

September Word of Life

Do not merely listen to the word, and so deceive yourselves. Do what it says. (James 1: 22)

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The author of this month's verse insists upon the fundamental importance of both listening and practice. The letter, in fact, continues: 'But whoever looks intently into the perfect law that gives freedom, and continues in it – not forgetting what they have heard, but doing it – they will be blessed in what they do' (James 1: 25). It is precisely this commitment to know God's word and to live it that sets us free and gives us joy.

One could say that this month's bible verse is the very reason why the practice of the Word of Life has spread throughout the world. Once a week, and then once a month, Chiara Lubich used to choose a sentence from Scripture and comment on it and then groups of people met and shared the fruits that living the word had brought about in their everyday lives. This created a united community and, in a small way, revealed the social impact that living the word can have upon society.

'Despite its simplicity, the initiative made a notable contribution to the rediscovery of the 'word of God' in the Christian world of the 20th century'^[i] by transmitting a 'method' for living the Gospel and sharing its effects.

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The letter of James takes up Jesus' message that refers to experiencing the presence of the kingdom of heaven among us: Jesus declares blessed are those who listen to his word and keep it;^[ii] he recognises as his mother and brothers those who listen to it and put it into practice;^[iii] he compares it to the seed that, if it falls on good soil – that is, on those who listen to it with a good and noble heart and keep it – they produce fruit through their perseverance.^[iv]

'In each of his words Jesus expresses all his love for us,' writes Chiara Lubich. 'Let us make the word incarnate and make it our own. If we do so, we will experience the powerful life it unleashes in us and around us. Let us fall in love with the Gospel to the point of allowing ourselves to be transformed by it and enable it to overflow onto others... We will be free from ourselves and our limitations. Furthermore, we will see a revolution of love explode everywhere because Jesus, freed to live in us, will bring about a change in society wherever we live.'^[v]

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How can we put the word into practice? Let us look around us and do everything we can, to serve others in need, through both small and not so small actions. Such gestures transform

injustice in society, combat violence, foster peace and reconciliation and increase sensitivity towards respect for our planet. This can initiate a real revolution in our lives, in our work environments and in the communities in which we live.

Love manifests itself in social and political actions that seek to build a better world. The commitment of a small Focolare community towards the most vulnerable people in society led to the opening of the Chiara Lubich Centre for the Elderly in Lamud, Peru in the Amazon area, 2,330 metres above sea level.

'The Centre was opened in the midst of the pandemic crisis and houses 50 elderly and lonely people. The building, furniture, crockery and even food came as a gift from the neighbouring community. It was a risk, not without difficulties and obstacles, but in March 2022 the Centre celebrated its first anniversary. It hosted a party and opened its doors to the city; even political representatives took part. The two days of celebrations enlisted new volunteers, adults and children, who want to enlarge their own families by taking care of lonely grandparents.'

Edited by Patrizia Mazzola and the Word of Life Team

[i] Chiara Lubich, *Word of Life*, New City, 2022, p 35.

[ii] Cf. Lk. 11: 28.

[iii] Cf. Lk. 8: 21.

[iv] Cf. Lk. 8: 15.

[v] Chiara Lubich, *Word of Life*, September 2006.