

FAITH WITHOUT WORKS IS DEAD

LESSON SCRIPTURE: JAMES 2:14-26

FOCUS SCRIPTURE: JAMES 2:14-26

Key Verses: *For just as the body without the spirit is dead, so faith without works is also dead. James 2:26*

## James 2:14-26 (NRSV)

14 What good is it, my brothers and sisters, if you say you have faith but do not have works? Can faith save you?

15 If a brother or sister is naked and lacks daily food,

16 and one of you says to them, "Go in peace; keep warm and eat your fill," and yet you do not supply their bodily needs, what is the good of that?

17 So faith by itself, if it has no 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 by my works will show you my faith.

19 You believe that God is one; you do well. Even the demons believe—and shudder.

20 Do you want to be shown, you senseless person, that faith apart from works is barren?

21 Was not our ancestor Abraham justified by works when he offered his son Isaac on the altar?

22 You see that faith was active along with his works, and faith was brought to completion by the works.

23 Thus the scripture was fulfilled that says, "Abraham believed God, and it was reckoned to him as righteousness," and he was called the friend of God.

24 You see that a person is justified by works and not by faith alone.

25 Likewise, was not Rahab the prostitute also justified by works when she welcomed the messengers and sent them out by another road?

26 For just as the body without the spirit is dead, so faith without works is also dead.

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## VOCABULARY

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- **Righteousness** – Behaving according to God’s Word.
- **Faith** – To believe and trust in God.
- **Works** – Deeds or actions.
- **Dead** – Lacking any signs of life.
- **Shudder** – To shake violently.
- **Justified** – Made acceptable, right with God.

### INTRODUCTION

“Mom, is it okay if I go to the movies with Sherry after Youth Choir practice on Saturday afternoon?” Carla was anxious about her mother’s response since she had gotten into trouble for disobeying rules last month. She thought asking mom five days in advance would give her time to think about it.

“Carla, I guess that will be fine. Just do not go anywhere else afterwards.” Her mother replied.

“I promise.” Carla texted Sherry to let her know she could go with her.

During Saturday’s choir practice, the choir director, Kurt, made an announcement about Sherry’s absence. “Sherry’s family had to flee from their home Wednesday night after a large tree in their yard fell on their house during the rainstorm. They also had a lot of rain come through the roof. Their house and personal belongings were destroyed. If you want to help, Sherry needs clothes and shoes. Also, her parents could use help cleaning up their yard and removing wet items from the house.”

Everyone agreed to go and help Sherry’s family. But before Carla left to go, she returned home to get pants, shirts, and two pairs of shoes from her closet. Her mother noticed Carla placing the items in a duffle bag.

“Carla, what are you doing? You cannot stay over Sherry’s house tonight. You must come straight home after the movie!”

“Mom, you don’t understand what I’m doing! I’m trying to help someone in need,” Carla said as she placed a jacket in the bag before zipping it closed. “Sherry’s family lost their house and belongings after a tree fell on their house. I want to show Sherry I care by giving her some of my stuff. I have more than enough to share with her.”

“Carla, I’m sorry. I didn’t know. It is a wonderful, loving act for you to want to help Sherry. I’ll go with you and give her parents a monetary donation.”

*Why is demonstrating our faith in God by what we do important? In today’s lesson, we explore James’ belief that the one who has faith, will demonstrate that faith by his or her works, as did Abraham and Rahab.*

### BIBLE STORY

In our scripture, James believed the principle that faith results in good works. If one has knowledge of the scriptures and agrees with it, but does not put into action what is believed, it is dead faith. Our faith in Christ should transform us from the inside out. That means a person’s thoughts and conduct must show faith. How can we say we have faith and love God but ignore the needs of others (vs. 2:15-16)? Faith is dead when separated from works. However, works of loving service verify our faith and commitment to Christ.

Faith is the only way to receive salvation; but, faith can never be detached from works. To offer God a faith separated from works is little better than the faith of demons who believe and shudder. Such faith produces no good works of repentance or value (vs. 2:19-20).

James presents two examples of living faith, Abraham and Rahab. Abraham was one of the greatest heroes of faith. James

says, “Abraham was justified by works when he offered his son Isaac on the altar” (vs. 2:21-24; Genesis 22:16- 18). The apostle Paul says he was “justified by faith apart from works” (Romans 4:1-5). James and Paul are not disagreeing but complementing one another. True faith always results in works, but the works do not justify us. “Abraham believed God, and it was reckoned to him as righteousness.”

Rahab was a prostitute who lived in Jericho, a city the Israelites conquered as they entered the Promised Land (Joshua 2). When the spies came to Jericho, Rahab hid them. Later Rahab sent the spies out of the city by a different route to save them. Rahab and her family were saved because Rahab, like she was told, hung a red chord outside her house as a signal to the Israelites that it was her home. Rahab demonstrated a living faith and was justified by her works (v. 2:25; Hebrews 11:31). As the body is lifeless when the spirit departs in death, so faith separated from works is dead (v. 2:26).

**LIFE APPLICATION**

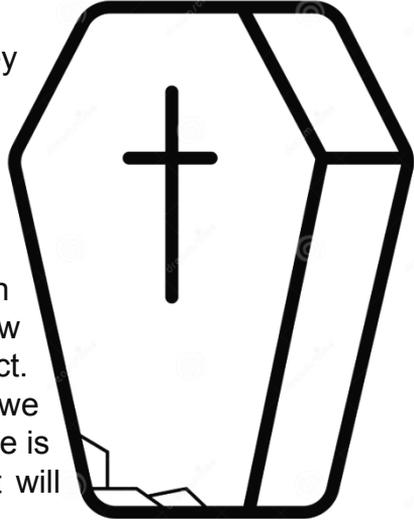
**T**here are many historical figures who demonstrated a living faith. Google the names mentioned below and write how they exhibited both faith and works. If you can think of persons in recent times, share their names as well.

1. Absalom Jones: \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_
2. Jarena Lee: \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_
3. Harriet Tubman: \_\_\_\_\_  
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The coffin represents death. Write inside the picture, “Faith without works is dead.” Discuss what “Faith without works is dead” means.

## SUMMARY

There are people who trust that if they do good acts it means eternal life is guaranteed. Others suppose if they have faith and knowledge about the Word of God, their behavior does not matter. Both are mistaken in what God requires of believers. We become new creations when we are saved. We are to demonstrate how faith transforms our thoughts and conduct. Our lives should reflect that new life in all we say, think, and do. Faith and loving service is what God requires from believers. What will you do?



## CLOSING DEVOTIONS

Prayer: Heavenly Father, thank you for this day. Please open opportunities for us to serve you. We desire to demonstrate our faith in action to the world. This can open occasions for us to share our beliefs and souls to be saved. Amen.

Closing Hymn: "A Charge to Keep I Have" (#242 - *AME Church Hymnal*)