

WD January 10, 2022
“A Godly Do List”

We’ve all heard of honey do lists. This often refers to a list of maintenance items around the house that need one’s attention. Just recently I had the wonderful privilege of cleaning out the drain in the tub of what used to be the boy’s bathroom. This is where we usually wash the dog. Needless to say, she sheds. As one would expect that hair gathers up in the drain eventually slowing the draining water to a crawl. So, I got out my tools, unscrewed the drain plug and began a kind of surgery with long needle-nose pliers. It was like pulling a small squirrel out a tiny hole—a handful of fur. It was gross and smelly, but not as bad as the drains in the sinks around the house which also collect hair and funkiness that no words can describe. I usually have to take each one apart at least once a year to get the water flowing again. But once the clog of furry-goo is out everything flowed like it is supposed to.

This is one example of maintenance. If you own a house you will have to do maintenance. That means cleaning out drains, gutters, repainting front porch columns, fixing broken stoves, cleaning the lint out of the dryer vent, and all kinds of other stuff. A lot of this stuff sneaks up on you. It can take time to get clogged or dirty or deteriorates enough that it needs repair. When the water stops flowing or the oven stops cooking it’s time to act. A lot of maintenance stuff doesn’t even make the list until it starts slowing things down or stops working all together. Usually, such things are like the chirping battery in the smoke alarm that goes off at 2:30 in the morning. It really doesn’t cross my mind until it makes some noise in the natural order of my week. Since you probably have many of the same things in your house as I do in my house, chances are you are doing some maintenance at some point—a honey-do list. But if we want to keep our house going that’s what must be done. If not, little things become big things and big things always cost more than little things.

Keeping this in mind I am turning to James 1 today. The reason for this is James chapter one also makes me think of Maintenance. It is what I would call a Godly-Do-List—things that can keep our faith strong in the Lord. Here we go.

Starting at verse 5-6 James writes, “⁵ If any of you lacks wisdom, let him ask God, who gives generously to all without reproach, and it will be given him. ⁶ But let him ask in faith, with no doubting....” What a great place to start. Start with the Word. Ask the Lord to bless you with spiritual wisdom gained by His Word.

Consider some maintenance on my car. Changing a headlight now requires a basic mechanics degree anymore. So, what did I do? I You Tubed it. I found someone online who was able to show me how it was done. If I want to do something mechanical that’s one place I can turn for wisdom. If I want to know something of God I go to His instructions. Want instructions on holy living then give the Sermon on the Mount a try in Matthew 5-7. There I can learn how to pray, how to forgive, what love looks like, how do keep my word, what it means to be generous and unselfish, and how to do Christian things.

James goes on in verse 9-10--⁹ Let the lowly brother boast in his exaltation, ¹⁰ and the rich in his humiliation, because like a flower of the grass he will pass away. ¹¹ For the sun rises with its scorching heat and withers the grass; its flower falls, and its beauty perishes. So also, will the rich man fade away in the midst of his pursuits.”

The maintenance here is about humility before the Lord and before others. Humility is huge to Jesus who made Himself nothing to die on a cross for our sins. Remaining humble gives us more opportunity to be a servant like Jesus. Practicing humility makes us more polite, more willing to be patient and forgiving, and more loving. It also helps us to be thankful people who give thanks for the simplest of things—things like eyes and ears, legs, strength, health, family, and the right tools to clean a clogged-up drain. It is best to give thanks and recognize what we have rather than what we do not have. Contentment is the by-product of such practice. This of course connects very strongly then to verse 17 where James tells us, ¹⁷ Every good gift and every perfect gift is from above, coming down from the Father.”

When things break, we seem to appreciate them more. We kind of take stuff for granted when it is working but as soon as it is broken or ruined or lost, we tend to pay attention. Spiritual maintenance here is to daily notice all that God has given you and daily give thanks for it. Giving thanks recognizes the Giver especially the gift of Jesus.

Some very handy advice comes in at verse 19-21. “¹⁹ Know this, my beloved brothers: let every person be quick to hear, slow to speak, slow to anger; ²⁰ for the anger of man does not produce the righteousness

of God. ²¹ Therefore put away all filthiness and rampant wickedness and receive with meekness the implanted word, which is able to save your souls.”

Sinful human beings can't handle anger. Anger is quick to become worse. Better quick to listen and slow to say something that we may regret, and slow to speak so that we do not miss important information that we should be quick to hear. Verse 21 tells us to bridle our tongues—watch what you say especially when you are angry. James is pretty clear. There is no such thing as righteous anger. Your anger will not produce righteousness but it could lead to something destructive. Put it away as soon as it flares up so that it doesn't take the driver's seat of your heart and drive it somewhere you do not want to go.

Finally, James says bluntly in verse 22 “be doers of the word, and not hearers only, deceiving yourselves.” I am not being honest if I tell someone I will help but never show up. Worse I leave a bad impression of our Lord or our church or our Christian faith on the one whom I have let down. Jesus at the end of His sermon on the Mount in Matthew 7 makes it very clear that we are to put the word into practice. In so doing we are maintaining our faith. Practicing something makes us good at it.

I can talk a good game about cleaning the drain. I might get politely reminded by Tricia that needs to be cleared and that is not draining right. Until I actually get up and go and do it the drain will not get clear. It only gets done when I do it. Praying, forgiving, patience, everything that Jesus teaches takes practice. But he promises that whoever puts His teachings into practice is like building a house on the rock. The storms came but the house remained steadfast and unbroken. Practice what we preach.

So, here we are. Maybe you have something that needs a little more attention on your Godly-do-list. Spiritual maintenance is like any kind of maintenance. It's not always fun but necessary in a fallen world. James 1 gives us a Godly-Do-List that will keep us in Good Christian order. May the Lord bless our work.

Pastor Matt Woods

John 3:30