

Live Love

What do we believe about God, and how do we act on it? The readings for this week challenge us to find connections between what we believe and say about God and the actions we take each day. God acts in our lives with generosity and love.

Focus Scripture: James 1:17–27

The book of James is a bit of an outlier in the New Testament, as it is commonly considered part of the Bible's Wisdom literature. It is attributed to James, the brother of Jesus, who is portrayed in the gospels as not believing in Jesus and his mission when Jesus was alive. Having experienced the resurrected Christ, he became a prominent leader of the church in Jerusalem.

Some consider this letter to be the earliest Christian writing, apart from Galatians. It was written at a time when the new church was undergoing persecution and was penned for "the twelve tribes in the dispersion" (James 1:1), Jewish Christians living outside of Jerusalem. There is an in-built understanding that the recipients of the letter know Jewish traditions and teaching. God is given the title "the God of lights." In this, we hear the echo of the creation story in which God creates light. James calls the recipients of the letter "the first fruits of his creatures." In Jewish tradition, the first fruits of any harvest were significant. The Israelites were required to bring these as an offering to God. It seems James conveys to his readers their significance and participants in God's great harvest.

It exhorts the importance of listening over speaking, patience over anger, meekness over brashness, and action over inaction. James leaves no doubt about what true faith looks like – care for the vulnerable (widows and orphans) and ethical living that is un beholden to the status quo but based on the goodness of God.

When lovers respond to one another in **Song of Solomon 2:8–13**, they act on their words. The Song of Solomon is a book of poetry celebrating love. The world in which we live is as bountiful and full of love as this scene, thanks to God, the giver of every perfect fit. We are called to respond in faithful living, confident that this is most certainly true.

Psalm 45:1–2, 6–9 describes God as generous and loving. The psalmist applauds how the ruler's relationship with God shapes how this earthly leader lives and governs. As the ruler responds in faithfulness, the entire nation is blessed.

In **Mark 7:1–8, 14–15, 21–23**, we find an appeal similar to that in James, as to how to live our faith. In a dispute between Jesus and some religious leaders who are fretting about lack of ritual observances, Jesus points to matters of the heart that spill out into acts as redefining covenant.

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As God's beloved, we are called to focus our attention on God as the giver of good gifts and to make these gifts and God's goodness known to all people throughout all the earth, particularly among the poor and vulnerable toward whom God has always had a particular interest and passion. If the church's light is truly to shine, it means standing alongside the vulnerable and being doers and not just listeners. How are we doing?



Focus scripture
James 1:17–27

Additional scriptures
Song of Solomon
2:8–13 22–30
Psalm 45:1–2, 6–9
Mark 7:1–8, 14–15,
21–23



Seasons of the Spirit
is based on semi-
continuous readings of the *Revised*
Common Lectionary.

**Holy One, may the
light of your love
shine in me that I
might be a lamp
of compassion,
illuminating the
way of justice and
peace. Amen.**

Lection Connection
links current events
with this week's
scriptures. Go to www.seasonsonline.ca and
click on the link.

The Focus for Ages 5–12

Children find their role models and heroes in people of all ages. The adults around them inspire them and they are challenged by the stories of children who are doers of God's word. Such stories appear periodically in the news. They may have heard about the boy who was appalled when watching the local news and seeing people sleeping on the streets in a city where the temperatures dip dangerously low in January. Or perhaps they know the story of a girl who chose to give presents to children with no toys instead of receiving presents for her birthday. They may even be a church school

group that makes sandwiches for a kitchen that feeds hungry families. Children need to hear about these doers of the word and be presented with situations where they can be doers too.

Two paraphrases of James 1:17–27 are available for the children in this session. The combination of ages in your group will determine whether or not you want to provide copies of both in the Respond zones.

Pray that the children in your group are well on their way to being students as well as doers of God's word.

Prepare

Before the session

- ❑ Read and prayerfully reflect on this week's focus scripture, James 1:17–27, and [biblical background](#) material (p. 107).
- ❑ Prepare worship table with green cloth, Christ candle, matches, and Bible. Place bookmark at James in the Bible.
- ❑ Bring offering basket, [basic supply kit](#) (p. 2), matches, candle snuffer, and, if possible, *Seasons Songbook* (Volume 7), *Seasons Music CD* (Volume 7), and CD or MP3 player; downloadable sheet music and MP3 recordings are available at www.seasonsonline.ca.

Gather

- ❑ Bring recording of song "May You Find Peace," (#19 on *Seasons Music CD* and available for purchase as a downloadable MP3 from the Seasons website).
- ❑ Bring papers with question marks.

Engage

- ❑ Prepare to tell story on today's resource sheet "[Be Doers.](#)" Glue letter portion of resource sheet to long sheet of paper to make scroll.
- ❑ For song group, bring song "Circle Song" (p. 10 in *Seasons Songbook*, Vol. 7; #11 on *Seasons Music CD*, Vol. 7).

- ❑ For Bible words group, bring copies of today's resource sheet "[Be Doers of the Word](#)" and directions.

Respond

Choose one or more of the following activities and bring materials to set up the chosen zones.

- ❑ **Art zone:** card stock or file folders, today's resource sheet "[Be Doers of the Word](#)," hole punch, and yarn
- ❑ **Community zone:** Cut hearts from coloured paper, using [resource sheet](#) (p. 121).
- ❑ **Music zone:** songs "Friend to Friend," "God's Family," and "May You Find Peace" (pp. 16, 18, and 26, in *Seasons Songbook*, Vol. 7; Music Section; #28, #12, and #19 on *Seasons Music CD*, Vol. 7)
- ❑ **Outreach zone:** today's resource sheet "[How Do We Fix This?](#)"



Live Love

Scripture

James 1:17–21

FOCUS To respond to God’s love as doers of the word

Gather

Welcome Greet the children as they arrive and welcome any visitors.

Call to gather Ring the bell or “singing bowl” as a signal to gather in the worship space. Invite a child to light the candle.

Sing, if possible, the song, “May You Find Peace” (p. 26 in the *Seasons Songbook*, Vol. 7; #19 on the *Seasons Music CD*, Vol. 7).

Pray the following prayer (or one of your own), inviting group members to repeat each line after you:

God of all creation, we bring our gifts, our question marks, and ourselves to you. Amen.

Receive the offering. Extinguish the candle to signal that the opening ritual has ended.

Connect with the focus

Doing and caring Invite the children to hold out their arms in front of them. Ask them to briefly notice their own hands and the hands of the others in the group and to think about how our hands can be used to help others. Once they’ve lowered their arms again, invite them to recall times when they were helped or cared for by someone else. After a moment, invite volunteers to tell memories. Then invite them to recall times when they have provided help or care for someone else. After they have told about these memories, explain that today’s Bible story is about the way we are to study God’s word and act on it by caring for others.

Engage

Preparing for the Story

Another letter Invite a child to get the Bible from the worship table and open it to the bookmark at James. Point out that the name of this book is “The Letter of James.” Recall with the group that they have heard letter to the church in Ephesus during the past several weeks. This is a letter from someone named James to Christians in many places. Remind the group that the letters were written after Jesus had lived and died, to help Jesus’ followers continue to be faithful to Jesus’ teachings.

The Bible story

Bring out the scroll with the focus passage on it. Tell the story on today’s resource sheet “[Be Doers](#),” which includes a paraphrase of **James 1:17–27**. You may wish to embellish the way the people gathered by naming people who arrived. Have a child open the scroll and read the paraphrase of the letter from it.

After the story, ask:

- **What do you think the people might be saying about the letter?**

Explore the story further

(To enable the children to explore the scripture reading further, according to their own interests and abilities, explain the two options and have each child select one.)

Song and story group This group will gather as the people in Sarah’s home to hear the letter again. Have the children stand in a group to one side. Call the children individually to move to the area designated at the house. Then sing the song “Circle Song” (p. 10 in *Seasons Songbook*, Vol. 7; #11 on *Seasons Music CD*, Vol. 7). When everyone is seated, read the letter on the scroll. After each paragraph, ask:

- **What are we to do?**

Bible words group This group will work with a paraphrase of **James 1:17–27** that is more sophis-

ticated than the one in the story. Provide copies of today's resource sheet "Be Doers of the Word," pencils, and these directions (right).

The Bible story and us

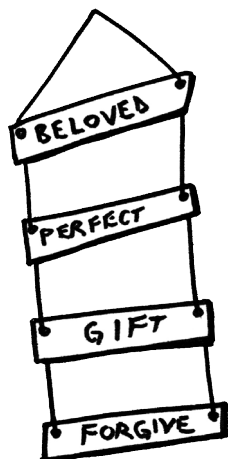
Play "*Somlandela/We Will Follow*" (p. 34 in *Seasons Songbook*; also #22 on *Seasons Music CD*) as the signal to gather together. Invite the Bible words group to teach the words and motions to everyone.

- 1 Take a copy of "Be Doers of the Word" and a pencil.
- 2 Read James 1:17-27 at the top of the page.
- 3 Work the puzzle at the bottom of the page.
- 4 Now look at the key words and phrases in the box in the middle of the page. Practice the motions so you can teach the words and motions to the other group.

Respond

Invite the children to select a zone and work with the materials there.

❑ **Art zone: Ladder banner** The banner will be a reminder of the teachings of James for the children. Cut strips of card stock or file folders approximately 3 x 12 cm/1½ x 4½ in. Begin with the words in the box on today's resource sheet "Be Doers of the Word." The children can select other words or phrases from the paraphrase on that page as well. Print one phrase or word on each strip and decorate it with stickers or drawings. Punch holes in the corners of each strip. Tie them together with loops of yarn so it hangs like a ladder. Tie a longer piece of yarn at the top for a hanger.



- ❑ **Community zone: Rules for doing** James's advice for the churches offers good guidelines for the church school group too. Provide copies of the paraphrase on today's resource sheet "Be Doers of the Word," paper hearts (see Prepare), and coloured markers for this zone. Read the paraphrase as the children who are able follow along. Talk about what parts of it would be good for the church school group to follow. Give each child a paper heart on which to write something from James for the group to practice. Tape the hearts around the learning space as reminders.
- ❑ **Music zone: Song of caring and doing** The children are familiar with the song "Friend to Friend" (#28 on *Seasons Music CD*, Vol. 7). Sing it together. Then look at the lyrics together to see how they give examples of James's teachings. Also sing "God's Family" and "May You Find Peace" (#12 and #19 on *Seasons Music CD*, Vol. 7, or you can purchase *downloadable sheet music* and *MP3 recordings* from the *Seasons* website).
- ❑ **Outreach zone: Story about doing** Children are often inspired by the stories of other children. Read the story on today's resource sheet "How Do We Fix This?" to the children in this zone. Talk about it, using the questions on the resource sheet. Brainstorm some possible responses to the final question. Then distribute copies of the resource sheet for the children to draw their responses.

Bless

Gather Play “Somlandela/We Will Follow” (p. 34 in *Seasons Songbook*; #22 on *Seasons Music CD*) as the signal to gather in the worship space and relight the candle.

Review the story by inviting the children from the Bible words group to lead everyone in the words and motions on today’s resource sheet “[Be Doers of God’s Word](#).”

Pray

Dear God,
with your love we are strong.
We are ready to share your love
wherever we go. Amen.

Sing, if possible, the song “Friend to Friend” (p. 16 in *Seasons Songbook*; #28 on *Seasons Music CD*).

Blessing Send the children out with these words, “(Child’s name), be a doer of God’s word this week.”

Reflect

What ideas did the children express about being doers of God’s word during this session? If you will not be the leader for the next season, pass their ideas on to the next leader.

What activities, conversations, or stories stand out in this first half of the Season after Pentecost for you?

Thank you for your ministry with young children. In what ways have you supported and strengthened one another in this season? Please take time to fill out the evaluation form at the end of this resource (also available in the Library on the *Seasons* website).



Be Doers

based on James 1:17-27

Having the paraphrase of James on a scroll makes it easier for the storyteller and reinforces the idea of a letter to the listeners.

Nearly everyone was there. Sarah waited each week for this day when the people who believed in Jesus gathered to worship, recall the teachings of Jesus, and sometimes, like this day, to hear a letter from a church leader. Families brought food to share. When everyone was present, they sat down, gave thanks to God, and enjoyed the meal together.

After the meal, they sang some hymns, praising God. Then Sarah's father announced that a letter had arrived from James.

(Invite a child to open the scroll.)

He read from the letter:

"To faithful followers of Jesus in all parts of the world: Greetings.

Every generous gift is from God, beginning with the light of God.

Remember this, my good friends, be ready to listen before you speak. Pay attention before you speak in anger. Anger is not becoming to God's children. Instead, study God's word and be renewed in it.

Above all, be doers of God's word. Don't just study it. If you only listen to God's word, you are like people who look in a mirror and then forget what they see when they turn away. But those who look in God's word in order to act on it will be blessed in their actions.

If you listen to God's word carefully, you will be ready to care for anyone who is in need. You will not be touched by the bad things in the world."

(Roll up the scroll.)

Everyone sat quietly for a moment. Then they began to talk to one another about being doers of God's word, not hearers only. Sarah listened eagerly to the people around her. She was always proud when her father read a letter, but she learned more when the people began to talk about the letter.



BE DOERS OF THE WORD

James 1:17-27: a paraphrase

Every generous act, every good and perfect gift, comes from God, creator of lights.

God gives us the truth.

Beloved friends, you must understand this then. Be quick to listen, but be slow to speak. Be slow to anger and quick to forgive.

Get rid of all that is not from God. Welcome God's words of love.

But be doers of God's word, not just hearers of it. If you only listen to God's word, you will be like someone

who looks in a mirror and then forgets what was seen there.

No, be doers of God's word, not just hearers of it. You will be blessed in what you do.

And this is what you are to do:

Care for those in need.

This is what is faithful to God.

PUT IT INTO MOTION *Let's break it down and put it in motion!*

Beloved	<i>shake hands</i>
Every perfect gift comes from God	<i>put hands out to receive</i>
Welcome God's words of love	<i>cross arms across chest to bring word to you</i>
Be doers	<i>right arm out to share, left arm out to share</i>
Not just hearers	<i>arms around each other's shoulders</i>

Puzzles

Decipher this word puzzle to discover the heart of the message from James:

Unscramble the letters below to discover important words that describes things Jesus was doing as he lived out faith in God. Circle one or two of the words you unscramble that say something about what you want to do with your faith.

oevL _____

aPcee _____

poHe _____

yoJ _____

glainHe _____

hSnagri _____

naeTcigh _____



itsegLnni _____

btnCeeralig _____

edFeign _____

rednsiFpih _____



“HOW DO WE FIX THIS?”

ANYTOWN, CAN – After an earthquake in another country caused mud slides and mass evacuations, Rachel, 9, and her brother Asif, 11, saw hundreds of homeless people on TV.

“How do people fix those houses?” Rachel worriedly asked her mother. They can’t, she replied – the damage is done and everyone will have to start over.

That’s when Rachel said she’d give them her sleeping bag that she took camping, and the money she was expecting from her grandfather for her upcoming tenth birthday.

Rachel’s brother wanted to help, too. Asif wanted to send the

money he’d earned delivering newspapers in their community.

When Rachel’s friends and Asif’s customers heard about their plans, they wanted to help. People of all ages began to drop off money for Rachel and Asif to send through their church’s relief fund.

Some people brought just a few coins, and some people brought larger sums. Several people brought sleeping bags.

“It was such a great thing to see,” said their mother, Sheyla. “I didn’t think there was much we could do from this far away to help people start over.”

But Rachel knew differently.

“When I was praying at

bedtime, I got a feeling that we could help people somehow,” she said.

Asif is proud of what their community has been able to do to help others far away.

“They’re just like us,” Asif said. “I saw children and adults and even old people on the news. Where were they going to sleep without any houses?”

Asif and Rachel’s church will send the sleeping bags and money to those who were left homeless by the earthquake through the church’s Disaster Relief Agency.

- What was Rachel’s concern?
- What did she do?
- What clues in the story tell you something about why she did it?
- What do you notice in the story about the connection between Rachel’s faith and her actions?

What does Rachel’s story inspire you to do in your community to make a positive difference in the lives of others? Write or draw one idea or a project that you’d like to do.

Heart templates

