

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**

# Actions Speak Louder

## Goal for the Session

Reading James, tweens will compare the value of words and actions, identifying ways to be both hearers and doers of the Word.

## ■ 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

Tweens usually are able to perceive the disconnect or hypocrisy in play when people say one thing and do another. They may even confront parents and teachers when their words and actions don't match up. At times, though, it is a challenge for tweens to recognize how they might be doing the same thing! James, in his letter, wants believers to welcome "the implanted word" (James 1:21) and to be committed to living it in their words and deeds.

*Gracious and loving God, open my ears to hear your Word this day and give me the courage to act on it in my teaching. Help me inspire these tweens to seek ways to be both hearers and doers. In Jesus' name. Amen.*

**YOU WILL NEED**

- green cloth
- battery-powered white candle
- copies of Resource Sheet 1
- pencils or pens
- Singing the Feast*, [bit.ly/SingingTheFeast](http://bit.ly/SingingTheFeast)
- Bibles
- newsprint, markers
- Color Pack 2, 30

For Responding

- option 1: copies of Resource Sheet 2, pencils
- option 2: copies of Resource Sheet 2, pencils, card stock, markers, scissors
- option 3: Color Pack 1

Engaging tweens in an activity as soon as they arrive sets the tone for active participation instead of passive sitting.

## LEADING THE SESSION

### GATHERING

*Before the session*, arrange the green cloth in the center of your table or meeting space and put the candle on top of it. If you will be using option 2 in Responding, cut colorful card stock into 4¼" x 11" pieces.

As tweens arrive, ask for two volunteers to prepare to read James 1:22–24 aloud, one from an NRSV Bible and one from the bottom of Resource Sheet 1 (Getting to Know Each Other). Distribute copies of Resource Sheet 1 and pencils or pens. Invite tweens to write their responses in the three spaces, following the instructions. Allow a few minutes for everyone to finish.

Call the group together and welcome everyone. Form groups of three. Explain that each person, in turn, will read the information he or she has written on the resource sheet. For the third item ("Three Facts, One Lie"), after the four statements are read, other learners in the small group will guess which one is the lie. After all have guessed, it's time to 'fess up.

Gather everyone around the green cloth, noting that green is the church color for this time of the year, called Ordinary Time or the season after Pentecost. Ask a learner to light the candle. Explain that to form a strong Christian community, it is important for people to know one another. Invite tweens to name one thing they learned about someone else during the opening activity.

Sing "God Is with Me" (Color Pack 30, [Singing the Feast](#)). Offer this prayer:

*Gracious God, we are grateful that you have called us together to learn more about your Word and how to hear and do it. In Jesus' name. Amen.*

### God Is with Me

Our God is with me  
everywhere,  
All day and night I'm in  
God's care.  
It doesn't matter where I  
go,  
Because God is with me,  
this I know.

Repeat two times

After asking a question, don't be afraid of silence. Wait, indicating you are expecting responses. If you keep talking, tweens will assume you really don't want to hear what they have to say, and they'll keep mum.

Ask tweens what they think it means when a person “talks the talk, but doesn't walk the walk.” Invite them to recall situations when a person said one thing, but then did something that didn't match his or her words.

### EXPLORING

Say that today's Bible passage is from a letter in the New Testament. James wrote this letter to early Christians to give them advice about living as Jesus' followers; it's like an instruction book for how to live a Christian life. Distribute Bibles and ask learners to help one another find James 1:19–21. Read the verses aloud as learners follow along. Ask:

- ✪ What does James say to do? (*List their responses on newsprint.*)
- ✪ Do you consider this good advice? Why or why not?
- ✪ What does the passage say about “the word”? (*Word here can be understood to mean either the Bible as a whole or Jesus' teachings.*)
- ✪ What does James mean by “the implanted word”? (*In the Contemporary English Version: “the message that is planted in you”; in the Common English Bible: “the word planted deep inside you”; in the Good News Translation: “the word that he plants in your hearts”*)
- ✪ Why is it important to hear this word?

Ask the volunteers to read James 1:22–24 from the NRSV and Resource Sheet 1. Ask:

- ✪ What point do you think James is making here?
- ✪ What is meant by looking in the mirror and then forgetting who you are?
- ✪ Which is easier for you, hearing God's Word or doing it? Why?

Read verses 26–27 aloud to the group. Ask:

- ✪ What does James say about being religious?
- ✪ How does James describe “true” religion?
- ✪ How would you restate verse 27 in language that your friends at school would use?

Tell the learners to picture an imaginary line drawn from one side of the room to the other. Point to one side and say, “If you strongly agree that actions speak louder than words, move to this end of the line. If you strongly disagree, move to the other end of the line. If your feelings are somewhere in between, find your spot along the line.” After tweens take their places, discuss:

- ✪ Why did you choose to stand where you are?
- ✪ Do actions speak louder than words? How so?
- ✪ When someone says, “I give you my word,” what does that mean? How important is it?

With everyone back in their seats, brainstorm ways to be hearers and doers of God's Word. List responses on newsprint.

EASY  
PREP

## RESPONDING

Mark the activities you will use:

- 1. Doing the Word** Dig deeper into James's message of being hearers and doers of God's Word. Distribute copies of Resource Sheet 2 (Be Doers of the Word) and pencils. Allow time for tweens to work individually to list their ideas in each section. Gather the group and invite learners to read some of their responses. Ask: Which of these ideas could we do as a group? If the group shows enthusiasm for an idea, make plans to do it.
- 2. Bumper Stickers** Focus on being doers of God's Word and encouraging others to do the same. Distribute copies of Resource Sheet 2 and pencils. Form pairs to work together to list ideas in the four sections. Ask each pair to pick one of their responses and write a bumper-sticker slogan to promote the idea. Give pairs 4¼" x 11" pieces of card stock and markers for making bumper stickers with their slogans. Make a display of bumper stickers where others in the church might read them.
- 3. Teaching Others** One way to enact James's call to be doers of the Word is to teach others to do so. Pass Color Pack 1 around the group, asking: What examples of being doers of the Word do you see? How do children learn to be doers of the Word? Form groups of three. Tell the groups they are to think about what they would teach younger children about being doers of the Word and how they might do so. Ask each small group to demonstrate its teaching plan to the entire group. Option: Arrange for the groups to meet with small groups of younger children and carry out their teaching ideas.

## CLOSING

Place Color Pack 2 on the green cloth and invite learners to gather around it. Review the learners' ideas from Exploring and Responding for ways to be doers of God's Word. Together, choose five ideas that seem most important for your group to carry out. Ask volunteers to write one idea in each of the five speech bubbles on Color Pack 2, with a marker. The ideas chosen may include things tweens can do as individuals, but try to also include ideas that your group can do together.

Close with a prayer of dedication. Tell learners that you will lead the prayer; when you say, "Bless our actions as we . . .," they are invited to say ways that they will be doers of God's Word in the week ahead.

*Lord, thank you for this time together. Increase our desire to hear your Word and be doers of it. Bless our actions as we (pause for learners to name ways they will be doers of the Word). Give us courage and strength to do these things. Amen.*

Say good-bye to each learner by name.

## Getting to Know Each Other

List three words that describe you.

List three things you believe or feel strongly about.

Three Facts, One Lie. List four ways you act on your beliefs, but have one thing not be true. (*The object is to make all four sound true. When you read these four things, the group will guess which one is the lie.*)

1

2

3

4

### James 1:22-24

Don't fool yourself into thinking that you are a listener when you are anything but, letting the Word go in one ear and out the other. Act on what you hear! Those who hear and don't act are like those who glance in the mirror, walk away, and two minutes later have no idea who they are, what they look like.

—*The Message* by Eugene H. Peterson, copyright (c) 1993, 1994, 1995, 1996, 2000, 2001, 2002. Used by permission of NavPress Publishing Group. All rights reserved.

# Be Doers of the Word

In each section, write ideas of what you can do to be a doer of the Word.



**By Myself**

**With Our Sunday School Class  
or Youth Group**



**With Family Members**



**With People in Our Church**

