DOERS in 2004

(Selected Scriptures)
1/4/04

Introductory Text: (James 1:22-27)

James 1:22 But be ye doers of the word, and not hearers only, deceiving your own selves.

It's easier to know what is right than to do what is right.

A. THE FOOLISHNESS OF THE "HEARER ONLY"

Why are some people content to hear the Word and not do it?

1. They are self-deceived (v. 22)

2. They are careless.

B. THE FAITHFULNESS OF THE "DOER" (v. 25 - 27)

l. He is conscientious (v. 25)

2. He is consistent in his practice (v. 26 - 27).

a. Doing the Word takes self-control (v. 26)

b. Doing the Word takes sacrifice (service) (v. 27a)

c. Doing the word takes separation.

We need to be DOERS in five very vital activities:

(Examples of Doing the Word in the Book of ACTS)

D iscipleship (follow-up of new & growing believers) (Acts 18:26)

O thers (accountable friendships) (Acts 2:42-47)

E vangelism (reaching the lost for Christ) (Acts 4:20, 31; 8:4)

R equests (Intercessory prayer) (Acts 12:5)

S ervice (ministry in & through my church) (Acts 11:25-26; 13:1-2)

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James 1:22 But be ye doers of the word, and not hearers only, deceiving your own selves.

James 1:27 - "Doer" - present tense = continual action. (a habit of life).
A key word in Deut. : DO Obey the Law!

"To whomsoever much is given, much shall be required"

It's easier to know what is right than to do what is right.

To learn and not to do is not to learn. Unless a message is acted upon, it is never learned.

Illus. - Spiritual obesity. Fat and lazy Christians (who know everything and do nothing).

"Arm-chair Quarterbacks - have all the answers but never play the game.

Ex. - The failure in Christian schools today is that the kids have no outlet to live what they have learned.

Knowledge puffs up (proud attitude) Love builds up (proper action).

V. 22 "Deceiving" = to misjudge, miscalculate. To miss the point.

You miss the whole point of God's word if you know and don't do. This is the height of foolishness.

Deceived because he thought he really benefitted. Illus. Wise man (a doer) and foolish man (one who does not do Christ's sayings). Mt. 7:24 - 29.

The gospel should have changed your life! We learn truth to live it! Not admire it, worship it, etc.

Illus. of a plow that was donated and sent to Africa. A primitive tribe did not know its purpose, so they set it up on a pedestal and worshipped it. They perverted it from its original design and purpose.

A. THE FOOLISHNESS OF THE "HEARER ONLY"

V. 23 - "Hearer" = an attender at a lecture (ex. Acts 17; Paul at Mars HIll - Greeks wanted only to hear new things).

Applic. : Going to church is not to see and hear a performance. It is to equip you to serve. You are the performers!

"A man beholding" = Gk. word for male in contrast to female. Women are more sensitive by nature. See flaws more easily. (spend more time in front of the mirror)

The Bible is like a mirror. It reflects defects, needs, areas that need change.

A hearer just likes only his ears tickled. II Tim. 4:3

V. 23, 24 - One who knows the Word but does not obey it is like:
l. a man who is lost while holding a map in his hand
2. a man who knows what is wrong with his health but does nothing about it.

Why are some people content to hear the Word and not do it?

1. They are self-deceived (v. 22). Illus. of intellectuals who lack common sense (not practical). They are deceived into thinking that knowing equals righteousness.

This is not true! Ex. The devils believe (know about God) and tremble (Ja. 2:19).

It's your actions that will one day be judged (these are undeniable).

2. They are careless.

--They take too quick a look (v. 24)
--They look without any intention of changing

Or he may:
--look with someone else in mind
--look with good intentions but never get around to doing them.

B. THE FAITHFULNESS OF THE "DOER" (v. 25 - 27)

I. He is conscientious (v. 25)

a. He is a serious reader.

"Looketh into" = to bend over and look intently. To stoop down to see exactly. To examine it minutely. (ex. Bereans).

"Looketh" - the word was used in secular Greek when referring to those who were bent over looking out their windows at someone else's party.

Ex. Jn. 20:5,11 - Disciples bent over and looked intently into the empty tomb.

b. He is a steady reader.

"Continueth" = remain, stay

1) Do you have devotions or devotion?

2) Are you playing Christianity? Is it a game?

PRACTICAL TIPS:

1. Take notes in church
2. Keep notes at home (ex. post them)
3. Take notes during devotions

    1. Listen with "ears to hear" & a "mind to obey"
    2. Listen to see how it applies to you (don't compare self with others)
    3. Examine self daily. Take the time -- think --

    "examine yourselves to see whether ye be in the faith"
    1. Plan - schedule obedience to what you know
    2. Be determined to practice one truth that God teaches or reminds you of each day.

c. He is a submissive reader.

"Doer" - He puts it into practice.

The way to prevent forgetfulness is by practicing what you know. We remember very little of what we read, a little more of what we hear, a little more of what we see . . . most of what we practice.

Blessing is only in doing!

(the reward comes only to the doer)

Ex. of learning to ride a bike, drive a car, play trumpet, play a sport, etc. -- You can read all the books you want; you don't gain the blessing of learning how until you do it!

2. He is consistent in his practice (v. 26 - 27).

a. Doing the Word takes self-control (v. 26)

"Seem to be" - He is supposing himself to be religious. The picture here is not of a conscious hypocrite, but of a self-deceived religionist.

"religious" - one who supposedly stands in awe of God. He is one who is very interested in everything (every minute detail) that regards worship of God.

"Bridleth not his tongue" - NOTE: the picture is that of a man putting the bridle in his own mouth, not in that of another.

"Vain" = empty, hollow, useless, dead. Illus. of hollow Easter bunnies -- they look promising but there is nothing on the inside).

V. 26 What you say is an evidence of whether or not you have true religion.

V. 27 How you serve is an evidence of true religion.
How you are separated is an evidence also.

b. Doing the Word takes sacrifice (service) (v. 27a)

"pure" - clean

"Undefiled" = free from contamination (Jews were very interested in this) Ex. priest and Levites who excused themselves from helping the man who fell among thieves.
Good Samaritan had real religion!

- "fatherless and widows" are mentioned because they could never repay you.

--Real living of the Bible is serving, helping, giving, etc. to those who can't pay you back. When you give to them, this shows true, pure motives.

"Affliction" = - stress, pressure, tribulation, trouble.

Serving - Christ "came not to be ministered unto but to minister . . ."

Illus. Christ washed the Disciples feet then said, "You ought to wash one another's (Jn. 13:14) Then He said: "If ye know these things, happy are ye if ye do them" (v. 17).

c. Doing the word takes separation.

"Keep himself unspotted from the world" -
"keep" = guard
"unspotted" = unstained
"world" = world system (see Ja. 4:4)

"In the world but not of the world"

"We reach into the world and get involved. Practice the Bible. We pull men out of the filth without swimming in it ourselves.

A doer will not have the world's mark on his life.

We need to be DOERS in five very vital activities:

(Examples of Doing the Word in the Book of ACTS)

D iscipleship (follow-up of new & growing believers) (Acts 18:26)

Acts 18:26
And he began to speak boldly in the synagogue: whom when Aquila and Priscilla had heard, they took him unto *them,* and **expounded unto him the way of God more perfectly**.

WHY SHOULD I DISCIPLE NEW CONVERTS?

1. BECAUSE GOD COMMANDS DISCIPLESHIP

A. DISCIPLESHIP IS THE GREAT COMMISSION (Mt. 28:18-20) ("Teach" = lit. "make disciples")

B. DISCIPLESHIP WAS THE PRACTICE OF THE EARLY CHURCH

1. Discipleship is expounding "the way of God more perfectly" (Acts 18:23-28)

2. Discipleship is declaring "the whole counsel of God" (Acts 20:18-20, 26-27)

For full discipleship to take place, you need:

a. public teaching of the Word in a church (see Acts 11:26)

b. private teaching of the Word in a home (see Acts 18:23-28)

Personal discipleship does not contradict the ministry of a church--it complements it. You need both! Don't substitute one for another. A pulpit ministry does not substitute for personal evangelism and discipleship, and vice-versa.

3. Discipleship is giving to others what has been committed to you (II Tim. 2:2)

   a. Christ discipled the apostles (who were called His disciples (see the Gospels)
   b. The apostles discipled Barnabas (implied in Acts 4:36)
   c. Barnabas discipled Paul (Acts 9:27)
   d. Paul discipled Timothy (I Tim. 1:2)
   e. Timothy discipled Ephesian saints (I Tim. 1:3)
   f. Paul discipled Aquilla & Priscilla (implied in Acts 18:2, 18)
   g. Aquilla & Priscilla discipled Apollos (Acts 18:23-28)
   h. Apollos discipled the Corinthian saints (Acts 19:1, I Cor. 1:12)

4. Discipleship is the goal of the ministry (Eph. 4:11-13)

2. BECAUSE NEW BELIEVERS NEED DISCIPLING

A. NEW BELIEVERS (like newborn infants) NEED LOVE, PROTECTION, FOOD AND TRAINING

1. They are more <u>vulnerable</u> than mature Christians

   a. More easily deceived by Satan (I Th. 3:5)

   b. More easily led astray by false religions, false movements, and false teachings (Acts 20:29-31)

2. They have a great <u>potential for growth</u> (change)

   a. Fastest growth rate is in early childhood (just as the early stages of growth are vital to an infant, the early stages are vital to a new convert)

   b. Patterns are established early that will continue

B. NEW BELIEVERS NEED TO KNOW WHAT THEY HAVE IN CHRIST
(II Cor. 5:17)

1. Teach him that he has a new faith (change in beliefs) (Acts 2:42 - "continued in apostles' doctrine)

2. Teach him that he has a new food (change in diet) (I Pet. 2:2; Mt. 4:4)

3. Teach him that he has a new family (change in relationships) (Prov. 24:1; I Cor. 15:33; II Cor. 6:14-16)

4. Teach him that he has a new fight (change in conflicts) (Put on new man - Eph. 4:24; I Thes. 3:1-5; II Tim. 3:12; James 1)

5. Teach him that he has a new future (Eph. 2:1-10)

   a. Change in direction (new goals) (Eph. 2:1-5)

   b. Change in destiny (new hope) (Eph. 2:6-7)

      1) We anticipate no judgment for sin
      --We face no condemnation (Ro. 8:1)
      --We have passed from death to life (Jn. 5:24-25)

      2) We anticipate a new body (I Cor. 15:51-58)

      3) We anticipate a new home (II Pet. 3:13; Rev. 21:1-8)
      We must live like citizens of Heaven - Phil. 1:27; 3:20; Eph. 2:19

   c. Change in duty (new responsibilities) (Eph. 2:8-10)

Serve (work for) Christ and His children with love as your motive (Jn. 13:34; I Jn. 2:7-8).

We are not saved to sit, soak, and sour, but to serve!

O thers (accountable friendships) (Acts 2:42-47)

Acts 2:42-47

And they continued stedfastly in the apostles' doctrine and fellowship, and in breaking of bread, and in prayers. [43]And fear came upon every soul: and many wonders and signs were done by the apostles. [44]And all that believed were together, and had all things common; [45]And sold their possessions and goods, and parted them to all *men,* as every man had need. [46]And they, continuing daily with one accord in the temple, and breaking bread from house to house, did eat their meat with gladness and singleness of heart, [47]Praising God, and having favour with all the people. And the Lord added to the church daily such as should be saved.

1. SPIRIT OF UNITY OVER A COMMON FAITH (V. 44a)

"All that believed were together"
We could not have unity, if a church were made up of believers and unbelievers.
We are in this together!

We need each other!

I don't know what I would do without our deacons; without the men in our church who play instruments, run the sound booth, repair around the building; without the ladies who cook, work in the nursery, clean up our building, etc. Without you, our church would be missing a vital body part.

2. SPIRIT OF UNITY OVER A COMMON WORSHIP (v. 46a)

"One accord" - lit. "same mind"

They worshipped together!

God knows nothing of solitary religion.

The Jewish Christians (at this point) did not realize that they didn't have to go to the Temple to worship (see Jn. 4:23). (NOTE: Even Paul felt this was no inconsistency - Acts 21:26).

But at least now they were worshipping the true God there!

The Temple was destroyed in 70 A.D.

3. AN UNSELFISH CHURCH (v. 45)

Those early Christians had an intense feeling of responsibility for each other.

We are "our brother's keeper."

Love overlooks differences in personality, race, culture, etc., and meets needs.

SEE Acts 4:34-35
Acts 11:27-30

This is not communism.
Communism is a forced redistribution of wealth; this was voluntary.

Communism is motivated by fear; this was of love.
Communism divides up all wealth and gives to those who don't deserve it or need it. This was to meet genuine needs.

4. A JOY-FILLED CHURCH (v. 46)

"Gladness" - we can rejoice in all that God has done for us.
"A gloomy Christian is a contradiction in terms."
"Singleness" - they had one motive - "love"
They did not have mixed motives. They were sincere!

They did not have Christians over to their house to show off but because they loved; not to impress but because they loved; nor were they selective (partial) in their company because they really loved.

When God is working, the church will blend together in harmony; will work together as a team, will function together as a healthy body, will band together like brothers.

E vangelism (reaching the lost for Christ) (Acts 4:20, 31; 8:4)

Acts 4:20
For we cannot but speak the things which we have seen and heard.

Acts 4:31
And when they had prayed, the place was shaken where they were assembled together; and they were all filled with the Holy Ghost, and **they spake the word of God with boldness**.

Acts 8:4
Therefore they that were scattered abroad went **every where preaching the word.**

God used persecution (death of Stephen, etc.) to cause the church to spread.

He didn't want a Jewish church.

Jesus wanted all nations discipled (Mt. 28:19), the Gospel preached to every creature (Mk. 16:15). He wanted them to be witnesses "both in Jerusalem, and in all Judea, and in Samaria, and unto the uttermost part of the earth" (Acts 1:8).

(Story: “The Fishless Fishermen”)

R equests (Intercessory prayer) (Acts 12:5)

Acts 12:5
Peter therefore was kept in prison: but **prayer was made without ceasing of the church** unto God for him.

In a time of crisis, you can eliminate many things. But prayer is not one of them.

If you are to eliminate anything, eliminate worry, fear, your own understanding (solutions) . . . But never eliminate prayer!

Prayer is an essential that we in our fleshly, old nature don't view as such.

Don't worry -- pray!
Don't plan without God -- pray!
Don't work in the flesh -- pray!

Why does God allow us to go into times of crisis? So He can be glorified by answering prayer.

I had an unsaved teacher in Jr. High school who said, "The only time you probably pray is when you really need something from God."

True, we should pray even when we are not in trouble, in good times and bad. But remember, troubles come so that you will pray. They come so that God can show Himself mighty!

EX: of people who prayed when trouble came:

1) Abraham for his relatives in Sodom (Gen. 18:23-32)

2) Lot when fleeing Sodom (Gen. 19:20)

3) Jacob when he thought his brother would kill him (Gen. 32:9-12)

4) Moses before the Red Sea opened (Ex. 14:15), and when in need of water (Ex. 15:25)

5) David when fleeing from Saul (Ps. 18, 25), and Absalom (Ps. 3)

6) Hezekiah when dying with a fatal illness (II Ki. 20:2ff)

7) Daniel when all the wise men were ordered to be killed (Dan. 2:17-18)

8) Jonah when in the fish's belly (Jonah 2:1)

9) Paul in prison with Silas (Acts 16:25)

Heb. 4:16 - "Let us therefore come boldly unto the throne of grace, that we may obtain mercy, and find grace to help <u>in time of need</u>."

DON'T ELIMINATE PRAYER BECAUSE IT MOVES GOD TO ACTION (v. 5b)

"But" = shows a sharp contrast. The Greek text brings out this contrast by literally saying: "On the one hand ( ) therefore, Peter was being guarded (impf. passive) in the prison, but on the other hand ( ), prayer was (impf.) fervently being made by the church to God about him (Peter)."

The soldiers were guarding, but the saints were praying!

The scene looks bleak on the one hand, but bright on the other!

"Prayer to the Rescue!"

I imagine if Hollywood were to depict a tense scene like this, it would not show a heroic group of people gathered together in a house praying (which gives God the glory), but rather the heroes would be gathered together scheming how they might conspire and think up a strategy as to how they might heroically free Peter.

Why does God command us to pray? Cannot He work without our needing to ask? YES!

However, the reason we are to pray is so that God will be glorified. So that God will receive the credit for what He does. So that no one will think it was by chance or coincidence.

God has every right to receive glory and honor. Answered prayer shows God to be mighty, sovereign, and faithful.

"...If thou wouldest believe, thou shouldest see the glory of God" (Jn. 11:40-42)

"...Ye shall ask what ye will, and it shall be done unto you. Herein (by answered prayer) is my Father glorified" (Jn. 15:7, 8).

What kind of praying moves God to action?

1.Fervent prayer ("without ceasing")

V. 5

"Without ceasing" = lit. to stretch out

1)Describes the length of prayer = continual, drawn out; tireless requesting.

"Praying always with all prayer" (Eph. 6:18)
~Continue in prayer" (Col. 4:2)
"Pray without ceasing" (I Th. 5:17)

2)Describes the intensity of prayer - fervent and earnest prayer.

Luke 22:44 - "And being in an agony he prayed more earnestly: and his sweat was as it were great drops of blood falling down to the ground."

Epaphras loved the Colossian believers so much that it is said of him that he was "always laboring fervently for you in prayers..." (Col. 4:12)

To pray fervently (or wrestle in prayer) does not necessarily mean to weep loudly or raise your voice. Remember prayer is a spiritual rather than physical exercise (DeHaan, How to Pray God's Way, p. 21).

Rather, it means to persist in prayer (EX: Luke 11:5-9, 18:108), and to have a sincere intensity, not mere lip service.

Why does fervent prayer move God?

It's sincere!

--Insincere requests don't last long (are soon stopped, quickly fade; have a short life span)

--Insincere requests come from the head, not heart.

2. United prayer ("the church")

Why does united prayer move God to action? Cannot private prayer accomplish the same thing? Yes, it can.

However, corporate decisions and requests (in the name of Jesus; i.e. according to His will) have a special promise. SEE Matthew 18:18-20.

Sometimes the things we ask God to do privately are not in accordance with His will - the Bible.

However, if you have a group of 2 or 3 brothers and you share a prayer request that is unBiblical or not the will of God, it can be checked. On the other hand, if everyone agrees it is God's will (assuming all are spiritual), it will be done.

3. Intercessory prayer ("for him")

Why does intercessory prayer move God? Answer - It is not selfish. It is for the benefit of someone else.

Selfish prayer does not get answered - james 4:3 - "Ye ask, and receive not, because ye ask amiss, that ye may consume it upon your lusts."

Does this mean we should never ask anything for ourselves?

No. (EX "Lord's Prayer" - Mt. 6:9-13). It means that whatever you ask for ought to be for God's glory (v. 13b) and according to His will (I Jn. 5:14-15).

"Remember them that are in bonds, as bound with them." (Heb. 13:3). Pray for those persecuted for righteousness sake!

The Puritan preacher Thomas Watson said: "The angel fetched Peter out of prison, but it was prayer that fetched the angel."

S ervice (ministry in & through my church) (Acts 11:25-26; 13:1-2)

Acts 11:25-26

Then departed Barnabas to Tarsus, for to seek Saul: [26]And when he had found him, he brought him unto Antioch. And it came to pass, that a whole year **they assembled themselves with the church, and taught much people**. And the disciples were called Christians first in Antioch.

Acts 13:1-2

Now there were in the church that was at Antioch certain prophets and teachers; as Barnabas, and Simeon that was called Niger, and Lucius of Cyrene, and Manaen, which had been brought up with Herod the tetrarch, and Saul. [2]As **they ministered to the Lord,** and fasted, the Holy Ghost said, Separate me Barnabas and Saul for the work whereunto I have called them.

The word "ministered" refers to service of a spiritual nature.

NOTE: Ministering to the saints (cp. 11:26) is ministering to the Lord!

Never forget that whatever you do for a fellow child of God in this local church you are doing for Christ. (SEE Mt. 26:34-46).

"Inasmuch as ye have done it unto one of the least of these my brethren, ye have done it to me" (Mt. 26:40)

Mark 9:41 - "For whosoever shall give you a cup of water to drink in my name, because ye belong to Christ, verily I say unto you, he shall not lost his reward."

(SEE V. 5)

We all are to be involved in one form of service or another.

The ministers had a minister (John Mark). We are all ministers. I serve you, many of you serve me (in various ways), and together we are serving Christ!

1. Barnabas & Paul <u>faithfully</u> served (12:25)
   (They were dependable; they finished the job)

12:25

Barnabas and Paul had faithfully carried out the menial task of bringing relief money to Jerusalem (Acts 11:30).

Those who are faithful in little things will be given greater responsibility.

Mt. 25:21 - "His lord said unto him, Well done, thou good and faithful servant: thou hast been faithful over a few things, I will make thee ruler over many things: enter thou into the joy of thy lord."

SEE Luke 16:10, 11 (NOTE: Paul and Barnabas were faithful, so God knew He could trust them with true riches).

Paul looking back at this point of God's calling him, said: And I thank Christ Jesus our Lord, who hath enabled me, for that He counted me faithful, putting me into the ministry." (I Tim. 1:12)

2. Barnabas & Paul continually served (v. 2)
(They were consistent; they didn't quit the job)

If you are not already at work in the ministry God has given us to do here, what makes you think you will work when you move to another location? What would lead you to believe that when you become trained, then you will serve . . . or when you go to the foreign mission field then you will serve?

The work of missions must begin at home!

You can't suppose that you can live any way you want, and that someday God will knock you over the head and call you into some great work for Him.

God never moves parked cars! (He moves those who are in motion)

God's will (desired purpose) unfolds as we are busy serving Him right where we are!

Conclusion:

MY COMMITMENT AS A CHRISTIAN:

I'm part of the fellowship of the unashamed. I have stepped over the line. The decision has been made. I'm a disciple of Jesus Christ. I won't look back, let up, slow down, back away, or be still. My past is redeemed, my present makes sense, my future is secure. I'm finished and done with low living, sight walking, small planning, smooth knees, colorless dreams, tamed visions, mundane talking, cheap living, and dwarfed goals. I no longer need preeminence, prosperity, position, promotions, plaudits, or popularity. I don't have to be right, first, tops, recognized, praised, regarded, or rewarded. I now live by faith, lean on His presence, walk by patience, lift by prayer, and labor by power.

My face is set, my gait is fast, my goal is heaven, my road is narrow, my way rough, my companions few, my Guide reliable, my mission clear. I cannot be bought, deluded, or delayed. I will not flinch in the face of sacrifice, hesitate in the presence of the adversary, negotiate at the table of the enemy, or meander in the maze of mediocrity. I won't give up, shut up, let up, until I have stayed up, stored up, prayed up, paid up, preached up for the cause of Christ. I am a disciple of Jesus. I must go till He comes, give till I drop, preach till all know, and work till He stops me. And when He comes for His own, He will have no problem recognizing me... my banner will be clear!
(The Timothy Report, Swan Lake Communications, SwanLC@aol.com, January 4, 1999)