
FAITH WITHOUT WORKS IS DEAD

Lesson Scripture: James 2:14-26

Focus Scripture: James 2:14-26

Key Verse: Just as the body without the spirit is dead, so faith without works is also dead.
James 2:26 (NRSV)

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.

JAMES 2:14-26 (KJV)

14 What doth it profit, my brethren, though a man say he hath faith, and have not works? can faith save him?

15 If a brother or sister be naked, and destitute of daily food,

16 And one of you say unto them, Depart in peace, be ye warmed and filled; notwithstanding ye give them not those things which are needful to the body; what doth it profit?

17 Even so faith, if it hath not works, is dead, being alone.

18 Yea, a man may say, Thou hast faith, and I have works: shew me thy faith without thy works, and I will shew thee my faith by my works.

19 Thou believest that there is one God; thou doest well: the devils also believe, and tremble.

20 But wilt thou know, O vain man, that faith without works is dead?

21 Was not Abraham our father justified by works, when he had offered Isaac his son upon the altar?

22 Seest thou how faith wrought with his works, and by works was faith made perfect?

23 And the scripture was fulfilled which saith, Abraham believed God, and it was imputed unto him for righteousness: and he was called the Friend of God.

24 Ye see then how that by works a man is justified, and not by faith only.

25 Likewise also was not Rahab the harlot justified by works, when she had received the messengers, and had sent them out another way?

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

KEY TERMS

- **Faith** – Having trust in.
- **Works** – Deeds that carry out an inner desire (intention, purpose).
- **Demons** – Fallen angels/devils.
- **Shudder** – Shiver from fear.
- **Barren** – Inactive, idle.
- **Justified** – Approved, to show what is right.
- **Reckoned** – Logical conclusion.
- **Friend** – Someone dearly loved and often trusted.
- **Law** – A force or influence impelling to action

work needs to be done to accomplish what is being asked for.

What if God is waiting for us? What if the healing or turnaround people need depends on our actions? What if our works have the deliverance people are awaiting? The author of James tells us that in addition to faith, there is work that must be done. What work does God need

us to do? What route does God need us to take in order for us to accomplish what needs to be done?

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 What route does God need us to take in order for us to accomplish what needs to be done?”

TELLING THE BIBLE STORY

Multiple times throughout the book of Genesis, God told Abraham he would have an abundance of offspring. One of the last times God said it,

Abraham and Sarah were well beyond childbearing age, making God’s words difficult to accept. Abraham had so much faith in God that he accepted and continued to follow where God led him.

When Isaac was born, Abraham and Sarah were beyond grateful to see God’s promise begin to unfold; but, this promise

INTRODUCTION

“A Prayer for Healing”

Many churches have a *Sick and Shut-In* list where people who are in need are placed. During the announcements or the pastor’s word, we hear about difficult situations congregants or community members may be facing. We call their names. We ask God to turn their situations around, and we move on. Because we had faith enough to pray, we leave the rest up to God to do whatever

came with a test. A test that required Abraham to do the exact opposite of what would make him the father of many nations: to kill Isaac, which meant killing God's promise. But, if Abraham truly had faith in God the way Abraham proclaimed, then he had to allow his faith to be shown through his actions. Thankfully, because of Abraham's action-filled faith, God blessed Abraham far beyond what Abraham could have imagined.

It was the same with Rahab. Moses had just transitioned, and Joshua was now in charge. Joshua received a command from God to move to a new land, but it required him to go in and take possession of the land. Before going into Jericho, Joshua sent two of his men ahead to survey the land.

While they were there, Rahab took the men in and hid them from the town officials who wanted to capture them. She had heard of the ways in which God had previously moved for the men and the places that were already overtaken, and she was afraid. In an act of faith, she

helped the men escape in exchange for protection of her and her family. The men obliged, and when Joshua and his men came into Jericho, Rahab and her family were saved. Rahab's faith and the works of Rahab protected her and her family from being overtaken and destroyed. It is this type of faith and action that the author of James is calling for in our passage today.

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SANKOFA

The Black Church has historically always been a site of gathering and empowerment for believers, in light of unfair treatment and conditions of its people. For African American believers, the church was not only the place where one would go to strengthen their relationship with God, it was also the place where they learned to turn their faith into actions.

During the times of slavery, the Black Church joined the Underground Railroad, which provided a safe haven for persons fleeing enslavement. After the abolishment of slavery, the Black Church became the site of planning and

community meetings. People gathered from all over to receive instruction and guidance on engaging in public faith that fought against injustice and created better, stronger communities.

Their religion was not just for Sunday morning, and more than shouting and praising took place. The kitchens were always hot from cooking. Thread was constantly spinning from the various garments made. Children were disciplined as the neighborhood took responsibility for their upbringing. Problems were not just individual but communal. In addition to personal piety, the Black Church served as a resource for discovering what a life of faithful works looked like.

CASE STUDY

“If a brother or sister is naked and lacks daily food, 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?”
James 2:15-16

A.J. Burgess, a two-year old boy, was

born without a working kidney and needed a donor to have a fighting chance at life. Naturally, the first step was to test the closest family members. Lo and behold, A.J.’s father was the perfect match. Surgery was scheduled, and the family, for the first time in a while, was hopeful that little A.J. would actually live. Five days before the scheduled operation, A.J.’s father was arrested. Though he was released the day before the surgery, the procedure was cancelled by the hospital due to his father’s criminal behavior, leaving A.J. without a donor.

A.J.’s mom went to the media pleading for help for her son. The story made national news. Community and faith-based organizations alongside city officials sprang into action. They did not sit in a meeting to discuss the situation or simply pray. They showed up at Emory Hospital in great numbers to protest the decision of the hospital. For days “Shame on Emory and shame on us,” was the chant outside the hospital. It was not enough to have faith. They wanted action. They

Being their religion was not just for Sunday morning, and more than shouting and praising took place.

demanded that the Emory University Hospital healthcare team meet with them and discuss better plans for moving forward that did not delay the care for this young boy. Their desire was granted after several days of protests. In the midst of all the discussions, A.J. received a kidney from an anonymous donor, and this year celebrated his 5th birthday.

A.J.’s story is one of a mother’s faith and works, which inspired an entire community to action, to ensure her son lived and did not die at the hands of the law.

LIFE APPLICATION

“Immigration, Environment, Prisons, Oh My!”

In the book *What’s the Least I Can Believe and Still Be a Christian?*, the author talks about the power of the church and how we are God’s hands on earth. Yes, God is the one who makes all things happen, but God has empowered us to do the work to *make* it happen. We have just as much a responsibility to social salvation as we do to personal salvation, yet the church seems to have forgotten that God cares about every aspect of us and our lives. From healthcare, to housing costs, to food access, God cares.

Going through each scenario below,

list ways in which the church can do more than pray and have faith, and take action.

Pray for...
Policies, Politicians, Laws
Poverty, Unemployment, Low Wages
Unjust Court Systems, Police Brutality, Prison
Hunger, Healthcare, Sickness, Environment
Immigration, Race Relations
Natural Disasters (Fire, Storms, etc.)
Teenage Pregnancy, Separated Families
Sexual Abuse, Human Trafficking, Assault
Foster Care, Adoption, Social Services

What Can We Do...

QUESTIONS

1. After reading through today’s lessons, what are other ways we can put our faith into action?
2. Is it okay for our “faith works” to merge with God and humanity to achieve the desires of our hearts? Why?
3. Is organ, blood, and platelet donation a responsibility of those who are able-bodied believers? Why or why not?

CLOSING DEVOTION

As you review today’s lesson, pray that God reveals to you the ways you can put your faith into action not just for personal benefit, but to help and provide for others. Remember, “Just as the body without the spirit is dead, so faith without works is also dead.” James 2:26

HOME DAILY BIBLE READINGS

August 10 – August 16

Monday	Genesis 22:9-19 (Abraham Blessed for Fearing God)
Tuesday	Joshua 2:1-7 (Spies Saved by Rahab’s Quick Actions)
Wednesday	Matthew 18:23-35 (Forgive Others Like God Forgave You)
Thursday	Titus 3:1-2, 8-11 (Devoted to Good Works, Avoiding Distractions)
Friday	Deuteronomy 6:4-9 (Works Guided by Loyalty to God)
Saturday	James 2:8-13 (Receive God’s Mercy by Showing Mercy)
Sunday	James 2:14-26 (Faith and Works Must Go Together)