

Semicontinuous
Song 2:8–13
Ps. 45:1–2, 6–9

Complementary
Deut. 4:1–2, 6–9
Ps. 15

Jas. 1:17–27
Mark 7:1–8, 14–15,
21–23

Hear and Do

Goal for the Session Children will hear God’s word in James and respond with Christ-centered actions.

■ PREPARING FOR THE SESSION

Focus on James 1:17–27

WHAT is important to know?

— From “Exegetical Perspective,” Aaron L. Utti

One not doing the Word is deceiving him/herself. This is like a person who looks into a mirror and then goes away unmindful of his or her faith. What is this deception about? On a practical level, someone might say, “I really believe in Jesus; I really believe in the resurrection,” but then give no evidence of such faith in dealing with his or her neighbor (2:18–19). It is not enough merely to hear the word. James promises that hearers will be blessed *in their doing* (cf. Luke 11:28; 12:43; John 13:17). The mere hearer is deceived; the doer is blessed.

WHERE is God in these words?

— From “Theological Perspective,” Haruko Nawata Ward

Historian Jeannine Olson noted Calvin’s contribution to modern society through his creation of welfare institutions. The city of Geneva during the Reformation period had many poor, widows, and orphans. Calvin himself came to Geneva as a French religious refugee. In his *Ecclesiastical Ordinances* (1541), Calvin established the General Hospital and designated the offices of deacon and deaconess to supervise citizens’ works of mercy as the “doers of the pure religion” in care of the poor.

SO WHAT does this mean for our lives?

— From “Pastoral Perspective,” Archie Smith Jr.

Actions Speak Louder Than Words. James counsels us to a practical morality that is quick to listen, slow to speak, and slow to anger. What we do matters, and what comes out of our mouths can make a difference, for good and for ill. But our actions speak louder than our words. Words may touch our emotional life and help us anticipate what is going to happen. But our actions establish the structures of meaning that build our worlds. Through faithful activity we create and recreate ourselves in trustworthy ways and help build worlds worthy of trust. Actions add value to our words and give them life. In this way, morality has the practical aim of creating relevance, meaning, and integrity in the world.

NOW WHAT is God’s word calling us to do?

— From “Homiletical Perspective,” Peter Rhea Jones

The justly famous definition of genuine religion at James 1:27 is juxtaposed against a religion that is “worthless” (1:26), “barren” (2:20), or even “dead” (2:26), so the stakes run high. In a kind of dialectic of Christian existence, James understands pure religion as being inclusive of both social ministry and personal morality. One’s relationship to God means showing mercy (2:13), striving for peace (3:18), helping the needy (2:15–16), loving the neighbor (2:8), and recognizing the social justice of a fair minimum wage (5:4). In terms of personal morality, it means keeping from the “stain” (Moffatt) and being “uncontaminated” (Jerusalem Bible).

FOCUS SCRIPTURE

James 1:17–27

Focus on Your Teaching

From a young age, children have heard parents and teachers tell them, “Listen to what I say.” They also have seen that these adults do not always do what they say. As you teach this year, children will hear stories of God’s people from you and learn how to put words of faith into action. They will learn Christian actions from your actions. Children will not expect perfection. Being a faithful, forgiven follower of Christ is the best example you can give them.

Dear Lord, open my heart to the children who gather. Guide me as I help them hear your Word. Help me to model what it means to be your disciple. Amen.

YOU WILL NEED

- green plastic tablecloth
- small table or large box
- permanent marker
- basket
- Color Pack 1, 33
- plastic toy animals
- washable markers
- pencils
- copies of Resource Sheet 1 on card stock
- scissors
- Bible
- hand mirror
- Singing the Feast*, bit.ly/SingingTheFeast

For Responding

- option 1: copies of Resource Sheet 2, crayons or colored pencils
- option 2: metal paper clips, assorted magnets

LEADING THE SESSION

GATHERING

Before the session, make copies of Resource Sheet 1 (Crosses) on card stock and cut out a cross for each child. Make several extras. Create a worship center by placing a green plastic tablecloth on a small table or large cardboard box. Use a permanent marker to draw crosses around the edge of the tablecloth. Place Color Pack 1 and a basket on the tablecloth. For option 2 in Responding, make arrangements for the children to greet other church members.

Welcome the children. Give each child a cross cut from Resource Sheet 1 to color with markers. Have each child print his or her name on the cross. Make a cross for yourself.

Gather around the worship center with your crosses. Teach the following response, which will be used to begin prayer times in your sessions:

Teacher: The Lord be with you.

All: And also with you.

Say, “The Lord be with you,” individually to each child. Encourage the child to respond, “And also with you,” and then place his or her cross in the basket. Tell the children that each week they will put their crosses in the offering basket as a reminder that each person can give thanks for God’s love and give God’s love and care to others. (Keep the crosses for use in upcoming sessions.)

Lead the following prayer, asking children to repeat each phrase:

Dear God, / help us to hear your Word. / Help us to do your work. / As we hear and as we do, / help us show our love to you. / Amen.

Invite the children to choose a toy animal. Have each learner tell whether they think the animal they’ve chosen is fast or slow, and then have the group all clap and speak a fast or slow rhythm:

Each child in your group is special. Learn each child's name. Find ways to recognize their uniqueness each week.

If some children are hearing about Jesus for the first time, take a moment to explain that Jesus is God's Son—God's best gift of love for us. Jesus came to earth to teach us about God's love that will never end. You might want to have a children's storybook or two about the birth of Jesus and Jesus' life to loan to families who are new to the church.

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Slow: Four slow, even beats ("slow, slow, slow, slow")

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Fast: Four faster beats ("quick and spee-dy")

Explain that even though fast and slow are opposites, they also can be a pair that goes together. Talk about other pairs of opposites: stop and go, in and out, up and down, open and shut. Invite children to name other pairs like this.

EXPLORING

Show a Bible and say: "Along with the many stories about Jesus in the Bible, there are also letters, poetry, history, and stories about God's people. All of these parts of the Bible help us learn how to follow Jesus."

Read aloud James 1:19 and ask the children to listen for a pair of opposite words. When they discover the opposites *quick* and *slow*, create a rhythm phrase using the patterns learned in Gathering:

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Slow to an-ger;

||-|

Quick to lis-ten.

Say and clap the phrase together, pausing slightly after "slow to anger" to catch everyone's attention before "quick to listen." Repeat at least three times, speaking and clapping together. Explain that this letter tells Jesus' followers—including us—to be quick and slow at the same time: quick to listen to God's Word and to others and slow to get angry, even when we're upset.

Read aloud James 1:22 and invite the children to find another pair of words that seem like opposites (*hear* and *do*). Comment that James is telling everyone who follows Jesus—including us—to hear God's Word and also to act on what we hear. Hearing and doing go together in Christian life.

Read aloud James 1:23–24. Bring out a hand mirror. Remind the children of what James said: Hearing God's Word and not doing God's work is like looking in a mirror and then forgetting what we look like! Ask each child to hold the mirror and look in it as the rest of the group says, "We see (*Name*): a hearer and a doer of God's Word."

To wrap up Exploring, ask:

- ✪ What are ways we can be hearers of God's Word?
- ✪ What are ways we can be doers of God's work?

RESPONDING

Mark the activities you will use:

1. **Hearers and Doers** Children need to see real-life connections between hearing God's Word and acting on it. Distribute copies of Resource Sheet 2 (Hear and Do) and crayons

Expect a wide range in reading and writing skills in your group. Be ready to write words on a scrap of paper for a learner to copy onto his or her sheet or to write the words a learner dictates to you on his or her sheet. Affirm each child's efforts and progress.

or colored pencils. As a group, talk about the activities shown on the sheet. Remind learners that we can hear God's Word in many ways (reading Bible stories, worshiping, coming to a Sunday school class) and we can do God's work in many ways (helping at home and in the community; caring for people; speaking loving words; telling people about Jesus). Invite children to label each picture with a word or phrase that explains it (*read the Bible, worship, help*) and then match the pictures by drawing a line between a child hearing God's Word and the same child doing a helpful deed of God's work. In the two blank spaces, have the children draw pictures of ways they hear God's Word and do God's work.

- 2. Word and Action** Help learners picture James's teaching about the close connection between hearing God's Word and responding with actions that follow Jesus' example. Show the magnets and explain that magnets pull metal objects close to them. Invite the children to explore with the magnets, trying different surfaces to see where the magnets stick and using them to pick up paper clips. Ask them to describe how closely the magnets stick to the metal objects. Recall how James teaches Christians to make a very close connection between hearing God's Word and following Jesus' example in doing God's work—just as close as a magnet is to metal. Since you have heard God's Word in the Bible today, brainstorm ways you might follow Jesus' example in doing God's work, for example: telling others that God loves them, forgiving, smiling, giving a friendly hug, helping. Choose one way the group can follow Jesus' example today, such as greeting other church members with a smile and telling them that God loves them. Go as a group to carry out this action.
- 3. Mirror Actions** Children need opportunities to physically practice how to be doers of Christ-centered actions. Ask children to "be a mirror" and copy your actions. Pantomime various actions of God's love: a handshake, a hug, a wave, a smile, or making the sign of the cross. Also pantomime ways to hear God's Word, such as praying, reading the Bible, or singing Bible songs. Ask a volunteer to act out other ways they can hear God's Word or do God's work, and have the class mirror the child's actions.

CLOSING

Gather together around the worship center. Remind the children that God is always with them, when they are hearing God's Word and when they are doing God's work.

Sing "You Shall Love the Lord Your God" (Color Pack 33, *Singing the Feast*). Repeat the song and invite the children to offer a joyful blessing of God's love to one another as they sing, such as a handshake, high five, smile, or wave.

Pray again the echo prayer:

Dear God, / help us to hear your Word. / Help us to do your work. / As we hear and as we do, / help us show your love to all. / Amen.

Take time to say good-bye to each child by name.

You Shall Love the Lord Your God

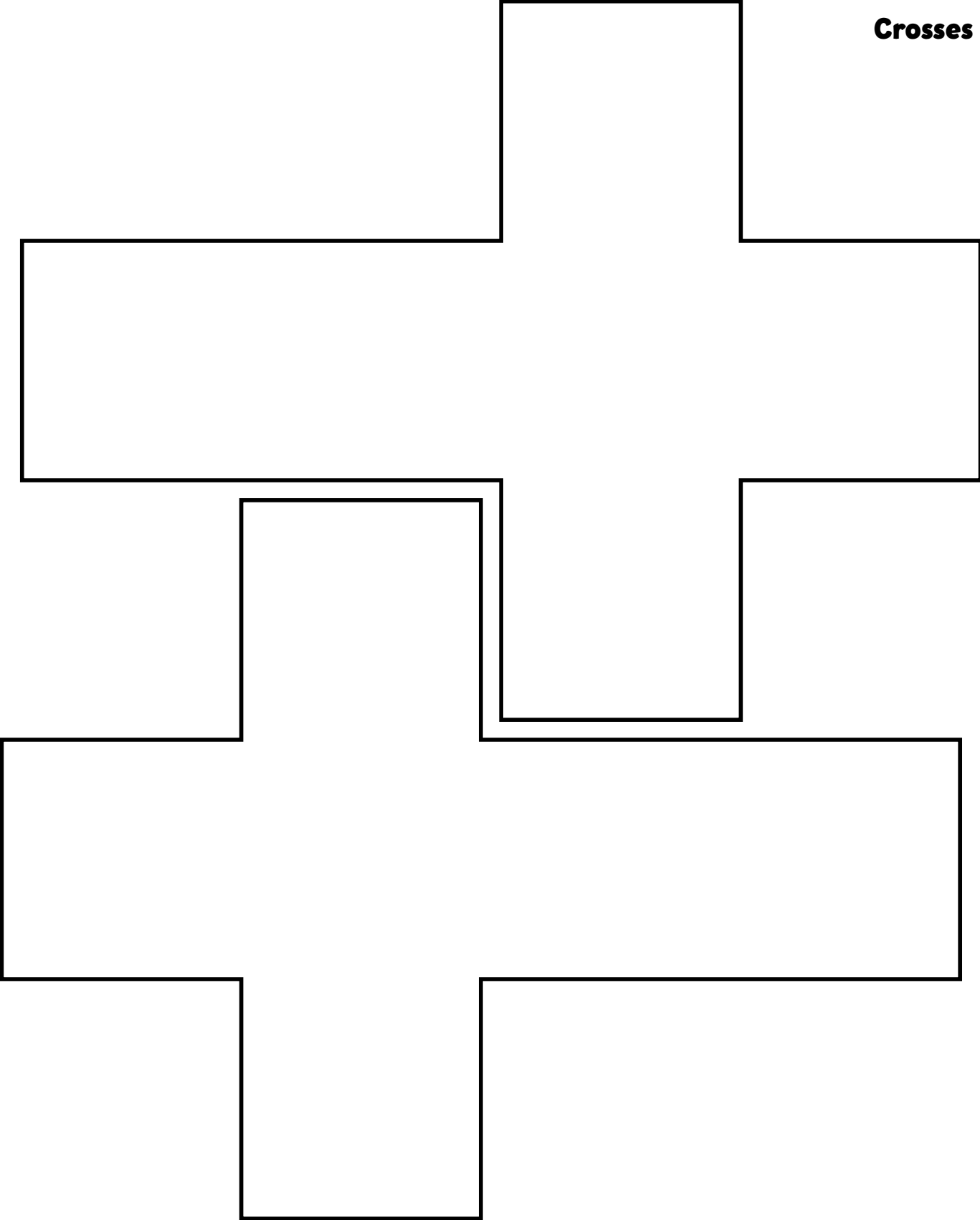
You shall love the Lord your God, alleluia!

You shall love the Lord your God, alleluia!

With all your heart and soul and mind, alleluia!

With all your heart and soul and mind, alleluia!

Crosses



Hear and Do

Grades (K)1-2
Resource Sheet 2

Hear and Do

What are these children doing to hear God's Word? How are they doing God's work?
Label each picture and then draw a line between matching pairs of hearers and doers.
Draw yourself hearing God's Word and doing God's work in the two empty spaces.



