

引言 INTRODUCTION

Our actions correspond to our beliefs. We do things that we believe to be right. Therefore, it may lead to an unexpected result if we go the wrong way. A man from New York booked a cruise trip for Australia. He would board a ship there and visit some exotic places. He very much looked forward to a dream vacation. The next step was to look for a flight ticket to get there. He found a deal of a lifetime. He thought he was flying to Sydney. He was surprised to see an area covered in snow when the plane was about to land. He realized what went wrong. He arrived in Sidney, Montana, a town that only has several thousand people, not Sydney, Australia. What a silly mistake he had made! Wrong information will result in wrong outcomes. Christians believe that the Bible is true because it comes from the God of truth. The book contains all the knowledge we need to live a godly life. The question for Christians is: are our actions consistent with our beliefs? In other words, does our conduct reflect our faith? That is a recurring theme James emphasizes in this book. He focuses on words in our passage today. He tells us that the words we say and receive will affect the works we do.

解釋 EXPLANATION

1. 虛心聆聽 Be Receptive and Heed (v. 19-21)

First, James encourages us to be good listeners. We should be receptive and take heed when others talk. How does that relate to the previous context about temptation? Enticement comes from the signals we receive. Two major sources are the things we see and hear. James focuses on the latter origin. Last week, we mentioned about the temptations Eve and Jesus faced. Satan tried to persuade both of them by telling lies. Eve fell but Jesus stood strong. The things we hear will gradually shape our values. Then we will act accordingly. That is why we need to listen with wisdom. In verse 19, the author reminds us that we should “**be quick to hear, slow to speak, slow to anger.**” How often do we do the reverse? We quit hearing, cannot wait to speak and get mad quickly. We all know the saying that God gives us two ears and one mouth because He wants us to hear more and speak less. By quick to hear, it means we must be eager to listen and focus when others talk. Communication is effective when the listener gets the right message the speaker wants to convey. I learn some good lessons on listening after making a ton of mistakes. Recently, someone commented that I have a good memory. I can recall some background information of newcomers. My memory is actually quite bad. Therefore, I must pay full attention when people introduce themselves. Later on I will also jot down key information on the newcomer forms they filled out. Once in a while, I will review those forms. That is how I remember people’s names, their jobs, hometowns, their kids’ names and even their pets’ name. However, if I am thinking about something else or distracted by somebody, then more than likely I will not capture much information. I teach my sons to listen with their eyes. Making eye-contact will help them stay focused. We cannot wait to interrupt and respond if our only goal is to share our personal

opinions. Perhaps we want to show that we know something about the topic. Worse still, we want to prove that we are right and the other party is wrong. When one or both sides do not keep emotion in-check, it will lead to anger. Uncontrollable anger is a precursor for conflicts and even sins. The outcome can be destructive. That is why James says in verse 20 that “**the anger of man does not produce the righteousness of God.**” Anger will not lead to a mutually-edifying result. On the contrary, it will easily escalate the tension. People will raise their voices, argue and harbor resentment when they cannot come to an agreement. Remember the first murder case in the human history? In Genesis 4, Cain killed his own brother Abel because God found favor in Abel’s offering but not his. Jealousy thus turned into hatred, and henceforth it ended in a bloodshed. Negative feelings led to a tragic result. Everything goes back to our hearts. Therefore, James urges us to clear up the junk inside. He tells us in verse 21: **Therefore put away all filthiness and rampant wickedness and receive with meekness the implanted word, which is able to save your souls.** We need to ask God to do a deep-clean in our hearts, so as to free up space to store His Word. Only the truth can change us. Then we will speak things that edify others and glorify God. We need to examine our intent before we talk. Do we love to brag about ourselves? Does our tone express grace and kindness? Is the content based on facts and not speculations? The listeners have to check their intent too. Do we accept the information as it is or do we try to guess between the lines? Are we interested in passing gossips or do we truly care about the people in question? Do we only welcome flattery but get mad at friendly criticism? May the Lord help us to be thoughtful talkers and faithful listeners.

2. 留心回應 Be Responsive with Deeds (v. 22-25)

James says we need to be receptive and heed truthful words. Of all the voices we hear, God’s Word is the ultimate truth. James underscores the importance of our reactions to God’s truth. We must be responsive to the truth with godly deeds. Verse 22 is a well-known reminder in the book: we should **be both hearers and doers of God’s Word.** The Bible is not some ancient literature to study. It is God’s timeless instructions for our life. James uses looking at a mirror as an analogy. A mirror tells us how we look. You will make corrections if your hair is messy or your clothes are not tidy. You may forget the problem if you do not address it right away. Similarly, the Bible reveals something we overlook and even sins we tolerate. For example, God tells us that we should not only care about our own business, but we should be mindful of the needs of others too. Or perhaps we are used to lying before we became Christians. But now, honesty should be our hallmark as God’s children. On the positive side, God’s Word tells us the good habits we should build up. For instance, we should read the Scriptures daily and attend church regularly. How can we receive the blessings from God’s Word? James tells us three things in verse 25: **But the one who looks into the perfect law, the law of liberty, and perseveres, being no hearer who forgets but a doer who acts, he will be blessed in his doing.** Step 1: we need to READ God’s Word. James tells us to look into it. It means to inspect carefully. Say you are searching for your keys. You will check where you have been thoroughly – car, kitchen, bedroom, etc. until you find them. Similarly, when we read the Bible, we should pay attention to the lessons God wants to teach us. You can focus on one verse, one word or one theme as you read. Ask God to help you apply one truth on that day.

Step 2: we must REPEAT the same process. James encourages us to persevere. We call that self-discipline in today's term. It may take a few weeks or even months to form a good habit. For example, if you get up at the same time every day, you will do so naturally without an alarm clock. Likewise, we must put Bible-reading at a high priority and make it a daily routine. I suggest you to do it soon after you get up. Otherwise, making breakfast, getting ready for school or work and checking social media and email will distract you. Step 3: we should RETAIN what we have read. What matters is not how much we read, but how much we retain after reading. Chew on one lesson the rest of the day. Convert your thoughts into a prayer. You can write down some key words on a sticky note and put it in your car or leave it by your desk. I highly recommend you to use a paper Bible. You can highlight verses and words that are helpful to you. You can jot down notes on the margins. Some people like to record their reflections in a notebook and review them later. James tells us that we will REAP the benefits from God's Word if we follow those three steps. The Bible will not only inform us something about God. It will also transform our lives to be more like Him. Psalm 1:3 describes those blessings: **He is like a tree planted by streams of water that yields its fruit in its season, and its leaf does not wither. In all that he does, he prospers.** A tree will continue to thrive and bear fruits when its roots are deeply secured into the ground near a water source. Similarly, people who set God's Word as their foundation will be blessed. In order to achieve that, we must apply God's truth after reading the Bible, at home and in the church. We ask ourselves what are some take-home lessons we can practice. It can be a change of mentality to adopt God's values, or it can be a change in our activities to do things that will please God. After all, Jesus does not train us to be scholars. He calls us as followers to imitate after Him.

3. 愛心扶助 Be Reactive to Needs (v. 26-27)

We should be receptive and take heed when listening. We should also be responsive to God's Word with deeds. Thirdly, James reminds us to be reactive to others' needs. We will skip verse 26 about controlling our speech. The author has detailed instructions on that topic in chapter 3. We will focus on verse 27 about caring for orphans and widows. They were some of the most helpless people at that time. Families without a husband and a father would be in great financial stress. They must rely on others' mercy because there was no social benefit or charity to depend on. Otherwise, orphans and widows had to beg for life or even sell themselves as slaves. James says acts of kindness is a pure and undefiled religion before God. The word "religion" means the fear and worship of a deity. The emphasis is on religious rituals. The point is that our belief in God should not be restricted to a church building. But it must also be demonstrated in daily life. If we say that God is loving, then we must spread His love to less fortunate people. Such teaching is consistent with the Old Testament. For example, Deuteronomy 10:18-19 says: **18 "He executes justice for the fatherless and the widow, and loves the sojourner, giving him food and clothing. 19 Love the sojourner, therefore, for you were sojourners in the land of Egypt."** God shows favor to vulnerable people because they have no other means to count on. He can create food and clothing out of nothing. But more than likely, God supplies those resources by moving people's hearts. God blesses us first so that we can be a channel to bless others. The Lord reminded His people that they were slaves in Egypt before. God saved them from bondage,

and made them His people. Those who received kindness ought to pass on kindness. We can also refer to the instructions in Deuteronomy 24:19 – “When you reap your harvest in your field and forget a sheaf in the field, you shall not go back to get it. It shall be for the sojourner, the fatherless, and the widow, that the Lord your God may bless you in all the work of your hands.” A similar teaching asks landlords to leave some produce in the fields so that poor people can pick their food. Boaz allowed Ruth to do just that. Ruth and her mother-in-law Naomi were two widows who had no son. In the end, Boaz picked Ruth to be his wife too! God’s commands come with promises. Perhaps He will reward generous people with a bigger yield. It is an expression of faith. We will be stingy when we reason that it is our hard-earn money and our properties. Why should I give to those who do nothing except holding out their hands? There will be joy when we realize that we are only stewards of God’s blessings. There are always poor people in the society. We need wisdom to distinguish between needy, crafty and lazy people. Many years ago, some charities put commercials on TV showing very skinny refugees in some African countries. People feel good by donating money. It is a legitimate question to ask what percentage of the money will actually go to needy people. Many international agencies need to pay for salaries, advertisements, travel and other administrative expenses. Those who keep an open-book policy on their finance may be more trustworthy. There are global needs as well as local needs. Once in a while there will be people knocking on our church door asking for money. Some ladies may say they are dumped by their husbands, they are looking for jobs or they have some chronic illnesses. There is no way to verify their stories. How should we react? Instead of giving them money, it is wiser to give them food items. In some instances, coworkers also filled their cars with some gas. There are tangible ways to fulfill their needs.

結論 CONCLUSION

The words we say and receive will affect the works we do. Talk is cheap but actions speak louder than words. Powerful words will motivate people to take actions. In 1988, Nike hired an advertising agency to come up with new ideas on increasing its sales in sports apparel. The company was inspired by something a death-roll inmate said. Gary Gilmore was convicted of murder. He was sentenced to death penalty. His attorney urged Gilmore to file for an appeal, but he refused the suggestion. On the day of his execution, he was asked if he had any final word to say. His reply: “Let’s do it.” The advertising agency tweaked the phrase and came up with the “Just Do It” marketing campaign. Commercials featured professional athletes and ordinary people from all walks of life. The message was clear: do not just watch sports and talk sports; get off the couch and play sports! You will not achieve anything unless you get moving. The plan was highly successful. Nike’s market share grew from 18% to 43% in ten years. The world will be different too if there are more Christians who are doers and not just hearers and talkers of truth. If we are convinced that God’s Word is true, then we must conduct our life accordingly.

引言 INTRODUCTION

我們的行為與我們的信念相符。我們做我們認為正確的事。因此，如果我們走錯了方向，可能會帶來意想不到的結果。一名來自紐約的男士預訂了澳洲的遊輪旅行。他會在那裡登船並遊覽一些獨特的景點。他非常期待這個夢想假期。下一步就是要飛到那裡。他找到了一張非常便宜的機票。他以為要飛往悉尼。當飛機即將降落時，他驚訝地看到四周都是雪。沒多久他知道出了什麼問題。他抵達蒙大拿州的悉尼，一個只有幾千人的小鎮，而不是澳洲的悉尼。他做了一件笨事！錯誤的訊息將導致錯誤的結果。基督徒相信聖經是真理，因為它來自真理的神。這本書包含了我們過敬虔的生活所需的知識。但是對基督徒而言：我們所做的事情是否與我們所相信的一致？換句話說，我們的行為是否反映出我們的信仰？這是雅各在這卷書中反覆強調的主題。今天經文的重點是言語。作者告訴我們，我們所講和所接受的話會影響我們所做的事情。

解釋 EXPLANATION

1. 虛心聆聽 Be Receptive and Heed (v. 19-21)

首先，雅各鼓勵我們要做個好的聽眾。當別人說話時，我們應該虛心聆聽。這與之前關於試探的內容有何關聯？試探來自於我們接收到的信息。兩個主要的來源是我們看到和聽到的事物。雅各集中於後者。上週我們提到了夏娃和耶穌被試探。撒旦用謊言來試探他們兩個人。夏娃跌倒了，但耶穌卻站穩。我們所聽到的信息會逐漸塑造我們的價值觀，然後便影響我們的行為。這就是為什麼我們需要用智慧去聆聽。在第 19 節中，作者提醒我們，要「**快快的聽，慢慢的說，慢慢的動怒**」。我們是否常常做相反的事？我們停止聽，迫不及待地想講話，同時很容易生氣。我們都聽過一句話：神賜給我們兩隻耳朵和一張嘴，因為祂希望我們多聽少說。快快的聽的意思是，當別人說話時，我們必須準備好並專心聆聽。當聽的一方明白講的一方想要傳達的意思時，溝通才是有效的。我在聆聽上面犯了很多錯誤之後，終於學到一點點教訓。最近有人說我記憶力很好。我記得新朋友的一些背景資料。我的記憶力其實還挺差的。因此，當別人自我介紹時我必須全神貫注。之後我也會在他們填寫的登記表格上的加上一些資訊，然後我會時不時看那些表格。這就是我記住人們的名字、他們的工作、家鄉、他們孩子的名字甚至他們寵物的名字的方式。然而，如果我一邊聽一邊思考別的事情或被某人打擾時，那麼很可能我就無法記住太多信息。我教

導我的孩子要用眼睛去聆聽。眼神交流可以幫助他們保持專注。如果我們只是想分享個人的觀點，我們便會迫不及待地打斷並作出回應。也許我們想要表示自己熟悉討論的課題。更糟的是，我們想證明自己是對的，對方是錯的。當一方或雙方情緒失控時，就會產生怒氣。怒氣是衝突甚至罪的起因。結果可能帶來破壞。因此，雅各在第 20 節中說：「**因為人的怒氣並不成就神的義。**」憤怒對雙方都沒有好處。相反，憤怒卻會製造緊張局面。當人們無法達成協議時，他們就會吵架、心懷怨恨。還記得人類史上第一宗謀殺案嗎？在創世紀第 4 章中，該隱殺死了他的兄弟亞伯，因為神喜歡亞伯的祭物，但並不接納該隱的祭物。嫉妒就變成仇恨，並因此引起流血事件。負面的情緒導致悲劇。一切是在乎我們的心。因此，雅各敦促我們清理心中的垃圾。他在第 21 節告訴我們：**所以你們要脫去一切的污穢和盈餘的邪惡，存溫柔的心領受那所栽種的道，就是能救你們靈魂的道。**我們需要祈求神徹底潔淨我們的心靈，以便騰出空間來儲存祂的話語。唯有真理才能改變我們。然後我們就會說一些能建立別人並榮耀神的話。我們在說話之前需要先檢查自己的心態。我們喜歡吹牛嗎？我們的語氣是否表現出恩慈和良善？說話的內容是否根據事實而沒有猜測？我們在聽的時候也需要檢查自己的心態。我們是直接地接受信息，還是我們拼命想是否有言外之意？我們是否只對傳謠言感興趣，還是我們真的關心別人？我們是否只喜歡被拍馬屁，卻對善意的批評感到生氣？求主幫助我們講話真誠並專心聆聽。

2. 留心回應 Be Responsive with Deeds (v. 22-25)

雅各說我們要虛心聆聽誠實的話。在我們聽到的所有聲音中，神的話語是最終的真理。接下來，雅各強調我們對真理該有的反應。我們必須以敬虔的行為留心回應。第 22 節是這卷書中很多人熟悉的提醒：我們不只要聽道，也必須行道。聖經並不是一些古代文獻，它是神賜給我們超越時空的教導。雅各以看鏡子作為比喻。鏡子告訴我們自己的外表。如果你的頭髮凌亂或衣服不整齊，你就會糾正。如果不立即處理問題，你可能很快便忘記。同樣，聖經也反映出一些我們忽略的事情，甚至是我們所容忍的罪。例如，神告訴我們，我們不應該只關心自己的事，也應該留意別人的需要。又或許我們在信主之前習慣撒謊。但現在，誠實應該是我們作為神兒女的標誌。從正面來看，神的話語告訴我們應該養成良好的習慣。例如，我們應該每天閱讀聖經並經常參加聚會。我們如何才能從神的話語得到祝福呢？雅各在第 25 節告訴我們三件事：**惟有詳細察看那全備，使人自由之律法的，並且時常如此，這人既不是聽了就忘，乃是實在行出來，就在他所行的事上必然得福。**第一步：我們需要**閱讀**神的話語。雅各告訴我們要詳細察看。假設你正在找你的鑰匙。你會徹底檢查你去過的地方：車子、廚房、房間等，直到你找到它。同樣，我們讀聖經的時候，也應該留意

神想要教導我們的事情。你可以專注於一節經文、一個單字或一個主題。請求神幫助你在當天實踐某一個真理。第二步：我們必須**重複**同樣的過程。雅各鼓勵我們要堅持下去。用今天的話來說，我們稱之為自律。養成良好的習慣可能需要幾週甚至幾個月的時間。例如，如果你每天在同一時間起床，那麼即使沒有鬧鐘你也會自然醒來。同樣，我們必須把讀經放在第一位，並且成為習慣。我建議你起床後先做這件事。否則，做早餐、準備上學或上班以及查看社交媒體和電子郵件都會分散你的注意力。第三步：我們必須**記住**所讀過的內容。重點不是我們看了多少，而是我們記得多少。你可以在當天仔細思考某一個教訓。將你的想法轉化為禱告。你可以在便條紙上寫下一些關鍵詞，然後放在車上或辦公桌旁。我強烈建議你使用紙本聖經。你可以劃下對你有幫助的經文和單字。你可以在邊緣空白的地方寫下筆記。有些人喜歡將自己的心得記錄在筆記本中，以後再重看。雅各告訴我們，如果我們依照這三個步驟，我們便會從神的話語中得益。聖經不只是告訴我們一些關於神的事。真理能夠改變我們的生命，使我們更像耶穌。詩篇 1:3 描述了這些祝福：**他要像一棵樹栽在溪水旁，按時候結果子，葉子也不枯乾。凡他所做的盡都順利。**當樹木深深扎根在水源的旁邊時，它就會不斷生長並結出果實。同樣，以神的話語為根基的人也會得到祝福。為了達到那個目標，我們必須在家裡和在教會閱讀聖經後實踐神的真理。我們必須找到一些我們可以應用的教訓。可能是心態上的改變，讓我們接受神的價值觀。也可以是我們的行為上的改變，做一些討神喜悅的事情。畢竟，耶穌不是要訓練我們成為學者。祂乃是呼召我們跟隨祂，使我們效法祂的樣式。

3. 愛心扶助 Be Reactive to Needs (v. 26-27)

我們在聆聽時應該保持虛心的態度。我們也必須以行動來回應神的話語。第三，雅各提醒我們要以愛心扶助別人的需要。我們將跳過第 26 節有關控制言語的教導。作者在第 3 章會有詳細的說明。我們集中看第 27 節有關照顧孤兒與寡婦。他們是當時最無助的人。沒有丈夫和父親的家庭將面對龐大的經濟壓力。他們必須依靠別人的憐憫，因為當時沒有社會福利或慈善機構。否則，孤兒寡母只能靠討飯為生，甚至賣身為奴。雅各說，慈善的行動在神面前是一種純潔、未受污染的虔誠。「虔誠」這個字也可以翻譯為宗教，是指敬拜儀式。重點是，我們對神的信仰不應局限於教會，也必須表現在日常生活中。如果我們說神是慈愛的，那麼我們就必須把祂的愛傳遞給那些不幸的人。這樣的教導與舊約是一致的。例如，申命記 10:18-19 說：**18 「為孤兒寡婦伸冤，又憐愛寄居的，賜給他衣食。19 所以你們要憐愛寄居的，因為你們在埃及地也作過寄居的。」**神對軟弱的群體施恩，因為他們無依無靠。神能夠從無變有創造食物和衣服。但更可能的是，神透過感動人們的心來提供這些資源。神首先祝福我

們，使我們成為祝福別人的管道。神提醒祂的子民，他們以前在埃及曾是奴僕。神將他們從奴役中拯救出來，並使他們成為神的子民。得到恩惠的人應將恩惠傳遞出去。我們也可以參考申命記 24:19 的教導：「你在田間收割莊稼，若忘下一捆，不可回去再取，要留給寄居的與孤兒寡婦。這樣，耶和華你神必在你手裡所辦的一切事上賜福與你。」有其他經文提到類似的做法，要求地主在田裡留下一些農產品，好讓窮人可以撿食物。波阿斯允許路得這麼做。路得和她的婆婆拿俄米兩個寡婦都沒有兒子。最終，波阿斯撿到路得當他的妻子！神的命令伴隨著祝福。也許神會以更大的收成回報慷慨的人。這是信心的表達。當我們認為這是自己的血汗錢和財物時，我們就會變得吝嗇。我為什麼要給那些只是伸手但什麼都不做的人提供援助呢？當我們明白到我們只是神祝福的管家時，我們才會感到喜樂。社會上總是會有窮人。我們需要以智慧來區分窮人、騙子和懶惰蟲。很多年前，一些慈善機構在電視上打廣告，展示一些非洲國家非常瘦弱的難民。這就讓一些捐錢的人感到心裡很舒服。但是我們必須要問捐款中有多少比例是真正用在有需要的人身上。許多國際機構需要支付工資、廣告、旅費和其他行政費用。一些公開帳目的機構可能更值得信賴。有全球的需求，也有本地的需求。偶爾會有人敲我們教會的門來要求救濟。有些女士可能會說她們被丈夫拋棄了、正在找工作或患有某些慢性疾病。我們無法證實她們的故事。我們該如何回應？我們可以給他們食物，這樣比給予金錢更有智慧。在某些情況下，同工們還給他們的車子加一點汽油。因此，有一些實際的方法可以滿足他們的需求。

結論 CONCLUSION

我們所講和所接受的話會影響我們所做的事情。發表意見很容易，但行動勝於雄辯。有力的言語會激勵人們採取行動。1988 年，耐吉 (Nike) 聘請一家廣告公司提供建議，如果提高銷售量。結果那家公司從一位死刑犯說的一句話得到靈感。加里吉爾摩 (Gary Gilmore) 被判犯有謀殺罪。他被判處死刑。律師鼓勵吉爾摩提出上訴，但他拒絕了那個要求。在行刑當天，有人問他是否還有什麼遺要說。他回答說：「趕快動手吧！“Let's do it!”」廣告公司修改了這句話，變成「馬上行動！(Just Do It)」。於是推出一些廣告，主角從職業運動員到各行各業的普通人都有。其中的信息很明確：不要只是觀看運動比賽和談論體育，要離開沙發，積極投入運動！如果你不採取行動，你只會一事無成。該策略非常成功。十年之間，耐吉的市場從 18% 增長到 43%。如果有更多的基督徒不只是聆聽真理和討論真理，而是付諸行動，那麼世界肯定會變得不一樣。如果我們確信神的話是真實的，那麼必須以行動來證明。