
FAITH IN ACTION

Part 2 - Faith and Deeds

The main game for all of us as followers of Jesus, is learning to live in a constant state of connection to the Spirit - learning to follow Jesus, adopting a lifestyle that reflects the life of Jesus with practical down to earth ways of following Him by putting our faith into action!

James writes to the church and is extremely practical in the wisdom he shares in how to live out our faith. This God given wisdom is timeless and speaks as much to us today as it did to believers in the first century, helping us navigate the pressure and stresses we face in putting our Faith in Action today.

Faith in Action is evidenced in living a life where our beliefs and values in Jesus are lived out consistently in our lives.

Don't Discriminate

James starts the chapter by talking about discrimination and saying this has no place in the church community. Using the example of rich and poor, James is declaring a message that unity and inclusiveness are essential to living out our faith in Jesus.

James wants us to be clear that we should always show mercy to others by refraining from partiality. The mercy we show will be extended to us again on the day of judgment and that mercy triumphs over judgment (Matthew 7:2; James 2:13).

Faith and Deeds

This is the most provocative part of the letter because James is raising the questions are you really who you say you are? Are you a Christian by name only or is it in your nature? Again, James is asking us the question, 'Is your

faith evidenced by living a life where your beliefs and values in Jesus are lived out consistently?' (James 2:14-17).

Faith in Jesus brings eternal life and eternal life brings transformation a transformation that can be seen. James says if you don't have the works and you don't have the deeds and you don't have the Godly living, your faith is false, it's dead.

Faith and Fruit

Unfortunately, many people today claim to be Christians or believers who are not. Some simply believe in God, which is not sufficient. Others have asked Jesus to forgive their sins so that they can go to heaven, but there has been no true repentance or commitment. Yet others, give the appearance of being believers but have all the wrong motives.

What is the good fruit that is evidence of a true believer? Their actions and attitudes must be in keeping with the instructions of God's Word and is a result of transformation. A true believer will have fruit in their lives that honours God (Matthew 7:16-17).

Jesus put it this way, He says those who love Me, who are true believers and have a relationship with Me, will obey Me (John 14:15). The obedience to Jesus is the good fruit of a person who believes in and loves Jesus. So, the faith in and love for Jesus demonstrates itself through outward action. On the other hand, the absence of good fruit or obedience to Jesus indicates that someone is not a true believer.

Faith and Deeds Connected

James is not saying the formula is: Faith + Works = Salvation. You don't need to add works to faith to be saved. He is saying, faith either "does not have" or "has" works and therefore it is either dead (no works), or alive (has works). If your faith is alive, works naturally flow out of your life. Your beliefs and values in Jesus are integrated into your life and the actions associated with these beliefs and values are evident for everyone to see.

At first James 2:18 appears to contradict Paul's statement in Romans 3:28 when he says, "For we maintain that a person is justified by faith apart from the works of the law."

James and Paul are complimenting one another, not contradicting one another. Looking at each statement in context we find that they arrived at the same point from different perspectives. Paul is explaining salvation to the outsider, and James is explaining transformation to the insider.

Belief in God in and of itself is not really a saving belief. True belief is always connected to an outworking of belief into actions (James 2:19).

And then James, to make the point that real faith brings real deeds, uses two Old Testament examples. One is Abraham and the other is Rahab, showing that it doesn't matter who you are, if you've put your faith in God – your actions match your beliefs.

What to Do?

When we rely on God asking for His wisdom, we mature to a point where we are living a completely integrated life where our actions are always consistent with the values and beliefs that we have in Jesus. For James, faith wasn't a mental accent to a belief. Faith was acting according to our belief. Our faith has effects on us and how we live in the real world, and it is seen in our deeds. That's what an alive faith looks like.

Call on God, ask for the Holy Spirit's presence to be so real to you that you act out of the overflow of a life of intimacy with Jesus. Work at your faith by:

- + Rejoicing in what Jesus has done for you by dying on the cross for your sin and rising again from the dead to give you life in abundance
- + Spending time with Jesus – be intentional about praying, reading the Bible, hearing from God and allowing Him to bring conviction and joy and peace into your life
- + Killing off the things that will wreck your faith – be vigilant to not let that stuff creep into your life

- + Persevere and make every effort to grow in your faith and faithfulness (2 Peter 1:5-8)

Let the overflow of a transformed life have its full effect in guiding what you do and how you do it.

Rather than being paralysed by the unlimited needs in the world, let's ask God for eyes to see the specific needs He has placed before us. Willingly stepping into and joining with Jesus in the work He does, the good work He has gotten ready for us to do (Ephesians 2:10).