

41. The verb **κατανοέω** (*katanoéō*) indicates focus and concentration. The man is a sophisticate, an **άνήρ** (*anēr*). Sophisticates are, potentially at least, advanced mentally and economically. He is metaphorically looking into a mirror, the singular noun **ἔσοπτρον** (*ésoptron*): “mirror.”
42. Some speculate that the reflection seen by the man is distorted and the subsequent loss of clarity prevents the man from perceiving a clear reflection of himself. This simply is not the case.
43. We will crack the mirror’s riddle by observing the following excerpts and then make their applications in verse 24:

The Word is like a mirror; Paul made this point in 1 Corinthians 13:12. The “hearer-only” is someone who *beholds himself* and sees the imperfections but then leaves and forgets *what manner of man he was*. His look in the mirror reveals something that calls for action, but he never does anything about it. He simply goes away and continues in a sustained state of imperfection. Because no improvements are made, he remains in that state. After a short while, he *forgets* those imperfections since he is no longer in front of this *mirror*.¹

The metaphor of a person looking in a mirror and subsequently forgetting what he or she looks like corresponds to “not doing,” because in hearing the word, one gets a glimpse of truth about oneself, but failure to then do the word makes the encounter purely momentary and external—a mere reflection, not the real thing. When they did look in a mirror, they realized, of course, that they were looking at their own image, but a onetime exposure.²

ἔσοπτρον, *mirror: look at one’s face in a mirror*, James 1:23. See indirectly in a mirror (because one sees not the thing itself, but its mirror image) 1 Corinthians 13:12.³

44. When a person looks into a mirror, he sees his own image, but when he walks away, that image is gone and soon forgotten.

¹ Arnold G. Fruchtenbaum, “James,” in *Ariel’s Bible Commentary: The Messianic Jewish Epistles* (Tustin, Cal.: Ariel Ministries, 2005), 236.

² Dan G. McCartney, *James* (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2009), 120–21.

³ Walter Bauer, “ἔσοπτρον,” in *A Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament and other Early Christian Literature*, 3d ed., rev. and ed. Frederick William Danker (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 2000), 397.

45. This is a metaphor of the mirror of the soul. In the *noús* the believer is able to acquire academic comprehension of a biblical truth and even transfer it by faith over to the *kardía*.
46. But when the subject changes or class is dismissed, that information is illustrated by the act of walking away from a mirror, the information is not fully metabolized as a path of least resistance.
47. Some believers treat the Bible as a mirror. They open it up, follow along with the study, then walk away “immediately forgetting” what they just learned.
48. The one who looks into the mirror and walks away quickly forgets what he saw and turns his attention to other issues.
49. The person who looks into the word and understands what is communicated, but then, forgets its message is a hearer, not a doer.
50. Principle: Hearing must precede doing if the doing is to be accomplished under the filling and guidance of the Holy Spirit.
51. Those who are doers without first hearing fall into the same trap. Their efforts are human viewpoint at best and evil at worst.
52. The sequence of producing divine good and invisible historical impact is, hear first, believe by transference, retain by facilitation, and apply under the power of the Holy Spirit.

James 1:23 For if, and it is true, anyone is a hearer of the Word in the *noús* and not a doer from the *kardía*, such a person, is like a nobleman who looks contemplatively at his facial features in a mirror; (EXT)

James 1:24 for once he has looked at himself and gone away, he has immediately forgotten what kind of a person he was. (NASB)

1. The verse opens with the same word for “looking” that we just noted in verse 23. In that verse it was a present active participle of *katanoéō*, to *contemplate* one’s face.

2. This same word kicks off verse 24 but here *katanoéō* is an aorist active indicative. The aorist's use here is culminative which stresses the cessation of an act or state. Its essential nature is summarizing and concluding.⁴
3. The active voice means the “looker/hearer” produces the action described: he has looked ... and gone away.”
4. The indicative mood certifies this as a statement of fact.
5. So, in verse 23 the “looker” contemplates his face while in verse 24 he keep on looking until he is satisfied he's examined all the nuances of his appearance and then he walks away.
6. After he concludes his “looking,” he then “goes away,” the perfect active indicative of the verb **ἀπέρχομαι** (*apérchomai*): “to depart.” The perfect tense is intensive which places emphasis on existing results which indicates the fruition of a finished product. This means that when special attention is directed to the results of the action, stress upon the existing fact is intensified.⁵
7. This means the person is not going to be able to apply doctrine to life and circumstances. He is inconsistent in attendance, lackadaisical in his concentration, and haphazard in his application.
8. To get the full meaning of the mirror metaphor one must understand that the mirror is the Word of God. Looking into the mirror is the period of time when doctrine is being taught. It goes into the *noús* where it advances no farther than academic understanding.
9. For this individual, the impact of doctrine on his life may be described thusly: On Sunday he looks into the mirror, acquires some biblical ideas and then leaves. Next Sunday he comes back, looks into the mirror again. Then leaves.

⁴ Daniel B. Wallace, *Greek Grammar: Beyond the Basics* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1996), 559.

⁵ H. E. Dana and Julius R. Mantey, *A Manual Grammar of the Greek New Testament* (Toronto: The Macmillan Co., 1955), 202.

10. A month later he comes back, looks into the mirror. Then leaves. He becomes frustrated. After six months he looks into the mirror again. Then leaves.
11. Details of life begin to wear him down. He thinks he should look into the mirror again. He comes back. Concentration is difficult. Then, he leaves.
12. This is an extreme example of a “hearer believer.” But churches are filled to the balconies with members who look into the mirror every Sunday and then walk away.
13. Nothing ever gets cycled into the *kardía*; nothing is ever recalled; nothing is ever applied. There are reasons for this. First is negative volition or worse when nothing has been consistently taught from the pulpit.
14. The intensified perfect tense of *apérchomai* is thus illustrated. This believer was inconsistent in his attendance: going and coming or coming and going as if he were shopping at Wal-Mart.
15. That inconsistent attendance resulted in him being lackadaisical in his concentration. His recall is as fractured as the drunkards of Ephraim in Isaiah 28:10–13. The denouement is given in:
Isaiah 28:13b That they may go and stumble backward, be broken, snared and taken captive. (NASB)
16. The failure to apply doctrine leads to haphazard application under pressure and increasing advancement in the categories of reversionism.
17. “Why do the heathen rage?” Because absent thought they cannot devise a solution. “Why do they devise a vain thing?” Because the things they concoct are hopeless. “Why do they stand idle?” Because without divine guidance they don’t know where to go.⁶
18. These hopeless questions are those an ever-increasing number of citizens in our client nation will soon be asking. Already, some are thinking it now, “Why do these heathen rage?”

⁶ Quotations 1 and 2 are from Proverbs 2:1 and Acts 4:25; number 3 from Matthew 20:6.