

GOD



LIFE

LIFE GOD'S WAY, ACCORDING TO
+ JAMES +

3



YES, NO & MAYBE

1. It bothers me when I see the number of homeless encampments growing.
2. Many of the poor people today are in that situation because of choices they have made, such as not studying in school, not applying themselves, and even drugs.
3. When people drone on about their problems, I get a bit frustrated.
4. If you aren't involved in some sort of ministry, you don't actually have faith.
5. God is more concerned with works than worship.



DIG DEEPER

● **READ James 2:14-26** (NIV)

14 What good is it, my brothers and sisters, if someone claims to have faith but has no deeds? Can such faith save them? 15 Suppose a brother or a sister is without clothes and daily food. 16 If one of you says to them, "Go in peace; keep warm and well fed," but does nothing about their physical needs, what good is it? 17 In the same way, faith by itself, if it is not accompanied by action, is dead.

18 But someone will say, "You have faith; I have deeds."

Show me your faith without deeds, and I will show you my faith by my deeds. 19 You believe that there is one God. Good! Even the demons believe that—and shudder.

20 You foolish person, do you want evidence that faith without deeds is useless? 21 Was not our father Abraham considered righteous for what he did when he offered his son Isaac on the altar? 22 You see that his faith and his actions were working together, and his faith was made complete by what he did. 23 And the scripture was fulfilled that says, "Abraham believed God, and it was credited to him as righteousness," and he was called God's friend. 24 You see that a person is considered righteous by what they do and not by faith alone.

25 In the same way, was not even Rahab the prostitute considered righteous for what she did when she gave lodging to the spies and sent them off in a different direction? 26 As the body without the spirit is dead, so faith without deeds is dead.

+ 15 daily food - In the Lord's Prayer (Matt. 6:11), you may recall the request for God to "give us this day our daily bread." That request was more likely understood as, "give us today enough bread for tomorrow," and held an understanding that the "us" meant the believers, so that they might have bread to give to those in need, not simply a prayer for one's own food.

+ 16 Go in peace - Common Jewish farewell (Judges 18:6; 1 Sam. 1:17; 20:42; 2 Sam. 15:9). This is a veiled prayer for God to provide their needs. It is an OT idiom for God's provision (cf. Judg. 18:6; 1 Sam. 1:17; 20:42; 2 Sam. 15:9). It reflects a shallow, flippant response, much like our "I will pray for you" when used in an insincere manner.

● What does it say about God that He would not want you to say you will pray for someone if you don't really have emotional feelings about it?



DIG DEEPER...CONTINUED

✦ **16 keep warm and well fed** - θερμαινομαι [thermainomai] as in John 18:18. “Warm yourselves.” Χορταζω [Chortazō] was originally used for pasturing cattle, but came to be used of men also as here. “Feed yourselves” (because the Greek is in the middle voice here). Instead of warm clothes and satisfying food they get only cold words to look out for themselves.

● Why do you think God cares so much about people who can’t seem to clothe and feed themselves?

✦ **18 Show me your faith without deeds** - The point lies in χωρις [chōris], which means not “without,” but “apart from the works that properly belong to it and should characterize it” (Hort). James challenges the objector to do this. **And I will show you my faith by my deeds** - (καγω σοι δειξω εκ των εργαων μου την πιστιν [kagō soi deixō ek tōn ergōn mou tēn pistin]). It is not faith or works, but proof of real faith (live faith vs. dead faith). The mere profession of faith with no works or profession of faith shown to be alive by works. James is not here discussing “works” (ceremonial works) as a means of salvation as Paul in Gal. 3 and Rom. 4, but works as proof of faith.

● How do we do these works without becoming legalistic, or without letting our philanthropy camouflage a weak relationship with God?

✦ **20 do you want evidence?** - (θειεις δε γνωναι; [theleis de gnōnai?]). More literally: “But do you wish to know?”

● Why do you think most people “don’t wish to know” that their faith without deeds is useless?

✦ **24 not by faith alone** - (και ουκ εκ πιστεως μονον [kai ouk ek pisteōs monon]). This phrase clears up the meaning of James. Faith (live faith) is what we must all have (2:18), only it must show itself also in deeds as Abraham’s did.

● What type of relationship does God want to have with us? Active; passive; corrective; supportive; or something else?

✦ **26 the body without the spirit is dead** - (χωρις πνευματος [chōris pneumatōs]). “Apart from breath” (the breath of life). It is not easy to tell when one is dead, but the absence of a sign of breath on a glass before the mouth and nose is proof of death. Startling picture of dead faith in our churches and church members with only a name to live (Rev. 3:2).

● How does the Holy Spirit give breath to our actions and our spiritual experience?

✦ James is writing to church people who are making Christianity a creed instead of a lifestyle (antinomians or intellectualists, Jewish gnostics). These folks are asserting orthodoxy as the basis for their assurance of salvation. The books of James and I John assert that daily love in action is not an option for Christians, but is the evidence of their being Christians. For James, “works” are not Jewish rules, but love in action (cf. 1 Cor. 13).

● When most people talk about the “Christian lifestyle,” they talk about rules and abstinence from certain activities. How do we see God’s character differently by seeing this type of lifestyle as His priority?



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MY PRAYER...

1. How am I responding to the needs around me?
2. How am I asking God to continue molding me into His loving character?
3. What new aspect of God’s character does He want me to know?