

Note: The Rev. Caleb Kim will deliver the sermon below on Sunday, June 15, 2025, at 10:00 am at St. Andrew's, Fenelon Falls and via Zoom.

Title: How to Be Blessed by The Bible Developing a Faith That Works – Part 3

One of the Ten Commandments highlights the importance of honouring our parents, as found in Exodus 20:12: "Honor your father and your mother so that you may live long in the land the Lord your God is giving you." This is God's command, and it comes with His promise. When we care for our father and mother, God blesses us with long life, not just here on earth but also with eternal life in heaven. In other words, honouring our parents is both essential and eternal!

Today is Father's Day. Let's take a moment to say, "Happy Father's Day" to all the dads and granddads joining us whether in person or online via Zoom. I am truly glad that we take this day to celebrate our fathers and appreciate their love, sacrifices, and hard work. My father passed away nearly ten years ago. He was a deeply loving dad and a wonderful mentor. He often encouraged me to hold on to four important things... And, like many loving fathers, he always ended with: "Be careful when driving!"—because, in his eyes, I was still his little boy. My dad loved his grandson—Caleb Jr. David, and Hope—so dearly. Today, my wife and I are grateful for the precious years we had with him. This morning I recall those pieces of his advice and recommit to carrying them with me on my journey of faith.

A few years ago, I read an article about the sharp increase in Bible sales during the recent global pandemic. Since COVID-19, Bible sales have surged worldwide. Why? Perhaps people are seeking answers for unprecedented situations. Perhaps they long for certainty, guidance, principles, and direction for their lives. Or maybe they've simply had more time to pursue something sacred.

According to the Guinness Book of World Records, as of 2021, between 5 and billion copies of the Bible have been printed. As of November 2024, Wikipedia reports that the full Bible—Old and New Testaments—has been translated into over 750 languages. The New Testament alone is available in more than 1,700 languages. Bible translation ministries, along with various software tools, continue to spread God's Word across the world. The Bible is undeniably the best-selling book in all of human history.

Yet despite its popularity, millions still miss out on the blessings of the Bible. Why is that? Because the benefits of Scripture are not automatic. The Bible is a book of blessings—it offers comfort, strength, hope, wisdom, joy, peace, and purpose. But simply owning a Bible doesn't mean we benefit from it.

As we move through this season of growth and maturity, I pray that we, as a church, grow deeper in faith by engaging with the Word of God. This morning, we continue our sermon series based on the Book of James and will look at three essential steps for receiving the blessings of the Bible. Together, let's explore these paths and learn how we can truly be blessed by God's Word.

Step One: We Must Receive God's Word. James tells us in verse 21, "Humbly accept the word planted in you." The word "accept" in Greek is a hospitality term—it literally means "to welcome" or "to receive warmly." James uses the imagery of a garden and seed to illustrate how we are to welcome God's Word into our lives.

The Bible is often compared to seed. Jesus used this very image in the Parable of the Sower, found in Matthew 13. In those days, farmers sowed seed by hand, scattering it across their fields. In Jesus' parable, the sower is not specifically identified—it could be anyone who shares God's Word. The seed represents the Word of God, and it falls on four different types of soil. Each soil represents a different condition of the human heart.

The seed is the same in every case—it is the soil that determines the outcome of harvest. Only one type of soil was properly prepared to receive the seed and allow it to grow abundantly. Likewise, James tells us that in order to receive the full blessing of God's Word, we must prepare the soil of our hearts. We must receive God's Word with the right attitude.

James gives us two attitudes we must have to be blessed by the Word:

First, we must be clean. Verse 21 says, "Get rid of all moral filth and the evil that is so prevalent..." ...How do we get clean? According to Scripture, we are made pure by confessing our sins to Jesus. As 1 John 1:9 tells us: "If we confess our sins, He is faithful and just and will forgive us our sins and purify us from all unrighteousness." The blood of Jesus cleanses us completely, making our hearts ready to receive His Word.

Second, we must be compliant. James continues, "Humbly accept the word planted in you..." ...One of the greatest blessings I personally receive as a pastor comes through sermon preparation each week. Preparing and delivering God's Word is not just a task—it is a transforming process. As I've often shared with you, the first audience for any message I preach is always me. I must be the first to hear it, the first to respond, and the first to be changed by what I share with the congregation. This is why regular devotion to God's Word is so vital for all of us...

Step Two: We Must Reflect on the Word of God. James writes in verse 23: "Anyone who listens to the word but does not do what it says is like someone who looks at his face in a mirror, and after looking at himself, goes away and immediately forgets what he looks like."

One of my favorite illustrations of what the Bible is comes directly from James: God's Word is like a mirror. While an ordinary mirror shows us our physical appearance, the Bible acts as a spiritual mirror. This sacred book reveals what we are like on the inside. Have you ever seen yourself in the Bible? I certainly have. When I studied the Gospels through my missional organization, University Bible Fellowship—especially the conversations Jesus had with people who struggled with different issues—I often saw myself reflected in their stories. It was like looking into my own heart through a divine mirror. Through their questions, doubts, sins, and healings, I could see my own struggles more clearly.

Hebrews 4:12 tells us: "For the word of God is alive and active... it judges the thoughts and attitudes of the heart." In other words, Scripture does not just speak to our behaviour—it discerns our inner motives and desires. It shows us who we truly are before God. There is a legend about Queen Elizabeth I... Mirrors can be uncomfortable because they show us things we may not want to see. The same is true with the Bible...

James does not just tell us to look in the mirror. He tells us how to look. In verse 25, he writes: "Whoever looks intently into the perfect law that gives freedom, and continues in it, not forgetting what they have heard..." The phrase "look intently" in Greek means "to stoop down and gaze into." James wants us to gaze—to study it carefully and attentively. James also tells us to "continue in it." This means we are called to reflect on the Word repeatedly... James adds that we are not to forget the Word. This means we are also called to remember it—and that often involves memorizing Scripture.

When my wife and I served in campus ministry back in our homeland, we were trained in a Bible study method called Inductive Bible Study, which involves three key steps. First: Observation. What does the text say? We examine the passage closely, use different translations, and consider surrounding verses, and explore the historical and cultural background. Second: Interpretation. What did the text mean to its original audience? We consider who God is, how the Spirit worked, and what Christ accomplished for those people at that time. Third: Application. What does this passage mean for us today? How should it affect our thoughts, actions, and decisions? To help us apply God's Word to our lives, we ask ourselves reflective questions like: "Is there a Sin to confess? Is there a Promise to claim? ... This is what James means when he calls us to reflect deeply and intentionally on the Word of God...

So James is telling us: "Receive God's Word with the right attitude. Reflect on God's Word by reading it, reviewing it, remembering it." But even that is still not enough.

Step Three: We Must Respond to the Word of God. James says in verse 22, "Do not merely listen to the word, and so deceive yourselves. Do what it says." What good is a mirror if we look into it and do nothing about what we see? James warns that simply hearing the Word—without doing it—is a form of self-deception.

The Greek word for "listen" here is where we get our English word auditor. If you've ever audited a college class, you know what that means. You attend the lectures, but you don't take the tests, you don't do the assignments, and you don't get a grade. You're present, but not accountable. It's a no-pressure experience.

Unfortunately, we can approach church the same way—becoming spiritual auditors. We show up, listen to the Word, enjoy the service, and leave without any intention of actually applying what we've heard to our spiritual journey. James says that kind of approach is deceptive. We fool ourselves into thinking we are growing just because we've learned something sacred. But the real test of spiritual maturity is not information—it is transformation. Not knowledge—but character...

Let me give you a humorous example. Imagine that you, as the congregation, start worrying about your minister's health... The point is clear: knowing a bodybuilding book doesn't build muscles. And we often do the same with the Bible. We can read it, study it, underline it, and memorize it—but unless we apply it, we may remain spiritually unhealthy... James puts it simply: "If you want to be blessed, you must be a doer of the Word—not just a hearer." That is a truth we can carry into every Sunday: we are not just called to hear the message—we are called to live it...

The best translation of Scripture is the one that is translated into our lives. Let us be honest: most of us already know more truth than we are currently practicing. We don't necessarily need more information. What we really need is to respond to what we already know... James may be asking each of us this morning: "What are you going to do with what you already know?"

2 Timothy 3: 16 says, "All Scripture is God-breathed." It's been noted that the Old Testament alone contains the phrase "Thus says the Lord" or "This is the word of the Lord" more than 3,800 times. That is a powerful reminder: this Book is not merely a collection of writings—it is the very voice of God. That is why, in worship, we often respond to Scripture readings by saying: "Thanks be to God." It is an expression of our reverence for His voice and our readiness to respond.

Let me ask you this: when we fall in love with someone, don't we want to know everything about them? Don't we naturally want to do the things that bring them joy? In the same way, when we love the Lord our God, we should want to know what He loves—and then do what pleases Him. And He tells us exactly that through His Word.

As we close this message, I want to highlight what I believe is the most incredible power our church needs today... The future our church does not rest in strategy or style—it rests in our response to the Bible. When we humbly receive it, sincerely reflect on it, and faithfully respond to it, God guides us, directs us, and grants us the wisdom we need.

We, as a church, are deeply thankful to God that His Word has been faithfully declared from this pulpit over the years—through the voices of both ministers and lay preachers. And we, as individual believers, are equally grateful that God has drawn us here, week after week, Sunday after Sunday, with hearts that hunger for His truth. Let us ask God to continue this sacred work—to speak His Word through His messengers, to keep our hearts open to renewal, to call us toward rededication, and to shape us through reformation.

May God bless each of us—through the reading of His Word, the reflection on His truth, and the faithful response in our daily lives. May He restore our brokenness, rebuild our godly character, and shape us more and more into the likeness of Jesus Christ.

*In this sermon I have drawn upon material from messages by Rev. Rick Warren, especially from his series "Developing a Faith That Works," based on James 1:19-27.