



Secrets Hidden In The Mirror

What Is the Mirror Telling You?

Halloween and Mardi Gras are two holidays when we try to disguise who we are as a way of celebrating. Many take the opportunity during these times to move out of themselves, become somebody they always wished they could be or act out the visions they have of a more exciting and fulfilling life. It is no wonder that for many adults, drinking is a big part of these celebrations of buried fantasies. Psychologists years ago insisted that we all have a hidden self, one many of us may not ourselves know buried within. Many pretend to be someone they aren't; others wonder how their friends, family members and co-workers really see them. When I was a teenager struggling with the ravages of acne, I used our bathroom mirror which opened up into three parts to see my face from multiple angles. I wanted to know how others saw me but admittedly at a very superficial level. All I really wanted to know was if my acne medicine was working or not and if not, how I looked to the girls at school. God has a way for you to learn much about yourself that perhaps you never considered. James the brother of Jesus provides rich insight for you into knowing yourself and reaching your potential

Many think of the Bible as a boring collection of writings only for the really religious and so they shrug off any suggestion that putting much time into the Bible is a worthwhile endeavor. You might lean in that direction or perhaps you see the Bible as valuable to you but have not invested much time in it yet. The Bible is however your best friend when it comes to building a truly good life. Consider what James has to say. **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 1:22-25 NIV) There isn't anything really surprising here, nothing that you might not expect in a book written by Jesus' brother, especially given how often Christ quoted the Bible and used it to shape His behavior. There is however a profound declaration made, one that should be pondered if we really would like to have a happier life.

James uses an interesting metaphor to tell us what happens if we fail to make good use of the Bible. He insists that we become like someone who looks into a mirror and then for some reason can't remember how he or she looks. There are of course those who have suffered injuries causing this and perhaps some with severe psychological issues who encounter such symptoms, but this certainly is quite rare and for most, even absurd. James is making an important point. When the Bible says you are to act in one way or another and you don't, you lose an important part of yourself. Who you are fades and you no longer really know yourself. Picture Adam and Eve after they ate the forbidden fruit. Suddenly they were changed by sin in such a dramatic way that their old personalities were, I am sure, lost to them. We see an example of this when immediately following their turning away from the word of God, they became embarrassed by their nakedness and tried to hide their bodies from God and probably even from each other. Before this, they were perfectly happy to walk about naked. Of course there is how each of them did not take responsibility for their actions, Adam blaming Eve for his sin and Eve blaming the serpent. Long gone was the simple pleasure of carefree trust, mutual affection and overarching happiness in life.

Let me use two examples from the Bible to show how this happens. When Samson was chosen by God to be the leader of Israel, he became known for his great strength. He certainly had the characteristics needed to guide the people into freedom from Philistine oppression. Yet as a young man, he began his decline spiritually and psychologically. Even though the Philistines were the mortal enemies of the Israelites, and all Israel was told by God not to marry the unbelieving women of other countries, Samson rejected the ban. His parents were astonished. **His father and mother replied, "Isn't there an acceptable woman among your relatives or among all our people? Must you go to the uncircumcised Philistines to get a wife?"** (Judges 14: 3 NIV) Samson, spoiled and rebellious insisted that his parents arrange his marriage to a Philistine young woman. The wedding fell through though and in his fury, Samson by himself with just the jawbone of a donkey slaughtered over a thousand Philistines.

Samson quickly, perhaps because of his clear prowess as a killing machine, took his place as the leader of the Israelites. However, he never lived up to his calling as Israel's deliverer. Despite serving as Israel's leader for twenty years, not once did he attempt to conquer the Philistines, never did he try to wreck their domination over the Israelite people. One might wonder, and it is a fair guess, if it was that Samson developed such an affinity for Philistine women that he was unwilling to upset them or drive them back. He did not even try to defeat and destroy the mortal enemies of the Israelites. Later it was a Philistine woman named Delilah who was so attractive to him that he was willing to tell her the secret of his strength. It was of course that he did not let his hair be cut in accordance with the command of God. As long as his hair remained uncut, his superhuman strength would stay with him. If his hair was even trimmed, he would lose that God given power. The Philistine Delilah broke Samson's trust and betrayed him to the Philistine soldiers hiding in her room who cut off Samson's hair as he peacefully slept on Delilah's lap. With his strength gone, the Philistine soldiers easily bound Samson, gouged out his eyes and took him prisoner.

How is it that Samson, so full of potential, never lived up to his calling as God's deliverer? He had everything he needed to destroy the Philistines and help Israel take her place as a great nation of faith. His personality certainly was fit for fighting and leading Israel. He lost at some point, perhaps soon after his failed engagement to the woman God's law forbid him to marry, his capacity to live up to his calling. His inner strength was drained off by his sinful desires. Something similar happened to Solomon, the third king of Israel. Full of spiritual power given to him by God, he was made the wisest man on earth by the hand of the Lord. God provided numerous signs of his favor with Solomon, and everything started off great. The Lord spoke directly to Solomon in dreams and his faith in God could not have been any stronger. But he too violated God's word regarding marriage and married the daughter of the king of Egypt. His personality began to change and his fervor for God diminished. Solomon married hundreds of women, many of whom were pagans. **King Solomon, however, loved many foreign women besides Pharaoh's daughter — Moabites, Ammonites, Edomites, Sidonians and Hittites. They were from nations about which the Lord had told the Israelites, "You must not intermarry with them, because they will surely turn your hearts after their gods." Nevertheless, Solomon held fast to them in love. He had seven hundred wives of royal birth and three hundred concubines, and his wives led him astray. As Solomon grew old, his wives turned his heart after other gods, and his heart was not fully devoted to the Lord his God, as the heart of David his father had been.** (1 Kings 11:1-4 NIV)

If it can happen to Samson and Solomon, it can certainly happen to you. Many have shipwrecked their lives because they did not let the Bible decide how they would live. Cling to the word of God and faithfully do what you are told there. You may not have the wisdom of Solomon or the strength of Samson, but unlike those two, you will reach the potential God has set for you and you will be greater than them both in the eyes of God and your happiness will grow because supernatural happiness will be yours as you go about the business of your day. The miraculous power of God is manifested in the obedient. Follow Christ by doing what He says to do in the Bible and see what He does to bring you joy. The great miracle God has for those who follow Him is that they are blessed.