

## Authentic Christians Put Their Faith Into Action

Message 4 of 6 in the series: "Authentic: Life Lessons from the Book of James"

### A. James, a leader in the church in Jerusalem, wrote an open letter to believers scattered by religious persecution, instructing them on how to authentically live out their faith among unbelievers.

"This letter is from James, a **slave of God and of the Lord Jesus Christ**. I am writing to the 'twelve tribes'—Jewish believers scattered abroad. Greetings!" James 1:1 (NLT)

1. James, a half-brother of Jesus, knew how hard it can be for some people to believe Jesus is God. "When his family heard what was happening, they tried to take him away. **'He's out of his mind,'** they said." Mark 3:21 (NLT)  
  
"For **even his brothers didn't believe in him.**" John 7:5 (NLT)
2. James knew what it was like to come to faith in Jesus (really believe Jesus is the Christ, the savior of the world) and to surrender control of his life to Jesus (really trust that Jesus is Lord over all things). "He (Jesus) was buried, and he was raised from the dead on the third day, just as the Scriptures said. He was seen by Peter and then by the Twelve. After that, he was seen by more than 500 of his followers at one time... **Then he was seen by James** and later by all the apostles." 1 Corinthians 15:4-7 (NLT)  
  
"...James, Peter, and John... **were known as pillars of the church...**" Galatians 2:9a (NLT)
3. James, together with the other believers in Jerusalem, experienced a total life change through the power of the Holy Spirit, and saw how good life can be when faith is put into action. "A deep sense of awe came over them all, and the apostles performed many miraculous signs and wonders. And all the believers met together in one place and shared everything they had. They sold their property and possessions and shared the money with those in need. They worshiped together at the Temple each day, met in homes for the Lord's Supper, and shared their meals with great joy and generosity."  
  
Acts 2:43-46 (NLT)

**Life Application:** Jesus promises forgiveness of sins and a total life change to everyone who believes in Him. "For God so loved the world that he gave his one and only Son, that **whoever believes in him shall not perish but have eternal life.**" John 3:16 (NIV)

### B. James reminded his readers scattered all over the Roman Empire that no one would believe they were authentic Christ followers if they didn't put their faith into action.

"What good is it, dear brothers and sisters, if you say you have faith but don't show it by your actions? **Can that kind of faith save anyone?** Suppose you see a brother or sister who has no food or clothing, and you say, 'Good-bye and have a good day; stay warm and eat well'—but then you don't give that person any food or clothing. What good does that do? So you see, faith by itself isn't enough. Unless it produces good deeds, it is dead and useless. Now someone may argue, 'Some people have faith; others have good deeds.' But I say, 'How can you show me your faith if you don't have good deeds? I will show you my faith by my good deeds.'" James 2:14-18 (NLT)

1. We don't do good works to earn our salvation. Rather, we have been saved by God's grace through faith in Christ so we can do good works. "**God saved you by his grace when you believed.** And you can't take credit for this; it is a gift from God. Salvation is not a reward for the good things we have done, so none of us can boast about it. For we are God's masterpiece. **He has created us anew in Christ Jesus, so we can do the good things he planned for us long ago.**" Ephesians 2:8-10 (NLT)  
  
"He gave his life to free us from every kind of sin, to cleanse us, and to make us his very own people, **totally committed to doing good deeds.**" Titus 2:14 (NLT)
2. Talk is cheap! "For **there are many rebellious people, full of meaningless talk and deception...** They claim to know God, but by their actions they deny him. They are detestable, disobedient and unfit for doing anything good." Titus 1:10a & 16 (NIV)  
  
"Not everyone who calls out to me, 'Lord! Lord!' will enter the Kingdom of Heaven. **Only those who actually do the will of my Father in heaven will enter.**" Matthew 7:21 (NLT)
3. Believing in Jesus is much more than intellectual agreement with theological propositions. "You say you have faith, for **you believe that there is one God. Good for you! Even the demons believe this,** and they tremble in terror. How foolish! Can't you see that faith without good deeds is useless?"  
  
James 2:19-20 (NLT)

*Note:* Demons believe God exists, Jesus is the Son of God, Jesus has authority over them, and one day God will punish them for their rebellion. “Once when he was in the synagogue, a man possessed by a demon—an evil spirit—cried out, shouting, ‘Go away! Why are you interfering with us, Jesus of Nazareth? Have you come to destroy us? **I know who you are—the Holy One of God!**’ But Jesus reprimanded him. ‘Be quiet! Come out of the man,’ he ordered. At that, the demon threw the man to the floor as the crowd watched; then it came out of him without hurting him further.” Luke 4:33-35 (NLT)

4. Abraham demonstrated the authenticity of his faith through his obedience. “Don’t you remember that our ancestor Abraham was shown to be right with God by his actions when he offered his son Isaac on the altar? You see, **his faith and his actions worked together**. His actions made his faith complete. And so it happened just as the Scriptures say: ‘Abraham believed God, and God counted him as righteous because of his faith.’ He was even called the friend of God. So you see, we are shown to be right with God by what we do, not by faith alone.” James 2:21-24 (NLT) (*Genesis 15:6, 2 Chronicles 20:7*)

“When they arrived at the place where God had told him to go, Abraham built an altar and arranged the wood on it. Then he tied his son, Isaac, and laid him on the altar on top of the wood. And Abraham picked up the knife to kill his son as a sacrifice. At that moment the angel of the Lord called to him from heaven, ‘Abraham! Abraham!’ ‘Yes,’ Abraham replied. ‘Here I am!’ ‘Don’t lay a hand on the boy!’ the angel said. ‘Do not hurt him in any way, for now I know that you truly fear God. **You have not withheld from me even your son, your only son.**’” Genesis 22:9-12 (NLT)

5. Rahab demonstrated the authenticity of her faith by helping some Israelite spies even though it meant risking her life and forsaking everything she had ever known. “Rahab the prostitute is another example. **She was shown to be right with God by her actions** when she hid those messengers and sent them safely away by a different road.” James 2:25 (NLT)

“‘I know the Lord has given you this land,’ she told them. ‘We are all afraid of you. Everyone in the land is living in terror. For we have heard how the Lord made a dry path for you through the Red Sea when you left Egypt... No wonder our hearts have melted in fear! No one has the courage to fight after hearing such things. **For the Lord your God is the supreme God of the heavens above and the earth below.**’” Joshua 2:9-11 (NLT)

**IMPORTANT:** The object of our faith matters more than our sincerity because we can be sincerely wrong. “There is salvation in no one else! **God has given no other name under heaven by which we must be saved.**” Acts 4:12 (NLT)

6. Faith that is never put into action is as useless as a corpse. “For as the body without the spirit is dead, so **faith without works is dead** also.” James 2:26 (NKJV)

**Life Application:** “Examine yourselves to see whether you are in the faith; test yourselves. Do you not realize that Christ Jesus is in you—unless, of course, you fail the test?” 2 Corinthians 13:5 (NIV)

09-01-24 • John Schmidt [john@centeringlives.com](mailto:john@centeringlives.com)

### Connect Group Discussion Questions:

1. Why do you think putting faith into action was so important to James? Why were the Christians scattered by persecution willing to listen to him? (Mark 3:21, John 7:5, 1 Corinthians 15:4-7, Acts 2:42-47)
2. Discuss the following statements:
  - We don’t do good works to earn our salvation. Rather, we have been saved by God’s grace through faith in Christ so we can do good works. (Ephesians 2:8-10, Titus 2:14)
  - Faith that is never put into action is as useless as a corpse. (James 2:17 & 26)
  - The object of our faith matters more than our sincerity because we can be sincerely wrong. (John 14:6, Acts 4:8-13)
  - Talk is cheap! (James 2:14-16, Titus 1:10 & 16, Matthew 7:21)
  - Sin is deliberate, determined, independence from God while faith is deliberate, determined, dependence on God. (Isaiah 53:6, Hebrews 11:1 & 6)
3. How does it make you feel to know that demons believe that God exists, Jesus is the Son of God, Jesus has authority over them, and God will one day punish them for their rebellion? (James 2:19-20, Luke 4:33-35 & 8:26-33) Why is it not enough for us to say, “I believe in God.”

4. Why do you think James chose Abraham and Rahab to illustrate what authentic faith looks like in action? (James 2:21-25, Genesis 22:1-19, Joshua 2:1-24 & 6:22-23)
5. Quotations worth considering:

“The faith of Paul and Luther was a revolutionizing thing. It upset the whole life of the individual and made him into another person altogether. It laid hold on the life and brought it under obedience to Christ. It took up its cross and followed along after Jesus with no intention of going back. It said goodbye to its old friends... It had a finality about it... It turned earth into a desert and drew heaven within sight of the believing soul. It realigned all life's actions and brought them into accord with the will of God... It made him little and God big and Christ unspeakably dear. All this and more happened to a man when he received the faith that justifies.”

A.W. Tozer in *The Root of the Righteous*

“Abraham was not saved by faith plus works, but by a faith that works.” Unknown

“Every Bible should be bound in shoe leather.” D. L. Moody