

Make Your Faith Count - James 2:14-18 (NLT)

Faith isn't measured by what we know...

It's measured by how we live.

"Faith is invisible...until it shows up in our decisions."

Examples:

"I've been blessed to spend over 30 years building a business, helping thousands of families, training leaders and serving in ministry.

One thing I've learned...

Everybody says they believe in hard work...

until the alarm clock goes off.

Everybody believes in generosity...

until it's time to write the check.

Everybody believes in forgiveness...

until someone hurts them.

Everybody believes God can do miracles...

until they're the one facing the impossible.

Real faith isn't tested when life is easy.

Real faith is revealed when life gets difficult."

James 2:14-18 (NLT): ¹⁴ 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?

¹⁵ Suppose you see a brother or sister who has no food or clothing,

¹⁶ 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?

17 So you see, faith by itself isn't enough. Unless it produces good deeds, it is dead and useless.

18 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 asks one of the most uncomfortable questions in the entire Bible...

"What good is your faith if nobody can see it?"

1) Real Faith Changes You (Productive)

Before faith changes your circumstances... it first changes YOU.

Before & After Examples:

- **Our attitude before Christ...**

Romans 8:28 (NLT): ²⁸ And we know that God causes everything to work together^[a] for the good of those who love God and are called according to his purpose for them.

- **Our speech before Christ...**

Ephesians 4:29 (NLT): ²⁹ Don't use foul or abusive language. Let everything you say be good and helpful, so that your words will be an encouragement to those who hear them.

- **Our priorities before Christ...**

Matthew 6:33 (ESV): ³³ But seek first the kingdom of God and his righteousness, and all these things will be added to you.

- Our marriage before Christ...

Colossians 3:13 (NLT): ¹³ Make allowance for each other's faults, and forgive anyone who offends you. Remember, the Lord forgave you, so you must forgive others.

- Our work ethic before Christ...

Colossians 3:23-24 (NIV): ²³ Whatever you do, work at it with all your heart, as working for the Lord, not for human masters, ²⁴ since you know that you will receive an inheritance from the Lord as a reward. It is the Lord Christ you are serving.

Personal Example:

“When Donna and I first got married... Victorville... Broke... Tithing...”

“When Donna and I sold our home in RC and we wanted to semi-retire down by the beach...” We aren't the same people today!!!

Questions We Should Ask Ourselves?

“If Jesus has been living inside of me for ten years...

Why do I still talk like everybody else?

Why do I still panic like everybody else?

Why do I still gossip like everybody else?”

Faith changes us from the inside out.

John 15:5 (NLT): ⁵ “Yes, I am the vine; you are the branches. Those who remain in me, and I in them, will produce much fruit. For apart from me you can do nothing.

We can't make the changes we need to make on our own.

(Practical – Prayer, Bible Time, Church, Etc.)

2) Real Faith Serves Others (Practical)

We all have the 3 T's: Our Time, Our Talent & Our Treasure

Lay them down at the feet of Jesus and ask Him how they are to be used for the Kingdom!!! Everybody wants to tell you how to use them, but you and I answer to an audience of 1...

We don't want good plans, we want God's Plans!!!

Before & After Personal Examples:

Church – Last one to arrive, first one to leave.

I listen to Christian Radio – I don't need church.

It was all about me, me, me! My wants, my desires and my needs!

Today - Building Discipleship Groups.

Serving at church. Going on mission trips.

Meeting clients who later became believers.

Helping the widows and the orphans.

Picking up trash and ministering to the homeless.

Being available. Being ready. By saying "YES!"

Let's choose to be thermostat, not a thermometer!!!

"We are blessed... to be a blessing."

"God never blesses us just so we can become comfortable.

He blesses us so we can become useful."

Matthew Miles – Serving... 10 Pictures...

Who around you needs...

- encouragement?
- forgiveness?
- a meal?
- financial coaching?
- prayer?
- an invitation to church?

James says don't just pray...

Be part of God's answer. (Matthew West Song – Do Something!!!)

3) Real Faith Influences Others (Provable)

Examples:

Your children are watching.

Your grandchildren are watching.

Your coworkers are watching.

Your neighbors are watching.

Your clients are watching.

Your co-workers are watching.

The question isn't...

“Do they know you're a Christian?”

The question is...

“Would they want your Jesus?”

Our Lives Are Preaching Right Now!!!

What Is Your Life Saying???

Matthew 5:16 (NLT): ¹⁶ In the same way, let your good deeds shine out for all to see, so that everyone will praise your heavenly Father.

**“Long after you’re gone...
your faith keeps speaking.”**

**The Bible gives us an entire chapter of examples of this in Hebrews 11.
We Call it the “Hall of Faith!”**

Hebrews 11:1-2 NLT - Faith shows the reality of what we hope for; it is the evidence of things we cannot see. 2 Through their faith, the people in days of old earned a good reputation.

And every single example in that chapter is followed by an ACTION:

By faith Abraham WENT.

By faith Noah BUILT.

By faith Moses LEFT.

By faith Rahab WELCOMED.

By faith David FOUGHT.

Their faith wasn't just believed, but was PROVEN IN THEIR ACTION, it was shown.

And 2,000 years later, the fingerprints of their faith are still all over the pages of Scripture.

If someone was to write about your faith in 2000 years, would they have anything to write about?

“What will your children & grandchildren remember about your faith?”

CONCLUSION:

“I don’t want anybody leaving here today thinking...

‘I need to work harder.’

That’s not the Gospel.

The Gospel is...

Jesus already did the work.

We don’t work FOR salvation.

We work FROM salvation.”

Ephesians 2:8-10 (NLT): ⁸ God saved you by his grace when you believed. And you can’t take credit for this; it is a gift from God. ⁹ Salvation is not a reward for the good things we have done, so none of us can boast about it. ¹⁰ 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.

You are NOT saved BY good works.

You could feed every hungry person in the world, and it would not get you into heaven.

You are saved BY grace THROUGH faith.

But watch verse 10, you are saved FOR good works.

The order matters.

Not saved BY works. Saved FOR works.

Good works are not the ROOT of your salvation.

Good works are the FRUIT of your salvation.

Jesus already did the work of salvation.

Now He's inviting you to walk in the works He's already prepared for you. THAT is how your faith counts.

Recap:

Real Faith...

- **Changes Me.**
- **Serves Others.**
- **Influences the World.**

Altar Call

So what about you? Do you have a personal relationship with Jesus?

1 - If today was your last day on earth, do you know where you would spend eternity?

Well, I thought I was a pretty good person so hopefully God would see that my good outweighed my bad.

Romans 3:23 says “For everyone has sinned; and we fall short of God’s glorious standard.” (Sin = Miss the Mark)

I had to ask myself?

Ever told a lie...

Ever took something that wasn’t mine...

Ever looked at a woman with lust.

2 - Do you know what the penalty is for just one sin?

The payment for just one sin is death.

Romans 6:23 says “For the wages of sin is death, but the free gift of God is eternal life through Christ Jesus our Lord.”

This is depressing Curt, what’s the good news?

3 - Do you know what Jesus did for us?

He paid the price for our sins by dying on the cross.

John 3:16 says, “For this is how God loved the world: He gave his one and only Son, so that everyone who believes in him will not perish but have eternal life.”

Romans 5:8 says, “But God demonstrates his own love towards us, in that while we were still sinners, Christ died for us.”

4 - Do you know that God wants to give you a gift? The free gift of eternal life.

Romans 6:23 says “but the free gift of God is eternal life through Christ Jesus our Lord.”

Eternal life is a gift of God because he loves us! This gift of eternal life is received by believing in Jesus Christ alone. Salvation is not a reward for the good things that we have done.

Ephesians 2:8 says, "God saved you by his grace when you believed. And you can't take credit for this; it is a gift from God."

5 – So I decided to put my faith in Jesus Christ and I received the free gift of eternal life!

Romans 10:9-10 says, "if you openly declare that Jesus is Lord, and believe in your heart that God raised him from the dead, you will be saved. For it is by believing in your heart that you are made right with God and it is by openly declaring your faith that you are saved."

So, I am going to give you that same opportunity today...

GOD LOVES YOU SO MUCH!!!

HE WANTS A PERSONAL RELATIONSHIP WITH YOU!!!

MAKE YOUR FAITH COUNT!!! PUT YOUR FAITH IN JESUS!!!

John 14:6 (NLT) says: "Jesus told him, 'I am the way, the truth, and the life. No one can come to the Father except through me.'"

1,2,3... Raise your hands all over this building!!!

(Be mindful of the moment)

Prayer:

Jesus,

I know that I've sinned against you. Thank you for taking the punishment that I deserve so that I may be forgiven. I believe you died on the cross and rose from the dead to save me. I repent for all of my sins and I asked for your forgiveness. I place my trust in you for salvation. I confess you as my Lord and Savior. I surrender my life to you Jesus. Help me live for you for the rest of my life. Thank you for your wonderful grace. I receive, by faith, your gift of forgiveness and eternal life. Make My Faith Count!

In Jesus name, I pray.

Amen.

Optional:

Christians, maybe today you realize...

I've been wearing the Jesus jersey...

I'm on the team...

but I haven't been in the game.

Maybe you've believed in Jesus...

but your faith has never become visible.

Maybe today your faith has grown cold.

The beautiful news is...

Jesus doesn't condemn dead faith.

He resurrects it.

If He can raise Lazarus...

He can raise your passion.

He can restore your purpose.

He can reignite your love for Him.”

If that’s you, I want you to raise your hands right now, so I can pray for you!!!

Prayer:

Heavenly Father,

We come before You with humble hearts, asking You to forgive us for the times we’ve held back what belongs to You. Forgive us for wasting our time, hiding our talents, and withholding our treasure instead of investing them into Your Kingdom.

Lord, we surrender everything to You today. Open our eyes to see where You want us to serve, who You want us to love, and how You want us to use every gift, every opportunity, and every resource You’ve entrusted to us.

Fill us with courage to obey, wisdom to discern Your will, and passion to live for what matters most. May our lives bring glory to Jesus and help advance Your Kingdom until the day we stand before You.

In Jesus’ mighty name,

Amen.