



James 1:22-25 Meaning: Be Doers, Not Just Hearers Now

James 1:22-25 Meaning: [*Be Doers, Not Just Hearers Now*](#). *“But prove yourselves doers of the word, and not merely hearers who delude themselves. For if anyone is a hearer of the word and not a doer, he is like a man who looks at his natural face in a mirror; for once he has looked at himself and gone away, he has immediately forgotten what kind of person he was. But one who looks intently at the perfect law, the law of liberty, and abides by it, not having become a forgetful hearer but an effectual doer, this man will be blessed in what he does.”*

If a person who accepts the word and recognizes how precious it is, then that person will treasure it and use it to grow, mature, and be able to effectively serve the Father and our Lord Jesus Christ. And that is the point that James was making in verses 22-25. Being a Christian is not passive. Christians are required to serve God the Father in every way that they can.

That does not mean that every man must become an evangelist or missionary. It does not mean that the responsibility rests with the congregational elders. But there is no clearer command for Christians than to be working and serving the Lord. A person can spend hours learning all about swimming. He/she can watch training video after training video. The person can go to lectures on swimming, meet with good swimmers, even go out to the pool or river to look at the water. But until that person actually jumps into the water and tries, all the time spent is useless.



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Most of the work of service is done quietly one on one with other people, and most of it involves the qualities that all Christians should have. Paul wrote in [*Colossians 3:12-17*](#),

“So, as those who have been chosen of God, holy and beloved, put on a heart of compassion, kindness, humility, gentleness and patience; bearing with one another, and forgiving each other, whoever has a complaint against anyone; just as the Lord forgave you, so also should you. Beyond all these things put on love, which is [l]the perfect bond of unity. Let the peace of Christ rule in your hearts, to which indeed you were called in one body; and be thankful. Let the word of Christ richly dwell within you, with all wisdom teaching and admonishing one another with psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing with thankfulness in your hearts to God. Whatever you do in word or deed, do all in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks through Him to God the Father.”

Of course, Paul’s words were directed on how Christians are to live and work together. But the principles also apply to those that are lost. Every Christian can have a heart of compassion, kindness, humility, gentleness and patience when dealing with others. A Christian



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is honest and hard working. A Christian develops a good reputation within a community or at work. These are traits that every Christian must have. And every Christian can live their lives quietly serving the Lord and showing others what it means to be a Christian. That will cause people to want to know about the blessings of being a Christian.

But then, James gives a stern warning to those that do NOT accept the word implanted with humility, and do NOT become doers of the word. "For if anyone is a hearer of the word and not a doer, he is like a man who looks at his natural face in a mirror; for once he has looked at himself and gone away, he has immediately forgotten what kind of person he was."

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A man was baptized and became a Christian as a young man. Basically, his learning about the Bible came from sermons he heard on the Lord's Day or maybe attending an occasional Bible study. He is friendly and courteous while at services. But when he goes to work, his attitude and language changes. He becomes more aggressive and his words include much cursing.

After work, he will go to a nearby bar for a few hours to drink with the guys and flirt with the waitresses. Then he goes home, eats, says a few words to his wife and children, goes to bed, and does the same thing the next day. Then Sunday comes up, and his entire demeanor changes again.



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This man rarely remembers who he is. He made a commitment to serve the Lord God and his King, Jesus Christ. That commitment cannot be turned on and off like a light switch. Every one of his attitudes and actions are known to God. There is no hiding. Being a Christian is not some insurance policy that is pulled out, dusted off, and used in emergencies. His life is NOT a living sacrifice.

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But in verse 25, James then said, “But one who looks intently at the perfect law, the law of liberty, and abides by it, not having become a forgetful hearer but an effectual doer, this man will be blessed in what he does.” A Christian must live intentionally knowing that he/she serves the Living God. The Christ-like qualities must become the very essence of a Christian’s personality and attitude.

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The Law of Moses was very detailed in what a Jew was supposed to do. The books of Exodus, Leviticus, and Deuteronomy described how the Law regulated every aspect of a person’s life. From what the priest and high priest was to wear to daily conduct were controlled through what seemed like a complex maze of do this and don’t do that.



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But Paul wrote in [Galatians 3:24-25](#), “Therefore, the Law has become our tutor to lead us to Christ, so that we may be justified by faith. But now that faith has come, we are no longer under a tutor.” When a man, or woman, is a small child, that child is faced with rules.

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For a child, the adult world must be a bewildering place. Rules and restrictions seem to be everywhere. It’s bedtime, time to get up, wash your hands, don’t touch, eat your food, don’t eat that, go play, don’t go into the street and countless other rules must be followed. If they are not followed, then that usually leads to some unpleasant consequence.

But when that child becomes an adult, he/she is free to make decisions without having parents, grandparents, or teachers looking over their shoulder. But with that greater freedom comes greater responsibilities. The adult is expected to know what to do. There are still laws in place. There are still rules of social behavior. But there is more flexibility making decisions. However, if the laws are not followed or social rules are ignored, the consequences can be much more serious.

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A Christian that has a real commitment to Jesus Christ and God the Father will be serious in learning what the Lord expects and then



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goes about putting the teachings and principles into practice. In other words, he/she becomes an “effectual doer of the Word.”

As has been said many times, being a Christian is not a spectator sport! Living a Christ-like life does not come naturally. In fact, it is the earthly, “natural” man that must be put off and replaced with a life that is directed by the Lord. It is a lifetime work that involves a lifetime commitment.

Yes, it can be hard at times. Yes, it will require difficult decisions to be made from time to time. But the blessings so outweigh the hardships! The spiritual quality of life in this world becomes richer, and the ultimate blessing is to be joined to the Living God for eternity. THAT is a goal worth working for!

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