

Use Week of: April 25, 2021

Unit 29 • Session 4

Doers of the Word

BIBLE PASSAGE:

James 1–2

STORY POINT:

James said that faith without works is useless.

KEY PASSAGE:

Romans 12:5

BIG PICTURE QUESTION:

What is the church? The church is all Christians everywhere, who gather together in their communities to worship and serve God.



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LEADER Bible Study

The early church was made up mostly of Jewish believers who had grown up believing they needed to fully obey God to be accepted. Grace was a new concept for them, and many struggled with understanding how grace and obedience fit together. Some made the mistake of thinking that once they had acceptance in Jesus, obedience didn't matter after all.

This greatly concerned James—Jesus' half-brother and a leader in the church at Jerusalem— so he wrote a letter to the Jewish Christians scattered throughout the Roman Empire. James wanted these Christians to understand that grace and obedience do not work against each other; they work with each other.

James wrote, “Be doers of the word. If you hear the word but don't do it, you fool yourselves. Anyone who is a hearer but not a doer is like someone who looks at himself in a mirror, goes away and forgets right away what he looked like.”

James wanted Christians to realize that true faith in Jesus—a faith that comes by grace—will always lead to action. True faith is an active faith.

James gave an example: When we look into a mirror and see something is not right—our hair is out of place or food is stuck in our teeth—we don't just walk away; we fix it. The gospel is like that mirror. It shows us what is true about ourselves, and when we see we are not living out our true identity, we should want to address it.

Help kids understand that true faith in Jesus always leads to living differently. When we trust in Jesus, God changes our hearts so that we will want to live a life pleasing to Him. We aren't accepted by God because of our obedience; we obey God out of gratitude because we are accepted by Him through Jesus.

The BIBLE Story

Doers of the Word

James 1–2

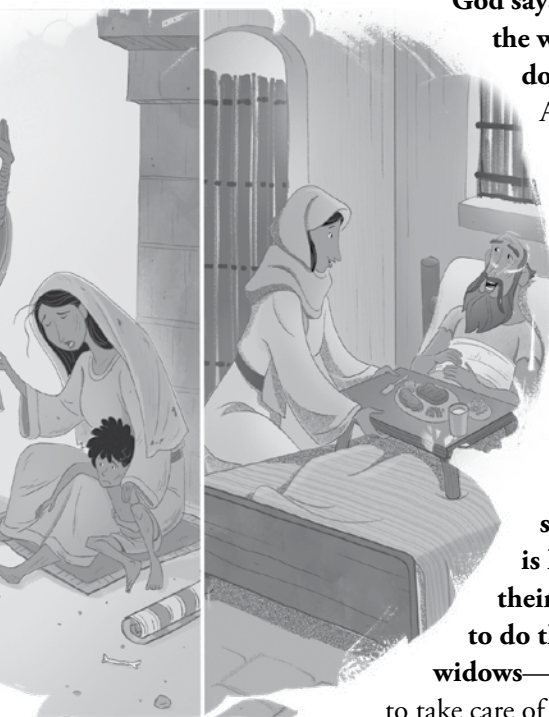
James was a leader in the Jerusalem church. He **wrote a letter to the Jewish believers** who had moved to many different places. **He told them the way believers should live.**

James explained that talking about God and the church is not enough. We have to do what God says. James wrote, “Be doers of the word. If you hear the word but don’t do it, you fool yourselves.

Anyone who is a hearer but not a doer is like someone who looks at himself in a mirror, goes away, and forgets right away what he looked like.” **God’s Word shows us the truth about ourselves. Anyone who hears and does the Word will be blessed.**

James explained that **people who really love God will show care to people too. God is honored when believers show their faith with actions. One way to do this is by helping orphans and widows—people who are who have no one to take care of them.**

We show love in what we say and do. James also wrote, “What good is it if someone says he has faith but does not do what is good and right? If someone is cold and hungry and you say to him, ‘Go in peace, stay warm, and be well fed,’ but you don’t give



him clothes or food, what good is it?” James said that in the same way, faith without works is useless.

Anyone can say that he has faith, but true faith is proven by good works. James reminded the believers that Abraham showed his faith when he obeyed God and got ready to sacrifice his son Isaac. Rahab showed her faith by risking her life to hide the spies in Jericho.

God does not accept people because they do what is good and right; He accepts people who have true faith in Jesus. We can see that true faith when someone does what is good and right. Faith comes first, and then doing what is good and right comes next.

Christ Connection: Jesus said, “If anyone loves me, he will keep my word” (John 14:23). James reminded believers to be doers of the word. Jesus rescues us from sin and frees us to live a life that honors God. By doing what is good and right, people who trust Jesus can show that they really believe in Him.

Bible Storytelling Tips

- **Use props:** Bring props to help you tell the story. Reveal a mirror, play food, and warm clothing as you get to the pertinent parts of the story.
- **Go vertical:** Use a step ladder to add vertical movement to your storytelling technique. Stand higher on the ladder when discussing obedience to God, and stand lower when talking about those who say they have faith but do not bear fruit.

INTRODUCE the Story



SESSION TITLE: Doers of the Word

BIBLE PASSAGE: James 1–2

STORY POINT: James said that faith without works is useless.

KEY PASSAGE: Romans 12:5

BIG PICTURE QUESTION: What is the church? The church is all Christians everywhere, who gather together in their communities to worship and serve God.

Welcome time

Greet each kid as he or she arrives. Use this time to collect the offering, fill out attendance sheets, and help new kids connect to your group. Prompt kids to discuss the rules they have at their schools or in their homes. Is it important just to know the rules, or is it important to follow them as well?

SAY • Your teachers and parents give you rules for good reasons, to keep you safe and help you learn. To honor your teachers and parents, and to get the benefit of the rules, you need to do more than just know what the rules are. You need to follow them! God gives us rules for good reasons, too, and it's important to know them and follow them!

Session starter (10 minutes)

OPTION 1: Ships and sailors

Instruct kids that they will play a game where they have to listen carefully for directions in order to know what to do. Instruct them to run to one side of the room when the leader says “ships,” and to the other side when the leader says “sailors.” When the leader says “captain’s coming,” kids will stand at attention and salute. When the leader says “three sailors rowing,” three kids get in a line and pretend to row. Any child that takes too long to follow the command or cannot find the right number of partners is asked to sit out until the next round of play.

SAY • You had to listen carefully to know what to do and do it quickly to avoid being “out.” It was important to both hear my words and do them. In today’s Bible story, we’ll hear about how important it is to both hear and do the Word of the Lord.

OPTION 2: Chopstick relay

Instruct kids to get into two lines. Each team should have a pair of chopsticks and a bowl of pom-poms. Place two empty bowls at the other end of the room. Show kids how to hold chopsticks and pick up the pom-poms. Kids will compete to move the pom-poms from one bowl to the other using only the chopsticks. If kids drop a pom-pom, they can pick it up with chopsticks and keep going. The first team to get all pom-poms to the other bowl wins.

SAY • It was important to use both chopsticks to pick up the pom-poms. Today, we will learn that two things are needed to follow Jesus: both faith and works!

LOW PREP

Tip: You can search online for additional commands and actions to go with them.

- chopsticks, 2 pairs
- bowls, 4
- pom-poms

Transition to teach the story

The Gospel: God's Plan for Me

Ask kids if they have ever heard the word *gospel*. Clarify that the word *gospel* means “good news.” It is the message about Christ, the kingdom of God, and salvation. Use the following guide to share the gospel with kids.



God rules. Explain to kids that the Bible tells us God created everything, and He is in charge of everything. Invite a volunteer to read Genesis 1:1 from the Bible. Read Revelation 4:11 or Colossians 1:16-17 aloud and explain what these verses mean.



We sinned. Tell kids that since the time of Adam and Eve, everyone has chosen to disobey God. (Romans 3:23) The Bible calls this sin. Because God is holy, God cannot be around sin. Sin separates us from God and deserves God's punishment of death. (Romans 6:23)



God provided. Choose a child to read John 3:16 aloud. Say that God sent His Son, Jesus, the perfect solution to our sin problem, to rescue us from the punishment we deserve. It's something we, as sinners, could never earn on our own. Jesus alone saves us. Read and explain Ephesians 2:8-9.



Jesus gives. Share with kids that Jesus lived a perfect life, died on the cross for our sins, and rose again. Because Jesus gave up His life for us, we can be welcomed into God's family for eternity. This is the best gift ever! Read Romans 5:8; 2 Corinthians 5:21; or 1 Peter 3:18.



We respond. Tell kids that they can respond to Jesus. Read Romans 10:9-10,13. Review these aspects of our response: Believe in your heart that Jesus alone saves you through what He's already done on the cross. Repent, turning from self and sin to Jesus. Tell God and others that your faith is in Jesus.

Offer to talk with any child who is interested in responding to Jesus. Provide *I'm a Christian Now!* for new Christians to take home and complete with their families.

APPLY the Story



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BIG PICTURE QUESTION: What is the church? The church is all Christians everywhere, who gather together in their communities to worship and serve God.

Key passage activity (5 minutes)

- Key Passage Poster
- index cards
- pens
- stopwatch (optional)

Prior to the session, write two to three words from the key passage on index cards. Give one card to each child, and then instruct the children to race to get in the right order. Mix up the cards again and see if kids can beat their time. Continue to practice the key passage in this way as long as kids are interested.

SAY • Paul wrote this key passage in his letter to the believers in Rome. Paul hadn't met them, but he wanted to be sure they knew the gospel and were united by God's grace.

Today, God's grace still unites believers. Everyone who is a Christian is a part of the global church, and we meet together in our communities to form local churches. When we love God, we obey His Word by serving and worshipping together.

- Bibles, 1 per kid
- Story Point Poster
- Small Group Timeline and Map Set (005802970, optional)

Discussion & Bible skills (10 minutes)

Distribute a Bible to each kid. Help them find James 1–2. Remind them that James is in the General Letters division of the New Testament, after Hebrews and before 1 Peter. James, Jesus' half-brother, wrote this book.

Ask the following questions. Lead the group to discuss:

1. James says that a person who hears the Word of God but does not do what it says is like who? (*A person who sees himself in a mirror and then immediately forgets what he looks like, James 1:23-24*)
2. What two groups of people did James specifically mention helping? (*widows and orphans, James 1:27*)
3. What does James say a person can show their faith by? (*the works they do to obey God, James 2:18*)
4. If you take care of people in need and show kindness to others, but do not trust Jesus, are you saved? *Remind kids that faith is necessary to salvation. We cannot earn salvation by good works.*
5. Why is faith without works useless? *Guide kids to understand that a person who claims faith but shows no outward signs of loving and obeying God's Word probably does not have true faith. Explain that saving faith is marked by the Holy Spirit's presence in a person's life. He transforms people to live more and more like Jesus; a person who isn't being transformed likely doesn't have the Holy Spirit in his life.*
6. What are some ways we can do good works through faith? *Help kids brainstorm practical ways they can live on mission, such as sharing their lunch with a friend, showing kindness to someone they don't normally get along with, and telling their friends about Jesus.*

SAY • James' letter was written mostly to Jewish believers. He wanted them to be prepared for hard times, and he wanted them to honor God with their actions, not just their words. **James said faith without works is useless.** We know that the Holy Spirit helps us do good works for God's glory.

Option: Retell or review the Bible story using the bolded text of the Bible story script.

- “Who to Tell” printable
- dry erase board or chalkboard
- dry erase marker or chalk
- tape

Tip: Use this activity option to reinforce the missions moment found in Teach the Story.

Activity choice (10 minutes)



OPTION 1: Tell the world

Print and cut apart the “Who to Tell” printable. Mix up the cards and distribute them face down among the kids. On a dry erase board or chalkboard, make three columns, labeled *Family*, *Friends*, and *Strangers*. Invite the kids to reveal their cards and help them determine which group each card fits into. Allow the kids to tape their cards in place.

SAY • People took the time to tell James, the Lost Boy, about Jesus. Church planters like Philip and Jummai Nache are telling Africans that move to the U.S. about Jesus. Who will you tell about Jesus?

When we obey Jesus’ command to tell others about Him, we show others how important Jesus is to us. **James said faith without works is useless.** When we have faith, the Holy Spirit helps us do the good things God has prepared for us.

OPTION 2: Faith and works paper planes

Instruct kids to create paper airplanes, and write the word *FAITH* on one wing, and *WORKS* on the other. Help kids who may still be learning to write. Invite kids to line up and see whose airplane will fly the farthest. Then, instruct kids to cut off one wing of the airplane, whichever wing they choose. Then invite the kids to compete again.

SAY • These airplanes sure flew a lot farther with both wings, didn’t they? Airplanes need both wings to fly. In the same way, faith and works go together when we trust Jesus. You can’t have an airplane without two wings, and you can’t have true faith without also obeying God and having good works.

LOW PREP

- paper
- pencils
- scissors

Good works cannot save us, but **James said faith without works is useless.**

Reflection and prayer (5 minutes)

Distribute a sheet of paper to each child. Ask the kids to write about or draw a picture to answer the following questions:

- What does this story teach me about God or about the gospel?
- What does this story teach me about myself?
- Whom can I tell about this story?

Make sure to send the sheets home with kids alongside the activity page so that parents can see what their kids have been learning.

If time remains, take prayer requests or allow kids to complete the Bible story coloring page provided with this session. Pray for your group.

- pencils and crayons
- paper
- Bible Story Coloring Page, 1 per kid

Tip: Give parents this week's Big Picture Cards for Families to allow families to interact with the biblical content at home.