

The Book of James:
Ancient Wisdom for Modern-Day Times
Week Five: April 7, 2024

Why do faith and action both matter?

14 What good is it, my brothers and sisters, if someone claims to have faith but has no deeds? Can such faith save them? 15 Suppose a brother or a sister is without clothes and daily food. 16 If 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? 17 In the same way, faith by itself, if it is not accompanied by action, is dead.

18 But 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. 19 You believe that there is one God. Good! Even the demons believe that—and shudder.

(James 2:14-19)

Sometimes we focus too much on right belief at the expense of right actions.
When we do, we fail to be Jesus' hands and feet.

Sometimes we focus too much on right actions at the expense of right actions.
When we do, we fail to understand Jesus' heart.

How do faith and action work together?

20 You foolish person, do you want evidence that faith without deeds is useless? 21 Was not our father Abraham considered righteous for what he did when he offered his son Isaac on the altar? 22 You see that his faith and his actions were working together, and his faith was made complete by what he did. 23 And the scripture was fulfilled that says, "Abraham believed God, and it was credited to him as righteousness," and he was called God's friend. 24 You see that a person is considered righteous by what they do and not by faith alone. 25 In 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? 26 As the body without the spirit is dead, so faith without deeds is dead.

(James 2:20-26)

Faith and action work together for God's purposes.

James gives us two examples:

1. Abraham the father: one of the most important figures in the Old Testament.
2. Rahab the prostitute: a woman and a foreigner.

No matter what our stories have been, it's our actions that show the depth of our faith in God.

How can we act in faith according to God's purposes?

We can meet the needs of those around us:

1. **Physical Needs**: with generosity and serving those who are vulnerable.
2. **Relational Needs**: with connection, hospitality, and compassion.
3. **Spiritual Needs**: with prayer and invitations to learn alongside you.

*16 "For God so loved the world, that He gave His only Son, so that everyone who believes in Him will not perish, but have eternal life."
(John 3:16)*

We know that God loves us because He took action through Jesus.
Our community will know God's love through our actions too.

Small Group Discussion Questions:

Do you naturally gravitate more towards the "heart" (belief) or the "hands" (action) when it comes to your spiritual life? Why?

Share a story of a time when you felt that God was asking you to do something different or challenging. What happened and how did that experience impact you?

Out of the three types of needs (physical, relational, and spiritual), which one do you feel most challenged to act on this week?