



LEADER'S GUIDE – FEBRUARY 24



HIGHLIGHT: *Primary Passage from Sunday*

James 2:14-26: ¹⁴What good is it, my brothers and sisters, if someone claims to have faith but has no deeds? Can such faith save them? ¹⁵Suppose a brother or a sister is without clothes and daily food. ¹⁶If one of you says to them, “Go in peace; keep warm and well fed,” but does nothing about their physical needs, what good is it? ¹⁷In the same way, faith by itself, if it is not accompanied by action, is dead.

¹⁸But someone will say, “You have faith; I have deeds.” Show me your faith without deeds, and I will show you my faith by my deeds. ¹⁹You believe that there is one God. Good! Even the demons believe that—and shudder.

²⁰You foolish person, do you want evidence that faith without deeds is useless? ²¹Was not our father Abraham considered righteous for what he did when he offered his son Isaac on the altar? ²²You see that his faith and his actions were working together, and his faith was made complete by what he did. ²³And the scripture was fulfilled that says, “Abraham believed God, and it was credited to him as righteousness,” and he was called God’s friend. ²⁴You see that a person is considered righteous by what they do and not by faith alone.

²⁵In the same way, was not even Rahab the prostitute considered righteous for what she did when she gave lodging to the spies and sent them off in a different direction? ²⁶As the body without the spirit is dead, so faith without deeds is dead.



EXPLAIN: *To Be Reviewed before the group gathering*

In this passage, James addresses the relationship between faith and works. James’ strong language shows the importance of works in the Christian life. He uses stories of Abraham (Genesis 22) and Rahab (Joshua 2) to further illustrate that our belief will inevitably impact our behavior.



APPLY: *For Group Discussion*

1.) Read vv. 14-26 and Ephesians 2:8-10. On the surface, these passages seem to contradict each other on the topic of faith and works, but they actually compliment one another. How do you believe the Bible speaks about the relationship between faith and works? The math illustration is helpful here. We sometimes believe that Grace + Faith + Works = Salvation. But the Bible makes it clear (especially in Eph. 2) that it is $G + F = S + W$. James and Paul seem to contradict, but they actually compliment. Paul is speaking about how we are saved (vv.8-9) and then in (v. 10) he is talking about what it produces. James is speaking to believers saying that works is an inevitable byproduct of faith. HELPFUL ILLUSTRATION: Fruit on a tree does not PROVIDE life, but it is PROOF that there is life. Works does not PROVIDE life, but it is PROOF that there is life.

2.) What statements of James stood out to you and why?

3.) How does the Bible's view on works differ from that of the world's? Everything in our life says, "You must earn this through your effort." (e.g. Job, Relationships, etc.) Christ says, "You are given this through MY efforts." **In what ways do you struggle to apply this perspective to your relationship with Jesus?** We always want to put the "W" on the front side of the above equation. We feel like we need to clean our life up to receive Christ for salvation or once we accept Christ, our works are necessary to earn or keep his favor. We quickly forget that works are not to earn God's love, but because of God's love.

4.) Let's discuss the flipside of this relationship. In the life of a believer, there can be seasons where one's faith seems numb or stale or you have nagging doubts. When this happens, acts of obedience often feel like one is just going through the motions. When this happens to us, how should we respond? Feelings and faith are not the same thing. Hebrews 11:1 says, "Faith is confidence in what we hope for and assurance about what we do not see." (Or in this case, "what we do not feel"). So, if there is an absence of feeling, it doesn't mean there is an absence of faith. The strength of our faith is not found in our feelings or behavior, but in the object of our faith: Jesus Christ. Even if we don't have strong feelings compelling us to action, our faith in who Jesus is, what he has done for us, and his promise of the fruit of obedience should drive us to action. And what we realize is that when we walk out God's practices and principles in faith, we then experience the promises of God. We act ourselves back into a feeling. We just have to put ourselves in healthy rhythms and patterns that will stoke the flame of our faith. (ILLUSTRATION: Just as wind can grow a small ember into a roaring fire, so can acts of obedience. To not act on obedience because you lack feeling is to remove the wind.) It is important to remember that faith fuels obedience, but also, obedience fuels faith (John 14:21).



RESPOND: *Bringing the discussion to a point of action*

Let's personalize James message. Every one of us has an area where what we know about our faith doesn't line up with what we do. Though our works will not make God love us any more or less, it will allow us to experience the abundant life that Christ has for us.

- **What is an area in your life where your faith is not "taking action?"** (Reading my Bible, Praying, taming the tongue, fighting lust, giving, making disciples, serving, etc.)
- **Why do you think that this is an area that you struggle to be motivated in?**
- **Our growth in Christ is about progress, not perfection. How can you take one step forward this week in the above area?**

