



Helping people encounter God in His Word



For use on Sunday, October 12, 2003

Introduction

30

*Core Competencies
of a follower
of Christ*

10 Core Beliefs

TRINITY
SALVATION BY GRACE
AUTHORITY OF THE BIBLE
PERSONAL GOD
IDENTITY IN CHRIST
CHURCH
HUMANITY
COMPASSION
ETERNITY
STEWARDSHIP

10 Core Practices

WORSHIP
PRAYER
BIBLE STUDY
SINGLE-MINDEDNESS
BIBLICAL COMMUNITY
SPIRITUAL GIFTS
GIVING AWAY MY TIME
GIVING AWAY MY MONEY
GIVING AWAY MY FAITH
GIVING AWAY MY LIFE

10 Core Virtues

LOVE
JOY
PEACE
PATIENCE
KINDNESS/GOODNESS
FAITHFULNESS
GENTLENESS
SELF-CONTROL
HOPE
HUMILITY

This week's Core Competency:

Giving Away My Life

**I give away my life to
fulfill God's purposes.**

Reality Check: When Life Requires a Balance *Easier Said . . . When Walk Doesn't Match Talk*

Dennis Bramlett called from the den, "Charlene, listen to this. Albert Sink's family had a fire in their home. Everyone is okay, but their utility room burned up. The entire house is smoke damaged and they are going to have to live somewhere else for probably three months while their insurance company tries to restore their house and belongings." Charlene came into the den and asked, "Did it say where they were going to live?" "Actually, that was the nature of the email," reported Dennis, "Their home owner's policy didn't have a provision to help them pay for temporary housing while their home is restored. They are asking if someone from our church group could help them, so they won't have to pay huge sums of money on a short term lease in an apartment complex."

"What do you mean 'help them'?" asked Charlene.

"They asked if anyone had room in their home for them to live in for three months," said Dennis.

"Don't they have family in town who can help them?" asked Charlene.

"No, remember they moved out here away from their family. They have always said that our church has become their family," said Dennis.

"Don't they have four kids?" asked Charlene.

"Yes, and a bird and a dog," said Dennis.

"Boy, I'd hate to be the one to have them stay with me. All that noise, extra clean up and a smelly dog, what an inconvenience to the host," stated Charlene shaking her head.

"Uhh, well, actually Charlene," said Dennis hesitantly, "I was going to ask you if you would want to offer our home to the Sink's. Our kids are grown and we have three extra rooms we don't use. It would be a good way to help out some folks who need help."

"What? You are kidding, right?" asked Charlene surprised. After looking at Dennis' unchanging expression she said flatly, "You're not kidding are you. I don't know if I can do it or even want to. I already have to clean up after you; I don't want to have to cook and clean up after other people as well. The dog would make a huge mess in the yard and stink up the place. Plus, our privacy would be interrupted. Kids always break things and get into things they shouldn't. Don't you think someone else could handle this?"

"Who, Charlene, who? They have no family here. They can't send their kids away. They need somewhere with enough space to hold them all. We have space. Plus, it would be good to have a family atmosphere here again," said Dennis. As Dennis looked at Charlene with her arms crossed and face lined with stubbornness he said gently, "Charlene, they are out of their own home. That is an inconvenience for them and it is very humbling for them to even ask for help. I will help clean and cook and I'm sure they would help out in the cooking and cleaning. I know they'd ask the kids to be on their best behavior."

Charlene's posture and face softened; she smiled and said laughingly, "If this could get you to clean a toilet, then it may be worth it! But I don't know about you cooking! Let me think and pray about it. There are many things to think through; I'm just not sure. Can I let you know tomorrow?" she asked.

"Okay," said Dennis, "Tomorrow."

Observation

What do you see?

Ephesians 2:8-10

⁸For it is by grace you have been saved, through faith--and this not from yourselves, it is the gift of God--⁹not by works, so that no one can boast. ¹⁰For we are God's workmanship, created in Christ Jesus to do good works, which God prepared in advance for us to do.

James 2:14-26 *Faith and Deeds*

¹⁴What good is it, my brothers, if a man claims to have faith but has no deeds? Can such faith save him? ¹⁵Suppose a brother or sister is without clothes and daily food. ¹⁶If one of you says to him, "Go, I wish you well; keep warm and well fed," but does nothing about his physical needs, what good is it? ¹⁷In the same way, faith by itself, if it is not accompanied by action, is dead. ¹⁸But someone will say, "You have faith; I have deeds." Show me your faith without deeds, and I will show you my faith by what I do. ¹⁹You believe that there is one God. Good! Even the demons believe that--and shudder. ²⁰You foolish man, do you want evidence that faith without deeds is useless? ²¹Was not our ancestor Abraham considered righteous for what he did when he offered his son Isaac on the altar? ²²You see that his faith and his actions were working together, and his faith was made complete by what he did. ²³And the scripture was fulfilled that says, "Abraham believed God, and it was credited to him as righteousness," and he was called God's friend. ²⁴You see that a person is justified by what he does and not by faith alone. ²⁵In 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? ²⁶As the body without the spirit is dead, so faith without deeds is dead.

Record your first impressions from what you read.

Interact with the passages

- Underline the phrases "What good is it?" and "dead." Draw arrows to what James is making reference to that the answer is "no good."
- Highlight every reference to faith in James & Ephesians.
- Circle every "if" and question mark. Then write the answer to the question posed next to the verse.
- Put a square around every reference of "did," "deeds," "works," and "action" in James and Ephesians.
- In James double underline "were working together," and "was made complete," in v. 22.
- In Ephesians double underline "created in Christ." Then draw an arrow from "created in Christ," to "faith," in v. 8 to answer this question "Is someone created in Christ when they have faith or when they do works?"

Interpretation

What does it mean?

Demonstrating compassionate acts alone does not save someone from sins consequences, but acts of compassion to those in need are a genuine byproduct of someone's faith in Christ and fruit of the Spirit. A true believer in Christ not only says they have faith in Jesus, but demonstrates their faith by living it out.

Insights

- "Deeds" in James is really a synonym for what is understood as "good works."
- The Greek article accompanying "faith," in the phrase "can such faith save him?" refers to the previous person who made the claim "I have faith without deeds."
- In v. 14 the term "save" is an aorist verb and implies "achieve salvation for him."
- The phrase, "Go, I wish you well," is really "Peace be with you." It ends the conversation and is common even today, and indicates no real interest in helping.

- “Show me your faith” in v. 18 is a command to “show.” The “I will show you,” is a future active verb that indicates James will continually demonstrate his already evident faith by actions that give proof his genuine faith exists. It is a challenge!
- By comparing the man to an evil demon who intellectually assents God exists and does nothing good, is a warm up. James really gets personal by using the derogatory term “fool.” James emphasizes the need for not intellectual assent of Christ as the Messiah, but a faith commitment to be a follower of Christ and do as He instructed.
- In v. 23 the Scripture cited is Gen. 15:6. The “was credited,” is a passive verb referring to God’s action of putting Abraham’s account in order or reckoning it.
- In v. 25 “for,” introduces the supporting argument of Rahab’s works along with faith. Her faith is presupposed and is the indication as to why and what she did for the spies.
- In Eph. 2:8 “through faith,” the preposition indicates the channel through which salvation comes. This is the same thing James refers to in v. 23 with Abraham.
- In Eph. 2:10 the “created,” is a passive participle and points to God’s new creation in Christ, a person who has faith in Christ.

Answering Questions of Interpretation

Who is saying that they have “faith without deeds? Is this someone who is in the congregation that James is addressing or is this someone outside of the congregation? How does James’ reaction, calling this person a ‘fool,’ help us understand the true identity of this person? Does this give us any indication of how we should react to Christian imposters? Why or why not?

The James passage has incorrectly been called contrary to Paul’s teachings. Read the James passage and Ephesians 2:8-10 again. How do we resolve the apparent wording difficulties that James presents in 2:24 with what Paul says in Eph. 2:8,9? How does James 2:22, 23 appear similar to Eph. 2:8, 9? How can one explain accurately both passages’ perspective regarding faith for salvation and faith in the process of sanctification?

What does it mean to have one’s faith and deeds “working together?” How does those things together make our “faith complete?” What does it mean to have a “completed faith?” What does it look like to have a completed faith today?

Application

What do I do?

Have I only intellectually assented to truths that Jesus is God and Savior? Is my life truly absent of an active and vibrant faith in Christ that is evidenced by genuine loving deeds? What proof do I have that my faith is not merely intellectual assent? What proof do I have that my deeds aren’t just trying to “work my way to heaven?” What is my commitment to following Christ and living out my faith? What do I sense I need to do?

Lately, how has my faith been made complete? Have I been living out my faith in Christ by demonstrating love and kindness to others? What was the last expression I have done that would demonstrate my faith to others? Have I gotten complacent in showing my faith in Christ to others? Have I become intellectually smug and spiritually judgmental and not been actively demonstrating true love and grace? If so, what do I need to do?

Correlation

How do we work this into our Home Group, Family, youth group, ministry, class, small group?

Core Competency: Giving My Life Away

Creed: I give away my life to fulfill God's purposes.

Commentary: Investing financially is the suggested way to see one's nest egg grow. Your financial advisor says that sending your money out as seed money helps develop more money. So when that money develops, or grows, you get some fruit back from your seed money.

You could verbally and intellectually agree with your financial advisor that sending your money out is a good way to see more money come your way. But in practice you may decide to stuff your money into a mattress where it would always be the same, never growing. It takes commitment and faith to see your money grow. The faith that the financial advisor will actually invest the money so it will grow, and the commitment where you actually hand over the cash to the financial advisor.

Similarly, one can believe and assent that having a strong spiritual life is a good way to grow and become a better person. One can believe that it is important to follow God, but if one has not truly committed to following Jesus teaching in action, then 'as the body without the spirit is dead, so faith without deeds is dead.' (James 2:26) If words spoken do not reflect one's behavior then the words are dead because one's actions do not support them.

Only upon believing and committing one's life completely to following and obeying Jesus does one see true growth in one's spiritual life and change to become a better person. God is in the business of transforming people into new creations who are called to do the work presently that He set out for them to do before time began. (Eph. 2:10) This investment into one's spiritual life, by having faith and commitment to following Christ, gives one not only an eternal purpose and reward, but also a living, active, and maturing faith which is seen in loving acts towards others.

For Discussion: Describe a time when you felt you invested by giving your life away. If you felt there was a return on that investment, what was it? How can we plan to continually give our life away to fulfill God's purposes?

Kid's Corner – I Believe You'd Not Be Hungry, if You Ate (Need canned foods)

Say: Kids I need 3 groups. Group #1 you're the "My Food" group. Group #2 you're the "Share Food" group. Group #3 you're the "Need Food" group. Group #1 and #2 you both have food. Group #3 you have no food and are hungry. I'll read a story and you act it out.

Read: One day the "Need Food" group was hungry. They looked and saw they had no food. They saw the "My Food" group & asked them for some food. They said, "We're hungry could you give us some food, please?" The "My Food" group said, "This is our food. I believe you'd not be hungry, if you ate. We love you, but you can't share our food." So the "Need Food" asked the "Share Food" group for some food. They said, "We're hungry could you give us some food, please?" The "Share Food" group said, "This is our food. I believe you'd not be hungry, if you ate. We love you, and want to share our food." So the "Need Food" and "Share Food" group ate together and both were satisfied.

Ask: Which group that said they loved the "Need Food" group really showed love to them?

Say: God wants us to trust and follow Jesus. God wants us to be like him or act like him. Jesus said to love one another and showed us how to do it. If we say we love someone and do not show them love, do we really show that we love them? (No) If we say that we love someone and give them love we also show that we love Jesus, for we are acting like him. When we give our life to others in love we show that we love Jesus too.

Memorize: James 2:18b "I will show you my faith by what I do."



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