

Worship Material
Actions speaks louder than words
Material from Roots Bible Study
Sunday 1st September

Begin with opening prayer

As we gather, may what we read
be treasured in our hearts
and inspire us to share God's Word
in our lives, so that we may turn
the written word into action in the world.

Amen.

Read James 1.17-27

Bible notes

James, the brother of Jesus, is the leader of the early Christian Church. As a disciple and sibling, he understood God's heart and purpose. As God's servant (v.1), his counsel is priceless and worthy of heeding.

God is the source of every gift, which is perfect, exactly what is needed and dispensed from heaven. These gifts are not the result of human generosity, personal talent, hard work or good fortune, but are blessings from God.

Furthermore, God has given us the greatest gift: Jesus, the word of truth. James' readers understood that the 'first fruits' conveys a special status of being set aside as belonging to God (v.18). The invaluable gift is for God's exclusive purpose, and recipients' actions will speak more powerfully and louder than their words. The habits and behaviours James describes are not a figment of his imagination but those inherent in the cultures these Christians inhabited.

The newfound status of these believers might invite hostility and pressure. It might also lead to arrogance, entitlement and superiority. However, the 'first fruit' should produce God's righteousness (v.19) and, with humility, embrace God's embedded (implanted) Word (v.21). While the implanted Word saves the soul, James' central theme (v.23ff) focuses on the proclaimed word, which is not personal or private but communal and public. The impact is devastating when God's Word is maligned, ignored or forgotten, as is the frustration of God's purpose. There is a blessing in persevering – pushing through against the odds – being doers of the Word (vv.22-25), controlling our tongues, looking after the vulnerable and not being tarnished by prevailing cultures.

Prayer

Generous God, we thank you for the blessings you shower upon us each day.
We thank you, O God, with all that we are and all that we have.
We offer ourselves to you as living sacrifices of praise and thanksgiving.
We pray in the name of Jesus Christ, our Lord and Saviour.

Amen.

A prayer to conclude

Go! The study has ended,
but our service in the world begins.
May God strengthen and encourage us
as we go, to live lives of gratitude,
spilling over into loving responses
of joyful caring.

Amen.