

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

**Goal for  
 the Session**

*Youth will build on their reading of James 1 to live a faithful life that hears and does 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

In James 1:17–27, the instruction to act on our faith may be a frustrating theme for some youth, those who might see it simply as a command to “just behave.” As a response to this frustration, help the young people in your group focus on the practicality of what God is asking—what we value the most should rightly be what we give the most effort. As you lead this session, challenge yourself to be honest and transparent, so that the participants can learn from your example what it means to struggle to live a just and spiritual Christian life.

*God help me lead with integrity, seeking always to grow more deeply in faith and learn from your Word. Amen.*

**YOU WILL NEED**

- newsprint
- markers
- Bibles
- copies of Resource Sheet 1
- index cards
- pens

For Responding:

- option 1: copies of Resource Sheet 2, pens
- option 2: newsprint, markers

For Music Connection:

- recording of “Fight with Tools” by the Flobots and music player

## LEADING THE SESSION

### GATHERING

Form groups of two or three. Give each group a sheet of newsprint and a marker. Have groups draw the simple outline of a person, in the style of the figure in the sidebar. Then have groups add details and label them with attributes of a person who is living a faithful life. For example, a group might note that the person’s eyes are useful for reading the Bible or seeing someone in need of a friend, or a group might note that the person’s hands could be used for feeding those who are hungry.

When all are finished, give each group an opportunity to present its labeled person to the rest of the group. Explain that today’s focus scripture gives advice on how to live a faithful life.

Pray:

*God, speak to us today through the voices of one another and the words of Scripture so that we can claim a faith that reveals itself through our whole lives. Amen.*

### EXPLORING

Have participants find the book of James in their Bibles. Explain that this book is a letter. Have participants read James 1:1 to learn of the author and audience of the letter. Ask them to read aloud any study notes for this verse in their Bibles. Continue introducing the book of James using the following information:

- ✧ This letter is traditionally considered to be written by James, the brother of Jesus, or by a follower of James.
- ✧ Although there are various opinions about exactly to whom the letter was written, the writer represents Christian communities that were loyal to Jesus’ teachings and whose communal life focused on prayer and morality.

If you have fewer than six participants, have the entire group rewrite James 17:19–27 in their own words.

Ask a volunteer to read aloud James 1:17–18. Discuss:

- ✪ What can we learn about the nature of God from these verses?
- ✪ What does it mean to be given “birth by the word of truth” (v. 18)?
- ✪ Why were we given this birth?

Ask a volunteer to read aloud James 17:19–27. Form three groups, and give each group a sheet of newsprint and a marker. Assign each group one of the following sets of verses: James 17:19–21, James 17:22–25, or James 17:26–27. Have each group rewrite the assigned text in its own words. When all are finished, give each group an opportunity to read its rewritten version of the Scripture to the rest of the participants. Post the sheets of newsprint.

Form groups of two or three. Have each group create and present a short skit that depicts a community following the advice found in James 17:19–27. When all are finished, discuss the following questions:

- ✪ In what ways is it easy to live a lifestyle as depicted in the skits? In what ways is living in this way a challenge?
- ✪ What obstacles prevent followers of Jesus Christ from living in the way depicted in the skits?

Distribute copies of Resource Sheet 1 (Two Versions), and ask volunteers to read aloud the two versions of the passage found on the page. Explain that reading and comparing different translations of the Bible can offer insight into understanding Scripture passages. Discuss:

- ✪ What is wrong with only hearing God’s Word and not doing God’s Word?
- ✪ As followers of Jesus Christ, what is the writer of James challenging us to do?
- ✪ What would the world be like if everyone accepted James’s challenge?

EASY  
PREP

## RESPONDING

Choose one or more of the following learning activities:

- 1. Frames of Faith** Distribute copies of Resource Sheet 2 (Frames of Faith) and pens. Invite participants to follow the prompts on the page to find ways to apply the Scripture passages to their lives. When all are finished, give each participant an opportunity to read one of the steps he or she can take in the next week.
- 2. Brainstorming Partners** Form pairs of participants. Give each pair a sheet of newsprint and a marker. Then give each pair thirty seconds to write down as many ways as possible to put God’s Word into action in the coming week. After thirty seconds, have each participant find a new partner and spend thirty more seconds brainstorming. Continue this process as time allows. Post the sheets of newsprint and review the lists together. Have each participant select one thing from the lists that he or she can put into action in the coming week. Invite each participant to put her or his initials next to the selected action and say what the first step will be in putting the commitment into action.

3. **Mission Project** Have the group participate in a mission project for your church. Brainstorm a list of possible projects around your church building. For each possible project, ask: How would we be doing God's Word if we participated in this project? Have the participants vote on which project they would like to do, and then lead them in completing the project. Ask: How can you continue to put God's Word into action in the coming week?

## CLOSING

Distribute index cards and pens. Have participants write down a spiritual gift (such as patience, hope, trust, guidance, open heart or mind) that would be helpful as they continue to build their framework of faithful living. Collect the index cards. Pray this prayer, inserting the spiritual gifts listed on the index cards:

*God, as we continue to grow in faithful living, we know we don't strive alone. You are always working with us for justice and wholeness, helping us in so many ways. We ask now for . . . [spiritual gifts] . . . and trust in your grace to lead us always. Amen.*

Randomly give each participant one of the index cards and send the participants with this blessing:

*Go into God's world, striving to be a doer of the Word and seeking the spiritual gift that is on your card.*

## ■ ENHANCEMENT

### MUSIC CONNECTION

Listen together to "Fight with Tools" by the Flobots. Invite participants to think of this song as a response to the call to be "doers of the word." Explore the following questions:

- ✪ What themes did you hear from today's conversation? How did they sound in this different context?
- ✪ Near the end, the Flobots say they need your courage, dedication, passion, and conviction. What do these have to do with God's call to be "doers of the word"?

## Two Versions

### James 1:22–25 (Common English Bible)

<sup>22</sup>You must be doers of the word and not only hearers who mislead themselves. <sup>23</sup>Those who hear but don't do the word are like those who look at their faces in a mirror. <sup>24</sup>They look at themselves, walk away, and immediately forget what they were like. <sup>25</sup>But there are those who study the perfect law, the law of freedom, and continue to do it. They don't listen and then forget, but they put it into practice in their lives. They will be blessed in whatever they do.

Scripture taken from *Common English Bible*. Copyright © 2011 by Common English Bible.

### James 1:22–25 (*The Message*)

<sup>22–24</sup>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.

<sup>25</sup>But whoever catches a glimpse of the revealed counsel of God—the free life!—even out of the corner of his eye, and sticks with it, is no distracted scatterbrain but a man or woman of action. That person will find delight and affirmation in the action.

Scripture taken from *The Message*. Copyright © 1993, 1994, 1995, 1996, 2000, 2001, 2002. Used by permission of NavPress Publishing Group.



### Frames of Faith

“Our actions establish the structures of meaning that build our worlds. . . . Actions add value to our words and give them life.”

—From “So What?” excerpt

**1. Laying the Foundation** *What are the words we claim?*  
 Select two Scripture passages from this list:  
 Micah 6:8, Acts 2:44–47,  
 Matthew 22:37–40,  
 Galatians 6:2

Read your selected passages.  
 In the space below, write key words from the texts that jump out at you:

**2. Giving it Structure** *What does this look like in real life? List three ways in which your selected verses can be applied to your life.*

1. \_\_\_\_\_
2. \_\_\_\_\_
3. \_\_\_\_\_

**3. Making it Real** *What are the first steps or habits to start doing these things?*  
 Select one of the ways from the list above. List three steps you can take in the next week to begin applying this to your life.

1. \_\_\_\_\_
2. \_\_\_\_\_
3. \_\_\_\_\_