

THE MAIN THING: Pursue Simplicity: Fall 2015 Series

Do not merely listen to the Word and so deceive yourselves. Do what it says. We can all make excuses (and do!) to not apply God's Word to our lives. Doing so can lead to our lives crashing. Obeying God opens up our lives to His blessing through strong, thriving lives of simplicity.

PURSUE RELATIONSHIP: *Opportunities to connect and pray as a group*

How many mirrors are in your house?

Describe your best or worst experience in front of the mirror.

PURSUE GOD: *Time that is devoted to the Word of God*

1. Read Matthew 7:24-27 slowly, and consider the two builders.

- What were their choices?
- What was the outcome for each?
- Why did Jesus close the Sermon on the Mount with this illustration?

2. Read James 1:22-25

- Why would James say that not acting on what you see is deceiving yourself? How is the mirror in James similar to God's word? How is James' message similar to Jesus' message?
- Why would a person not pay attention to what is in the mirror, and why would a builder not pay attention to the foundation?

PURSUE MISSION: *Seek to be the community of God's people in your community as you live out your calling*

1. What has God been saying to me lately?
2. How have I responded, and how would I like to respond?
3. Share your experience (challenges and benefits) in learning to become a doer of the word.

For further consideration. Is there a "house" (relationship, finances, career, time) that you feel "stuck" as being only a hearer? Have you heard ideas / testimonies on moving forward? What steps can you take? Who can you ask for help?

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Hearing and doing go together.

THE WORD (NIV)

Matthew 7:24-27

²⁴ "Therefore everyone who hears these words of mine and puts them into practice 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 put them into practice 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."

James 1:22-25

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.

1 John 3:1

See what great love the Father has lavished on us, that we should be called children of God! And that is what we are! The reason the world does not know us is that it did not know him.

Sermon Study Summary

This marks the final message on Simplicity. Many have indicated they were challenged by the messages. Yet, have you taken at least one step to simplify your life? Reading God's Word and hearing it taught is a good thing. But just hearing God's Word doesn't go far enough. Jesus tells us that hearing and doing go together (Matthew 7:24-27). James says the same (James 1:22-25) and even warns us that if we are content to just listen to the Word we are deceiving ourselves! How might we do that?

1. We compare ourselves with other Christians. Despite knowing that we are ignoring some parts of Christ's teachings and their call to action we justify our disobedience. We say that we are more devoted, living simpler and giving more than 'most' Christians we know. When we hear Scripture preached we think of how 'others' should be hearing this as they need it more.
2. We believe we are growing spiritually because we had an emotional experience. We can be moved in a service and leave feeling closer to God. But if that is where it stops, and you don't move on what God spoke to you in that service, then you are deceiving yourself.
3. We felt convicted by a sermon or passage studied at a Bible Study. Leaving there with a sense that we 'should' deal with this or that in our lives and not stepping out in faith to doing anything about it is deceiving ourselves.

James likens this to looking in the mirror and seeing that your face needs serious work — and you do nothing about it but go off to school or work anyway. Others notice and wonder what happened to you that you look this way. We know that our face needs attention and we do something about it. Yet in our spiritual lives we don't follow that path. We know there are things that require our attention and we know what the Bible says we should do about it from reading it or from messages. Yet often we don't do what we know we need to do. Matthew 7 says that if we keep putting this off, one day we will reap what we sow and our lives will crash.

There is good news. Jesus says that if you put His Words into practice, your life will stand firm and thrive. James adds that you will be blessed. The world is full of stories of people who ignored God's Word and their lives becoming shipwrecked, or of marrying someone not on the same spiritual page as the other and feeling alone in their faith. Bill Hybels' father was a disciplined and faithful man in all but one area — his diet and exercise, and died young as a result. Eli (1 Samuel 2) was a well respected prophet in Israel living an upright, righteous life — but for one area. He neglected to train and discipline his sons who grew to be scoundrels. He reaped the shame of this later in life.

God has our best interests at heart. When you hear Him speaking to you about something and are tempted to ignore Him, or put off what He is saying, always remember that His heart's desire is to bless you and see you set free from all that keeps you from being who He created you to be. So too, He will warn us that ignoring Him bears a cost.

The message of simplicity is this: If we want to break out of a lifestyle of complexity and pursue one of simplicity, the most fundamental decision we must make is 'what is the one thing I'm giving my life to'? What is most important to you? For you to live is ... what? The answer to that will affect every area of your life — your values, priorities, lifestyle, relationships, how you use your time and money and, ultimately, your eternal trajectory.

But, having made this decision, your life will not change, and you will not experience a life of simplicity or growth in any other area, if you do not act on what is most important to you. If for you to live is Christ, then you need to prayerfully evaluate all aspects of your life and whether they are pointed toward the ONE you say is most important to you. Are my closest friends on the same page as I am with respect to what is most important to me and to God? Outside of work, am I investing my time in those things that are most important to me and to God? Are my financial decisions aligned with what I say is most important to me? You can believe all the right things but unless you actually do what you believe to be true and important there will be no change in your life.

80% of people in the United States say they are Christians. Yet, if that many are genuine Christ followers, would the nation not look differently than it does? (The same goes for Canada.) In God's eyes we have vast worth (1 John 3:1). We are children of the King. He saw in us something of infinite value. In spite of being sinners deserving of judgment, He took the initiative and made a way for us to be reconciled (John 3:16). God took what was most precious to Him — His Son — and allowed Him to die on a cross for you and me. He cares for you and wants you to live life to the full. Have you heard God speak to you about an issue that you know is not God's best for you? Do you feel that you don't have the courage or strength to do what you need to do? You are not alone. He is with us. And in us. And the same power that raised Jesus from the dead is available to you and me to do those things He has called us to do. He is walking with us and empowering us to do what we can't do. Surrender Your life completely to Him and you will not only find true rest for your soul but He will guide you and empower you to live a life of simplicity to the glory of God and for the sake of a world who needs the Jesus we know and love.

Lord, what are you saying to me? What are you asking me to do about it?