

James

A STUDY ON THE BOOK OF JAMES

UPSTATE GROUP MEMBER GUIDE

WEEK 5 - *JAMES 2:14-26*

LEADER NOTES

This week, we are discussing the relationship between faith and works. James argues that faith without works is not really faith at all. While works in and of themselves do nothing to save us, works are an indicator of what Christ has done in and through us. Our faith demands that we respond in by hearing and acting on the word we have recieved.

Please continue to complete the Gospel Connection's and Conversations form. You can find the form [HERE](#).

You can find other sermons from our Teaching Pastor's [HERE](#).

SCRIPTURE

TAKE THIS TIME TO STUDY THE BIBLE TOGETHER. REMEMBER, THE GOAL IS NOT JUST TO CONVEY INFORMATION, BUT TO HELP PEOPLE IN YOUR GROUP LEARN TO READ THE BIBLE FOR THEMSELVES.

THE POINT

FAITH IN OUR HEARTS IS SHOWN IN THE FRUIT OF OUR LIVES.

James 2:14-26

14 What good is it, my brothers, if someone says he has faith but does not have works? Can that faith save him? 15 If a brother or sister is poorly clothed and lacking in daily food, 16 and one of you says to them, "Go in peace, be warmed and filled," without giving them the things needed for the body, what good[b] is that? 17 So also faith by itself, if it does not have works, is dead.

18 But someone will say, "You have faith and I have works." Show me your faith apart from your works, and I will show you my faith by my works. 19 You believe that God is one; you do well. Even the demons believe—and shudder! 20 Do you want to be shown, you foolish person, that faith apart from works is useless? 21 Was not Abraham our father justified by works when he offered up his son Isaac on the altar? 22 You see that faith was active along with his works, and faith was completed by his works; 23 and the Scripture was fulfilled that says, "Abraham believed God, and it was counted to him as righteousness"—and he was called a friend of God. 24 You see that a person is justified by works and not by faith alone. 25 And in the same way was not also Rahab the prostitute justified by works when she received the messengers and sent them out by another way? 26 For as the body apart from the spirit is dead, so also faith apart from works is dead.

The Holy Bible: English Standard Version (Wheaton, IL: Crossway Bibles, 2016), James 2:14-26.

STUDY NOTES

In this passage James continues with the theme of “being hearers and doers of the word” by focusing on the relationship between faith and works. The word “faith” has the sense of trust in and commitment to Christ for salvation. The openness to receive God’s grace brings redemption, and the redeemed live out that grace. The term “works” refers to good deeds—actions on others’ behalf that demonstrate Christ’s love (see v. 8). James’s question called for an obvious answer— an inactive faith accomplishes nothing.

James drew the parallel between words without actions and faith that produces no good works. Apart from works, such faith is dead in and of itself—inwardly lifeless and outwardly unproductive. Mere words, no matter how kind or well-meaning, are not substitutes for helpful actions. Destitute people need more than good wishes—they need practical provisions.

Understanding this point could literally save your soul. Especially if you’ve grown up in church. You might mistakenly think salvation is a matter of believing the right things about Jesus, like a code that unlocks the gates of heaven. The demons also believe—and they shudder in answer to the mistaken assertion that belief in God by itself is sufficient for salvation. Demons believe, but it’s impossible for them to be saved. Saving faith entails more than mere knowledge. It includes trust and obedience, for faith without works is useless.

For examples of authentic faith, James turned to the Old Testament. First he pointed to Abraham, the father of the Hebrews—the first patriarch. The example of Abraham and his offer of Isaac as a sacrifice (Gen. 22:1-19) affirms James’s teachings about faith. Abraham’s faith was proven genuine by his obedience to God’s command. His faith made his good works possible. Faith’s purpose in a believer’s life is to produce good works. Without good works, faith is incomplete. Good works demonstrate faith’s integrity and maturity. James’s second example of faith demonstrated by works was Rahab the prostitute (Josh. 2:1-24). James emphasized that she had demonstrated her faith by protecting the spies. Her actions were evidence of her having a right relationship with God.

If you need more resources for this week’s sermon and curriculum, click [HERE](#).

QUESTIONS FOR DISCUSSION

- *What is the most incredible display of faith in Jesus you have ever heard about or seen?*
- *Is it possible for a person to be a Christian in name only? Explain.*
- *How is keeping the law different from faith-based works of righteousness?*
- *What is your reaction to James's statement that even demons believe in God (see v. 19)?*
- *How does the reality that the demons believe convict us about the nature of saving faith and works?*
- *How do the examples of Abraham and Rahab, who seemed to be polar opposites in every earthly way, encourage you in your faith?*
- *What fruit have you noticed in your life?*