

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

Hearing and Doing God’s Word

Goal for the Session *Children will puzzle on connecting words and actions as taught in the letter from James.*

■ 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

Some children in this broad age range generally assume that adults do what they say and teach. But older children are keen observers of the adults around them, and sooner or later they recognize that words and actions don't always match. However, this session takes a slightly different route about matching words and actions. The children will be encouraged to act on the word of God or the teachings of Jesus as a way of showing God's love to others. The focus is on how they can do this rather than judging others.

God of love, reassure me of your love as I examine how my words and actions show your love to the children I teach. Amen.

YOU WILL NEED

- copies of Resource Sheet 1 on card stock
- scissors
- markers or crayons
- green cloth
- battery-powered white candle
- offering basket
- Bibles
- Singing the Feast*, bit.ly/SingingTheFeast
- Color Pack 1, 2, 32

For Responding

- option 2: newsprint, card stock, pencils, markers
- option 3: Resource Sheet 2, scissors

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!

Save the crosses for use in the Gathering activity each week.

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 and teacher. Make a few extras. For option 2 in Responding, divide a sheet of newsprint into four quadrants with these headings: *By myself*, *With family members*, *With my church school friends*, and *With people in my church*. Cut card stock into 4 ¼" x 11" pieces. For option 3 in Responding, cut apart the cards on Resource Sheet 2 (Game Cards). Arrange a green cloth over a table or large box for the worship table. On it, place a Christ candle (battery-powered white candle decorated with symbols of Christ), a Bible, and an offering basket.

Welcome the children by name as they arrive. If they have offerings, have them put them in the offering basket. Give each one a cross from Resource Sheet 1 to decorate. Ask each one to print his or her name on it. When ready to begin, gather the group at the worship table. Play "You Shall Love the Lord Your God" (Color Pack 32, *Singing the Feast*) and invite learners to sing along. Light the Christ candle, pointing out that it is a reminder of Jesus' presence with the group. Note that the green cloth means that the church is in the church season called Ordinary Time or season after Pentecost, when Christians learn more about how to follow Jesus.

Teach this prayer response:

Teacher: God be with you.

All: And also with you.

Then say to each child, "God be with you," and the child responds, "And also with you," and places her or his cross in the basket. Remind the children that placing their crosses in the basket is a symbol of giving thanks for God's love and care.

**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!

Introducing the class to various types of literature in the Bible is one step on the way to biblical literacy. Older children who have some Bible skills like to use them.

Lead this prayer, asking the children to echo each phrase:

*Loving God, / we are ready to hear your word. / We want to do your word /
so others / will know your love too. / Amen.*

Play a variation on “Simon Says.” The children are to do what you say if the action is preceded by “Simon says.” When the directions are not preceded by “Simon says,” they are to do something totally different. For example, if you say, “Touch your ear,” the children might touch their toes. After a few rounds, suggest that the Bible story is about matching words and actions.

EXPLORING

Invite a child to find the Letter of James in the Bible from the worship table. Explain that the New Testament has four Gospels, books that tell the story of Jesus, a book called Acts of the Apostles that tells about the beginning of the church, and many letters written to churches and to individuals. These letters were read in homes when the people gathered to learn about Jesus and worship God. Show Color Pack 1, a narrow street in an ancient town in Italy. Invite the children to imagine they are walking on this street to a home where they will gather with others to hear a letter from James. Have the child hold the Bible open to James as you read this paraphrase:

Every good thing comes from God, the creator, who does not change. My brothers and sisters, be quick to listen, but slow to speak. Also be slow to become angry. An angry person doesn't show God's love. Stay away from unhealthy things and let the word of God deep inside you grow.

Ask:

- ✪ What does this part of the letter tell you about God?
- ✪ What does it tell you to do?
- ✪ How do you think the word of God gets “deep inside you”?

Read:

Be doers of God's word and not hearers only. People who hear but don't act are like people who look in the mirror and then forget what they look like. Instead, study God's word and do it. Don't listen and then forget, but do what you hear. You will be blessed in all that you do.

Ask:

- ✪ What might Christians do to show that they are doers of God's word?

Show the children Color Pack 2. Invite the children to pass it around. Invite each one to name a way to show God's love to one of the individuals pictured.

RESPONDING

Offer at least two options so children have a choice. One might be more challenging to interest older children who can work on their own.

- 1. Mission Project** Working together helps children recognize the importance of being doers of God's word. This option might naturally follow the conversation at the end of Exploring. Pick up on any suggestions made that connect with mission or outreach programs of your congregation. Talk together about how your group might take part in one or more of them. Notice which ones gather more interest, and explain to the group what they might do. Conclude this option by praying together as they begin this work of doing.
- 2. Bumper Stickers** This option focuses on encouraging others to do God's word. Help the group fill the newsprint sheet with ideas in each quadrant: *By myself*, *With family members*, *With my church school friends*, *With people in my church*. Provide 4 ¼" x 11" card stock pieces, pencils, and markers for the children, working in pairs or alone, to create bumper sticker slogans about doing God's word. Display the bumper stickers where others will see them.
- 3. Doer Game** For the game, spread out the game cards from Resource Sheet 2 upside down. The children, one at a time, select a card, turn it over, read the action described, and tell whether it is a way to follow the teaching from James. If it is not, invite the group to tell how to be a doer of God's word in that situation.
- 4. Mirror Actions** Some children more easily connect hearing and doing if they can act out being doers of God's word. Have the children stand in a line facing you. They are to "mirror" what you do. First explain that you will pantomime various ways of hearing God's word: praying, reading the Bible, singing hymns. Then invite volunteers to act out other ways. Next, explain that you will pantomime actions for doing God's word: shaking hands, waving, and smiling. Then invite children to act out other ways of doing God's word.

Younger children may need time to consider how to be doers of God's word. The doer game and mirror actions provide examples and time to think about them.

EASY
PREP

CLOSING

Gather at the worship table. Light the candle, if necessary. Sing or clap to the song "You Shall Love the Lord Your God" (Color Pack 32, [Singing the Feast](#)). Invite children to name ways to be doers of God's word.

Lead the prayer response:

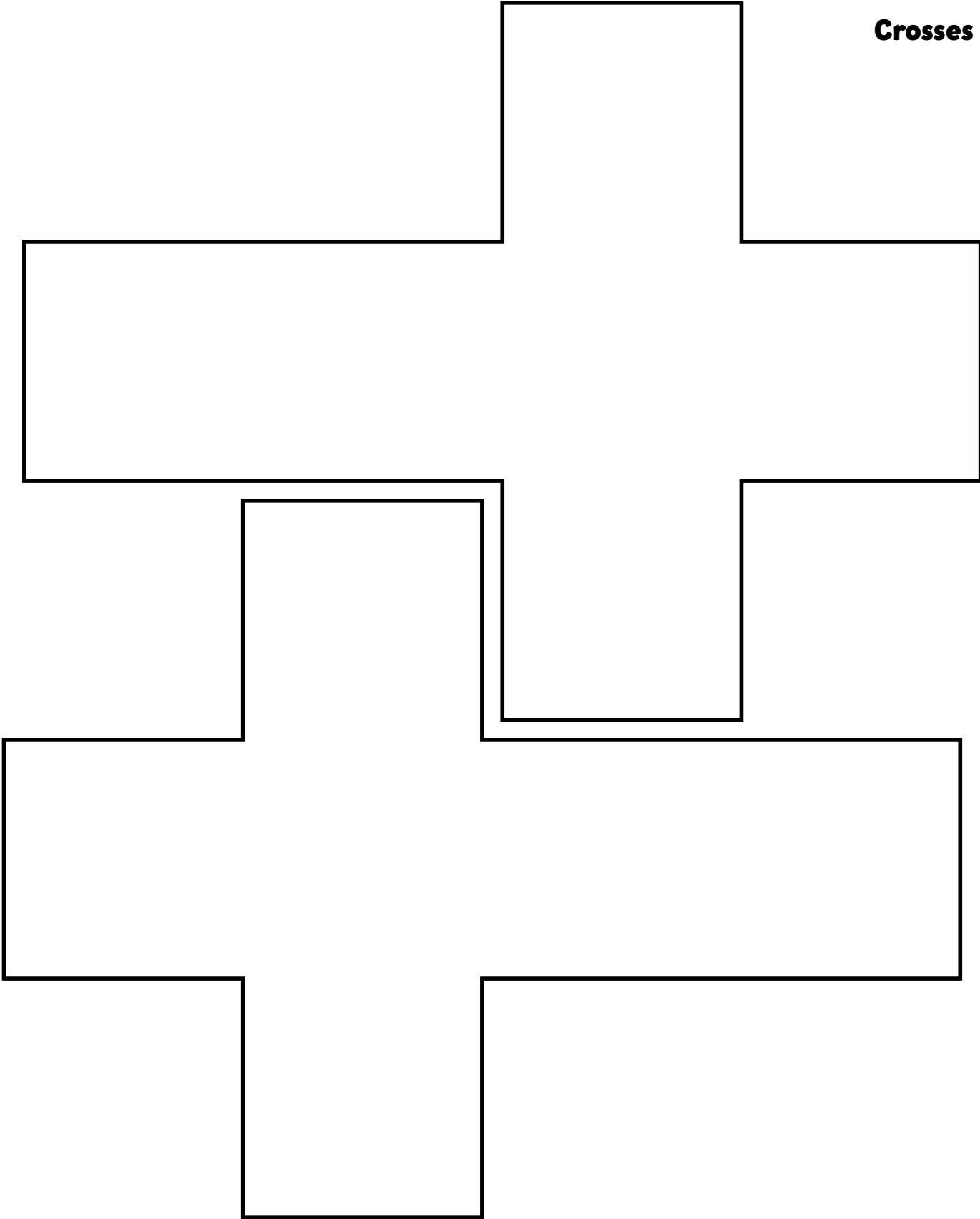
Teacher: God be with you.

All: And also with you.

Follow with this echo prayer: *Loving God, / be with us / during this week. / We want to be / doers of your word. / Amen.*

Say good-bye to each child and invite each one to return.

Crosses





Game Cards

<p>Colton saw a boy fall down at recess and ran to help him get up.</p>	<p>Nate asked the new boy to eat with him at lunch.</p>	<p>Bella gave one of her birthday presents to a homeless shelter for families.</p>
<p>Emma and Emily sold lemonade and used the money to buy food for the food pantry.</p>	<p>Tom saw his grandmother crying and went outside to play.</p>	<p>Molly told her friends to stop teasing a new girl.</p>
<p>Dylan's church school class voted to collect money to help flood victims. Dylan spent his money on a new computer game.</p>	<p>Ethan told his mom he would babysit. After a while, he left his little sister home alone.</p>	<p>Hannah's choir was singing at church on Sunday. Instead, she went swimming with friends that morning.</p>
<p>Sarah took a comic book from a store without paying for it.</p>	<p>Grace texted a mean message to one of her friends.</p>	<p>Jacob pushed his way to the front of the line so he could be first at the movies.</p>