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What Now? / James 1:22–25

Going to Challenge and youth saw other churches clothing

I was asked, What is our mission?

Unveiling the last one on ONE day.

L - Learning and living out the gospel

You need to read more than just scripture (exam question)

Faith in God wants you to help others

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On June 23, 2018, twelve boys between the ages of 11 and 16 from the Wild Boars soccer team with their 25 year old assistance coach, after soccer practice in Chiang Rai Province, Thailand decided to explore the nearby Tham Luang Nang Non cave. They hiked deep inside, but sudden and heavy monsoon rains flooded the cave, trapping them more than 2.5 miles from the entrance with no way to get out. The world watched as a dramatic 18-day rescue mission unfolded. It involved over 10,000 people including Thai Navy SEALs, doctors, engineers, and expert cave divers from countries such as the UK, Australia, and the U.S. They used pump systems to reduce flooding, oxygen tanks and guide ropes were installed along submerged passages. Divers swam through narrow, murky, flooded corridors, some barely wide enough for a person to pass.

There were many challenges faced including low oxygen levels inside the cave, complex maze-like passages that were completely underwater, and the boys couldn't swim well with no diving experience. A daring plan was made: expert divers would sedate each boy, put them in full-face masks, and swim them out one by one through the flooded tunnels. All 13 were rescued between July 8–10, though a Thai Navy Seal, tragically lost his life during this mission. The mission required careful planning, extreme courage, teamwork, and exact equipment.

This event mirrors the Christian call to be thoroughly equipped as we read: "...so that the servant of God may be thoroughly equipped for every good work." The rescue divers were highly trained and properly equipped—they had to be. Their knowledge, preparation, and tools saved lives. In the same way, God's Word equips us spiritually—teaching, correcting, and preparing us to help others, face trials, and do God's work. Scripture is our training, our gear, and our guidance.

The next four weeks will be a series with a final unveiling on June 8th as our mission statement on our One Day for this year. It's hard to explain it all now, but I hope by the end you will see where God has been leading me since September, and I believe us as a church, since I started here as pastor. These next four weeks I'm going to spell out an acronym. Today is the letter L - which stands for learning

and living the gospel.

One of my questions in my final exam for my New Testament course that I wrote a month ago was the following: Someone in your church comes up to you and asks how your classes are going at ADC. After you tell them a little bit about your classes, they say, "I'm not sure why people think they need anything more than their Bible and the Holy Spirit to understand God's Word." What would be your response, drawing from the elements of exegesis you've learned in class.

This fits in well to the first part of the L - learning the gospel.

Here is an excerpt of my response:

*While yes, God gave us Scripture and the Holy Spirit to understand God's Word, he also has given us the responsibility to understand Scripture as it was not written to us, but for us. There are important steps that must happen to understand what the word of God meant at the time and what it means to us now. For example, it is imperative to understand the contextual component of Scripture, including its historical and sociopolitical background, how does the text being referenced fit into the chapter of the book, the book overall, the testament and the canon? You must ask questions to understand the overall message being conveyed. The time Scripture was*

*written is a very different time to the world we are living in now, and so to understand exactly what is being portrayed, we must understand better the context to how the text was being written at the time. Theological reflection is important, using ALL the information gathered, to then reflect on what the passage/author is trying to convey and how this relates to the world we are living in now. What is God revealing to us in Scripture? (End quote)*

We first need to learn all that we can about God through Scripture. What is God saying to us through the Bible? Scripture is not a rulebook—it's a revelation. It shows us God's character, His love, His justice, His promises, and His plan for the world. Without reading it, we're left guessing what God is like, often shaping Him in our own image. As we read in 2 Timothy 3:16–17 “All scripture is inspired by God and is useful for teaching, for reproof, for correction, and for training in righteousness, so that everyone who belongs to God may be proficient, equipped for every good work,” and as we're reminded in Psalm 119:105 “Your word is a lamp to my feet and a light to my path.”

In a world constantly telling us who we are or who we should be, the Bible reminds us we are made in God's image, loved, forgiven, and called for a purpose. It's where truth drowns out the lies. When you hit hard times, feel overwhelmed, or face temptation, Scripture anchors your soul. When you're joyous and hope filled, Scripture

reminds you of a God who is the source of every good gift, and draws you closer in celebration and praise.

The Holy Spirit often uses Scripture you've read to remind you of truth when you need it most. Just as our bodies need daily food, our faith needs daily truth. Reading Scripture regularly keeps us connected to God. God's Word gives practical wisdom for real life—relationships, work, forgiveness, handling conflict, money, and more. It doesn't just inform; it *transforms*.

We're called not just to read God's Word, but to truly learn from it—diving deeper with the help of Bible studies, commentaries, courses, and/or trusted teachers. Through my ADC classes and the people I've connected with, I've grown so much this past year. Studying Scripture has helped me better understand God's message then and now, and I've loved sharing what I've learned—especially in our recent Bible study. Reading the Bible isn't about duty; it's about drawing close to God and reflecting Jesus to others.

Here's an example of why it's important to not just read Scripture but to dive deeper in the understanding of God's word by needing to understand context. In Revelation 3:15–16 it says “I know your works; you are neither cold nor hot. I wish that you were either cold or hot. So, because you are lukewarm, and neither cold nor hot, I am about to spit you out of my mouth.”

Some individuals will explain this as if Jesus were saying:

*“Be spiritually hot (on fire for God), or if not be cold (totally against God), but don’t be in the middle.”*

Using this explanation it sounds like Jesus would prefer someone be an *atheist* rather than a halfhearted Christian. That interpretation doesn’t match the character of God or the broader message of Scripture, so we need to get some historical background to help us.

This was written to the church in Laodicea, a wealthy city in Asia Minor (modern-day Turkey), known for its wealth and self-sufficiency but also its lack of a good water source. So here’s the key: Nearby Hierapolis had hot springs, which were used for healing, and nearby Colossae had cold, refreshing water. Laodicea, itself, had lukewarm water, piped in through aqueducts—tepid and unpleasant. So when Jesus says “lukewarm,” He was using a local image the Laodiceans would understand:

Jesus was saying “Your faith is like your water supply—useless, unimpressive, and good for nothing.”

He’s not saying He prefers people be spiritually dead. He’s saying: “Be *useful* in your faith—refreshing like cold water or healing like hot water, such as their nearby communities—not indifferent, self-satisfied, and ineffective.” This is why context matters. Without knowing the geography and culture, we misread Jesus’ meaning. With the context, we

see a loving rebuke to a church that had grown spiritually complacent and self-reliant.

This verse challenges believers not to be passive or comfortable in their faith—but to *live out* the gospel in a way that truly impacts others. And it reminds us that the Bible wasn't written in a vacuum—historical and cultural context brings the message to life.

We live in a world full of confusion, opinions, and shifting values. But God's Word is unchanging and breathed out by Him. According to Paul's letter to Timothy, the Bible isn't just good advice—it's essential training gear for the Christian life. God calls us to be ready for action: to help, to serve, to endure, and to lead others to Jesus. Scripture teaches us truth, corrects us when we're off track, and trains us to walk in righteousness. It doesn't just inform—it transforms. Let God's word equip you daily.

Maria was a driven woman—sharp, dependable, and deeply rooted in her faith. She had worked at her company for years and was up for a major promotion. She had prayed over it, worked late hours, and believed she was the clear choice. Everyone assumed she'd get it. Then she didn't.

The promotion went to someone less experienced—someone who, in Maria's view, played the politics better. She was devastated. It felt unfair. She smiled politely

during the announcement, but inside, she was boiling. For the next few weeks, her heart hardened. She stopped volunteering for extra projects. She gave curt replies in meetings. She prayed—but mostly to vent.

One Sunday, the sermon was on Jesus washing His disciples' feet. The pastor asked, "Who do you think deserves less than you, but needs more of your love?" That question stuck. Because Maria *knew* the answer. She just didn't like it.

She realized something deeper: her faith had been strong when she was winning—but now, God was teaching her something more valuable than promotion—*humility*.

She had read Scripture her whole life, but knew she had to chose to live it out, even when it felt like losing. She began to pray sincerely for her new boss. She congratulated her in person. She started showing up again—not for applause, but for Christ. Over time, her heart softened. And people noticed. One coworker quietly said, "I don't know how you're doing this, but it's making me rethink some things."

Maria didn't get the title she wanted. But she got something else: a clearer understanding that living the gospel isn't about always rising—sometimes it's about how we walk when we've been humbled.

This leads into the second part of the L - living the gospel. While there is a lot to focus on for living the gospel, I will

only touch the surface today, as the next 3 weeks we will dive more into what this looks like.

As we read in Scripture earlier today from James 1:22–25 “But be doers of the word, and not merely hearers who deceive themselves. For if any are hearers of the word and not doers, they are like those who look at themselves in a mirror; for they look at themselves and, on going away, immediately forget what they were like. But those who look into the perfect law, the law of liberty, and persevere, being not hearers who forget but doers who act—they will be blessed in their doing.”

James 1 shows both the challenges and the purpose of trials. Though trials can feel unsettling, they often become moments where God strengthens our faith and draws us closer to Him. Trials should be seen as reasons for joy—they deepen our dependence on God, grow our faith, and lead us toward mature worship. With wisdom, we learn to live out true faith, and God promises great reward to those who persevere with discernment and sincerity.

James is saying, don't just hear Scripture and continue on with life as if nothing has changed, but do something with what you've heard. Be doers who act. Following Jesus isn't just about knowing facts or quoting Scripture. It's about letting the gospel reshape our thinking, our choices, our relationships. Learning God's Word should lead to living it out. Every time we open the Bible, we ask, “How does this

change the way I live today?”

Jesus would talk about hearing the Word and obeying it many times throughout his ministry.

In the gospel of Luke, a woman calls out, “Blessed is the mother who gave you birth and nursed you.” When Jesus responds by pointing to true blessing - not in physical connection to Him, but in obedience to God’s Word as he says, “Blessed rather are those who hear the word of God and obey it.” Or in the gospel of Matthew, Jesus begins the Parable of the Wise and Foolish Builders which is used to conclude the Sermon on the Mount by saying, “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.” The gospel of John after washing the disciples’ feet, Jesus stresses that knowing His teachings is not enough - doing them is where blessing lies. These are just a few examples.

James mentions mirror. The “mirror” in the ancient world was used for the same purpose that it is used for today. Can you imagine looking in a mirror, noticing something off, maybe a big stain on your shirt, and just continuing on as if nothing was wrong? What was the point of looking in the mirror to begin with if you weren’t going to take your reflection into account before you went on with your day?

In James’ day there were no photographs, most people

didn't have a portrait of themselves and not many people possessed mirrors. So if you did happen to catch sight of yourself, you might well forget at once what you looked like. That's what it's like, says James, for some when they hear God's word. A quick glance—'Oh, yes', they think, 'that's interesting'—and then they forget it straight away and carry on as before.

Scripture reminds us that we are to reflect Jesus to all those we meet. 1 John 4:12 "No one has ever seen God; if we love one another, God lives in us, and his love is perfected in us." Here we are reminded that we make the invisible God visible through our love - we become Jesus to others. Or Matthew 25:40 "And the king will answer them, 'Truly I tell you, just as you did it to one of the least of these who are members of my family, you did it to me.'" Here we are reminded that serving the needy is treated as serving Christ Himself - we represent Jesus through compassionate action. Or John 20:21 "Jesus said to them again, "Peace be with you. As the Father has sent me, so I send you.""

Reminding us that Jesus sends us into the world to live as He lived - on mission, embodying His presence. Or Ephesians 2:10 "For we are what he has made us, created in Christ Jesus for good works, which God prepared beforehand to be our way of life." Reminding us that we are here to act as Christ's hands and feet, doing the work He would do.

When I read mirror in this passage, recognizing that mirrors reflect, my first thoughts were what are we reflecting to the world as Christians? Are we reflecting Jesus in everything we do? So don't forget, L - learn and live the gospel.

Since I started in September I have journeyed with individuals through their last walk on this earth which has made me think about my own earth journey and I'm sure it is of no surprise to most of you how much music has a lasting impact on my life. As I was writing this message a song kept playing in my head sung by the first Christian group I remember listening to when I was a teenager, Casting Crowns. They came out with this song a few years ago, called Only Jesus. Listen to the lyrics, before we sing our last song. As we will all come to our last days on this earth, and as you learn and live the gospel, what do you want your legacy to be?