

## August 24

**Scriptures:** Read James 1

**Key Verse:** “But be doers of the word, and not hearers only, deceiving yourselves.”  
(James 1:22)

### Overview

I like the way the NIV puts it, “Do not merely listen to the word, and so deceive yourselves. Do what it says.”

There are three subjects for discussion here: 1. listening to the word, 2. self-deception, and 3. practicing the word.

When you look at the Greek verbs used in the New Testament for “deceive” (whether deceiving others or oneself), there is a common denominator with some of them; it is best expressed by the humorous remark, “Don’t confuse me with the facts.” Self-deceit is essentially “a sin against common sense” (as one scholar put it). The specific verb used in the key verse is *paralogizomai*, which means “to reason falsely” or “to deceive by false reasoning”. The question is, how is the reasoning in this context out of balance?

Here’s how. The Bible is not only tremendous history, literature, and poetry, it’s a book with an implicit (and explicit) moral challenge. It’s the word of God and cannot (or should not) be taken for anything less. It demands change in the reader. It is not content to leave us as we are. It expects growth, just as we do when we plant a sapling or a tulip bulb. In fact, none of us has ever planted a seed not expecting it to germinate and grow.

Imagine, then, a “gardener” who spends his day planting a garden in the desert, far from water, in scorching heat. You approach him at the end of the day as he contentedly sips a cup of tea and reads a book. “How can you be so happy?” you ask, “Your seeds won’t grow!” He responds peacefully, “Grow? Who said anything about growth? I simply plant for recreation. It brings me peace and contentment. It blesses me.”

The word of God is not passive, nor does it expect a passive posture from its readers. The word is active, “sharper than any two-edged sword”, and expects the hearer to be transformed and, in turn, become an agent of change in the world. We are to do more than merely listen. We are to practice what we hear. The Bible was never meant to be taken passively. It is intensely personal, profound, and practical.

### Prayer

Dear Lord, please give us Your grace and power so that we may be doers of the Word and not hearers only. We pray this in Jesus’ name. Amen.