



2014 Q4 “The Book of James” Lesson 4 – Being and Doing

Memory Text: “But be ye doers of the word, and not hearers only, deceiving your own selves”

What does it mean...what comes to mind when you think about being a “doer of the word?”

- Doing all the right things? Making sure you eat the right things, pay the right tithe, wear the right clothes, play only “Bible” games on Sabbath (Bible football, Bible Frisbee, etc.)?
- Participating in all the required sacraments and rights necessary for salvation...or at least to lessen the degree of judgment?
- Checking off a list of behaviors or obligations designed to improve our standing or curry favor with God?
- OR does it mean not just “talking the talk” but “walking the walk”?
 - Sabbath’s lesson recounts a story of “The Great Blondin”, a famous performer who walked across Niagara Falls on a tightrope in 1860...and actually carried an assistant on his back. The Prince of Wales witnessed this feat, and Blondin then offered to carry the prince across the falls too.
- Tim has used the example in class to contrast someone knowing the mechanics of swimming, the different types of strokes/kicks, the physics of buoyancy...but if that person were thrown into the deep end of the pool, could they actually *swim*?
- Is watching/witnessing, knowing *about* something or someone...the same as actually experiencing it for yourself?
- Experience is so important, this class has made it 1 of our 3-prongs in the Integrative, Evidence-Based model
 - Psalms 34:8 – Taste and see that the Lord is good.
 - John 20:27 – Put your finger here; see my hands. Reach out your hand and put it in my side. Stop doubting and believe.
 - Isaiah 1:18 – Come let us reason together, though your sins are like scarlet, they shall be white as snow...
- Natural laws at work in being “doers of the word”:
 - Law of worship – by beholding we become changed
 - Law of exertion – we talked about this just a few weeks ago, and how we cannot develop/grow/increase a muscle or a skill or a habit or acumen without exerting it...stretching it...practicing it – ongoing and repeatedly. This repeated experience of actually doing and applying and putting into practice God’s words, God’s methods, God’s principles increases our confidence and builds our faith.
 - Others?



SUNDAY

Knowing Your Enemy

I'm not sure if others got the same overall impression I did when reading this week's lesson...that it seemed to be very commandment/behavior driven when referring to God's law...but do make some excellent points in several areas. It is just so almost automatic now to ask myself...what law lens is the author looking through? What law is being presented – natural or imposed?

Read James 1:23, 24...what do we think James is talking about here?

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! Those who hear and don't act are like those who glance in the mirror, walk away, and two minutes later have no idea who they are, what they look like. (MSG)

For if anyone only listens to the Word without obeying it and being a doer of it, he is like a man who looks carefully at his [own] natural face in a mirror; For he thoughtfully observes himself, and then goes off and promptly forgets what he was like. (AMP)

A quote by Richard James says, "Whenever two people meet there are really six people present. There is each person as they see themselves, each person as the other person sees them, and each person as they really are. Thoughts?"

Has anyone other than me experienced this? Are there times when we are our own worst enemies? Aren't we so good at the art of denial and delusion...and even if we have moments of honest character revelation in the mirror, aren't we quick to forget as soon as we walk away? I find this to be one of the most remarkable and inspiring things about David's prayer after being confronted by Nathan in Psalm 51. He realized where not being truthful about his true nature and spiritual state had gotten him – to commit adultery and murder. He confessed his desire to embrace the truth about who he really was...with no desire to hide any of the bad or ugly...in fact he begged for God to search him and find even the smallest defect, because he knew once it was uncovered and acknowledged, then God could heal it and replace it with a new heart and a right spirit.

The lesson lists 2 examples from Matthew of men who had rather distorted self-images – the rich young ruler and Peter who were both self-deceived about their true spiritual states. The rich young ruler really thought he had it made...he had check off all the obligatory boxes he thought were required to be saved. Did anyone other than me grow up in an environment where behaviors and "doing the right thing"...or maybe "not doing the wrong thing" were given more emphasis than a heart transformation?



The Bible gives several examples of folks who seem to get caught up in the rituals and the symbols and the works, and completely miss the healing message about God's character of love they were originally designed to reveal. Can you name any?

- Israelites – Isaiah 1 ¹¹ “The multitude of your sacrifices — what are they to me?” says the LORD. “I have more than enough of burnt offerings, of rams and the fat of fattened animals; I have no pleasure in the blood of bulls and lambs and goats.
- ¹² When you come to appear before me, who has asked this of you, this trampling of my courts? ¹³ Stop bringing meaningless offerings! Your incense is detestable to me. New Moons, Sabbaths and convocations — I cannot bear your worthless assemblies. ¹⁴ Your New Moon feasts and your appointed festivals I hate with all my being. They have become a burden to me; I am weary of bearing them. (NIV)
- ¹³⁻¹⁷ “Quit your worship charades. I can’t stand your trivial religious games: Monthly conferences, weekly Sabbaths, special meetings meetings, meetings, meetings I can’t stand one more! Meetings for this, meetings for that. I hate them! You’ve worn me out! I’m sick of your religion, religion, religion, while you go right on sinning. (MSG)
- Hosea 6:6 I’m after love that lasts, not more religion. I want you to know GOD, not go to more prayer meetings. (MSG) ⁶ For I desire mercy and not sacrifice, And the knowledge of God more than burnt offerings. (NKJV)

So what was the problem here? If anyone had a direct word from God, it was these folks...and they were doing **exactly** what he said...why were they not considered “doers of the word”?

Because there was no heart transformation happening. They continued to hold on to their celebrity worship, their television, their facebook, their iDevices... oh wait... that’s something totally different. I mean they continued to be idol worshipers and hold onto their other gods.

Pharisees – Matthew 23 (the famous “woe unto the teachers of the law” chapter) ²³ Then Jesus said to the crowds and to his disciples: ² “The teachers of the law and the Pharisees sit in Moses’ seat. ³ So you must be careful to do everything they tell you. But do not do what they do, for they do not practice what they preach. ⁴ They tie up heavy, cumbersome loads and put them on other people’s shoulders, but they themselves are not willing to lift a finger to move them.

⁵ “Everything they do is done for people to see: They make their phylacteries[a] wide and the tassels on their garments long; ⁶ they love the place of honor at banquets and the most important seats in the synagogues; ⁷ they love to be greeted with respect in the marketplaces and to be called ‘Rabbi’ by others.

⁸ “But you are not to be called ‘Rabbi,’ for you have one Teacher, and you are all brothers. ⁹ And do not call anyone on earth ‘father,’ for you have one Father, and he is in heaven. ¹⁰ Nor



are you to be called instructors, for you have one Instructor, the Messiah. 11 The greatest among you will be your servant. 12 For those who exalt themselves will be humbled, and those who humble themselves will be exalted.

Seven Woes on the Teachers of the Law and the Pharisees

13 “Woe to you, teachers of the law and Pharisees, you hypocrites! You shut the door of the kingdom of heaven in people’s faces. You yourselves do not enter, nor will you let those enter who are trying to. [14] [b]

15 “Woe to you, teachers of the law and Pharisees, you hypocrites! You travel over land and sea to win a single convert, and when you have succeeded, you make them twice as much a child of hell as you are.

16 “Woe to you, blind guides! You say, ‘If anyone swears by the temple, it means nothing; but anyone who swears by the gold of the temple is bound by that oath.’ 17 You blind fools! Which is greater: the gold, or the temple that makes the gold sacred? 18 You also say, ‘If anyone swears by the altar, it means nothing; but anyone who swears by the gift on the altar is bound by that oath.’ 19 You blind men! Which is greater: the gift, or the altar that makes the gift sacred? 20 Therefore, anyone who swears by the altar swears by it and by everything on it.

21 And anyone who swears by the temple swears by it and by the one who dwells in it. 22 And anyone who swears by heaven swears by God’s throne and by the one who sits on it.

23 “Woe to you, teachers of the law and Pharisees, you hypocrites! You give a tenth of your spices—mint, dill and cumin. But you have neglected the more important matters of the law—justice, mercy and faithfulness. You should have practiced the latter, without neglecting the former. 24 You blind guides! You strain out a gnat but swallow a camel.

25 “Woe to you, teachers of the law and Pharisees, you hypocrites! You clean the outside of the cup and dish, but inside they are full of greed and self-indulgence. 26 Blind Pharisee! First clean the inside of the cup and dish, and then the outside also will be clean.

27 “Woe to you, teachers of the law and Pharisees, you hypocrites! You are like whitewashed tombs, which look beautiful on the outside but on the inside are full of the bones of the dead and everything unclean. 28 In the same way, on the outside you appear to people as righteous but on the inside you are full of hypocrisy and wickedness.

29 “Woe to you, teachers of the law and Pharisees, you hypocrites! You build tombs for the prophets and decorate the graves of the righteous. 30 And you say, ‘If we had lived in the days of our ancestors, we would not have taken part with them in shedding the blood of the prophets.’ 31 So you testify against yourselves that you are the descendants of those who murdered the prophets. 32 Go ahead, then, and complete what your ancestors started!



33 “You snakes! You brood of vipers! How will you escape being condemned to hell? 34 Therefore I am sending you prophets and sages and teachers. Some of them you will kill and crucify; others you will flog in your synagogues and pursue from town to town. 35 And so upon you will come all the righteous blood that has been shed on earth, from the blood of righteous Abel to the blood of Zechariah son of Berekiah, whom you murdered between the temple and the altar. 36 Truly I tell you, all this will come on this generation.

37 “Jerusalem, Jerusalem, you who kill the prophets and stone those sent to you, how often I have longed to gather your children together, as a hen gathers her chicks under her wings, and you were not willing. 38 Look, your house is left to you desolate. 39 For I tell you, you will not see me again until you say, ‘Blessed is he who comes in the name of the Lord.’

As Sunday’s lesson states in the 4th paragraph, “The rich young man thought he had been keeping the commandments. Suddenly he was challenged to adhere to a different kind of obedience, one that he had never anticipated, one that went much deeper than mere outward compliance to rules and regulations.” So...where do we think the rich young ruler falls in Lawrence Kohlberg’s stages of moral development? (3-4)

Really quickly, those stages of moral development are:

1. Obedience and punishment orientation (Avoiding punishment)
2. Self-interest orientation (What's in it for me? Payment for benefit)
3. Interpersonal accord and conformity (Social norms/good boy/girl)
4. Authority/Maintain social-order (Law & order morality)
5. Social contract orientation
6. Universal ethical principles (Principled conscience)

So, does the Law of Love require unselfish service in action (not just hearing or talking...but doing)? Yes! And when we understand natural law constructs, we realize what we are being “commanded” to do and what the law “requires” are not rules or regulations or obligations at all...they are merely the principles upon which life was created to operate and are intended only to restore us to our original design. Just as the law of respiration requires breathing...and the law of my Volvo engine requires regular gas.

MONDAY

Being a Doer

The 1st paragraph rightly points out that James’ reference to “being” and “doing” are inseparable – in fact, the tense of the Greek word James uses for “be” does not refer to individual acts, but to an ongoing lifestyle of obedience. In this class, Tim has used the analogy of breathing. Just as obeying the law of respiration *requires* us to breathe, and we never even think about it – it’s just an



involuntary response. Well, when we are won back to trust...open our hearts to the Holy Spirit and allow the law of love to be re-written back on our hearts and minds...then unselfish behavior and loving others will be as natural to any of as breathing is! One of the founders of our church put it this way:

- “By His perfect obedience, He has made it possible for every human being to obey God’s commandments. When we submit ourselves to Christ, the heart is united with his heart, the will is merged in His will, the mind becomes one with His mind, the thoughts are brought into captivity to Him; **we live His life!** COL 3:11

But please notice the timing and the sequencing of events...are you noticing what comes first? Trust, opening the heart, submitting ourselves to Christ, having the law recreated in our hearts and minds **MUST** come first...then we become **LIKE CHRIST** – in mind, heart, and behavior. We already talked about some folks who got it backwards and allowed an oppressively long list of rules to come first. In fact, they were so focused on the behaviors, that the very God they were trying to impress when He came and dwelt among them. I like the way Paul puts it Galatians 2:16:

- We know very well that we are not set right with God by rule-keeping but only through personal faith in Jesus Christ. How do we know? We tried it – and we had the best system of rules the world has ever seen! Convinced that no human being can please God by self-improvement, we believed in Jesus as the Messiah so that we might be set right before God by trusting in the Messiah, not by trying to be good. (MSG)
- If you need more evidence that it is about a heart transformation first, consider Matthew 7:21-23:

21 "Not everyone who says to me, 'Lord, Lord,' will enter the kingdom of heaven, but only he who does the will of my Father who is in heaven. 22 Many will say to me on that day, 'Lord, Lord, did we not prophesy in your name, and in your name drive out demons and perform many miracles?' 23 Then I will tell them plainly, 'I never knew you. Away from me, you evildoers!' 24 "Therefore everyone who hears these words of mine and puts them into practice is like a wise man who built his house on the rock. 25 The rain came down, the streams rose, and the winds blew and beat against that house; yet it did not fall, because it had its foundation on the rock. 26 But everyone who hears these words of mine and does not put them into practice is like a foolish man who built his house on sand.

- How does being a “doer” justify or set us right with God?

So...if we are busy being “doers of the Word”...exactly what is it we should be doing? Let’s take that instruction straight from the Word...can someone look up and read aloud Luke 6:27-36?



- Has anyone here really had the opportunity to do this? I say “opportunity” not sarcastically and not because it is easy...quite the opposite, but can be life changing – for both parties. Is anyone willing to share the outcome?

I have a strong belief that maybe what we DON'T do is just as important in being a doer of the Word, so someone please finish that passage in Luke 6 by reading verses 37-38. Thoughts?

TUESDAY

The Law of Freedom

Teachers portion of the quarterly states: “Seventh-day Adventists have sometimes been characterized as hopeless legalists in bondage to the law. Nowadays, some SDAs go to the opposite extreme and seem afraid to even mention the law for fear of being misunderstood. After all, can God’s law really have anything to do with freedom?”

What kind of understanding of God’s law is required for it to be liberating or a source of freedom? Is obeying the law in order to avoid punishment freeing? Does that view differ dramatically from what you learned about God’s law growing up? When we understand design law principles and the constructs on which the universe and life itself were built to operate on, it helps us “understand our masters business”.

The 2nd paragraph is very well said, quoting Romans 2:13, and stating that we can become doers only through the work of the spirit writing the law on our hearts.

WEDNESDAY

Useful or Useless?

The lesson asks...how would you define true Christianity? Using James 1:26-27 and Matthew 25:35-36,40

2nd paragraph quote from Ministry of Healing 470:

- “The strongest argument in favor of the gospel is a loving and lovable Christian...To live such a life, to exert such an influence, costs at every step effort, self-sacrifice, discipline.”
- Do we have any issues today with unlovable Christians?

Repeatedly emphasized are orphans, widows, the sick, the poor, those most easily overlooked. Last paragraph: “From a worldly standpoint, it does not make sense to focus our resources on those who can give nothing back to society. But in God’s not-of-this-world kingdom, it is precisely how we love those who have been cast off and rejected by the world that reveals whether hearts have been truly transformed – by lending money to those who cannot pay us back; inviting to dinner those who cannot



reciprocate; or blessing and praying for those who mistreat us. A quote from someone who really seemed to understand and spent her life as a doer of the word:

- "I pray that you will understand the words of Jesus, 'Love one another as I have loved you.' Ask yourself 'How has he loved me? Do I really love others in the same way?' Unless this love is among us, we can kill ourselves with work and it will only be work, not love. Work without love is slavery." - Mother Teresa

Ephesians 2:10 – For we are God’s handiwork, created in Christ Jesus to do good works, which God prepared in advance for us to do. (NIV)

THURSDAY

Unlike the World

1st paragraph is right on the mark: “Some people seem to think that if only they could move far enough away from the world they could avoid most of its temptations, however it seems our problems and weaknesses tend to follow us wherever we go. The problem with sin isn’t so much about what is *out there*, though that certainly plays a role, as much as what is *in us*, and in our hearts. That’s where the true battle is, and we have to overcome that battle no matter where we physically live. Christ spent adequate time alone with His heavenly Father in order to know his will; however, he never shut himself off from people...He went to where they were. His “food” was reaching out to the needy, breaking down barriers of prejudice, and sharing the good news of who God is and has always been.
