

Fleshed Out: A Journey Through the New Testament Letter of James

“The Relationship Between Faith and Deeds”

Discuss

In many areas of our lives, it is obvious to us that if we want something to change then we must take some type of action. This is the same in our spiritual lives. Do we really have faith in something if we do not take action? James makes the case that faith is of little value without action, and God-talk without God-acts is not of God at all.

“Dear friends, do you think you’ll get anywhere in this if you learn all the right words but never do anything? Does merely talking about faith indicate that a person really has it? For instance, you come upon an old friend dressed in rags and half-starved and say, ‘Good morning, friend! Be clothed in Christ! Be filled with the Holy Spirit!’ and walk off without providing so much as a coat or a cup of soup—where does that get you? Isn’t it obvious that God-talk without God-acts is outrageous nonsense?” ([James 2:14-17 Msg](#))

- Has there ever been a time in your life that you decided to take action and got the outcome you wanted?
- Why do you think James is concerned that Christians can easily fall into the trap of having “faith” that is not followed by action?
- Is there any area of your life where what you believe does not align with your actions? What can you do to make sure that your faith is in alignment with your deeds?

James anticipates what the next argument could be. If it’s all about what we do, then why would someone need faith? Simply consistently doing good deeds would equal real authentic faith, right? Not at all! We can do all types of good deeds like feeding the hungry, housing the homeless and caring for the poor, but still have an incomplete faith if we are not in an active, fruitful relationship with Jesus. There must be a balance between what we believe and what we do.

“I can already hear one of you agreeing by saying, ‘Sounds good. You take care of the faith department, I’ll handle the works department.’ Not so fast. You can no more show me your works apart from your faith than I can show you my faith apart from my works. Faith and works, works and faith, fit together hand in glove.” ([James 2:18. MSG](#))

- Do you have a natural tendency towards faith or towards deeds? How can you ensure that both are working together in a balanced way in your life?
- What are some ways you can put your faith into action at Meck? What is a step you can take towards making your faith evident by serving others?

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If what you call faith has virtually no impact on how you live, then you do not have anything that can really be called faith. When knowledge and experience and truth flow in, but nothing flows out into your real life through action, you begin to spiritually dwindle away. And you also fail to extend grace to people. James wants us to have a faith that results in good deeds; a life marked by Christ in both words and actions. A faith that changes you from the inside out.

“Wasn’t our ancestor Abraham ‘made right with God by works’ when he placed his son Isaac on the sacrificial altar? Isn’t it obvious that faith and works are yoked partners, that faith expresses itself in works? That the works are ‘works of faith’? The full meaning of ‘believe’ in the Scripture sentence, ‘Abraham believed God and was set right with God,’ includes his action. It’s that weave of believing and acting that got Abraham named ‘God’s friend.’ Is it not evident that a person is made right with God not by a barren faith but by faith fruitful in works?”

“The same with Rahab, the Jericho harlot. Wasn’t her action in hiding God’s spies and helping them escape—that seamless unity of believing and doing—what counted with God? The very moment you separate body and spirit, you end up with a corpse. Separate faith and works and you get the same thing: a corpse.” ([James 2:21-26, MSG](#))

- Reflect on when you were younger in your faith: are there obvious changes that have come as a result of you trusting God as your Leader?
- Do you possess the type of faith that is more than just knowledge, and more than just helping people? Do you have the type of faith that changes who you are on the inside and is evident because of your actions?

Next Steps

All you must do is give God all of you. Are you ready to do that? Are you ready to get rid of any resemblance of a cold lifeless relationship with God, and trade it in for a deeply real and authentic life-giving, life-renewing and life-changing relationship with God?

August 8: [Backpack Drive](#)

August 11: [The Grounds Online Book Club: A Voice in the Wind](#)

Daily: [Training Camp](#)

Continued Reading

Read [Hebrews 11](#).

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Prayer

God, I know what is true. I believe. I've always believed. I also know that I have not always been yours. But I want to be. I do not want to just know *about* You, I want to *know* You and live for You. I want You to have my heart and I want to live for You like someone who has truly given You their heart. Amen.