

March 12, 2023

3. Faith That Works—It Shows

A long time ago, in England...

A preacher happened across a friend whose horse had been accidentally killed. His horse was his chief source of livelihood. This was a devastating situation for him.

While the crowd of onlookers expressed empty words of sympathy, the preacher stepped forward and said to the loudest sympathizer, “I am sorry five pounds worth. How much are you sorry?”

That preacher’s active faith became a catalyst for growing faith rather than shrinking faith.

I catch myself too frequently thinking the faith, believing the faith, talking the faith, but taking TOO FEW action steps of faith. Do you? Why do we do that?

That is a dangerous place for me, because even if I think the faith, believe the faith, and teach the faith, if I don’t take action steps with my faith, my faith shrinks back rather than grows forward.

Faith that works—It shows!

I. DEAD faith is UNRESPONSIVE faith

James 2:14–17 (NIV) 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.

- How do you know when someone is dead?
 - When they are completely unresponsive!
- How do you know when someone’s FAITH is a DEAD?
 - When it is unresponsive to the needs of people!
 - When it is alive to “My Will” but unresponsive to God’s will.

James 2:26 (NIV) As the body without the spirit is dead, so faith without deeds is dead.

REVIEW: Last week we learned that where self gave us **birth to DEATH**, (James 1:15) God He chose **to give us birth** [to spiritual life] **through the word of truth** (James 1:18). If this happened to you it happened when by faith you **humbly accepted the word planted**

in you, which can save you. (James 1:21). The word of truth is the Gospel of Jesus, and Jesus himself.

Now, in chapter 2 James exposes **FAITH THAT DOESN'T WORK AS A BOGUS FAITH.**

I. DEAD faith is UNRESPONSIVE faith

II. **Genuine faith grows and it SHOWS**

*James 2:18(NIV) 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.*

Faith and Action are not different gifts. As if one person is strong in faith, and another is strong in actions. That is not it! Faith and actions are two sides of the same reality.

QUESTION: Is your faith so hidden that there is not enough evidence for the unbelievers in your life to think of you as a follower of Jesus?

QUESTION: And if they do know you as a follower of Jesus, does your life show that this is a good thing? Does what actually shows in your life look attractive to them?

Genuine faith grows and it SHOWS

III. **Faith and ACTIONS work TOGETHER**

A person who thinks they can separate faith from actions is deceived, and self deceived, a fool, because they are fooling themselves. James uses this zinger to drive the point home.

*James 2:19–20 (NIV) You believe that there is one God. Good! Even the demons believe that—and shudder. ²⁰ **You foolish person...***

Jesus believed demons were real. I believe demons are real.

Demons exist. What's more, you might be surprised by what does not exist! **There is no such thing as a demon who is an atheist.** Every demon knows God is real, but their brand of believing has no saving value, they are in complete rebellion against HIM.

James' point: This is "bogus" "believing". It isn't the faith that germinates with life.

Haven't we all met people who have this kind of faith? They say they are believers, but they live more like a child of hell than like a child of God. Jesus talked about this.

Luke 6:46 (NIV) "Why do you call me, 'Lord, Lord,' and do not do what I say?"

And when they come up with their excuses, by focusing on a few supposedly good things they did, Jesus replied:

Matthew 7:23 (NIV) Then I will tell them plainly, 'I never knew you. Away from me, you evildoers!'

James continues: *James 2:20-22 (NIV) 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.*

- **What does it look like when faith is made “complete” (2:22)?** Faith is complete when your “**faith and actions**” honor God “**by working together**” (2:22).
- There’s another word for incomplete faith: It is called DISOBEDIENCE. **It is the sin of omission.**

James 4:17 (NIV) If anyone, then, knows the good they ought to do and doesn't do it, it is sin for them.

Responsive, obedient faith SHOWS that the GOODNESS of Jesus is birthed, and alive inside of you, and it is growing, and showing.

Faith and actions are like the wings of a bird. There can be no real flight with only one wing.

James was not teaching that saving faith is earned by good works, but that true faith results in godly action. Jesus taught the same thing.

Matthew 7:17, 20 (NIV) Likewise, every good tree bears good fruit, but a bad tree bears bad fruit.... ²⁰ Thus, by their fruit you will recognize them.

Faith and ACTIONS work TOGETHER

IV. Actions SHOW what you really BELIEVE

What you really believe affects what you do.

James 2:15–16 (NIV) 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?

What does a person who responds like this REALLY believe (in that moment)? “I believe I will be happier in this matter if I do what I want rather than what God wants.”

They don’t say this. They just live according to the lie. To say it would expose the lie they are believing. Until they confess and repent, they remain self-deceived. **Actions SHOW what you really BELIEVE**

JAMES and JESUS both taught that GENUINE FAITH will GROW and SHOW.

*Matthew 5:14–16 (NIV) “You are the light of the world. ...¹⁶ ...let your light shine before others, **that they may see your good deeds** and glorify your Father in heaven.*

Real faith shines because real faith connects us to an unearthly source of power that shines through us to others.

That’s the picture of the oil lamp. Jesus also used the picture of a branch grafted to the vine as a life source *Jesus dwelling, abiding, remaining in you, and you dwelling, abiding, remaining in Jesus* . (John 15) “*Christ in you...the hope of glory*” (Colossians 1:27).

Here is a true story of what this can look like.

Jack had been president of a large corporation, and when he got cancer, they ruthlessly dumped him. He went through his insurance, used his life savings, and had practically nothing left. I visited him with one of my deacons, who said, "Jack, you speak so openly about the brief life you have left. I wonder if you've prepared for your life after death?"

Jack stood up, livid with rage. "You -- ---- Christians. All you ever think about is what's going to happen to me after I die. If your God is so great, why doesn't he do something about the real problems of life?" He went on to tell us he was leaving his wife penniless and his daughter without money for college. Then he ordered us out.

Later my deacon insisted we go back. We did. "Jack, I know I offended you," he said. "I humbly apologize. But I want you to know I've been working since then. Your first problem is where your family will live after you die. A realtor in our church has agreed to sell your house and give your wife his commission. I guarantee you that, if you'll permit us, some other men and I will make the house payments until it's sold. Then, I've contacted the owner of an apartment house down the street. He's offered your wife a three bedroom apartment plus free utilities and an \$850-a-month salary in return for her collecting rents and supervising plumbing and electrical repairs. The income from your house should pay for your daughter's college. I just wanted you to know your family will be cared for."

Jack cried like a baby. He died shortly thereafter, so wrapped in pain he never accepted Christ. But he experienced God's love even while rejecting him. And his widow, touched by the caring Christians, responded to the gospel message.

Source: Van Campbell, Homer, Louisiana. Leadership, Vol. 5, no. 1.

- I. DEAD faith is UNRESPONSIVE faith
- II. Genuine faith grows and it SHOWS
- III. Faith and ACTIONS work TOGETHER
- IV. Actions SHOW what you really BELIEVE

If you feel dead and unresponsive, why not ask for prayer today. Maybe you already know what's getting in your way. Ask for help. Ask for prayer. The prayer team is available.

Lord, thank you for bringing us from death to life. Thank you for making us responsive to you, help us to be more responsive to the needs of others. Help our faith to grow and to show, with our faith and actions working together. We need you Lord, to shine in us and through us. We come to you today. Help us, we pray, in Jesus name Amen.

Faith that Works

(Week 3) Group Study: James 3:1-12

“Guards Your Mouth”

SMALL TALK

1. **What was one of your “bloopers” when you said something you wish you had not?**

VIEWPOINT

2. **READ James 3:1-12.** Why is a stricter judgment placed upon teachers? (3:1)
3. What three illustrations does James use demonstrating the power of the tongue, and what do these teach us? (3:3-6)
4. What does 3:7-12 teach us about the tongue? About human nature? About hope for change? If there is hope, where is the hope found according to the illustration? (Compare this with John 15:1-5; and Matthew 15:18-19)

GETTING PERSONAL

5. When is your tongue more likely to be “set on fire by the fires of hell”?
6. What have you found helpful in controlling your tongue? In changing the source of your spring? (3:11)

MAKING PROGRESS (THIS WEEK)

Dear God, You know better than I do that the solution for “Me and My Big Mouth” is not ME—trying harder to hold my tongue or trying harder to say the right things. The real hope for “Me and My Big Mouth” is YOU. Thank you for your forgiveness, please cleanse my heart, and fill me with your life, your fresh clean living water filling me and flowing through me more. Help me to speak from the good things I store up in my heart. In Jesus Name, Amen.