

## Listen and Learn

*Do not merely listen to the word, and so deceive yourselves. Do what it says. Anyone who listens to the word but does not do what it says is like a man who looks at his face in a mirror and, after looking at himself, goes away and immediately forgets what he looks like. But the man who looks intently into the perfect law that gives freedom, and continues to do this, not forgetting what he has heard, but doing it--he will be blessed in what he does.* (James 1)

For many years a teacher started his first class by putting two figures on the blackboard:

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"What's the solution?" he would ask. A student would say six. Another would say two, but the teacher would ignore them. Finally several would call out eight, and he would shake his head. The professor would then point out, "All of you failed to ask the key question. What is the problem? Unless you know what the problem is, you cannot possibly find the answer." Without a plus sign, a minus sign, a multiplication or division sign, the numbers cannot be computed.

Our life is exactly the same. We need to spend time defining our problems and taking stock of our situation. We need to listen to God and to trusted mentors and sponsors to begin to learn what makes life work. We need to read God's word to find God's description for healthy living. We need to make and take inventories of our lives so we can discover what is going on with us and how we are responding to what we are learning. Until we know what's happening and what we need to know, we are stymied. Problems are usually more complicated than we realize. Life and recovery are complex. H. L. Mencken said, "For every human problem there is a solution that is simple, neat, and wrong." We never know all we need to know. Self-discovery is an adventure into an ongoing mystery. God alone understands the problem and the solution. God can and will direct us through a series of steps and events that will shape healthy thinking and living for us. God gives us individuals and groups of people who have words of life for us and God

invites us to both listen and learn to put those words into practice.

*"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 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. 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. The rain came down, the streams rose, and the winds blew and beat against that house, and it fell with a great crash."* (Matthew 7)

When we have surrounded ourselves with responsible voices, when we have checked our life and our decisions with them, if we find that we disagree with what they tell us, we need to surrender our will and act on their suggestion. It is to be expected that this scenario will pop up on a fairly regular basis for us. Our thinking and choosing have been self-centered for so long that we often can't recognize and don't see our own problems. We live with "blind spots" in our personality.

*"For my thoughts are not your thoughts, neither are your ways my ways," declares the LORD. "As the heavens are higher than the earth, so are my ways higher than your ways and my thoughts than your thoughts."* (Isaiah 55)

God's gift to us is clear directions for living that work: in the Bible; through the Holy Spirit in our heart; through suggestions and applications to daily living from sponsors and mentors. We need to listen to them. We need to learn from them by doing what they suggest. God's ways are often not our ways. We need to learn to walk in new ways.

### Questions For Discussion and Reflection

1. What has helped me discover my real problems as I've walked in recovery?
2. When has it been difficult to open my life to a sponsor or mentor and choose for their advice rather than my own wishes?
3. What do I need to when my thoughts and God's word disagree? (i.e. The 10 commandments)
4. How can I welcome more accountability into my life?