

JAMES

MARK IT UP

James 1:22-25 **LEADER** Discussion Guide

Week of 3/13/22

Icebreaker: Which of the following areas of life is most challenging to you?

- Personal finances (spending, giving, saving, investing, etc.)
- Relationships (parenting, dating, marriage, etc.)
- Diet and exercise (limiting calories, working out, etc.)

What percent of the challenge you experience is due to not knowing what to do and how much is due to not acting on what you know you should do?

Getting Started: Read James 1:22-25 as a group.

1. James begins these verses with a warning against self-deception. What is it about only hearing the word and not doing it that leaves a person vulnerable to this kind of deception?

One consistent theme of Scripture is that saving faith takes action, or that it's visible in a person's life. No one is right with God simply because of what he or she knows. Two easy examples are the end of Matthew 7 (i.e., the end of the Sermon on the Mount) where Jesus paints a vivid picture of what it's like for someone to hear but not do what they've heard. So also, the Great Commission of Matthew 28 tells us that being a disciple includes obeying what Jesus commanded, not just learning what Jesus commanded. Knowing a lot of information can deceive us into thinking we're pleasing God simply because of all we know.

Application: Why do you think we're prone to being "hearers" only and not also "doers" of God's word?

Knowing is often easier than doing. It's also more comfortable and less costly. Knowing about a great diet or budget is easier than subjecting oneself to it.

2. James cautions against being "hearers only," which means that hearing is still really important! What's the danger of jumping into action as a "doer" without also listening to God's word?

The problem with acting without listening is that we might act in the wrong way—either doing something that's not from the Lord or in a manner that's not consistent with the Lord.

Application: What kind of practices, commitments, or habits can help us listen well to God's word?

Here are a few to consider...regularly reading the Bible, devoting specific time each day to read the Bible, engaging in discussions with other Christ-followers about the Bible (which is what we're doing in LifeGroups), listening to the teaching and preaching of the Bible, memorizing Scripture, etc.

3. Verses 23-25 paint a picture of what it's like to *only* hear God's word. What benefit is a mirror to someone who "at once forgets what he was like"? How do you think this is like people who hear but do not act on what they've heard?

Yes, it's obvious—a mirror would be no good in such a case. In similar fashion, hearing God's word does us little good if it doesn't lead to doing what we've heard. Think of a person who sees in a mirror that they have part of last night's dinner affixed to their chin...yet does nothing to remedy the situation.

Application: As specific as you can be, what do you find easy to hear or listen to from God's word, but hard to put into action? What do you think is keeping you from being a "doer"?

We can all say in a general sense that it's easier to listen than do what God's word commands. More specifically, we might find it difficult to be generous, to tell others about what Jesus has done in the gospel message, or to love our neighbor as ourselves.

4. Verse 25 commends the person who "looks into the perfect law, the law of liberty." It almost sounds like a contradiction, but in what sense do God's commands bring us freedom or "liberty"?

Our culture (and hearts) can make us think that true freedom and liberty come from answering to no one but ourselves. True liberty is to throw off the shackles of God's commands! Not so fast. God's laws free us from sin and death. As Paul writes in Romans 8:2, "the law of the Spirit of life has set you free in Christ Jesus from the law of sin and death."

Application: What's an example of some truth or command of Scripture that has given freedom in your life? (Or, flip things around and think about a time where disobedience robbed you of some degree of liberty?)

This is a personal question so it may be beneficial for you to answer first. Also, this is a question that could unleash different emotions which may make people hesitate to engage. For example, one person could say that the command to live in life-long faithfulness to one's spouse has given freedom from divorce and heartache, but another in the same group may have experienced such heartache.

5. Every LifeGroup at Calvary is a Biblical Community on Mission—a community that listens to God’s word and then seeks to actively live it out together so that we might be “blessed” like verse 25 states.

The term, **Biblical Community on Mission**, is meant to express both listening and doing. As a “Community,” we seek to love and care for each other. As a “Biblical Community,” we seek to make the Bible the centerpiece of our discussions in our groups and live out the model of community we see in it. The “Mission” piece means that we are ready to engage in meeting the needs of those outside our group.

Application: How would you assess your group when it comes to hearing and doing God’s word? None of us is perfect and no group is perfect, but what steps could you commit to as a group to grow in both areas?

Try to be as practical and realistic as possible as you think of ways to grow. Taking a small step or two in the right direction might be better than trying to take a major leap.