

**Sermon:** Do It or Forget It

**Series:** Dig Deep (Summer Teen Conference 2013)

**Bible Text:** James 1:22-27

I'm going to read for us verses 22-27, but I will focus a little bit more on the first few verses 22-25. Let's read James 1: 22-27. This is the Word of the Lord:

<sup>22</sup> Do not merely listen to the word, and so deceive yourselves. Do what it says. <sup>23</sup> Anyone who listens to the word but does not do what it says is like someone who looks at his face in a mirror<sup>24</sup> and, after looking at himself, goes away and immediately forgets what he looks like. <sup>25</sup> 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.

<sup>26</sup> Those who consider themselves religious and yet do not keep a tight rein on their tongues deceive themselves, and their religion is worthless. <sup>27</sup> 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.

One of the things I teach my kids: there's something about people who wake up early and something about people who wake up late. Listen very carefully. This is not the Bible, but I have no problem preaching this. There are two kinds of people in the world: morning people and lazy morning people. There are really only two people in the world: morning people and people who stay up too late to be morning people. When it comes to the Bible, very quickly, there are two kinds of people in the world, and there are only two kinds of people. As we go through this passage, I'd like us to think about it.

Whether or not you're a Christian or not a Christian. Whether you come here just to have fun and come along and you kind of put up with the messages and the Bible studies or whether you actually really want to learn about God. Whether or not you come here because life is perfect. You have no problems and you have the grades and friends you want. Your family is just the way you want it and honestly your personal life is fine; you're content with that maybe. Or deep down you realize, "I really need God to work my life. I'm a sinner and I've got issues I didn't realize. I want my life more fulfilling than anything I can get here. Nothing I can buy. Nothing I can do will satisfy me more

than maybe there's a God that created me and loves me and calls me His child. I call Him Abba, Father, or Daddy."

We're going to take a look at those two kinds of people. We are going to see what these two kinds of people are. Secondly, we're going to see what those two kinds of people do. And thirdly, we're going to say what is the difference between them. Everyone, I believe, in this room is part of one of those two groups of people.

### **1. What are the two kinds of people?**

Let's take a look at James 1:22. Let's see how the Bible describes those who hear or read God's Word. James is writing and he says this to the church he is writing to -- to the people scattered. Verse 22 says this:

<sup>22</sup> Do not merely listen to the word, and so deceive yourselves. Do what it says.

Let's go to verse 25. You'll see the contrast again between the two types of people.

<sup>25</sup> 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.

Listen. There are two types of people in the world when it comes to the Bible. This is way it breaks down in the Bible. On one side, there are the hearers and, on the other side, there are the doers. There are the hearers of the Bible, of His Word, of His commands, of His good teaching, of His truth, wisdom and love. And then, there are the doers. Hearers and doers. This is what he is saying. There are only two kinds of people. Listen very carefully and think about that.

"Wait Pastor Enoch, isn't there something else between a hearer and a doer. Aren't those that don't hear the Bible?" Okay, those who don't hear the Bible... we're not going to address that tonight. When it comes to reading the Bible, there's a hearer and a doer. "Is there really all there is?" Yeah. Let me put it this way, there are only two kinds of people at this conference when it comes to the rules that Calvin [the Director] has said: there

are the hearers and the doers. There are only two kinds of students in your classrooms: those that hear what the assignment is and those that do it. There are only two kinds of kids in the households: the kids that hear what their parents say and the kids that do what their parents say. That's it. There is no other category. If you are not doing, you are merely a hearer.

How does the Bible describe you or me as a hearer? Take a look at verse 22:

<sup>22</sup> Do not merely listen to the word, and so deceive yourselves. Do what it says.

Now this is very interesting. Look over here. Hearers and doers. Hearers are those who deceive themselves. What does that mean? What it means is this: you can sit there and listen to five sermons at Summer Teen Conference. I mean like, five. You might even like them or think it's funny or interesting. You might even have a great small group discussion. And what we will see is in about two and a half days, the difference between hearers and doers. Those that only hear are in danger of being deceived.

What is this deception? The deception is the fact that you sat there and listened to the Bible, that somehow God loves you more. That's not true. He doesn't love you. He already loves you. He already sent His son down to die for you. Or maybe the fact that you read your Bible every single day, that it makes you a more mature Christian. Not necessarily. It's enough just to hear it. You have to do it. Don't think that just because you went through it, you can do it.

When I was younger, my father and my mother were very involved in our Chinese American community in the LA area. There were two things they did with their kids to keep them connected to Chinese culture. What are the two kinds of places sometimes immigrant Chinese parents send their kids so they can interact with other immigrant Chinese kids? One is church, maybe one with ethnic background. And then there is the glorious Chinese school.

Here's the basic idea. You can sit there and I can say, "Here, you can read the Bible. You can read the commentary. You can read in the original Greek or Hebrew language forwards or upside down. You can write it or memorize all this stuff. Or you can sleep

through a lot of sermons. That works too. No matter what, James is saying, "Don't be deceived." Everyone starts off as a hearer, but not everyone makes it out to be a doer.

## **2. What is the difference between being a hearer and a doer?**

If there are hearers and doers when it comes to God's Word, what is the difference between them? Here it is in verse 23. James gives a great, brilliant example, very appropriate for adolescents going through an insecure period of their lives.

<sup>23</sup> Anyone who listens to the word but does not do what it says is like someone who looks at his face in a mirror<sup>24</sup> and, after looking at himself, goes away and immediately forgets what he looks like.

Have you done this? Your parents say, "Hey, you have something on your face." You say, "What? Where". "What do you think, I'm a mirror? Go look in the mirror." Maybe if you're a teenager, you say, "Ugh, look. There's a booger hanging out of my nose." You walk back and your mom says, "Wait! Did you go look in the mirror? What'd you see? Go back and look." You go back and you say, "Oh yeah, there's a booger hanging out of my nose" and you walk back. Your mom says, "What are you doing? Did you look in the mirror?" And you respond, "Yeah I looked in the mirror." "Well?" "I have a booger hanging out of my nose." "WELL?"

You know, for me, it's actually a great weakness of mine: my wife thinks I'm colorblind fashion-wise. I'll put on some pants, and I'll think, "What color shirt should I wear?" She says, "anything but a gray" and I say, "okay". I'll go to the closet and I'm just going around and I walk out. I go, "Here, what's this?" "A gray shirt... well, go look in the mirror." I say, "Yeah...?" "I said anything but the gray shirt." I go back and I go, "Baby, what am I supposed to wear? Just pick it!" That's why sometimes, every couple months, I wake up Sunday to get ready for church and if my wife is really busy, there's an outfit laid out for me and I wonder, "Woah, I wonder how that got there..". I'm just kidding.

It's kind of sad that we do this. Have you ever had to memorize a phone number? You read the phone number and seconds later you forget it. You're thinking, "I can do ten digits" and then you forget it. You know what? It's hard.

Here's the difference. The difference is: they look at it and they forget about it. You know how you memorize a phone number? How do you memorize a phone number? Muscle memory. You punch in the numbers a lot and you remember how to do it. It's the same. James is saying, "you can look at something all you want, but unless you practice it, it will not stick." Let's take a look again at the Bible and I want you to see this contrast.

Verse 24:

<sup>24</sup> and, after looking at himself, goes away and immediately forgets what he looks like. <sup>25</sup> 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.

So listen very carefully. This is something that maybe you have not thought about. I just talked to Randall earlier about this. Hearers forget. Doers do. So here's the message title. When it comes to God's Word, either you do it or you forget it. There are only two things to do with the Bible. When it comes to the Bible, you either do it or forget it. There are no options. Someone might say, "But I remember. It's not like I forget what the Bible says. I remember!" Nuh uh uh, especially if you've been hanging out with Randall, our TIOB Children's and Youth Minister. We were just chatting about this the other day.

The Bible, like in Psalm 48:7, says, "I want you to not forget God's commands, but do them." Listen very carefully, the opposite of forgetting isn't remembering, as in remembering intellectually. Biblically, to remember God's word is to do it. There are only two options to do with God's word: you either do it or forget it. To say, "Well I remember it!" You don't really remember it in the Bible sense unless you also do it. Either do it or forget it. There are no options. For everything you hear, for every teaching you get, for every devotion you do, everything you read, all that stuff, you either do it or you forget it.

We've got lots of examples. I'm leading worship with this great bunch of students. You know what? My fingers are in great pain. I'm actually missing a lot of my chords because I haven't led worship with a band since like 2007. I either do it or I forget it. How many of you take a foreign language during school? You either use your language or you forget it. Muscles! Really big, strong muscles. What happens with a muscle. You either use it or you lose it.

Here's the thing. Do you understand? To have the Bible information in your head and to just have it there and not come out in your life and to think you're growing is to actually be deceived.

Along the way, as a pastor, I've had people leave our church. Some of them move; they're getting a new job. Occasionally, someone will come up to me and say, "Pastor Enoch, we're going to change churches. We like you. We like the church. We don't think your teaching is helping us." People have said that to me. I say, "Okay, so what church are you going to go to?" They respond, "We're going to go to that church." You know what I think when they say my teaching isn't good enough? I think "I'm glad you're taking the Bible seriously and I hope to be a better teacher. I'd love for you to stay but I'm glad you're taking it seriously, especially for your family, and if you want to go to another church and hear God's word."

You know, I've noticed. This is not a way to make me look good or bad. Sometimes they go to another church and when I check-in with them, they say "It's great." Most of the time, you know what I find out a month or two later when I bump into them or I say "hey, let's hang out?" In the summer, I've had the opportunity to connect with several folks like that and I was like, "Oh, so, how's that church? You go to that church because the preaching is better. The youth group is better. The college group is better. The adult whatever is better..." and you know what almost everyone says to me now? "You know what, I don't go there anymore." If I ask "Oh, was it not good enough", most of them say, "Well actually, I don't go to church really anymore." You know what I wonder then? I wonder the same thing as if I was the principal at your school and your whole class did terrible.

I'm a principal and your whole class did terrible, I think, "Man, what a terrible teacher" maybe? You know how I can tell? That teacher is a bad teacher if next year most of the students improved and did better and this was the one class that they did badly in. Your teacher is bad if that same student did well in the other four or five classes, but it was only that one class he or she did bad in. Then yes, maybe it was the teacher. If you look at the class, and you follow the kids across their grade, you'll notice that they're not only doing bad in your class, but sadly, they're not doing well in any other classes. You follow them longitudinally and if they're not doing well in any of those classes, it could be the teacher. It could be that they had eighty bad teachers. Or it could be something in the student's life. Something rough at home distracting them. It could be that they don't care or they're not trying or they're not very good at school. So listen very carefully.

People go, "How was Teen Conference? How was TIOB Retreat? How was Sunday service?" and what they really mean was "Was the sermon good?" "How was church today?" "It was great. The ushers were smiling!" I mean that is important, but most people, especially in our church, mean "how was the sermon?" or "How did Pastor \_\_\_\_\_ do?" That's what everyone is thinking.

We need to be better teachers, okay? I confess that. That being said, God has certain responsibility placed on us. I don't want you to be deceived. This isn't me saying, "You better think I'm an awesome teacher." This is me saying this: I need to be better as a teacher. I need to grow, but the Bible warns us. If you're not doing God's word as a result of hearing the Bible, you may have a terrible teacher or not a very good teacher or you may be lying to yourself. It's very sad. I'll tell you this: at our church, I'll talk to people about the sermons and they'll say, "The teaching was bleh" and I know they're talking about my colleagues.

What I've done is, when other people are preaching, I've gone to those services and I'd watch the people that tell me those sermons are really boring. I remember many times going to service, hearing the preacher preaching what I thought was a pretty good sermon and I would ask the person, "What'd you think?" and they would say, "Meh I thought it was okay." I go back, and then I notice, before the speaker starts talking, the person is already sleeping. I think, "Wow, they're already sleeping. The preacher literally

started 30 seconds ago and they're already nodding off." Then I test them, "how was the message?" "It was kind of hard to pay attention." Wow. I know you're supposed to grab their attention in 30 seconds, but come on. Is it really the preacher? Or honestly, can you just say you don't care about the Bible? Can you say that?

There are only two kinds of people in the world: hearers and doers. The hearers intellectually remember, but they do not really remember in the full Biblical sense. They hear it, but then they forget it. The doers do it. They have to do it and they want to do it. You either do it or forget it. I promise you, there is no other option. Either you do it or you forget it. Either you do God's word or you forget it.

"I listened to a 35 minute message. How can I try to do something from here?" Either you do it or you forget it. I remember having a discussion with Pastor Steve when I was suggesting to him at one point, at least in Chinatown, that we discuss our sermons in our small group. We talked about it and he said, "well, do you really think they get enough Bible? Because if small group can have another Bible study, that might be really good. So you hear Bible study on Sunday, then go to TIOB or Sunday school, then maybe Friday fellowship, and if you're an adult or college student, you have another Bible study. I just don't think we get enough Bible. 75 hours versus one hour?" I said, "Pastor Steve, I know that's true for some churches, but I think the people I know are forgetting more than they are remembering." I would rather you listen to one hour of Bible teaching and try to do that one hour of Bible teaching. Talk about it. Think about it.

People say to me, "Enoch, I'm trying to do a devotion, but I don't know what to do. I follow Our Journey, but I don't know what to do." I tell them, "Here's what you do: just read that passage you learned last Sunday every day." "Well that's kind of boring." What if you read the same passage for seven days? If you read that every single day and you thought how can I apply that one passage this week, maybe we'd have a lot more doers. I think we have forgotten a lot more than we could ever do. There are only two kinds of people when it comes to God's word: there are the hearers and the doers. There are only two things to do with God's word. You either do it or forget it. Or you didn't hear it because you were sleepy.

### 3. How do you become a doer?

Thirdly, how do we actually become a doer? Here's the word I want to say, but I have to be careful because I don't want you think something negative or bad. Here's the thing: Hearers or doers. Do it or forget it. You just need to understand this one principle: persevere. Persevere or endure. Continue. Let's take a look here at James 1: 24 and understand what we're seeing here.

<sup>24</sup> and, after looking at himself, goes away and immediately forgets what he looks like. <sup>25</sup> 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.

Here's the deal: you have to endure if you want to understand God's word. Before we go there, please don't think of endure like this: don't think of enduring like drinking Chinese medicine. Do you know what it's like to see mud on the ground soaking in plants and bugs and these Chinese so brilliantly pick it up and drink it. That's what we do. Herbal medicine is actually very good. One of my sons drinks it and it really helps him a lot. He has to endure the medicine, meaning he knows it's good for him, but it's terrible. We put sugar in it. The first couple times Karen, my wife, put sugar in it and then one day, she couldn't do it so she had me do it. My son after that, for whatever reason, comes up to me and says "hey Baba, can you make my Chinese medicine?" Sometimes Karen will ask him if he wants her to make his medicine and he'll say, "I'll ask Baba." One day I was making his Chinese medicine and I was putting the sugar in and Karen goes, "Woah, that's a lot of sugar." "Really? How much do you put?" "Half of that!" "Oh...No wonder..."

Some of us are thinking, "here comes the message. It's the boring, long part where I can't really sleep comfortably in after the singing and the fun hype and before hanging out with my small group." Some of us, honestly, think of the Bible as herbal medicine. We know it's good for us, or at least we're told, but it's nasty and I don't like going through it. That's not really what endurance is. When it talks about endurance and

continuing in it, it means not giving up. There are things you and I like, but we just give up.

For example, some of you like to exercise. Some of you guys come out and run and I know some of you have chosen to run circles around the grass. You need that because you're starting sports in a few weeks. Yeah it's kind of painful sometimes, but deep down, you kind of like the sport. You kind of like being fit and having a strong, competitive advantage right? That's probably why you do it. You cannot give up. You have to persevere, endure and stick with it.

When we do our Bible reading or devotional campaign in our congregation called Plant by the Stream for 21 days, I remember talking to pastoral staff and they we were discussing with devotional booklet was good. Our Daily Bread. Our Daily Cheese. Our Journey. Your Journey. Whatever, all these things. It came down to this: I said, "I will be happy if they take the Bible and open it and just look at it for 30 seconds every day. I'll take that." I'll take that over zero. I'll take that because I think that if you keep doing it, you might go from 30 to 60 seconds. Now you don't think that's much, but let me ask you, how many of you don't spend 60 seconds a day in the Bible?

This is not a guilt trip. Satan, if he is real which I believe he is, hates you spending 60 seconds in the Bible. 60 seconds in the Bible sounds small, but that may keep you Christian in college. 180 seconds of Bible might help you when you struggle with doubt. That might be the only thing you think of if you get into a car accident, right before you go. That might be the only thing you think of when you're at the hospital with your parents.

You may not remember anything from this conference. You might just remember kayaking and flipping over, but let me tell you, the fact that you remember that one bit of the Bible may save your spritual life. The thing is, persevere. I will take 30 seconds. If you could read the Bible for 30 seconds a day for a year, that's a lot. I'd be so happy. I'd pay money if I could. I would pay you all money to read the Bible because it's that important. But I could pay you and you would still stop.

My parents used to give me chores and they'd pay me \$5 a week. You know what? As a kid, I never ever stuck with any of those things. If I told you I'd pay you \$5 a day if you could read the Bible every day for one minute, honestly, most of us wouldn't keep it. In the end, it's not something you endure or suffer through. You have to know that reading this Bible will help you fear God more, to help you love God more, to help you know God more because there are only hearers and doers. When you hear God's word, do it because either you do it or you forget it. The key is persevere. Do not give up.

When my family, we're late and we run into something in the morning, my kids do a couple things: they eat their breakfast, brush their teeth, read the Bible, and practice their piano. Those are the things Karen and I have asked them to do every day. When they're late for school, it is so easy to say, "brush your teeth instead of reading your Bible" because that is socially acceptable, but usually they get brushing their teeth in. But when it comes down to Bible or playing piano, I'll say, "read the Bible, practice piano when you get home". Let's be honest, most of the time they don't get to piano because I forget to remind them, but I want them to read the Bible every day. You come over to my house and you think my family is so disciplined. They're not. They just don't know anything other than that. My kids will come up to me before bedtime and say, "Baba, I need the iPod touch so I can read the Bible." People over for dinner will say, "wow your kids are so spiritual." No they're not, they're just beaten into submission.

I cannot pass on a love for God. Listen carefully. I can't even pass on a fear for God. But, I can pass on a habit. A habit that, every day of their lives, no matter how tired they are, they will continue and read the Bible right before they close their eyes. No matter how late they are for school or work, before they walk through that door, they will open up the Bible and read it, even if they don't remember anything from that morning because you have to continue.

Don't get caught up in the, "well I read it and I don't understand". Then read that same thing again. Go online. Listen to sermons. Sign up for Right Now Media which our church is paying money for so you can listen to the sermons online. Just don't give up. Because when you want to dig deep in the Bible, there are only two kinds of people: hearers and doers. Either you hear it or forget it.