

TO LIVE IS CHRIST

Faith That Works

James 2:14–26

“You see that [Abraham’s] faith and his actions were working together, and his faith was made complete by what he did.” James 2:22

Days 1 and 2: Read James 2:14–26.

1. How sincere is the person who offers nice wishes to someone in need, but does nothing to help? (vs. 16) How are such wishes like faith without deeds?

2. What words does James use to describe faith that is unaccompanied by action? (vss. 17, 20)

3. Parts of this passage seem to be in tension with other New Testament writers. Compare, for example, what James says in 2:24 (“You see that a person is justified [made right with God] by what he does and not by faith alone.”) with what Paul says in Ephesians 2:8–9 (“For it is by grace you have been saved, through faith—and this not from yourselves, it is the gift of God—not by works, so that no one can boast.”). How does the Bible say a person is saved? (Jn. 3:16; Rom. 3:21–24; Titus 3:4–7)

4. Paul and James are in fact not at odds. The Bible’s teaching on faith and deeds has been summed up this way: a person is saved by faith alone, but the faith that saves is never alone. Explore the connection between faith and works (or deeds) by looking up the following verses and writing the references in the appropriate part of the chart.

Mt. 7:16–21; Gal. 2:16; Gal. 3:10–11; 2 Pet. 1:5–9; 1 Jn. 3:17–18

SAVED BY FAITH ALONE	FAITH THAT SAVES IS NEVER ALONE

5. How do the following verses bring faith and deeds together? Jn. 6:28–29; Gal 5:6, 13; 1 Thess. 1:3; 1 Jn. 3:23.

Day 3: Read James 2:14–26.

6. What kinds of good deeds has James exhorted his readers to thus far? (For example, 1:12, 19–21, 22, 26, 27; 2:1, 8, 12–13.)
7. Good deeds fall into two categories, both of which are found in 1:27—serving others (“look after orphans and widows in their distress”), and striving for personal purity (“keep oneself from being polluted by the world”). As believers grow in good deeds of both kinds, they reflect God’s character more and more. What do we learn about God from the way he commands us to live? (Ps. 146:5–9; Is. 58:6–7; Lk. 6:35–36; 1 Pet. 1:14–16; 1 Jn. 4:7–8)
8. Often Christians err by emphasizing one category of good deeds and neglecting the other. Do you have a tendency to focus on one area more than the other? Does your church?

Day 4: Read James 2:20–24.

9. Look back at Genesis 22:1–18 for the account of Abraham and Isaac. What did Abraham actively believe as he carried out the Lord’s command? (Gen. 12:1–3; 15:3–6; Rom. 4:18–22; Heb. 11:17–19)
10. How was Abraham’s faith “made complete by what he did” (vs. 22)?

Day 5: Read James 2:25–26.

11. Read Rahab’s story in Joshua 2:1–21. What did she believe? (Josh. 2:9–11) What actions did she take based on this faith? What was the result for her of this active faith? (Josh. 6:17, 22–23)
12. In what extraordinary way did God honor this Gentile woman of faith? (Mt. 1:1, 5)
13. Consider your own life. Does the way you live demonstrate what you believe? Do you sometimes rationalize a lack of fruit in your life by pointing to grace? Do you avoid helping another person because you don’t feel particularly loving? Do you ever use kind words or even a promise of prayer to come across as compassionate, while avoiding taking action in a particular situation? Pray about a situation that may require you to act. Pray that whatever action you take would be motivated by faith and love and hope.