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Hearers or Doers?

By Edgar Solís

Intro.

One of the many things that the Covid-19 pandemic suspended was the practice of sports in public places. Before all of this happened, I had my workout routine well established at the YMCA. During the summer I did a little bit of biking but when the winter came that practice also was suspended. After months of missing my workout routine, finally this week I had the opportunity to enroll in a health program that will help me improve my physical condition through exercise and better nutrition.

As I was exploring different places and alternatives to restart my suspended exercise routine, one particular place caught my attention, I can't say the business name because I don't want to do a commercial but part of the name of this place is "Transformation Center." Part of their slogan is "Get your life back" particularly this last part of the name stroke hard into my mind and soul...

Bible Context

In today's Bible passage we can read this exhortation "be doers of the word and not merely hearers." As you may remember the epistle of James is one of practical spirituality. Many scholars agree that the document appears to be a general letter written to numerous churches.

Experts also say that the possible author of this epistle was the brother of Jesus who was a leader in the church of Jerusalem from 36 CE until his martyrdom approximately

in 62 CE. The ethical character of today's passage can be presented in three simple teachings:

warnings against anger, an exhortation to practice what ones hears, and a call to manifest the Christian character with concrete actions of love and compassion; all of this strongly connected with the main principle that the word of God must to be practiced not only heard.

According the New Interpreter's Study Bible, the Jewish tradition emphasizes that the "law is perfect and liberating" so it's no wonder the author is making a powerful connection with the knowledge of the scripture and its ethical application. This becomes evident when one notes that for James, the source of moral virtue is wisdom received from God. For James "the new life of Christian obedience fulfills the law through love." We can also find this idea in other parts of this Epistle.

Theological reflection.

Now that my mom has gone to eternity with God, there is nothing I value more than her words to me. They are present in my mind and always will be... but I am also blessed and fortunate to have a treasure she left, her letters. These words that she wrote to me are now at this very moment, her real presence here on earth. In a similar way, God gave us Jesus, the incarnate word of God, and we now have the divine word of God among us, within us. Dear church how much I wish that when you feel the oppression of uncertainty or fear of the future...the word of God would be your power and your strength. The word of God empowers your life, your spiritual journey and your heart to make you an extension of Jesus' presence here and now!

Returning to the epistle, in the end, what mattered for James is that when you get really angry and frustrated with life, people, work, politicians, your spouse or the pastor and you are at the point where you want to explode, remember the Scripture! If you are now facing a big challenge in your life, bring to your mind and heart the words from God that live in inside you and ask what it is in your soul that gives you your inner power? There is something inside of you that is bigger than fear, anger, and frustration that you can use as your source of wisdom and virtue.

Application.

I believe that the word of God lives in you but if you want to experience more and more the presence of Jesus through the divine word, it is important to read, to know and internalize the Scriptures. If I want to be a doer and not only a hearer, I need to do what I am doing right now with my physical exercise!

Do you remember that I shared with you that I started working out again at this "transformation center"? (My legs are sore and I'm still feeling pain in my arms and chest!) Why did the owners include in the name of their business "transformation center"? I can say that the answer is simple: If you follow their routine, if you commit yourself to incorporate into your personal discipline the practice of their philosophy and program, your health will improve, and you'll see the results in your body. If you practice a discipline you will get results. How crucial is it to consider this same principle in our spiritual life? A hearer of the word is like a person that in theory knows how to do an exercise. Yes, you can know the discipline, you can memorize the feats, you can read the instructions on how to do each one of the exercises, you can understand the

importance of a good workout program but until you start to put all of that into practice you cannot really experience a change in your health.

Well, here is the "Spiritual Exercise" for you this week:

From the prayer Journal: Lectio Divina.

Lectio Divina means "divine reading." It is a powerful way to encounter God in scripture. This practice has four phases.

1. Phase 1 – (Lectio: Reading/Listening) Choose a passage of scripture. Read the passage to yourself twice (once out loud is helpful). Listen for the word or phrase that catches your attention, not the literal meaning. Then silently focus on that word or phrase. Repeat it a few times. Allow it to sift through your heart and mind.
2. Phase 2 – (Meditatio) As you continue to focus on your word or phrase, pay attention to the thoughts and feelings it evokes. What images, thoughts or memories come to mind?
3. Phase 2 (Oratio) At some point you may find yourself wanting to speak to God. Wait and listen as God forms your prayer and desire. Then speak your prayer of desire, longing, or action to God. Continue to listen in silence.
4. Phase 4 – (In this phase, your conversation with God comes to a close.) You have heard a word from God and have expressed your response. Sit in silence. Allow your mind to settle. When you feel the prayer has come to an end, express your gratitude to God for the time you had together.

Dear Church, this is the time to be doers of the word! Let's start by growing more and more in our relationship with Jesus and his Word! Love, compassion and transformation

of our lives and the world only comes when we live a life of actions inspired and empowered by the presence of God. Amen!