

# Forgetting Our Reflection

**James 1:22-25.** Intentional. There's no way around it, because if we're not, we walk away and forget. Like last week's lesson: did anyone walk away thinking, "Yep, it's time to overcome this obstacle!" We discussed the need for forgiveness. Did you seek to forgive yourself if need be? If not, is that because we enjoy feeling unforgiven? Do we get something out of it? Or, did it make you think of someone you've had an issue with? Do we need to let it go - forgive? Or will we keep that mindset because we want revenge, even if that means running them over the coals in our minds? What about the latter portion of the sermon? We encouraged one another to make the hard decisions so we won't live with regret.

Is it okay to share our victories? Here's my victories: I've been much more at peace with prayer lately and my role as a father. Do you know how that happened? It required prayer, speaking to trusted loved ones, and study. There was effort and a look in the mirror without forgetting. "How can you preach to others while not praying as Jesus would have you? How can you ignore the implications?" That's not fun stuff, brethren. It's hard and embarrassing. Or my role as a father? It began with a sit-down discussion with Jordan. We took inventory, if you would, then I confessed my shortcomings. That was the beginning. We then gathered the kids together, and I had to admit my faults to them. I told them what was going well, but what needed improvement, and that was on me. I also asked the whole family to help me stay accountable. This led to a new daily routine once I got home. One of those is that we're all going to study a chapter every evening. We're in Genesis (ask me how it's going as time goes on). Some of you do so well. For example, most of y'all may not know how devoted Eric Grusendorf is to reading the Bible every night over the years with the kiddos.

Let me give you another story (this influenced today's sermon). Y'all know and love the Brewers. I've had the blessing of studying with them (either in small groups in our homes or in their home most weeks). They're dear to me. I've also had the blessing of watching them grow (and I hope that goes for them as well - that's not meant to be condescending). Both of them. I could talk about Hannah for a good while (for the record), but I'd like to focus on Tuesday's study. Kelton asked me a question about something because he recently had a study with his coworkers. Kelton described a coworker who's very intelligent and eloquent. He disagreed with a position Kelton held. It took Kelton back a little... but he stayed the course and walked him through his understanding of scripture. You should have been there. Kelton was referencing multiple passages right off the top of his head. I would interject now and then to see if he'd thought of a certain angle, and sure enough, he had almost every time. To be blunt: he hit a grand slam. Not only was he scripturally equipped for the task at hand, but his attitude matched his accuracy. As I sat and listened to him, all I could see was Kelton. I didn't hear what he was saying anymore. "Behold!" What I actually said was, "Grasshopper has become Master." Yes, he was armored up, sharing the grace of God with grace and gentleness, yet firm with boldness. God gives the increase. The plant is producing fruit that benefits others. God is so good. He's blessing Kelton in his doing, but brethren: Kelton also had to trust in the Lord, look into the law of liberty, see where he needed to grow, mold, and put time into studying God's word. He had to love his coworkers, see their need for the Lord,

invest in them, and work his way into their hearts. This is why they'll study with him. He (like many) had to work on his patience as he studied with those who might disagree, dismiss, or pretend to listen to what he was sharing.

Curious: When I draw attention to the growing faith of brothers and sisters, how does that make you feel? I hope we all rejoice with them (those comments are never meant to promote comparison). But, I'm not naive. It could make some people feel guilty. We had a beautiful time together last Lord's day, and I surely don't want to take away from any encouragement you felt. However, the latter half of the sermon was intended to encourage change. So, I'm asking today: how did your week go, and does my drawing attention to others' success in the Lord produce frustration, anger, sadness, or jealousy?

I was speaking to a preacher friend recently about the danger of doing the bare minimum or being a nice person who may not actually want to take steps to change into the image of Jesus. I think he said it well: "if our brethren don't want to change and grow closer to God through study and prayer, serve their neighbors and share the word - they should feel uncomfortable around us. We don't want anyone to leave. Not trying to push anyone away, but they shouldn't feel comfortable among us." What do you think about that? Do you agree? Do you think we should be a group that fosters or coddles spiritual apathy? It's so rhetorical.

I ended last week's lesson with this passage. I said if you're struggling and need to make a change, do what needs to be done, and He will bless you in your doing. I'm drawing attention to this again, but here's what we need to do (and God hasn't made it difficult).

### **Our Part:**

- Look in the mirror.
- Look at God's word.
- Accept your shortcomings.
- Confess your struggle/sin to God and those around you.
- Consider how to grow in those specific areas. In other words, what should I do to improve that? You may need to reach out to other spiritually minded people if you feel lost or overwhelmed.
- Plan for accountability.
- Now practice it. Time for talk is done. Do it and do it consistently.
- Surround yourself with those who DO, not TALK.
- Through the whole process, pray to God who WILL bless you in your doing. Believe that and let God do His part.
- Warning: if you're looking for something different, you don't want to change. You need to accept that, and beloved of Christ, you need to feel uncomfortable here.
- Jesus' (and our) plea is this: don't leave. Humble yourself under the mighty hand of God, and He will exalt you.