

James 1:22

But be doers of the word, and not hearers only, deceiving yourselves.

Here is an interesting story to start off today's devotional. The story goes something like this:

There was a church that was looking for a new pastor; Therefore, many Pastors came to the church, giving a sermon, and the people would decide if they liked his teaching or not and if they wanted him to be the new Pastor of the church. After several Pastors had spoken over several weeks, one Pastor came along and preached a message that the people thought was tremendous. They thought that his words were powerful and full of scripture and that he spoke the words of God directly to them. So, the church decided at once to ask him if he would be their new Pastor. The Pastor agreed and the following Sunday everyone came to hear this new Pastor speak again. The pews were full and there was standing room only for all to hear what new message that the Pastor would bring them this Sunday.

So, the Pastor went up to the pulpit and spoke his message, which was the exact same message that he had spoken to them before. When the Pastor was done, the people came to him and said, *"Hey, that's a great message, but is that the only one you have? You already told us that one, we expected more awesome messages to be spoken by you from the pulpit other than just the one."*

The pastor replied, *"Oh, I have many more messages to teach, in fact I have the entire bible to teach you. But until you do what the first message that you heard taught you to do, I can't move on to any more messages. It would be like me making you a great breakfast every morning, and you devour it, but then just sit there all day waiting for the next day to come so you can eat again, looking for a new food to eat, but you do nothing with the energy that the breakfast I made for you, to improve your walk with the Lord and help others."*

No, this is not a true story and I have heard different forms of it before, but I thought it fit in perfect with today's verse, which James, the half brother of Jesus, spoke when he said, ***"be doers of the word, and not hearers only, deceiving yourselves"*** or as the Message bible puts it, ***"Don't fool yourself into thinking that you are a listener when you are anything but, letting the Word go in one ear and out the other. Act on what you hear!"*** James 1:22 (MSG)

Yet how many listen to message after message each Sunday, yet they walk away unchanged, and other then laughing at a few jokes by the Pastor and saying "Amen" to a few things he said, yet it had no other affect on their lives?

If you think about it, how often do you retell the same joke you heard from the pulpit, but never repeat any of the message to someone else. You may even go to the Pastor and say, *"Great message pastor."* shaking his hand and walking away. But if he asked you why you thought it was great or what you got out of it, you would be stumped, because you simply can't remember anything, other then the one or two jokes or stories that he may have said.

So, if you think about it, if you really were not paying attention, then how do you know if what was being spoken from the pulpit is true or right? Are you relying on every word of man or every word of God (the bible)? Now we wouldn't expect our pastors to deceive us, but if you never check it out, how do you know you haven't been deceived all this time? How do you know if you are really in a church that teaches the bible, and not a church that entertains you?

Or maybe you are not one to witness because you think you don't know the bible well enough? Well, you don't need to know the bible to be a witness, being a witness is just telling what God has done in your life and you are being a witness to the change that the Lord has made in your life, because you have given your life to Jesus. Its like, you don't need to know how to drive a car to be a witness to a car accident that you saw. You simply tell the police what you saw.

So even though you don't need to be a bible scholar, you should know the basics, which you will hear from the pulpit and also by reading the bible for yourself. But if you are not paying attention, then you are like what James said, ***“Don't fool yourself into thinking that you are a listener when you are anything but, letting the Word go in one ear and out the other.”*** Then of course you will have no bible knowledge, because repeating a joke that the Pastor said is not being a witness.

But we do have an example of what to do in the bible so that you are not letting the message go in one ear and out the other, and it will cause you to pay more attention. Read it here in Acts to help you to get an idea of what to do.

† ***Acts 17:11-12 These were more fair-minded than those in Thessalonica, in that they received the word with all readiness, and searched the Scriptures daily to find out whether these things were so. Therefore many of them believed, and also not a few of the Greeks, prominent women as well as men.***

First, make sure you have a bible with you when you go to church, and then make sure you open it and read along with the Pastor as he is reading it. A lot of people now a days have a bible app on their phone that you can read from, and most of them allow you to take notes in the bible app right there on your phone or tablet. I use my iPad because these old eyes need something bigger to read, and I can change versions of the bible to help me understand as well.

Also, I take a journal or note pad with me to take notes. You can even write down the verses that the Pastor reads in this journal or note pad and read them again later when you get home, and even during the week. Also you can talk about the message with your spouse or friends on the way home, or go out to lunch with a few people and talk about it with others. These are some basics to help you pay attention and get more out of the sermon on Sunday.

Simply, the more you get into the word and the message, the more you will do what it says and what you were taught. So don't be like the people in the church in the story I told, but listen to the message, and put it into practice and be prepared for the next message the following Sunday.

† ***Romans 2:13 (MSG) Merely hearing God's law is a waste of your time if you don't do what he commands. Doing, not hearing, is what makes the difference with God.***