

Part Three: Just Do It

Written by Bob Stone

I read once of a teacher who quizzed a group of college-bound juniors and seniors in preparation for a "Bible as Literature" course. He planned to teach in one of the better high schools in our nation. The results revealed what we all know: our nation is biblically illiterate.

Here are a few of the replies from the students he surveyed:

- Sodom and Gomorrah were lovers.
- Jezebel was Ahab's donkey.
- The four horsemen appeared on the Acropolis.
- The gospels were written by Matthew, Mark, Luther and John.
- Eve was created from an apple.
- Jesus was baptized by Moses.
- Golgotha was the name of the giant who slew the apostle David.

We laugh at that, but the truth of the matter is that Christians are also tragically ignorant of what the Bible says. In the book entitled *Christian Literacy*, the author, Judith A. Lunsford reports on a recent study by the Barna Research Group of Glendale, CA. This survey revealed that nearly 1/4 of the people who call themselves born-again Christians, never read the Bible. Barna reports, "Many Christians do not even know things such as where Jesus was born." He then reflects: "If they are uninformed about elementary things... how can they be expected to intelligently discuss the content of the Scriptures with an unbeliever, or to live in a manner consistent with biblical principles?"

That's a great question!

In this passage in James, we will center on the Scripture—the Book of Books. It has never been more important that we understand and apply its pages. Charles Colson, in his book *Loving God*, wrote the following about the Bible:

"More widely read, more frequently attacked than any other book in history, generations

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of intellectuals have attempted to discredit it; dictators of every age have outlawed it and executed those who read it. Yet soldiers carry it into battle believing it more powerful than their weapons. Fragments of it smuggled into solitary prison cells have transformed ruthless killers into gentle saints. Pieced-together scraps of Scripture have converted whole villages of pagan Indians.

Yearly, the Bible outsells every best-seller. Five hundred million copies were published last year alone. Portions have been translated into more than 1800 languages and even carried to the moon.

Literary classics endure the centuries. Philosophers mold the thoughts of generations unborn. Modern media shapes current culture. Yet nothing has affected the rise and fall of civilization, the character of cultures, the structure of governments, and the lives of the inhabitants of this planet as profoundly as the words of the Bible." (Loving God, Charles Colson)

We would all agree with Barna's comments on the need for Christians to know the Word, and we as believers are already impressed with the power and impact of the Word on human history, *but there is still a more significant reason for ignorance of the Word*. Many who might know the answers to a simple quiz are likewise ignorant of what Scripture says. Though many have listened to the teaching and preaching of the Word of God for years, they still don't understand the basic concepts, nor can they recall its principles. Why is that?

The answer can be found in a three-word slogan for tennis shoes. "Just do it" has become a slogan for Nike, as well as a call to a selfish culture. The message translated is "go ahead and not be inhibited by anything—just do what you want. As long as it's not hurting anyone, 'just do it.'"

With a different translation, this can be good advice for the Christian. The only difference is that we should apply it not to our selfish desires, but to the application of the Scriptures. As we will see in James 1:19-27, it isn't only hearing the Word that is needed. Unless we *do* what the Word says, we are in great danger of deception and of forgetting the Scriptures we have been taught. Here's an important question:

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"Church in America, Hillcrest Chapel—are you listening to the Word, and are you doing what the Word says? Our answer will affect us in a profound way."

James 1:19-25 unfolds for us into the following main points:

The Preparation Needed for the Word—vv. 19-21a

The Process to Follow in Receiving the Word—vv. 21-25

The Promises for Doers of the Word—vv. 19-25.

The Practice of doers of the Word—vv. 26-27

Then a direct application:

The Plan for Doers of the Word

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Looking at James 1:19-21, we see first of all:

The Preparation Needed for the Word—vv. 19-21a.

19] *"My dear brothers, take note of this: Everyone should be quick to listen, slow to speak and slow to become angry, 20] for man's anger does not bring about the righteous life 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."*

There is a tie with this passage and the previous one. In verse 18, James mentions the Word of God as the instrument by which the birth is affected. Here James shows us how the Word must be a continuing and dominant factor. Also notice, this whole paragraph is dealing with the same subject—e.g., the words *for* (v. 20), and *therefore* (v. 21), show it is the same context.

What will assure the impact of the Word on our lives?

An attentive ear—v. 19a. "My dear brothers, take note of this: Everyone should be quick to listen. . . "

If the Word is to have impact, there must be a readiness, an eagerness to listen—this is what this verse is calling for. It is possible to have good hearing, but be hard of listening—i.e., it is possible we could hear the words but not really hear what they mean to our hearts. This is instructive, in that there is not a method of Bible study or a plan of personal devotions presented first. As important as they might be, there is little point in methods unless there is an attentive heart—attitude precedes actions.

"Our time with God is not restricted to church services, or quiet times. If we are not people with attentive hearts, in the ordinary circumstances of life, we will not be people with

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attentive hearts when we shut the door and open the Bible."

This is so easy to see in a church service! Faces reveal so much—disinterest, eagerness, etc. This must be cultivated if we are to receive the Word of God. Did you hear what others said to you before the last time you attended a church service? Did you listen to them? Did you simply nod and smile to your family members on the way to church, but were not really listening?

On the other hand, how many thoughts do you have in your mind while you are reading the Scripture? Have you ever read a whole chapter of the Bible and could not remember what you read? Have you ever listened to a sermon and not heard a word? (Don't respond, I don't want to know.)

It's obvious if we are to receive anything from God, we must develop an attentive ear.

A controlled tongue—v. 19b.

There are two kinds of control called for here: *"My dear brothers, take note of this: Everyone should be quick to listen, slow to speak and slow to become angry. . ."*

"Slow to speak"

If we are to hear from God, it will be because we are slow to speak. If we intend to learn, we have to practice quick listening and slow speech at the same time. A great talker is rarely a great listener. Those who want to hear God speak will have to be less impressed with the sound of their own voices, and value beyond measure hearing God speak,

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even if they have to wait.

Do you ask God about what to do, and then fill up the rest of your prayer time speaking to Him (pleading for your answer, etc.)? Do you read a passage of Scripture and immediately apply it, without first studying, meditating and praying about it?

Wanted: great Bible students. Inattentive listeners and fast talkers need not apply!

This is a real problem for teachers/pastors. Sometimes a teacher is so eager to speak, he has little or no time to be a student and listen to God.

- If a teacher applied this truth, how might it affect his/her schedule or priorities?
- Are there other Scriptures that confirm this?

"Slow to anger"

Does this mean that some kinds of anger are appropriate? Yes! Anger can be used as long as it controlled, properly focused, and limited in duration. It can be used as a powerful energy of the soul, if properly focused on sin and not individuals. Anger, however, must be arrived at slowly, with proper control, or it will be sin—*"In your anger do not sin: Do not let the sun go down while you are still angry, do not give the devil a foothold"*—Eph. 4:26.

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Quotes on Anger

- "An angry spirit is not an attentive spirit."
- "The ear is never so closed than when anger takes over."
- "When uncontrolled anger comes in, controlled listening and speaking flies out."
- "Whether the anger is expressed outwardly or stored up inwardly, it is a hindrance to a meek and reverent hearing of God's Word."
- "A fiercely argumentative attitude is not conducive to a humble reception of truth."
- See Prov. 16:32; 29:22.

What's the main reason we should have controlled anger? *19] My dear brothers, take note of this: Everyone should be quick to listen, slow to speak and slow to become angry, 20] for*

man's anger does not bring about the righteous life that God desires.

(Note

,
"for" indicates the reason to be "slow to anger.")

Anger—even controlled anger—has its limitations. Jesus used anger in the temple to clean out the money changers, but that wasn't His only means to get something accomplished. The sustained anger of Christians attempting to right evil in our society will leave them feeling drained and burned out. They will ultimately not accomplish the righteousness of God by their anger. Misdirected anger, in fact, will kindle the flames of controversy, divide people, dissipate their energies and do incalculable injury to Christian causes and the church.

A third preparation is also needed:

A clean heart.

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v. 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."*

The definition of moral filth and evil means dirt and filth in the worst sense.

Moral filth can refer to filthy clothes. It is a term that can mean "wax in the ear that plugs the sound." *Evil* refers to a network of wrong, encased in motives and attitudes, that lies below the surface—James, Swindoll. *Prevalent* appears to mean abundance, and seems to be added to emphasize the variety and prevalence of sin Christians have to fight against.

Curtis Vaughan, in his commentary on James, says: "...it is perhaps best to interpret the word in the sense of 'residue,' 'remainder,' 'what is left over and above.' The thought then is that sin, though renounced by Christians, is not entirely vanquished in them. There may be some wickedness remaining, like a bad 'hangover' from preconversion days." A paraphrase might be then, "Get rid of all moral filth and evil that still remain in you."

A Scripture that speaks of this same process is: Heb. 12:1—*"Therefore, since we are surrounded by such a great cloud of witnesses, let us throw off everything that hinders and the sin that so easily entangles, and let us run with perseverance the race marked out for us."*

Therefore, if we are going to hear properly, our hearing must be preceded by confession and cleansing—i.e., the cleansing of those sins that are still hanging around; the ones that trip us up—the hangover from our preconversion days as well as our current sins. Also, if the Word of God is going to have impact on us, we must deal with the motives and the attitudes of our lives that are dirty and filthy.

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This is a prevalent problem in the church today—Christians are approaching church services and the study of the Word with moral filth and wrong motives and attitudes inside. This will obviously impede the impact of the Word on our lives. Therefore, let me ask:

- Have you concluded that the Word doesn't mean that much to you?
- Are you listening so poorly and talking so much that you haven't heard God speak through His Word to you for a long time?

If that describes any of us, then our trouble is not the Word, but an interior heart problem of which we must rid ourselves.

But a clean heart and a controlled tongue is only one-half of what is needed. According to Ephesians 4:22-24, we not only put off our old self, we must change the attitude of our mind and put on a new self created to be like Christ.

You were taught, with regard to your former way of life, to put off your old self, which is being corrupted by its deceitful desires; 23 to be made new in the attitude of your minds; 24 and to put on the new self, created to be like God in true righteousness and holiness.

1 Pet. 2:1-3—*"Therefore, rid yourselves of all malice and all deceit, hypocrisy, envy, and slander of every kind. 2] Like newborn babies, crave pure spiritual milk, so that by it you may grow up in your salvation, 3] now that you have tasted that the Lord is good."*

See also Rom. 13:12; Col. 3:8; Heb. 12:1. This is the pattern James is advocating here in vv. 19-27. Let's pray to that end. Let's ask God to free us from all that has plugged up our ears, made us angry, and caused us to talk and not listen to God or others.

From the preparation for the Word, we should now follow the process advocated by James that will allow us to receive the Word. We need to put something in place of the moral filth and evil that plugged up our ears, made us angry and caused us to talk too

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much, e.g., vv. 19-20. We need to put something in the place of that which we are taking off. We need the right attitudes and the right process.

This is where James, by the Holy Spirit, is leading us:

The process to follow—vv. 21-25.

Be humble in spirit.

v. 21b—*"Therefore, get rid of all moral filth and accept the word planted in you..."* *the evil that is so prevalent and humbly*

Humility means gentleness or mildness. "This is a disposition which is the very opposite of an angry, self-assertive spirit. Here it denotes a teachable spirit." Curtis Vaughan, James.

"In secular writings it describes the atmosphere which should prevail during a question and answer period in a classroom; being able to discuss issues without losing your temper or becoming strongly defensive"—Gary Vanderet. See Christ's description—Matt. 11:28. We learn from the Lord when we are likewise humble. Trench describes it as "an inwrought grace of the soul. It is that temper of spirit in which we accept His dealings with us as good, and therefore without disputing or resisting." Trench, p. 153.

Calvin wrote, "Humility is the mind disposed to learn." The soil of the heart must have a rooting hormone called humility. In contrast to anger, or being too talkative, is the spirit of humility; therefore, James tells us we should come without defensiveness or resistance to the classroom of the Word to hear its good word to us. The questions we should ask,

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then, are:

- Do I have a humble attitude toward the Word, or am I quarrelsome and haughty as I approach the Scripture?
- Do I have a preconceived idea of what the Word says?
- Do I approach the Word and twist it to mean what I want (find a verse to justify what I already intend to do)?

If we do, we will not receive the Word God has for us! We must come to this Book with a humble attitude—a teachable spirit—if we intend to understand and apply God's Word to our lives.

Be accepting of the Word planted—v. 21c.

"...and humbly accept the word planted in you..."

The word "*accept*" is one used throughout New Testament times to refer to hospitality. It refers to a person "welcoming another" into his home, to take to one's self what is presented or brought by another; to accept, embrace, receive hospitably; admit, approve, allow. It implies a subjective reception, showing that a decision of the will has taken place with respect to the object presented, and that the acceptance manifests it.

The word "*planted*" is used metaphorically to mean "set into a man to be, or to grow to be, a new part of his nature (including his mind). In v. 21, the use of the word "accept" gives us a very beautiful picture of the attitude and action that must be present if the Word is going to find "lodging and impact in our lives." The phrase *planted in you* suggests the readers were believers who already possessed some truth. These people were to have an attitude of welcome /hospitality for the Word, and then extend that attitude to new words as well. They were not to be finicky hosts, but were to welcome the words even if they were unfamiliar.

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This sponsors a number of questions:

What will determine if the Word of God planted in us will bear fruit? The Parable of the Sower gives us answers. It all depends on whether the recipients of the Word are hard soil, rocky soil, thorny soil, or good soil (Matt. 13:1-23; Mk. 4:3-20).

What will determine if the recipients are good soil? (Matt. 13:15b, 23; Mk. 4:20) Hearing and retaining the Word; not letting it be stolen by Satan, burned up by trials, choked by the cares of life and the deceitfulness of wealth. It means we accept it and let it grow in us.

What will the planted Word of God do for us according to v. 21? *"...and humbly accept the word planted in you, **h can save you.**"* **whic**

James is speaking here of sanctification, not justification. He's not calling for initial acceptance—that has happened—v. 18. But accepting the Word/Jesus is only the beginning. He's acknowledging that the full and continued acceptance of the Word will help us to grow—to be saved from the effects of our prior moral filth.

In case we misunderstand what accepting or hospitality for the Word involves, James spells out what it does and doesn't mean. Notice what will keep the Word from having lasting acceptance/impact according to v. 22. *"Do not merely listen to the word, and so deceive yourselves. Do what it says"*

—v. 22b. Just listening, or merely reading, keeps us from accepting. If we just listen or read, we will be deceived.

Deceive

means to reckon wrong, to draw a wrong conclusion by false reasoning.

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That means if we congratulate ourselves on merely being a hearer of the Word, we have come to a false conclusion. If we think that merely listening to or reading the Word entitles us to some special favor from God, we are duped by faulty reasoning. The responsibility of those who hear, in fact, is far greater than those who never hear.

It would be wrong to conclude that James is against listening to the Word, that hearing and reading is unnecessary or unimportant (my job is important!). If we don't do more than merely listen, however, we will be deceived. How could just listening deceive us?

For the Hebrews, knowing and doing was tied together. You didn't know something until you did it. For the Greeks, knowing, learning, and listening was the big deal. James' audience had been dispersed among the Greeks, so it's possible they were being affected by the culture surrounding them. The same could be true for us. We might think that if we *know* about religious things we are somehow spiritual. James is making it clear, however; knowing isn't enough.

What are some of the ways Satan seeks to deceive us with regard to the Word?

- Substituting for it, e.g., religious writings of supposed prophets, psychics, etc.
- Demeaning it, e.g., Pharisees and enemies of Christianity.
- Adding to it and altering it, e.g., cults.
- Being too busy for it, e.g., American Christian.
- Misuse of it, e.g., not correctly handling the Word of truth—1 Tim 2:15. (See Scribe School, pp. 1-2)
- Not value it, e.g., American Christians who don't recognize the Word as a perfect gift from our Father to give us birth and life. (See James 1:16-18.)

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Do you see what God uses as an instrument to give us birth? It's the Word of truth.

But probably the most subtle way we are deceived is what James is pointing out here.

- Just listening to it—v. 22. Listening is important, but it is not enough.

What will keep Satan from deceiving us with regard to the Word? James has the answer, and our sermon title is a paraphrase to James' answer: "Just do it"!

Be doers of the Word

v. 22—*"Do not merely listen to the word, and so deceive yourselves. Do what it says."*

This command, "Do what it says," is at the center of all that James teaches. (It may be the key verse of this whole book). *Doer* means to be a maker of anything—hence, the maker of a poem—Acts 17:28. To be a doer of the Word is to submit to its authority and to comply with its requirements. To be a doer—just do it—means to be obedient. To be a doer—according to the tense of the words in the Greek in this sentence—expresses a continuing action.

In the King James it is easier to see: "But be ye doers of the word and not hearers." In other words, the person who responds to the demands of the Word only now and then, who acts by impulses and at intervals, is not a real doer either. James intends to make this point as loud and as clear as possible! To be a doer is proof that we have come to know Jesus—1 John 2:5-6

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Each of us has the potential to be a mere listener, deceived by a lack of application of Scripture and puffed up with knowledge but no application—1 Cor. 8:1. Jesus tells us that if we hear the Word and don't put it into practice, we build our lives on the sand, and when the storms of life come, our lives will fall apart—Matt. 7:24-27. James will tell us later in this book (4:17) that anyone who knows the good he ought to do and doesn't do it, *sins*.

It is easy to see we have much to lose by not hearing and obeying the Scripture. A mere listener might be deceived into thinking he has a relationship with God because he attends church, reads the Bible and goes to Bible studies, etc. This should concern us, for the vast majority of Americans believe this is what it means to be a Christian.

Do you know what happens to a person who believes listening, attending and studying is enough? He eventually loses heart and finds it difficult even to listen and read the Scriptures anymore, because there is no life, joy, or peace in simply listening. Life comes in *doing* the Word of God.

In case we don't get it yet, James elaborates on the difference between a person who only listens and the person who listens and obeys. He gives us an example of those who listen to the Word but don't do what it says in vv. 23-24—

"Anyone who listens to the word but does not do what it says is like a man who looks at his face in a mirror 24] and, after looking at himself, goes away and immediately forgets what he looks like."

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This look in the mirror is not a hasty glance as some have suggested, but refers to careful observation— thoughtful and attentive consideration. The person in this illustration looks at himself in the mirror of the Word and has a very revealing picture of what he looks like—e.g., he studies himself and becomes very familiar with his features. Hebrews 4:12-13 tells us:

"For the word of God is living and active. Sharper than any double-edged sword, it penetrates even to dividing soul and spirit, joints and marrow; it judges the thoughts and attitudes of the heart. 13] Nothing in all creation is hidden from God's sight. Everything is uncovered and laid bare before the eyes of him to whom we must give account."

Do you see what is revealed in the mirror of the Word? Isn't it amazing? The Word dissects the smallest and most complicated areas of our inner lives. It judges and reveals our thoughts and attitudes. The problem is that because the man in the mirror doesn't do what is called for, he goes away and forgets what the mirror of the Word has revealed.

He listens to the Word attentively and at length, so that he understands what he hears. His lack of response *isn't* because he failed to hear or understand what was in the Word.

Questions

1. Are you becoming forgetful about what you used to know in the Scripture?
2. Have you noticed that you have to hear the same things from the Word of God over and over again because you forget?
3. Why is that?

The answer is obvious. We're not responding to the Word when we hear it the first time and thus forget it. The illustration of the man in the mirror should speak to us and cause us to be committed to hearing and doing what the Word says.

During and after a church service, what should be our response when the mirror of the

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Word reveals the thoughts and attitudes _____ in our soul and spirit that are not pleasing to God? We should apply James _____ 1:21—*"Therefore, get rid of all moral filth and evil that is so prevalent _____ and humbly accept the word planted in you, which can save you."* (Put _____ off, change your attitude and put the Word in you.)

How about after a personal Bible study? One commentator _____ says, "Once we have looked at the Scripture, we have a choice: we can _____ either deceive or bless ourselves. We deceive ourselves if we make the _____ mistake of thinking that we have responded correctly to God's Word by _____ only hearing and receiving it. We say, 'I spent 45 minutes reading my _____ Bible, I can't even remember what it said. What a great, uninterrupted _____ time.'" Do you hear the deception in that? What should this example say _____ to seminary and Bible school students or graduates?

How about pastors? I must make sure that I practice what _____ I preach. This whole book is very convicting to me. I must hear and obey _____ what I am preaching.

What does this say to us about Scripture memory for children?

"Don't we sometimes give out rewards for children for memorizing Bible _____ verses, or giving correct answers regardless of whether the children _____ obeyed or even understood them? In doing this, I wonder if we begin _____ to deceive them into equating knowledge with spiritual maturity. Scripture _____ memory is wonderful, if it is memorized for the purpose of obedience. _____ The purpose of Scripture is to make us mature, not make us smart"—James Vanderet.

Parents, don't be satisfied if your kids can mouth back _____ to you a few simple answers to your Bible questions. It is imperative _____ that your kids learn to hear and obey too. Otherwise

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they will be deceived as to what spirituality is all about.

Be an intent looker.

v. 25a—*"But the man who looks intently into the perfect law that gives freedom..."*

The phrase "looks intently" is very important here; it's a sustained gaze, or to stoop down near, to bend forward in order to look at something more closely—to zealously search for its message. It can also mean penetrating absorption. It is a term used to describe John's act of stooping and peering into the tomb of Jesus—Jn. 20:5. These words make it clear; a person who is going to be a doer of the Word must not be a casual reader and listener.

Doers must be involved in active looking—i.e., study, observation, meditation of the Word.

Be a continual student and doer of the Word of God

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—v. 25b. *"But the man who looks intently into the perfect law that gives freedom, and continues to do this, not forgetting what he has heard, but doing it—he will be blessed in what he does."*

The words here give us a strong message as well. "Continues" means "to remain near, or by, or with anyone; hence, to continue or persevere in anything. The phrase emphasizes the thought of habitual activity"—Curtis Vaughan.

This calls for a consistent time in the Word, a continual perseverance and staying near the Word—not just in crisis, or periodic study. By necessity we keep looking at that which we've already looked at many times before. This kind of looking will require a keen eye to look for clues as to the meaning and application of a passage.

What will happen if we apply this passage to our lives and continually do what it says?

The Promises for Doers of the Word—vv. 19-25.

James has sprinkled several promises in this passage. Some are stated explicitly, others implied. The most obvious is found in verse 25:

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Doing what the Word says brings us blessing in what we do.

"But the man who looks intently into the perfect law that gives freedom, and continues to do this, not forgetting what he has heard, but doing it—he will be blessed in what he does"—v. 25.

This verse makes it clear that blessing comes from applying what the Word of God says. The converse is also true: if we only listen and do not apply, we are not as blessed as we could be.

Doing what the Word says helps bring about the righteous life God desires—v. 20.

Anger does not bring about the righteous life God desires; humbly accepting and doing what the Word asks of us, does.)

Doing what the Word says can also save us—v. 21b.

"...and humbly accept the word planted in you, which can save you."

Doing what the Word commands keeps us from deception—v. 22.

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

Doing what the Word says enables us to remember what we were and what we are—vv. 23-24.

"Anyone who listens to the word but does not do what it says is like a man who looks at

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his face in a mirror: And, after looking at himself, goes away and immediately forgets what he looks like." (See also verse 25)

The person who only listens to the Word of God doesn't know himself very well and has a hard time remembering the things he/she has been taught. The person who hears and obeys is more aware of himself, because the process of application implants truth in our memory and enables us to not forget it.

Here's the final test:

1. Do you have a good memory of applied truth?
2. Has the sword of the Spirit revealed the thoughts and intents of your heart?
3. What is motivating you?

The person who listens and obeys is spiritually self-aware and retains the Word. According to Hebrews 5:11-6:3, the person who hears and does not obey is immature and must be taught the elementary truths of God's Word **all over again!**

How is your retention? How is your mirror? What will enable us to realize these promises?

The Plan for Doers of the Word

I would like to offer a simple way for you to apply these steps and realize these promises, so that we apply this lesson quickly. The action called for means we follow the example of a farmer and humbly accept the Word (v. 21b) by carefully planting, cultivating and harvesting the Word of God. A simple acrostic that will help us plant, cultivate and harvest is one I developed for beginning Bible study. It is called the REAPer.

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R—read and re-read the passage many times.

E—emphasize the key words of the passage. That means looking for

- key words (words that need further study; words that connect; repeated words)
- signs of composition (comparisons/contrasts, lists, series, conditions, questions, illustrations, warnings, promises, commands, advice)

A—ask key questions. Where? When? Who/Whom? How? What? Why?

P—personalize your findings. Ask the following questions:

1. the before/after question. What book is it in? What takes place before the chapter, paragraph, or verse?
2. the general application question: How does this apply to me?
3. the personal question, e.g., SPACE PETS:

Sin to confess? Do I need to make any restitution?

Promise to claim? Is it a universal promise? Have I met the conditions?

Attitude to change? Am I willing to work on a negative attitude and begin building toward a positive one?

Command to obey? Am I willing to do it, no matter how I feel?

Example to follow? Is it a positive example for me to copy, or a negative one to avoid?

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Prayer to pray? Is there anything I need to pray back to God?

Error to avoid? Is there any problem that I should be alert to, or beware of?

Truth to believe? What new things can I learn about God the Father, Jesus Christ, the Holy Spirit, or other biblical teachings?

Something to praise God for? Is there something here I can be thankful for?