

Doers of the Word

The Church of the Covenant, Washington, PA

James 1:19-27

September 2, 2018

Today I want to focus our thoughts on the letter of James chapter 1, verse 22 -

“Do not merely listen to the word, and so deceive yourselves... Do what it says.”

Throughout his entire letter, James is concerned that faith in Christ be expressed by action, and that Christians would put into practice what they say they believe. He tells them, *“Do not merely listen to the word...”*

James means more than just using your ears to hear sound waves. James is referring to listening to, or reading, the Scriptures, the Word of God. “Merely listening to the word” includes religious rituals and practices that one repeats by rote. It includes sitting in the church pew but not paying attention. It includes half-listening to sermons while checking out face-book or emails on your smart phone.

James means don't let that word of God go in one ear and out the other!

Verse 22 continues: “... Do what it says!”

That is the important part – the application of what you hear. When you listen to sermons or go to Adult Education classes, do you leave thinking about how you can put into practice what you just learned?

Someone said, **“The Bible was not written to satisfy your curiosity. It was written to transform your life!”**¹

That is what James is saying in his entire letter. “Don't just sit there! Be a Doer of the Word!”

I am sorry that I cannot give you a bullet-point list of **“10 steps to becoming a successful Doer of the Word.”** Our lives are all too different. Our circumstances and personalities are too complex and varied. Instead, I want to share with you four stories about people who took their faith beyond listening and became “Doers of the Word.” We will trust the Holy Spirit to use these stories to inspire you to become a Doer of the Word too.

1. Hear the word in Matthew 5:43-45

⁴³ *“You have heard that it was said, ‘Love your neighbor and hate your enemy.’ But I tell you, love your enemies and pray for those who persecute you, that you may be children of your Father in heaven. He causes his sun to rise on the evil and the good, and sends rain on the righteous and the unrighteous.”*

Be a Doer of the word.

“Watchman Nee, the Chinese evangelist, tells of a Christian he once knew in China. He was a poor rice farmer, and his fields lay high on a mountain. Every day he pumped water into the paddies of new rice, and every morning he returned to find that a neighbor who lived down the hill had opened the dikes surrounding the Christian's fields to let the water fill his own. For a while the Christian ignored the injustice, but at last he became desperate. He met and prayed with other Christians and came up with the following solution.

The next day the Christian farmer rose early in the morning and first filled his neighbor's fields, then he attended to his own. The evangelist tells how the neighbor subsequently became a Christian, his unbelief overcome by a genuine demonstration of a Christian's humility and Christlike character.ⁱⁱ

That farmer was a Doer of the Word.

2. Hear the Word in Luke 15:30-37

Jesus said: "A man was going down from Jerusalem to Jericho, when he was attacked by robbers. They beat him and went away, leaving him half dead. A priest and later a Levite, both passed by on the other side. But a Samaritan, as he traveled, came where the man was; and when he saw him, he took pity on him. He went to him and bandaged his wounds. Then he put the man on his own donkey, brought him to an inn and took care of him. The next day he took out two coins and gave them to the innkeeper. 'Look after him,' he said, 'and when I return, I will reimburse you for any extra expense you may have.'

Jesus asked, "Which of these three do you think was a neighbor to the man who fell into the hands of robbers?"

The expert in the law replied, "The one who had mercy on him."

Jesus told him, "Go and do likewise."

Be a Doer of the word.

A seminary professor set up an exam for his preaching class one week. They were to prepare a sermon on The Good Samaritan. On the day of the exam, the students were to wait in one classroom, and then walk, one at a time, to another room to present their sermons. On the way, each student had to pass by a homeless man, who was deliberately planted there, obviously in need of some sort of help.

The percentage of students who stopped to help was surprisingly low, especially for those who were under the pressure of a shorter time period to get from one room to the next. Rushing to preach a sermon on the Good Samaritan, they had walked right on past the beggar at the heart of the parable. *That was the actual test.*ⁱⁱⁱ

"Do not merely listen to the word, and so deceive yourselves. Do what it says!"

3. Hear the word in 1 Thessalonians 5:16-18

"Rejoice always, pray continually, give thanks in all circumstances; for this is God's will for you in Christ Jesus."

Be a Doer of the word.

Ruth Senter wrote a short story about an experience she had in the locker room at the pool. It was 6:15 a.m. when she heard a Voice from the other side of the lockers that sounded like the morning itself – bright, cheerful and full of life.

"Dolores, I really appreciated the book you picked up for me last week. I know the library was out of your way. I haven't been able to put the book down. Solzhenitsyn is a great writer. I'm glad you suggested him to me."

“Good morning, Pat.” She greeted another swimmer. For a moment the voice was silent, then I heard it again. “Have you ever seen such a gorgeous day? I spied a pair of meadow larks as I walked over this morning. Makes you glad you’re alive, doesn’t it?”

The voice was too good to be true. Who can be that thankful at this time of the morning? Probably some rich woman who has nothing to do all day but sip tea on her veranda and read Solzhenitsyn.

Ruth went around the corner of the lockers and came face to face with the youthful voice. An employee of the swimming facility was just gathering up her mops, brooms, dust cloths and buckets. The cleaning woman smiled and hurried out the door, calling out, “Have a glorious day!”^{iv}

That cleaning woman was a Doer of the Word.

4. Hear the word in 1 Corinthians 13:4-8

Love is patient, love is kind.
 Love does not envy, it does not boast, it is not proud.
 It does not dishonor others, it is not self-seeking,
 Love is not easily angered, it keeps no record of wrongs.
 Love does not delight in evil but rejoices with the truth.
 Love always protects, always trusts, always hopes, always perseveres.
 Love never fails.

Be a Doer of the word.

This time, the example is about you.

Substitute your name for the word “love” In 1 Corinthians 13.

You are patient. You are kind and thoughtful.
 You are never jealous or envious.
 You do not brag and are not proud or arrogant.
 You are never haughty or selfish or rude.
 You never demand your own way.
 You are not irritable or touchy or easily angered.
 You do not hold grudges and will hardly even notice when others do you wrong.
 You are never glad about evil, but instead rejoice whenever truth wins out.
 If you love someone, you will bear all things regardless of what comes.
 You will be loyal to them no matter what the cost.
 You always believe in others and look for what is best in them.
 You remain hopeful and steadfast during difficult times.
 You endure all things without weakening.
 The Love of Christ in you will never fail, or fade, or end.

5. Hear the Word in Philippians 1:6

“I can do all things in Him who strengthens me.”

Accept the word of God, planted in you. Be a Doer of the Word. Amen.

ⁱ Living by the Book, by Howard Hendricks, p. 290

ⁱⁱ Philippians – An expositional Commentary by James Montgomery Boice. P. 107

ⁱⁱⁱ Stories For the Heart, compiled by Alice Gray. “The Good Samaritan” by Tim Hansel, p. 89

^{iv} Ibid. “Contentment Is...” by Ruth Senter, p.91