

# BLUEPRINT

Sermon-Based Study Guide  
Good Shepherd Presbyterian Church  
James 2.14-26 | July 14, 2019

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## FOR A FAITH THAT WORKS

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### I. Introduction to this Study

This week we continue our study of the Book of James, one of the earliest Christian letters, which was written by none other than Jesus' half-brother! As we will see in this week's passage, receiving God's gift of salvation should bring about life transformation in our intellect, emotions, and will – in our head, heart, *and* hands!

As Warren Wiersbe writes, there is *dead* faith and *demonic* faith. May we, instead, have *dynamic* faith!

### II. Connecting with One Another

How would you define "dynamic faith"?

How would you explain to a five-year old child why we do "good works"?

### III. Study the Text

a. Read *James 2.14-26* slowly, making notes of any insights you have while reading these verses. Also jot down any questions you have.

b. Reread *James 2.14-17*.

James engages in conversation with an imaginary person within the church. What are the implied answers to the three questions he asks in these verses?

Do you agree or disagree? Why?

c. What example does James give in verses 16-17 to prove his point?

The word "good" in verse 17 could also be translated "profit" or "advantage."  
How would inserting one of those words instead affect the meaning?

d. It seems as though James writes these verses to correct a problem within the earliest Christian communities. What problem do you think he is trying to fix?

e. How does giving to the poor demonstrate the depth of our Christian faith?

f. Do you think James is suggesting that giving to the poor is a prerequisite to receiving salvation? Why or why not?

g. Reread *James 2.18-19*.

James not only challenges an only-intellectual *dead* faith, he also challenges an increasingly emotional *demonic* faith.

Why do you think he uses demons as an example? How do *demons* believe?

If demons *believe in God* and *feel something* in response, why don't they receive salvation?

h. Reread *James 2.20-24*.



James turns his attention to two examples of dynamic faith – the first being Father Abraham (who, you may or may not know, had many sons, and, as it turns out, many sons had Father Abraham).

James references Genesis 22.1-19, then quotes from seven chapters earlier in Genesis 15.6 (“Abraham believed God, and it was credited to him as righteousness”). So, which came first in Abraham’s life, faith or works?

- i. If the Apostle Paul taught that we are justified by faith alone, is James contradicting him?

After thinking through and discussing that question, engage Paul’s letter to the Ephesians, chapter 2, verses 8-10. Compare and contrast Ephesians 2 with James 2.

- j. Reread *James 2.25-26*.

James’ second example of dynamic faith is a little more surprising than Abraham. The father of the God’s people was a male, Jewish, righteous, and a friend of God. Rahab was female, Gentile, sinful, and an enemy of God’s people.

Why do you think James used such dramatically different people to illustrate his point?

- k. Why do you think Rahab’s inclusion should be encouraging to Christians today?
- l. James concludes, “As the body without the spirit is dead, so faith without deeds is dead.” What other illustrations could you use to make the same point?
- m. John Calvin said, “It is faith alone that justifies; but faith that justifies can never be alone.” Martin Luther put it this way: “If works and love do not blossom forth, it is not genuine faith, the gospel has not yet gained a foothold, and Christ is not yet rightly known.”

Spend some time reflecting on these statements. Are there any areas of your life where “the gospel has not yet gained a foothold”?

- n. If an only-intellectual faith is *dead* and a solely-emotional faith is *demonic*, what is needed for a dynamic faith?

#### IV. Pray

- a. Lift up any parts of your life where the gospel could stand to gain a stronger foothold,
- b. Ask God to empower you with a faith that loves God and loves others with your head, your heart, and your hands,
- c. Pray for our youth group wilderness adventure next week and Vacation Bible School the week after, that these opportunities would draw young people into a Christ-centered life in God’s family.

#### V. Digging Deeper

- a. Read the Parable of the Good Samaritan in Luke 10.25-37 and the Parable of the Sheep and the Goats in Matthew 25.31-46.

How do these parables compare and contrast with James’ teaching in 2.14-26?

