

**SCRIPTURE READING:** James 1:23-25.

**INTRODUCTION:**

1. Imagine a magic mirror that would show us, not what we actually look like, but only what we really want to see. Would we use such a mirror?
2. I think most of us would say no. Why? Because most of us want to see what we actually look like so we can make ourselves as presentable as possible. We don't want to go around thinking we look good when we've really got a huge piece of spinach stuck in our teeth.
3. The scripture reading makes it clear that the Bible is a mirror, not of the outward man, but of the inward man.
4. Here's the question we will ask and answer this morning – do we want the Bible to be a magic mirror or an accurate mirror?

**DISCUSSION:**

1. **Do some people want the Bible to be a magic mirror?**
  - A. Absolutely, and that's exactly how some people use it. They look into Bible and see whatever they want to see. That's why some people say you can prove anything by the Bible. That's not true, but if someone wants to see something in the Bible, they can convince themselves it's there even when it's not.
  - B. To give an extreme example, some people look into the Bible wanting homosexuality to be an acceptable lifestyle and that's exactly what they end up seeing.
  - C. Now before we get too uppity, do we do the same thing? Let's consider something that hits far closer to home – sins of the tongue. James 1:26. What about the demands of love? Luke 10:25-28, 29.
  - D. Many people don't want the truth about what they think or do. Rather, they want what they think or do to be true. So much, in fact, that they will believe a lie about what they think or do before they'll accept the truth if it's not what they want hear. 2 Thessalonians 2:9-12.
2. **Why do people use the Bible as a magic mirror?**
  - A. **Accepting the truth would require more pain than some people are willing to bear.** The departed but mistaken loved one illustration.
  - B. **Accepting the truth would require more change than some people are willing to make.** Too much work, too many consequences, etc.
3. **Why is magic mirroring a problem?**
  - A. **It's unnecessary.** It's denial. It's not that they we haven't seen the truth. It's that we won't accept the truth.
  - B. **It doesn't go unnoticed.** By God (Revelation 3:17) or men (the spinach illustration).
  - C. **It blocks repentance.** John 9:40-41. This has many temporal and eternal consequences. The Paul illustration.
  - D. **We lash out at people who try to help us see our true appearance.** Luke 16:14-15A.

**APPLICATIONS:**

1. **What do we really want?** Do we want to think and do what's truly just, or do we want to justify whatever we decide to think or do? Proverbs 23:23.
2. **Listen carefully to criticism.** James 1:23-25.
  - A. When criticized, we should not immediately get defensive. Rather, we should automatically assume that we've got something to learn.
  - B. There is usually some truth in all criticism, even destructive criticism.
  - C. We should especially listen to criticism if it's coming from a respected source or if we've heard the same thing from two or three witnesses.
3. **Solicit constructive criticism.** 2 Timothy 4:3-4.
4. **Offer constructive criticism.** The spinach illustration. Titus 2:3-5. Don't always expect appreciation, but do it anyway. 2 Corinthians 12:14-15. We don't want their blood on our hands. There are honest and good hearts.
5. **We must forgive ourselves and move on.** No matter what mistakes we've made and how much it would hurt us to admit them, the truth is that more of the same will only produce more of the same. Hope for better things can only come if we recognize our mistakes, repent of them, be forgiven, and move on. Part of being forgiven includes forgiving ourselves. We all make mistakes. The only thing worse than making mistakes is to not learn from them and do better in the future than we've done in the past. We can't learn from our mistakes if we don't admit we've made them!

**CONCLUSION:** We wouldn't use a magic mirror for the outward man. Let's certainly not use one for the inward man!