

Text: James 1:25

Title: “3-D Life ... Discover”

INTRODUCTION

Open your Bibles to James 1:25.

INVITE, DISCOVER, CONNECT – These are all important dimension to the life of the church. Why? Because they are all important dimensions of who God is. This three-dimensional life of the people of God reflects the character of God.

Invite – Because God is a reaching God

Discover – Because God is a revealing God

Connect – Because God is a relational God

Note: Understand that this is not a new program in our church. This is simply the NT pattern for how the church should function. It’s another way of stating our mission. We must never get away from this.

Now God is a revealing God. He has revealed Himself through His Son, the Word, Jesus Christ. And He has revealed Himself and continues to reveal Himself through His written Word ... the Bible you hold in your hands. Now if the God of the entire Universe has revealed Himself, we ought to try to discover what He has shown us about Himself and about life in His Word.

James 1:25 - 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.

Now there is an important equation found in this verse. Write it in your notes and remember it.

THE EQUATION - CAREFUL ATTENTION + FAITHFUL OBEDIENCE = EVENTUAL BLESSING

Let’s look at that equation. The first part is ...

1. CAREFUL ATTENTION

James 1:25a - But the man who looks intently into the perfect law that gives freedom, and continues to do this...

What it means when it talks about “the man who looks intently...” is “to stoop sideways, or to stoop to look.” That’s the picture.

ILLUSTRATION – If you want a great illustration of this, just look at the difference between the way women shop and the men shop. My wife Nan is diligent shopper. She’s always looking for the best bargains. She knows her way around every store in town. She knows what’s on every aisle. If

somebody looks like their lost in a store she'll ask them, "May I help you find something." She knows where everything is located. When she sends me to the store to get something, she can say, "Go to aisle #6, and about halfway down the aisle on the left, on the top shelves there's this kind of canned fruit. And about the middle there's this kind. Don't get that. Down on the bottom shelf you'll find just the right size can of fruit.

One time I went to the store and I couldn't find what she was looking for. The manager happened to be walking by and I grabbed him and asked him. He couldn't find it either. So I called Nan on my cell phone. She knew exactly where it was.

Why? Because she had studied it intently.

And it's not just a one-time thing. Because it goes on to say "and continues to do this." It literally means "to remain beside or near something."

Note: When James talks about the "perfect law" here, he is referring to Scripture.

James 2:8 – "If you really keep the royal law found in Scripture, "Love your neighbor as yourself," you are doing right."

The Bible through which God has revealed Himself deserves our careful attention. If you've never read through the entire Bible, I want to challenge you to do that. It may get a little tedious at times, but stay with it. All of God's Word is God's Word and it is profitable. At other times, you may want to spend an extended period of time in one particular book of the Bible. At other times you may want to focus on a theme in the Bible, like prayer or righteousness or some other theme.

And to our Bible teachers, let me encourage you to serve up a feast of God's Word for your class. Don't spend half the time talking about the weather or football games. Get them into the Scriptures. That means you have to prepare. Shame on you if you don't.

The Bible deserves our careful attention. But the next part of the equation is ...

2. FAITHFUL OBEDIENCE

James 1:25b – "not forgetting what he has heard, but doing it..."

Note: In ancient times, not everyone had a copy of the Scripture. Their exposure to the Bible was hearing it read by a leader in the synagogue or the church. O how blessed we are to have a copy of the Bible to read. That's all the more reason to not forget what we have heard, but to actually obey it.

Now James has already talked about this in the preceding verses.

James 1:22 – "Do not merely listen to the word, and so deceive yourselves. Do what it says."

The KJV says it more succinctly: “Be ye doers of the word, and not hearers only, deceiving your own selves.”

Literally it means, “Keep on being doers of the word and not hearers only.” Hit and miss obedience to the Word of God is not acceptable.

It is not enough to merely hear the Word; we must do it. It’s not the hearing of the Word that makes us disciples, but the obeying of the Word.

It’s one thing to mark your Bible; it’s another thing to let your Bible mark you.

Next James uses a great illustration.

James 1:23-24 – “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.”

Now here the Bible is compared to a mirror. What is the main purpose of a mirror? To reflect reality. You have a mirror in your bathroom that you look at while you’re getting ready. As you look into the mirror, it shows things that need to be fixed. Now the idea is that if you’re trying to make yourself presentable, you don’t look in the mirror, see something that needs to be fixed and then just walk away.

Now there’s a 3-fold mistake here:

- **Mistake #1 - We glance and but don’t gaze.** As we read the Bible, we’re not just glancing at the Bible, but gazing into the Bible. But we don’t just look at the Bible. Remember that the Bible is a mirror that reflects the condition of our lives back to us. That’s the way God uses the Word. So we need to give enough time and thought to the Word of God that we can let God show us things about ourselves as we gaze into the Bible. God is speaking to your situation.
- **Mistake #2 - We forget what we see.** Isn’t it amazing that we can read something in the Bible one minute and go on our way, ignoring it the next minute.

Note: When it says in v.23 that he “is like a man” who looks at his face in the mirror and ignores what he sees, the word for man there is word for “male.” I think that’s interesting. A female would never do that. But guys? Yes, we’ve been known to do that.

- **Mistake #3 - We fail to obey what the Word tells us to do.** Hearing is not the same as doing. How can we read a condemnation of gossip in the Bible and walk away and start gossiping about someone? How can we read a condemnation of sexual immorality, then walk away and commit it? How can we read the instructions in God’s Word about using our money and walk away and ignore it?

ILLUSTRATION – I recently read about an interview with Actor Sir Ian McKellen, who played Gandalf in the Lord of the Rings movie. (Most recently he played Leigh Teabing in The Da Vinci Code). Ian McKellen, who is an avowed homosexual, confessed in the interview: "Whenever I stay at a hotel, I always check to see if they have a Gideon Bible, and if they do I tear out a page. I turn to Leviticus 18:22 and rip out that page, which is directed against homosexuals.... I think by now I must have ripped out a few hundred." His motives? "Who knows? There might be someone who has insomnia...who reads the Bible because they have nothing else to do and who might be especially vulnerable to what I really think is Leviticus's pornography."

Note: We shake our head at that. But are we really any different if we see our reflection in the Word of God, and don't do anything about ... we don't change our ways? We may as well rip that page out of the Bible.

Jeremiah 5:22a – “Should you not fear me?” declares the LORD. “Should you not tremble in my presence?”

Do we tremble at the Word of the Lord? If we did, we could never walk away and forget what He has revealed to us.

v.25 - “the perfect law that gives freedom...” – The Bible, OT and NT, is the “perfect law.” It reflects the heart of God. It is right and true, always!

Now people get hung up on the word “law.” Aren't we in the age of grace and freedom? But notice that it says that this is “the perfect law that gives freedom.”

Don't think of God's Word as something that merely restricts your life. It releases your life. It frees you to live as you were designed to live ... by God's way, by God's will and by God's Word. That's freedom!

Jesus said, “You will know the truth, and the truth will set you free.”

ILLUSTRATION –Pittsburgh Steelers quarterback Ben Roethlisberger is the youngest quarterback ever to win a Super Bowl. He is a rising superstar in the NFL. However, as of June 2006, he also has a new perspective on freedom.

Last year an ESPN reporter asked Roethlisberger to explain his decision to ride his motorcycle without a helmet.

ESPN: Why don't you wear a helmet when you ride your motorcycle?

Roethlisberger: Because you don't have to. It's not the law. If it was the law, I'd definitely have one on every time I rode. But it's not the law and I know I don't have to. You're just more free when you're out there with no helmet on.

Unfortunately, Roethlisberger was involved in a serious motorcycle accident in June of 2006, less than one year later. When a 62-year-old woman failed to yield at a Pittsburgh intersection,

Roethlisberger was thrown into the windshield of her Chrysler Town and Country. His bike was totaled, and emergency surgeons spent over seven hours repairing a broken jaw, a fractured skull, missing teeth, and several other facial injuries.

After being released from the hospital, Roethlisberger apologized to the fans, his family, and his team for risking his health (and life) unnecessarily. In another interview, he was no longer focused on taking advantage of his individual freedom: "In the past few days, I've gained a new perspective on life. By the grace of God, I'm fortunate to be alive." He also added that, if he ever does ride a motorcycle again, "it will certainly be with a helmet."

So don't think of obeying God's Word as something that restricts your life ... it releases your life. And that's the last part of the equation.

THE EQUATION - CAREFUL ATTENTION + FAITHFUL OBEDIENCE =

3. EVENTUAL BLESSING

James 1:25c – “He will be blessed in what he does.”

Now this is not the only time James talks about blessings from God.

James 1:12 - Blessed is the man who perseveres under trial, because when he has stood the test, he will receive the crown of life that God has promised to those who love him.

James 5:11 - As you know, we consider blessed those who have persevered. You have heard of Job's perseverance and have seen what the Lord finally brought about. The Lord is full of compassion and mercy.

Note: I think it's interesting that in both of those verses “blessing” and “perseverance” go together.

So persistent obedience is what leads to the blessing ... not just sporadic or occasional obedience. This is done even in the face of adversity. In tough times, you're tempted to quit obeying God. Hold on. There's a blessing awaiting you.

ILLUSTRATION – Several years ago we launched a program to encourage students to remain sexually pure, waiting for God's gift of marriage. Many of the students received rings from their parents to remind them of the vow they made. What's really cool is that I'm now starting to perform wedding ceremonies for these young people who made vows during “True Love Waits.” I know it wasn't always easy for them. It required perseverance at times. But what a special time it is during the wedding ceremony when this young man and young woman exchange their “True Love Waits” rings. There was a blessing waiting for that married couple to give themselves to one another the way God intended for it to be.

God will be a debtor to no one. If he promises a blessing for obedience, then He will give it. Maybe not on our timetable, but He will always honor His Word and the one who follows His Word.