

FAITH WITHOUT WORKS IS DEAD

LESSON SCRIPTURE: JAMES 2:14-26

FOCUS SCRIPTURE: JAMES 2:14-26

Key Verse: Show me your faith apart from your works, and I by your works will show you my faith. James 2:18

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.

WORD POWER!!!

- **Epidemic** – When a disease spreads rapidly and affects a large number of people.
- **Works** – Godly actions that line up with what a person says they believe.
- **Reckoned** – Counted; regarded.
- **Justified** – Proved to be in right relationship with God.
- **Prostitute** – Person who earns money by having sexual relations with numerous people.

GETTING READY!!!

Sarah Bass Allen wasn't just the wife of the founder of the AME Church. She was also someone who believed that following Jesus Christ meant doing things to make the world a better place. Before she married Rev. Richard Allen, Sarah Bass helped people affected by the yellow fever epidemic of 1793. After she married Rev. Allen, she continued putting her faith to work. She was so well-known for helping runaway slaves that it was mentioned in her obituary. She even organized a women's group who mended the torn clothing of AME preachers, after noticing their torn clothing during the First Annual Conference of the AME Church



Sarah Allen's perspective may seem ordinary to modern day members of the AME Church. However, it was a little unusual for female Christians to take such an active role during Mother Sarah's lifetime. Women's groups often prayed for people in need. They also raised money for charitable causes, but they

didn't usually take direct action to change people's situations.

Sarah Allen changed the way Christian women approached serving God and the people of God. She proved that people of faith could study the Bible, pray, and make a difference in their communities. Perhaps that's why she is known as one of the first female missionaries in U.S. history.

INTO GOD'S WORD!!!

James is a lot like Sarah Bass Allen. He clearly believes that it's not enough to know the ideas that we base our faith on. That's why Jesus says that even demons know that God is one (in three). James wants believers to understand that their faith in God should move them to take actions that make the world better.

James suggests that our faith lacks saving power when we pretend that everyone in a bad situation can get out of it, without help. Listen closely to what James says:

“Let me get this right: you think your do-nothing faith is better than my life-giving faith? Your faith lets you pat yourself on the back for offering to pray for the hungry and naked. My faith pushes me to feed and clothe others. Well, how does God get glory out of you ignoring people in need? How do they learn that God's concerned about them? That kind of faith seems dead to me and I serve a God who gives us life. I choose to be like Rahab. I'll take a chance on God and help God's people live.”

Activity #1 – Faith with Saving Power. Unscramble the phrases below. Then copy the numbers under the numbered boxes to the other boxes with the same number.

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USING GOD’S WORD!!!

Three year ago, U.S. Congresswoman Maxine Waters became famous for using the phrase “reclaiming my time” at the House Financial Services Committee meeting. She’d asked Treasury Secretary, Steven Mnuchin, why he hadn’t responded to a written request she’d made. Instead of answering her question, he started complimenting members of the committee. When her attempts to get him to answer the question failed, Rep. Waters asked that her time be returned to her. That way she could make sure that she could continue the work she’d been elected to do.

In the scripture, James also wants the people of God to be able to do what Jesus saved them to do. That’s why James

works so hard to “reclaim” the idea of what it means to live a faithful life. James wants believers to make a positive impact for God. Jesus knows that it can’t be done if the people of God can’t prove to others that God wants to save the *whole* person.

Activity #2 – “Reclaiming My Faith.” If you think the actions below show that the church is doing something that makes Christianity look good, circle it. Then talk with your class about the message that the other church’s actions send to believers.

1. People in the neighborhood think a local church is closed because it’s only open on Sundays.
2. A church allows people with no place to live to sleep in the basement and access the bathrooms once a week.
3. A group of Christian doctors and nurses provide free medical care to people in a detention center for illegal immigrants.
4. The Finance Committee uses the money given in the missionary/benevolent offering to pay bills.
5. The Stewardess and Deaconess Boards pray once a month before packing up toiletry bags to give to the prostitutes in the neighborhood.

REMIX!!!

It can be hard to figure out the best way to live faithfully. Some people believe that being able to say the right words are the best signs of living faithfully. Others believe that doing the right things are the best signs. Sarah Allen and James, the writer of the scripture, fit into a third group. They believe that the things we do for Christ will reveal that our relationship with God is tight and right. That belief pushes them to make a positive impact in

the lives of the people around them. If we want to have a living faith that can spread the message of salvation, we should be like Mother Sarah Allen and James. We must have the kind of faith that meets the needs of those God sends our way. Then and only then can we take back our faith.

PRAISE THE LORD!!!

Take it back.

We've got to take it back

Our faith's been hijacked

So, we will pray and act

To meet people's need

And prove by what we do

That our relationship with God is right and true.