

CALVARY CHAPEL OF PHILADELPHIA

CHILDREN'S MINISTRY
3RD-5TH GRADE
TEACHER'S PACKET

SUNDAY MORNING

Study 4

James 2:14-26



Faith and Works

The Objective is the key concept for this week's lesson. It should be the main focus of the study.

These are the key verses that you will find helpful in teaching your study this week. The "Main passage" is the basis of the study, where the other verses support the objective of the lesson.

There is a memory verse for the students that relates to every study. If a student can memorize the verse for the following week you may give them a prize from the "reward box" found on your cart.

An introductory activity or question that will settle the class, draw their attention to the study and prepare their hearts for God's Word.

Objective To show the students that the Christian life is one of faith and service and that we can demonstrate our faith by the way that we behave.

Key Verses

James 2:14-26—Main Teaching Passage
Luke 6:43-45

Memory Verse - Luke 6:44

"Each tree is known by its own fruit."

Hook

Review last week's memory verse, James 2:10.

Take a chair or a stool and place it in front of the class. Tell them that you believe that the chair is strong. Tell them that you have faith that the chair can hold you up. Then tell the students that you want one of them to check it for you to make sure before you sit down. Tell them that you refuse to sit on the chair... but that you believe that the chair is strong.

Ask the students, "Did I really have faith that the chair would hold me up? How can I prove that I believe the chair is strong?" (By sitting down on the chair.)

What does the Bible say? This is where we will read a passage or series of passages that teach on the subject of the day.

BOOK

James 2 brings us to one of the more controversial passages of Scripture, dealing with faith and works. The context of the whole passage is found in verse 14, "What good is it, my brothers, if someone says he has faith but does not have works? Can that faith save him?" James here is answering a problem that is being faced by the early Church: what do we do about people who say that they are Christians but their lives don't change, they show no evidence of rebirth, and there is nothing in the way that they behave that demonstrates that they are true believers? James is quite blunt with his response. He states that merely claiming faith is not sufficient. There needs to be real conversion that can be demonstrated by works.

His key point is in verses 18-19, where he sets up a pretend debate. He argues with the person who has no works but says that they have faith, and tells them that he himself doesn't need to tell people that he has faith, they can easily see that by what he does. James tells us that demons believe in God, but demons aren't saved. Therefore simple mental assent that God exists is not sufficient for salvation.

James goes on to give two examples of people who believed, were saved, and then their lives were changed by their faith. Both Abraham and Rahab demonstrated the faith that they already had, Abraham by being willing to sacrifice Isaac, and Rahab by hiding the spies and turning to the true God.

Jesus would say it like this, "each tree is known by its own fruit" (Luke 6:44). He said that good trees bear good fruit, and that by looking at the fruit you can see the health of the tree. The demonstration of good works is an evidence that salvation has taken place in our lives.

LOOK

The interpretation/ exegesis of the passage. What does this passage mean? How does this passage apply to my life?

How can you tell if someone else is really a born again believer? After all, salvation is something that changes us on the inside, and we can't see what someone's soul looks like, can we? We can only see what's on the outside. So how can we know if someone else is really a Christian? The first things to find out is if the person say that they are a Christian. If they say, "No, I don't want anything to do with Jesus," then that answers our question. However, what happens if the person says that they are a Christian, but they are always lying, stealing, cheating, getting into fights and bullying people? What if they tell you that they never pray, read the Bible, or go to Church? What then?

LOOK (Continued)

James 2 tells us that we can't have one without the other. We can't say that we are born again and then never do the things that Jesus asked us to do. In fact, if we have a real and true faith in Jesus, then we should want to do the things that Jesus asked us to do, like read His word, pray, love our neighbor, etc.

James tells us that we shouldn't really need to tell people that we have faith, but instead people should be able to tell that we have faith by what we do. A wise Christian once said, "Preach the gospel every day of your lives, and sometimes use words." By this he meant that our actions should always be demonstrating the love of Christ to the people around us.

We can never truly know what is going on in someone's heart, and it isn't actually our job to figure that out. God knows the hearts of all men. He knows for sure if you say that you are a Christian, but on the inside you don't really love God at all. We, however, want to show God's love to the people around us whenever we get the opportunity, and we don't ever want to give people the impression that it is okay to say that we have faith but then never live that faith out through our actions. We want to be good witnesses of Christ and His sacrificial love for the whole world.

What is my response to this passage of Scripture? How should my life change according to what this passage teaches me? What are the practical things I can do throughout the week to make this true in my life?

TOOK

As a class, memorize Luke 6:44.

Open the class up for discussion. Have the students talk about some things that they see people do that make them think that they are Christians. What are some things that they do themselves that might show someone that they are a believer?

Pray: Ask the Lord to help us to see the areas of our lives that we might need to change. Ask Him to help us to live out our faith boldly.

Parent Question: How do our works show that we have faith?

FURTHER STUDY

Commentary on James 2 by David Guzik

B. The demonstration of a living faith in loving action.

1. (14) The principle established: true faith will be accompanied by action.

What *does it* profit, my brethren, if someone says he has faith but does not have works? Can faith save him?

a. **What does it profit, my brethren:** James thought it impossible that someone could genuinely have saving faith with no works. But someone could say **he has faith**, but fail to show good works. So, the question is valid: **Can that kind of faith save him?**

i. "The apostle had just before declared, that they who are unmerciful to men shall find God severe to themselves, and have judgment without mercy: but hypocritical professors boasted of their faith as sufficient to secure them against that judgment, though they neglected the practice of holiness and righteousness." (Poole)

b. **Someone says he has faith but does not have works:** James wrote to Christians from a Jewish background that discovered the glory of salvation by faith. They knew the exhilaration of freedom from works-righteousness. But they then went to the other extreme of thinking that **works** didn't matter at all.

c. **Can faith save him?** James did not contradict the Apostle Paul, who insisted that we are saved *not of works* ([Ephesians 2:9](#)). James merely clarifies for us the *kind of faith that saves*. We are saved by grace through faith, not by works; but saving faith will have works that accompany it. As a saying goes: *faith alone saves, but the faith that saves is not alone*; it has good works with it.

i. Paul also understood the necessity of works in proving the character of our faith. He wrote: *For we are His workmanship, created in Christ Jesus for good works, which God prepared beforehand that we should walk in them* ([Ephesians 2:10](#)). He also wrote: *This is a faithful saying, and these things I want you to affirm constantly, that those who have believed in God should be careful to maintain good works.* ([Titus 3:8](#))

ii. **Can faith save him?** "That is, his profession of faith; for it is not said that he *has faith*, but that *he says*, I have faith." (Clarke)

2. (15-17) An example of dead faith.

If a brother or sister is naked and destitute of daily food, and one of you says to them, "Depart in

peace, be warmed and filled,” but you do not give them the things which are needed for the body, what *does it profit*? Thus also faith by itself, if it does not have works, is dead.

a. **If a brother or sister is naked and destitute of daily food:** To fail in the most simple good work towards a brother or sister in need demonstrates that one does not have a living faith, and we can only be saved by a living faith in Jesus.

i. “Under these two of nakedness and hunger, he comprehends all the calamities of human life, which may be relieved by the help of others; as food and raiment contain all the ordinary supports and comforts of life, Genesis 28:20; Matthew 6:25; 1 Timothy 6:8.” (Poole)

b. **Be warmed and filled:** To say this means you know that the person in front of you *needs* clothing and food. You know their need well, but offer nothing to help them except a few religious words.

i. “How many have we now-a-days that will be but as friends at a sneeze! The most you can get out of these benefactors is, ‘God bless you, Christ help you.’” (Trapp)

c. **What does it profit?** Real faith, and the works that accompany it, are not made up of only spiritual things, but also of a concern for the most basic needs – such as the need for comfort, covering, and food. When needs arise, we should sometimes *pray* less, and simply *do more* to help the person in need. We can sometimes *pray* as a substitute for *action*.

i. “Your pretending to have faith, while you have no works of charity or mercy, is utterly vain: for as *faith*, which is a principle in the mind, cannot be discerned but by the *effects*, that is, *good works*; he who has no good works has, presumptively, no faith.” (Clarke)

d. **Thus also faith by itself, if it does not have works, is dead:** This is the first time James speaks of a **dead** faith. Faith alone saves us, but it must be a *living faith*. We can tell if faith is *alive* by seeing if it is accompanied by **works**, and **if it does not have works, it is dead**.

i. A *living faith* is simply *real faith*. If we really believe something we will follow through and act upon it. If we really put our trust and faith on Jesus, we will care for the **naked and destitute** as He told us to do.

ii. “He doth not say, faith is dead without works, lest it should be thought that works were the cause of the life of faith; but *faith without works is dead*; implying, that works are the effects and signs of the life of faith.” (Poole)

iii. What are some marks of saving faith?

- It is faith that looks not to self, but to Jesus Christ.

- It is faith that agrees with God’s word, both inwardly and with words.

- It is faith that in itself is not a work that deserves reward from God; in this sense it is simply *refusing* to think God is a liar, and that in itself is not a good work, simply the absence of a sinful work.

- It is faith grounded in what Jesus did on the cross and by the empty tomb.
- It is faith that will *naturally* be expressed in repentance and good works.
- It is faith that may sometimes doubt; yet the doubts are not *bigger* than the faith nor are they *more permanent* than the faith. This faith can say, “Lord I believe; help my unbelief.”
- It is faith that wants others to come to the same faith.
- It is faith that says *more* than “Lord, Lord” as in Matthew 7:21-23.
- It is faith that not only *hears* the word of God but *does* it, as in Matthew 7:24-27.

3. (18-19) A living faith cannot be separated from works.

But someone will say, “You have faith, and I have works.” Show me your faith without your works, and I will show you my faith by my works. You believe that there is one God. You do well. Even the demons believe; and tremble!

a. **You have faith, and I have works:** Some might try to say that some have the “gift” of **works** and others have the “gift” of **faith**. “It’s fine for you to have your gift of **works** and that you care for the needy. But that isn’t my gift.” James will not allow this kind of thinking. Real faith will be demonstrated by works.

b. **Show me your faith without your works, and I will show you my faith by my works:** The appeal of James is clear and logical. We can’t “see” someone’s faith, but we *can* see their works. You can’t see faith **without** works, but you can demonstrate the reality of faith **by** works.

c. **You believe that there is one God. You do well. Even the demons believe; and tremble!** The fallacy of faith without works is demonstrated by the **demons**, which have a “dead” faith in God. The demons **believe** in the sense that they acknowledge that God exists. But this kind of faith does nothing for the **demons**, because it isn’t real faith, and that is proved by the fact that it doesn’t have works along with it.

4. (20-24) Abraham as an example of living faith.

But do you want to know, O foolish man, that faith without works is dead? Was not Abraham our father justified by works when he offered Isaac his son on the altar? Do you see that faith was working together with his works, and by works faith was made perfect? And the Scripture was fulfilled which says, “Abraham believed God, and it was accounted to him for righteousness.” And he was called the friend of God. You see then that a man is justified by works, and not by faith only.

a. **Do you want to know, O foolish man, that faith without works is dead?** James will now use the Old Testament to demonstrate what he has already said about the character of a living faith, showing that a **faith** that is not accompanied with **works** is a **dead** faith that cannot save.

b. **Was not Abraham our father justified by works when he offered Isaac his son on the altar?** Abraham was justified by faith long before he offered Isaac (Genesis 15:6). But his obedience in offering Isaac *demonstrated* that he really did trust God.

i. James properly estimates that Abraham actually *did* offer **Isaac his son on the altar**, even though the angel stopped him from actually killing his son. Yet he had **offered Isaac his son** in his firm resolution and intentions, and would have surely completed the act had not God stopped him. Abraham was so complete in his obedience that he counted Isaac as dead and set him **on the altar**.

c. **Faith was working together with his works, and by works faith was made perfect:** Faith and works cooperated perfectly together in Abraham. If he never had believed God, he could have never done the good work of obedience when asked to offer Isaac. As well, his faith was proven true – was completed, **was made perfect** – by his obedient works.

i. “Here is a proof that faith cannot exist without being active in works of righteousness. His faith in God would have been of no avail to him, had it not been manifested by works.” (Clarke)

d. **You see then that a man is justified by works, and not by faith only:** The **faith only** that will not justify a man is a faith that is without works, a dead faith. But true faith, living faith, shown to be true by good works, will alone justify.

i. “It is faith that justifieth the man; but they are works that justify faith to be right and real, saving and justifying.” (Trapp)

ii. Works *must* accompany a genuine faith, because genuine faith is always connected with regeneration – being born again, becoming a *new creation* in Jesus (2 Corinthians 5:17). If there is no evidence of a new life, then there was no genuine, saving faith.

iii. As Charles Spurgeon is reported to have said: “The grace that does not change my life will not save my soul.”

5. (25-26) Rahab as an example of living faith.

Likewise, was not Rahab the harlot also justified by works when she received the messengers and sent *them* out another way? For as the body without the spirit is dead, so faith without works is dead also.

a. **Rahab the harlot:** Significantly, James used two examples of a living faith – Abraham (the father of the Jews) and Rahab (a Gentile). James perhaps is subtly rebuking the partiality that may have developed on the part of Jewish Christians against the Gentile believers starting to come into the church.

b. **Was not Rahab the harlot also justified by works:** Rahab demonstrated her trust in the God of Israel by hiding the spies and seeking salvation from their God (Joshua 2:8-13). Her faith was shown to be living faith because it *did* something. Her belief in the God of Israel would not have saved her if she had not *done* something with that faith.

i. The lesson from Abraham is clear: if we believe in God, we will do what He tells us to do. The lesson from Rahab is also clear: if we believe in God, we will help His people, even when it costs us something.

ii. “He designedly put together two persons so different in their character, in order more clearly to shew, that no one, whatever may have been his or her condition, nation, or class in society, has ever been counted righteous without good works.” (Calvin, cited in Hiebert)

c. **For as the body without the spirit is dead, so faith without works is dead also:** As much as you can have a body with no life (a corpse), so you can have a faith with no life – and faith without works is a **dead** faith, unable to save.

i. “Therefore, if no deeds are forthcoming, it is proof that the professed faith is dead. Notice that James does not deny that it is faith. He simply indicates that it is not the right kind of faith. It is not living faith, nor can it save.” (Burdick)

ii. We can think of an apple tree; where is the life of the tree? It is in the root, and underneath the bark of the tree in the trunk. The life is not in the apples, the fruit that is displayed in season; but if the tree is alive *it will produce apples in season*.

iii. “Man is not justified by faith alone, that is, by a bare and empty knowledge of God; he is justified by works, that is, his righteousness is known and proved by its fruits.” (Calvin)