

# JAMES

## Faith on Display in Your Actions // James 2:14-26

**THE POINT:** What you believe is seen in what you do.

### THE BIBLE MEETS LIFE

You would assume that with so many people seeing religion as important and going to church, the ethical and moral standards of our country would be more in line with the Bible. Unfortunately, this is not the case. Some want to blame our morality issues on social media, music, movies and TV, or the opposing political party. However, the responsibility rests on us as individuals. The problem is that too many of us don't live what we claim to believe. There is a large disconnect between our belief system and our conduct. James, in his letter to the church, pointed to a better way.

► **Where have you seen faith in action?**

### JAMES 2:14-17

In James's example, though the church members said all the right things, their words were empty and meaningless. James's message to them: "faith, if it does not have works, is dead by itself." True faith is displayed in the ways we live. Otherwise, our faith is dead. It's lifeless and useless. Further, inactive faith does not merely fail to do good—it makes the situation worse. In James's example, the man sought the warmth of Christian love, but instead felt the cold of apathy. He sought food for his soul, but was instead filled with the sense that those in the church didn't care about his needs. Let us make sure that we see others as God sees them and take real steps to show the love of Christ.

► **How would you describe the connection between faith and works?**

► **What are the characteristics of a faith that is alive?**

### JAMES 2:18-20

Even the world sees that there must be a connection between what we believe and what we do. In matters of faith, this is especially important. Our greatest blessing is our relationship with God, and if we truly believe this, it will be evident in the ways we live. Faith and works are inseparable. Our works—how we live—are the demonstration of our faith. The people James addressed believed in God. James didn't correct their beliefs. In fact, he praised them for believing in God. However, simply thinking correctly about God isn't enough. Genuine faith must begin with good theology, but it doesn't stop there. Some people believe intellectually the right things, but if it doesn't lead to their wholeheartedly following Jesus, it isn't genuine, saving belief. True faith leads to a life-changing relationship with God. It is one thing to talk about God, and another thing entirely to obey God by putting that faith into practice.

► **Why are right beliefs so important?**

► **How can we demonstrate our faith to a skeptical world?**

### JAMES 2:21-26

Paul wrote that salvation comes because of God's grace through faith (Eph. 2:8-9). He also wrote that the purpose of our salvation is to do the good works that God has planned for us (Eph. 2:10). Good works are the natural result of real faith. Godly works always accompany saving faith. Likewise, James wasn't teaching that faith and works are opposing forces or that works save apart from faith. Instead, faith and works are complementary. Faith activates our works, and those works complete our faith—"Faith was active together with his works, and by works, faith was made complete" (James 2:22). Works are not what we do for salvation, it is what we do because of salvation.

► **How would you describe the connection between faith and obedience?**

► **What sometimes keeps us from living out our faith?**



# LIVE IT OUT

Unit 1 // Session 3

## ➤ CHRIST

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- Read Psalm 139:23-24: “Search me, God, and know my heart; test me and know my concerns. See if there is any offensive way in me; lead me in the everlasting way.”
- Pray asking God to expose the areas in your life where you are not living what you claim to believe. After praying, develop an action plan for life changes to help align your actions with your faith.

## ➤ COMMUNITY

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Ask a trusted friend to speak into your life and tell you how consistent you are at living your faith.

- Listen. Avoid getting defensive and prepare to make some life changes based on what you hear.

## ➤ CULTURE

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We are called to share the gospel with lost people, including (or especially) non-believing friends. It’s incredibly important that our actions line up with the things we claim to believe, and this kind of consistency is one of the most powerful ways we prove our faith is real and makes a difference.

- What are some examples of faith in action? How do your non-believing friends see your faith lived out?
- How will you use this to help your non-believing friends understand the difference Jesus could make in their lives?