me and hears my cry.
² He lifted me out of the slimy pit,
out of the mud and mire;
he set my feet on a rock
and gave me a firm place to stand.
³ He puts a new song in my mouth,
a hymn of praise to our God.
Many will see and fear the LORD
and put their trust in him.

⁴ Blessed am I as I
trust in the LORD,
when I do not look to the proud,
to those who turn aside to false gods.

⁵ Many, LORD my God,
are the wonders you have done,
the things you planned for us.

None can compare with you;
were I to speak and tell of your deeds,
they would be too many to declare.

⁶ Sacrifice and offering you did not desire—
but my ears you have opened^[c]—
burnt offerings and sin offerings^[c] you did not require.

⁷ Then I said, "Here I am, I have come—
it is written about me in the scroll.^[e]

⁸ I desire to do your will, my God;
your law is within my heart."

May it be so, Lord Jesus. Amen.