

The Mirror (Undivided Follower)

Phil EuBank · What Is a Follower Of the Way? · Ephesians 5:15-16; James 1:2-4; James 1:5-8; James 1:22-25

AT A GLANCE

Phil EuBank argues that followers of Jesus are not called to escape a scattered, over-scheduled world but to become undivided within it. James's letter, written to literally dispersed believers, diagnoses internal fragmentation and names the marks of an undivided follower: treating interruptions as God's assignment, asking without a hedge, and gazing into the mirror of the Word long enough to actually change.

- Formation is not optional; your calendar and spending are already teaching you something, so the real question is who is doing the teaching.
- James's 'count it all joy' is accounting language: move interruptions from the loss column to the faith-being-developed column in your mind.
- Being double-minded isn't unbelief; it's asking God for help while quietly building a backup plan because you doubt He'll come through.

“He is double-minded, unstable in all his ways.”

EXPOSITION

Scripture engaged

Ephesians 5:15-16 — So be very careful how you live. Live wisely, not like fools. I mean that you should use every opportunity you have for doing good, because these are evil times. (ERV)

James 1:2-4 — My brothers and sisters, you will have many kinds of trouble. But this gives you a reason to be very happy. You know that when your faith is tested, you learn to be patient in suffering. If you let that patience work in you, the end result will be good. You will be mature and complete. You will be all that God wants you to be. (ERV)

James 1:5-8 — Do any of you need wisdom? Ask God for it. He is generous and enjoys giving to everyone. So he will give you wisdom. But when you ask God, you must believe. Don't doubt him. Whoever doubts is like a wave in the sea that is blown up and down by the wind. People like that are thinking two different things at the same time. They can never decide what to do. So they should not think they will receive anything from the Lord. (ERV)

James 1:22-25 — Do what God's teaching says; don't just listen and do nothing. When you only sit and listen, you are fooling yourselves. Hearing God's teaching and doing nothing is like looking at your face in the mirror and doing nothing about what you saw. You go away and immediately forget how bad you looked. But when you look into God's perfect law that sets people free, pay attention to it. If you do what it says, you will have God's blessing. Never just listen to his teaching and forget what you heard. (ERV)

The argument

Formation Is Not Optional, Only Its Teacher Is — Your calendar is the curriculum, whether or not you chose the teacher

Phil EuBank opens with Paul's warning to Ephesus, 'Look carefully how you walk, not as unwise but as wise, making the best use of the time, because the days are evil.' He glosses 'evil' as harmful rather than wicked, and 'make the best use' as the word behind redeem: buying time back from a thief. 'You don't manage your time,' he says, 'you buy it back from someone or something that is already trying to steal it.' The point isn't that we're failing at life but succeeding at a curriculum we never agreed to enroll in — one that shapes us into whatever has our attention.

Insight — You are always being formed by something; the only real choice is which teacher gets your undivided attention.

The Interruption Is the Assignment — James's accounting language moves suffering from the loss column to the formation column

James opens with 'count it all joy... when you meet trials of various kinds, for you know that the testing of your faith produces steadfastness.' Phil EuBank notes that 'count' is an accounting word, a ledger term — James isn't asking us to feel good about pain but to reclassify it. 'He's telling you and me to move something that we're experiencing to a different column in the ledger of our mind... it belongs under the work being done column.' He ties this to James watching Jesus absorb interruptions for decades before ministry even began: love, and formation, cannot happen at a sprinter's pace.

Insight — What you file as wasted time may be the exact place God is doing His deepest work in you.

Asking Without a Backup Plan — Dipsychos names the believer who prays while quietly hedging

James promises that God 'gives generously to all without reproach' to the one who asks in faith, 'with no doubting.' Phil EuBank highlights that 'double-minded' translates a word James appears to coin for the occasion, dipsychos — literally 'two-souled.' He directs this not at skeptics but at believers who ask God while simultaneously building their own plan: 'we're good at this... let me just figure out my own plan.' The deeper diagnosis: we ask confidently where

we feel strong and hide where we're repeatedly weak, forgetting 'we ask God over and over again because we do' need help, not because He forgets.

Insight — Real strength isn't independence from God but the willingness to keep asking Him without a fallback.

Staying at the Mirror Long Enough to Change — The difference between the two hearers is prolonged attention, not sincerity or intelligence

James contrasts a man who 'looks intently at his natural face in the mirror... and at once forgets what he was like' with one who 'looks into the perfect law, the law of liberty, and perseveres, being no hearer who forgets but a doer who acts.' Phil EuBank points out that the second man's 'looks' carries the sense of bending down and peering in — the same word, he notes, used of Peter and John looking into the empty tomb. 'Glanced and gazed are way different postures,' he says. Both men see the same truth accurately; only one stays long enough for it to do something to him.

Insight — Accurate self-knowledge changes nothing without the discipline of staying with it.

Cross-references

- [John 20:5](#) — Notes the same Greek word for 'looks' used of Peter and John peering into the empty tomb, to illustrate the difference between a glance and a gaze.

DEVOTIONAL

There is a particular kind of exhaustion that comes not from failing but from succeeding — at the wrong curriculum. You did everything asked of you this year: showed up, answered the emails, filled the calendar with things that each carried a small promise of a fuller life. And now you stand at the end of it, scattered, wondering why the promotion or the acceptance letter or the restful vacation didn't do what it said it would do on the label. James writes to people who are literally scattered, exiled from home, and he never tells them to relocate to safety. He goes after something harder to fix than geography: the scattering inside. You can be sitting in a pew, coffee in hand, family beside you, and still be internally divided — asking God for help with one hand while writing your backup plan with the other. The mirror James describes doesn't shame you for what it shows. It simply shows you. The tragedy was never the reflection; it was walking away from it too quickly to let it change anything. Some of us have become spiritual goldfish, forgetting our own face the moment we look away. What if the interruptions you've been filing under loss are actually where God is doing His most patient, most careful work — not despite the mess but through it? What if asking again, for the same old thing, is not weakness but the exact posture of a person who is finally becoming whole?

Reflection

- Where in your life this week did your actions and your stated priorities quietly disagree with each other?
- What is the 'arm out of the water' you've been keeping from God — the one area you've decided He can't have?
- Where have you stopped asking God for help because some part of you no longer expects Him to come through?

Closing prayer

God, thank You. Thank You for the honest stories of people learning to surrender to You, even when it's challenging. Help each of us navigate what that looks like this week — whether it's changing a calendar, having a hard conversation, or finally getting help in an area that's been secretly dysfunctional for a long time. Make us a people who are not just hearers of Your word but doers, making something of our lives by Your grace, through faith, because of You. In Jesus' name, amen.

FORMATION

One thing to remember

You are already being formed by something; the mirror of God's word only helps if you stay long enough for it to change you.

This week

This week, set your phone aside and open a physical Bible to James 1. Each night, ask two questions in prayer: Where did my actions match my words today? Where was I double-minded? Let God, not a glance, meet you there.

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