

JULY 27, 2025

SERIES 2: FAITH PASSAGES

**A DYNAMIC DUO**

## **LESSON 2.4**

### **FOCUS VERSE**

**James 2:14**

What doth it profit, my brethren, though a man say he hath faith, and have not works? can faith save him?

### **LESSON TEXT**

**Genesis 22:1–14; James 2:14–26**

### **TRUTH ABOUT GOD**

God calls us to put our faith into action.

### **TRUTH FOR MY LIFE**

I will demonstrate my faith through my works.

### **Thinking about Last Week:**

Have students refer to their Daily Devotional Guide to answer the following questions:

1. What most affected you as you read through the Lesson Text and the Biblical Insights?
2. How did it shape your prayers and thoughts throughout the week?
3. Do you feel you grew closer to the Lord this past week? Why or why not?

### **TEACHING OUTLINE**

**Icebreaker:** If you could have been born in any family in the Bible, which family would it have been?

**Lesson Connection:** Share the Lesson Connection. (I)

#### **I. THE DYNAMIC DUO OF FAITH AND WORKS**

A. The Danger of Faith without Works

B. The Power of Faith with Works

» *If Peter walked into our church this Sunday, would he feel right at home? What if he heard our typical altar call—would the instruction he heard match what he said in Acts 2?*

C. I Will Demonstrate My Faith through My Works (V)

» *Why do you think the majority of Jewish society rejected Jesus even after witnessing so many marvelous miracles?*

#### **II. THE FAITHFULNESS OF ABRAHAM**

A. God Challenged Abraham's Faith

» *Who is your favorite Bible character included in the Hall of Faith Heroes in Hebrews? Which name are you surprised was not included?*

B. Abraham Proved to Be Faithful

» *Can you think of any reason it would make sense for God to call Abraham to offer Isaac?*

C. I Will Seek to Be Found Faithful When Tested

» *What types of sacrifice has God required from you in your walk with Him?*

## **Internalizing the Message (I)**

### **Prayer Focus**

Lead the group in prayer and consider the following topics of focus:

- For God to help us become doers of the Word and not hearers only
- For God to give us the confidence to stand when life challenges our faith

## **LESSON CONNECTION**

*A supplemental image is available in the Resource Kit. (I)*

Topeka, Kansas, is well known in American history for multiple reasons. In Topeka the events that led to the famous Brown v. Board of Education case occurred, which resulted in the desegregation of American schools. Topeka was also the location of the Bible school where Charles Fox Parham and his students believed and taught that speaking in tongues was the initial sign of Holy Ghost baptism, helping to spark the modern Pentecostal movement.

In this same city, Charles Sheldon served as the pastor of Central Congregational Church during the closing years of the nineteenth century. In 1896, he decided to try something different during the Sunday night services. Instead of a traditional sermon, he began reading a novel he was writing by presenting one chapter each week to the congregation. The story became so popular that soon the church was full of people wanting to find out about what would happen next. Eventually the book would be published with the title *In His Steps*, and it remains a popular reading assignment in many Christian schools today.

The story is set in fictional Raymond, a railroad town in the Eastern United States. It opens with the main character, Reverend Henry Maxwell, pastor of First Church of Raymond, sitting in his home on Friday afternoon preparing his Sunday sermon. When his efforts to concentrate are interrupted by a panhandler, the pastor brushes him aside and gets back to what he considers a more important activity.

On Sunday morning the same man shows up to service and addresses the congregation. He then immediately collapses and dies a few days later. Reverend Maxwell is affected deeply by these events and begins to question his selfish behavior. He challenges his congregation with a question that causes a revival in the lives of virtually everyone in the town: what would Jesus do? Inspired by this simple, yet profound question, the members of Central Congregational Church begin to look for ways to use their position in the community to bring about changes that will form Raymond into a place God desires it to be.

What would Jesus do? We would still do well to consider that provoking question because one of the essential components of true biblical theology should focus on what we believe and what we do. Living for God is much more than simply listening to the preached Word of God on Sunday mornings; we must respond and follow what the Word of God calls us to do. When God's Word calls us to repent, we must repent. When God's Word calls us to love our neighbor and forgive those who hurt us, we must hear and heed. We would do well to enter every service asking ourselves two questions: what does God want me to know? What does God want me to do?

## **BIBLE LESSON**

### **I. THE DYNAMIC DUO OF FAITH AND WORKS**

#### **A. The Danger of Faith without Works**

Peanut butter and jelly. Coffee and donuts. Rest and relaxation. Some things seem destined to always go together. The same should be true of faith and works. Almost nine hundred years ago a man commonly referred to as Saint Bernard of Clairvaux wrote, "Hell is full

of good wishes or desires.” While you may not have heard of this man, you likely have heard the contemporary equivalent of his saying: “the road to Hell is paved with good intentions.” Neither of these quotes are from the Word of God because they are not exactly accurate. A person being cast into outer darkness, being eternally separated from God, is not simply the end result of good intentions but rather the direct result of sin.

Likewise, we understand that good works alone cannot earn us entrance into that beautiful gate cut from a single pearl. We can never be good enough to purchase our own salvation because, even on our best day, the Bible declares all our righteousness as nothing more than “filthy rags” (Isaiah 64:6). It is impossible to do enough good deeds to erase the stain of one single sin. We must apply the gospel to our lives through the new-birth experience because neither good works nor good intentions are enough to save us.

This fact is demonstrated throughout the Word of God. If Noah had the faith to believe it was going to rain but refused to build the ark, he would have drowned. If Peter had answered the question, “Men and brethren, what shall we do?” by explaining that simply changing their mind about Jesus was enough for salvation, the people may have gone home with a repentance experience, but they would not have been born again. (See Acts 2:36–39.)

## **B. The Power of Faith with Works**

However, faith combined with works releases the power of God. Faith and works are both involved in all elements of obeying the gospel of God. (See II Thessalonians 1:8; I Peter 4:17.) We must do more than have a change of mind about our sinful state; we must repent of our sins by turning from our old life. It is not enough to feel sorry for past mistakes; we must quit sinning.

For those who gathered to be baptized by John the Baptist, he demanded they “bring forth therefore fruits worthy of repentance” (Luke 3:8). Jesus taught the same doctrine when He instructed the woman caught in adultery to “go, and sin no more” (John 8:11). Repentance is how we obey the death of Jesus. We must have faith to believe that His death on the cross of Calvary was sufficient to pay our debt to sin, and we must do the work of turning from sin.

After we have repented of our sin, we respond to Jesus’ burial by being baptized in the name of Jesus Christ. (See Romans 6:4.) When the first Gentiles were brought into the New Testament church in Acts 10, Peter did not just suggest they be baptized; rather, he “commanded them to be baptized in the name of the Lord” (Acts 10:48).

Our new birth is not complete without Spirit baptism. In His supreme wisdom, God provided us an undeniable sign that we have been filled with His Spirit. Multiple experiences in life can make the hair stand up on our neck or give us moments of joy or a sense of peace. However, only the baptism of the Holy Ghost allows us to worship God in a language we have never learned as we declare “the wonderful works of God” (Acts 2:11). That experience involves a level of faith in the Word of God combined with surrendering our whole self to Him. Faith without works is dead, but the combination of faith and works produces the new birth.

*If Peter walked into our church this Sunday, would he feel right at home? What if he heard our typical altar call—would the instruction he heard match what he preached in Acts 2?*

## **C. I Will Demonstrate My Faith through My Works**

Just as faith apart from obedience will not result in salvation, our walk with God after the new birth is equally dependent upon the marriage of faith and works. If Jesus had only declared His identity with words, the statements He made would have been true, but the opportunity to prove their accuracy may have been lost. The Bible declares: “Jesus . . . went about doing good” (Acts 10:38).

When John the Baptist sent messengers asking whether Jesus really was the Messiah, Jesus offered the works He had done as evidence: “Go your way, and tell John what things ye have seen and heard; how that the blind see, the lame walk, the lepers are cleansed, the deaf hear, the dead are raised, to the poor the gospel is preached” (Luke 7:22).

*Why do you think the majority of Jewish society rejected Jesus even after witnessing so many marvelous miracles?*

The Book of James contains the most notable commentary on this subject. James asked these rhetorical questions: “What doth it profit, my brethren, though a man say he hath faith, and have not works? can faith save him?” (James 2:14). James then gave a very practical example to illustrate his point. If we encounter a brother or sister needing clothing and food and say, “Depart in peace, be ye warmed and filled” without offering practical help, it is of no use (James 2:16). In summary, the Word of God declares in clear terms: “Even so faith, if it hath not works, is dead, being alone” (James 2:17).

**Teacher Option:** *A supplemental video is available in the Resource Kit. (V)*

## **II. THE FAITHFULNESS OF ABRAHAM**

### **A. God Challenged Abraham’s Faith**

To see faith in real life, let us look at the “father of the faithful” based on Paul’s description of Abraham as “the father of all them that believe” (Romans 4:11). The first eleven chapters of the Book of Genesis chronicle approximately two thousand years. In those chapters we read about Adam and Eve, the story of Noah and the Flood, and how God confused the languages because of humanity’s disobedience in building the Tower of Babel.

We see some detail, but the Bible paints in rather broad brushstrokes until we reach chapter twelve where we are introduced to a man named Abram and his wife Sarai. The next fourteen chapters are devoted exclusively to that one man and his family. If we add in the portion of the Bible dedicated to Abraham’s son, grandson, and great-grandson, we see a total of thirty-nine chapters devoted to this one extended family.

No surprise Abraham is celebrated in God’s Hall of Faith in Hebrews 11: “By faith Abraham, when he was called to go out into a place which he should after receive for an inheritance, obeyed; and he went out, not knowing whither he went” (Hebrews 11:8). Abraham was called, and then he obeyed. Abraham combined faith with works. If he had sat around his entire life bragging about God speaking to him and explaining how much he believed God’s promise without ever leaving his hometown, his spoken faith would have been dead words.

But to be proven faithful required more than one action. Abraham left his hometown, separated from his entire family (including his nephew Lot), and received the promised son named Isaac. Then the Lord challenged Abraham’s faith yet again with a call that must have been incredibly difficult to hear: “Take now thy son, thine only son Isaac, whom thou lovest, and get thee into the land of Moriah; and offer him there for a burnt offering upon one of the mountains which I will tell thee of” (Genesis 22:2).

*Who is your favorite Bible character inducted in the Hall of Faith Heroes in Hebrews? Whose name are you surprised was not included?*

### **B. Abraham Proved to Be Faithful**

No one can truly understand the anguish he felt to offer up his own son to God as a sacrifice. Abraham must have thought, *God, this did not make sense. Is this really Your plan? Your nature?* Yet Abraham’s response may be one of the most impressive examples of faith in God we read in the entire Bible. Consider the test of Abraham’s faith. He had waited approximately twenty-five years for his promised son to be miraculously born. He had received the promise from God that through Isaac all nations of the earth shall be blessed. Then God said to sacrifice his promised son, Isaac. Do not underestimate what this means: Abraham would have to lay his son on an altar and kill him as a sacrifice to God.

*Can you think of any reason it would make sense for God to call Abraham to offer Isaac?*

How could Abraham do something so barbaric? Offering Isaac directly conflicted with the promises God had given him. But there are

two reasons for those concerns. First, Abraham loved Isaac, but he loved God more. One of the main issues for Abraham was whether he loved the promise (Isaac) more than the promise keeper (God). Abraham passed the test by his willingness to sacrifice his son unto the one who gave him his son.

Secondly, Abraham had enough faith and trust that if he followed what God told him to do, the Lord was able to prove Himself faithful. Again we discover insight in the Book of Hebrews that helps explain Abraham's thought process. The Bible explains Abraham reasoned that if God had promised all the nations of the earth would be blessed through Isaac, then when he followed God's instructions and sacrificed his son, "God was able to raise him up, even from the dead" (Hebrews 11:19). That is certainly faith with works. But that resurrection miracle was unnecessary because as Abraham lifted the knife to sacrifice Isaac, the Lord stopped him and provided a ram as a sacrifice in place of Isaac, a beautiful Old Testament foreshadowing of our Savior, the Lord Jesus Christ.

### **C. I Will Seek to Be Found Faithful When Tested**

Today we are faced with the same choice as every saint of God who has come before us. Unlike Noah, we will probably not be asked to build a large boat out of gopher wood, and we certainly should not expect God to call us to sacrifice our children. However, we must be mindful that living for God always has and always will require some level of sacrifice.

Only by a combination of faith with works is it possible to please God. The Book of James is often called the New Testament companion to the Old Testament Book of Proverbs. We are encouraged to be "doers of the word, and not hearers only." If we only hear the word without taking proper action, we are guilty of deceiving our own selves (James 1:22). This same principle can be applied to believing without taking action—faith without works.

In each of our lives, we must make the decision to allow the Word of God—not our opinion of ourselves or the trends of society—to be the mirror whereby we evaluate our actions and motives to ensure we are not guilty of the description Jesus gave in Luke 9:62: "No man, having put his hand to the plough, and looking back, is fit for the kingdom of God." A proper combination of faith and works will ensure we endure to the end and obtain salvation.

*What types of sacrifice has God required from you in your walk with Him?*

### **INTERNALIZING THE MESSAGE**

*A supplemental image is available in the Resource Kit. (I)*

The year 1955 was significant. America had endured the Great Depression, experienced the thrill of victory in World War II, and found itself one decade into the Cold War with what was then known as the Soviet Union. President Eisenhower sent the first military advisors to Vietnam, and in that same year, a woman named Rosa Parks refused to give up her seat on a bus in Montgomery, Alabama, an event that sparked the Civil Rights Movement and inspired Martin Luther King, Jr.

Also in 1955 a recently retired man sat on his front porch and watched as his Social Security check was delivered to his mailbox. His life had been difficult. When Harland was only six years old, his father had died, causing young Harland to take the lead in caring for his younger brothers and sisters when their mother entered the workforce. He had dropped out of school in the sixth grade and held a wide variety of jobs since then: a railroad worker, a tire salesman, an unsuccessful politician, and others.

At the age of sixty-five, all he seemed to have to show for his efforts was the promise of another Social Security check being delivered. He went to the mailbox, retrieved his check, and thought to himself, *Is this all my life is going to be, just sitting on the front porch waiting for my next check to arrive?*

The thought was discouraging. Harland decided to pause and write down all the blessings in his life, listing everything, even the small things. You could say he was counting his blessings, naming them one by one. He wrote that he was the only person in the world who knew his mother's recipe for fried chicken, which included eleven different herbs and spices. That day he decided to become a doer.

He visited a local restaurant and asked if he could get a job cooking chicken. Soon his chicken became the most popular item on the menu.

Later Harland opened his own restaurant, which soon became a string of restaurants we now know as Kentucky Fried Chicken. He sold to a national organization for millions of dollars and served as their public representative until his death in 1980 at the age of ninety. All this became possible when “Colonel Sanders” refused to simply sit on the porch waiting to receive; he decided to do something with what he already had.

If Colonel Sanders realized his recipe and his fried chicken were gifts, and if his decision to do something with that knowledge allowed him to achieve fame in our society, what can the church of the living God do if we will become doers of the Word instead of hearers only?

### **Prayer Focus**

Lead the group in prayer and consider the following topics of focus:

- For God to help us become doers of the Word and not hearers only
- For God to give us the confidence to stand when life challenges our faith