

Sermon Notes and Discussion Questions: Faith Works

What typically motivates you to action - personal conviction, outside pressure, guilt, duty, other? Why?

Has there been a situation in your life where you did not act and you wish you had? What happened?

On the times you don't act, what typically keeps you from it?

When faith is authentic, it is demonstrated in loving actions. Over a billion people in the world live on less than \$1 a day. Every day, over 26,000 children die of either hunger or preventable diseases. We do not want to merely listen to the word. We want to do what it says.

HAVE A VOLUNTEER READ JAMES 2:14-19.

What do the questions in verse 14 imply about faith without works?

What does James mean by faith that is dead in verse 17 (see also verse 14)?

In what way should the lifestyle of a Christian verify his or her faith?

How might James' words in verse 14 and 17 cause conflict in the hearts of some who profess to be Christians?

Do you think James was meaning to cause people to doubt their salvation here? What was his intent?

The word "faith" has the sense of trust in and commitment to Christ for salvation. The openness to receive God's grace brings redemption, and the redeemed live out that grace. The term "works" refers to good deeds—actions on others' behalf that demonstrate Christ's love (see v. 8). James is not contrasting immature faith with mature faith or nominal faith with devoted faith. He's contrasting faith with nothing. It is possible to claim to have a faith that saves and not have faith at all.

How do verses 15-16 help you understand the faith/works balance of the Christian life?

How can you know James meant this as more than simply an illustration (see 1:27-2:14)?

From these verses, how would you define faith in Jesus?

How can both of the following statements be true at the same time: "Good works are not the means to salvation" and "Acts of mercy are necessary evidence of salvation"?

James 2:15-16 echoes Jesus' teaching concerning people who help the needy and people who do not. In Matthew 25:31-46, Jesus taught that not serving people in need is the same as not serving

Him, and vice versa. As followers of Christ who seek to honor Him, we are called to serve Christ by serving and ministering to those in need. Ultimately, deed-less faith is useless faith. Faith is not mere intellectual assent. Faith is not simply emotional response. Faith involves willful obedience.

APPLICATION

What are some of the things our church is already doing to minister to people in need?

Name one new way you know you need to put faith into practice.

If faith in your heart is evident in the fruit of your life, then what is your faith like right now?

PRAYER

Thank God that acts of mercy are not means to salvation, but a natural overflow of salvation. Ask Him to show you new ways you can demonstrate your faith by works that show His love to a world in need.