

# A Dynamic Faith

James 2:14-26

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Take your Bibles and turn to James 2:14.

It seems like if you put the word "real" in front of something it sales more... like, real coffee or real leather. People want to know if it's genuine. There was a TV show a few years back called, "Real People." We are not interested in fakeness, but authenticity. Even Coke got caught on to this and created a slogan, "Coke is the real thing."

In James 2:14-26, James tells us the difference between a real faith and a phony faith. He wants to make sure we understand the difference between a genuine faith and an imitation faith.

The book of James is really about how to be like Jesus. It's about sanctification. It's about growing spiritually. I'm going to assume that you want to grow as a Christian or you wouldn't be here today. My guess is also that you don't want a useless kind of faith that doesn't take you anywhere or do anything for the kingdom of God. I'm going to assume you want to be used by God... you want to have a faith that God can work through. With that in mind I want to share with you three different kinds of faith. One of them is the real deal, while the other two are only imitations.

## 1. DEAD FAITH: Involves only the mind (14-17).

Let's begin by looking at **dead faith**. **Dead faith involves only the mind**. This deals with the intellect and knowledge. The people who have a dead faith know the right answers. They may be Biblically smart... **they may know the Scriptures, but they don't know the Savior**. Look at **verse 14**, "What good is it, my brothers, if a man *claims* to have faith but has no deeds? Can such faith save him?" James doesn't say he has faith, he says this man just "claims" to have faith.

If you were to ask him if he were a Christian, he would say yes. If you were to ask him if he had asked Jesus Christ into his heart and be the Lord of his life, he would say yes.

**Listen carefully, this person is not a Christian simply because he says yes to these**

**questions.** James says, “What good is it, my brothers, if a man claims to have faith but has no deeds? Can such faith save him?” James is saying, “What good is it if a person says they are a Christian, says they have trusted Christ, says they have believed Jesus, and says that He is the Lord of their life when their life doesn't back up what they say?”

Today we tend to label people as Christians if they make the slightest sound of being a believer. Let me say that it is more than just talk that is involved in real faith. It's more than just knowing the answers. Jesus said, “Not everyone who says to me, ‘Lord, Lord,’ will enter the kingdom of heaven, but only he who does the will of My Father who is in heaven” (Matt. 7:21). Not everyone who has a Christian bumper sticker that reads, “Honk if you love Jesus” is a Christian. Not everyone who wears a Christian T-shirt is a Christian. Not everyone who goes to church is on their way to heaven. Not every one who carries a Bible is a believer. **Not everyone who is a professor of Christ is a possessor of Christ.**

To drive home his point, James gives us an illustration in verses 15-16.

Suppose a brother or sister is without clothes and daily food. (16) If 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? (17) *In the same way*, faith by itself, if it is not accompanied by action, is dead.”

To bring the Bible home to your front doorstep let me explain it like this.

Suppose your doorbell rings and you open it to find a family from your church that has hit hard times. The father says, “We haven't eaten in several days. Can you help us?”

So you take the family into your living room, get out your Bible, and say, “Let's have a Bible study.” You start reading passages that tell how God can make a way where there is no way, how He rained manna on the Israelites when they were in the wilderness, how He miraculously fed five thousand people with a few loaves of bread and a couple of fish.

Then you say, “My Bible says God can feed you when you're hungry. He's a doctor when you are sick, a shepherd when you're lost, and a rock when you're in the midst of storms. My Bible tells me God can do anything. Isn't that encouraging? Let's have a word of prayer.” You ask God to meet the needs of this brother and sister and their children, lay your hands on them and say, “Go in peace,” show them to the door, and close it behind them.

God's question to you and me in that situation is, "What good is that kind of faith?" **That hungry family didn't need a *sermon*; they needed *supper*. They didn't need to sit in your living room but in your kitchen. They needed you to open your refrigerator, not your Bible.**

Now don't misunderstand. There's nothing wrong with sharing the Word with people in need. The problem is when you don't heed the Word you're sharing and meet the need God brought to you.

If you have real faith it can be seen in what you do, but if you have a phony and dead faith it will also be seen in what you do... or maybe I should say in what you don't do. The Bible says, "Faith by itself, if it is not accompanied by action, is dead." Dead faith is only faith you talk about not live. Dead faith is only in your head. It's an *academic* faith, not an *action* faith.

**The KEY TRUTH is we need to let sink into our heart is... real *faith* produces action.**

## **2. DEMONIC FAITH: Involves only the mind and emotions (18-19).**

We have just examined dead faith and dead faith only involves the mind. Dead faith is about having the right information without the right transformation. This brings us to a second kind of false faith. This one is called **demonic faith**. **Demonic faith involves the *mind and emotions*.** You need to know that demons have faith, to a degree, but not saving faith... not real faith. What kind of faith do they have? What do they believe? Look at **verse 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 what I do. (19) You believe that there is one God. Good! Even the demons believe that- and shudder.

The man with *dead* faith was touched only in his mind, but the demons are touched also in their emotions. **They believe and tremble.** They mentally believe the facts- they believe there is a God, they know who Jesus is, they know who the Holy Spirit is and what He is all about- they mentally believe the facts and emotionally "shudder." They know their outcome and they know who really is in control and it's not Satan. **A demonic faith is a faith that knows the Word and responds emotionally to the Word, but it doesn't change their life.**

There are a lot of people just like that. They know the truth. They know that Jesus is the Son of God. They know that Jesus is coming again. They know there is a God. They know that Jesus died for them. They know there is a heaven and a hell. They may respond emotionally to all those truths. They may shed a tear when the gospel singer sings about it, they may sense the emotion of fear when the preacher preaches about it... they may shudder, they may shout and they may dance all about. But it doesn't make any difference. Their "faith" is only an emotional and mental response to the truth without life transformation. They have faith in God like the demons do. They have a demonic faith that believes and shudders.

The danger of the demonic faith is it is so close to the real thing. The faith the demons have looks good at first glance. They believe there is a God and they know who Jesus is and their emotions respond to who God is and to their outcome. But what makes demonic faith fall short of real faith is the fact they don't live like they know there is one God, they don't live like they know who Jesus is. They continue to live a lifestyle that is contrary to Christ.

**Here's the KEY TRUTH: Real *faith* produces action.** There is no obedience with a dead faith and there is no obedience with a demonic faith.

### **3. DYNAMIC FAITH: Involves the mind, emotions and will (20-26).**

This brings us to ***dynamic faith***. **Dynamic faith involves the *mind*, the *emotions* and the *will*.** Look at James 2:20.

You foolish man, do you want evidence that faith without deeds is useless? (21) Was not our ancestor 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 justified by what he does 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.

To help us understand the dynamic faith God wants us to have we are given three illustrations: Abraham, Rahab and a dead body.

Real faith is always followed by action. Dynamic faith is not passive, but active. Real faith is demonstrated through faithfulness. Abraham and Rahab are exact opposite extremes. Abraham is a man. Rahab a woman. Abraham is Jewish. Rahab is a Gentile. Abraham is a patriarch. Rahab was a prostitute. Abraham is a rich somebody while Rahab is a poor nobody. Abraham is a major character in the Bible, while Rahab is a minor character.

**I believe God is trying to say to us today that it doesn't matter who you are or where you are in life as long as you have got dynamic faith in your life.** They only had one thing in common- their faith in God. And their faith in God led them to do something for God. Their faith in God created works for God. They both demonstrated their faith in God. Abraham had been a follower of God for years. Rahab had only been a follower of God for a few days.

**Abraham** demonstrated his faith in God when he offered his son Isaac on the altar. Before Isaac was sacrificed God told him to stop and provided an animal sacrifice that had been caught in the bushes nearby. Abraham demonstrated his faith in God by being obedient to God.

**Rahab** demonstrated her faith by helping a couple of Israelite spies (Joshua and Caleb) when they came into Jericho. I believe Rahab became a child of God when she declared to Joshua and Caleb in **Joshua 2:11**, "The Lord your God, He is God in heaven above and on earth beneath." Then she went on to show her faith was real when she protected the Israelites spies, knowing she could be put to death for it. You could see her faith in her obedience to God and her actions toward the people of God.

To drive home the point... to make sure we get it James compares dead faith with a **dead body**. Look at **verse 26** again, "As the body without the spirit is dead, so faith without deeds is dead." The word "spirit" does not refer to the Holy Spirit. It refers to the spirit that all humans have that gives them life. When God created Adam and Eve He breathed into them the spirit of life. When Jesus was on the cross He said before he died, "Father, into your hands I commit my spirit." When His spirit left His body he died.

**Picture with me a dead body lying on the stage.** A dead body has a brain, heart, lungs, eyes, ears, mouth, hands and feet. Just because you have a body doesn't mean you are alive. Just because you have some kind of faith does not mean you have life transforming faith. Just because you believe there is a God does not mean you are

spiritually alive. Just because you believe there is a heaven does not mean you are on your way there.

**How does a *body* prove that it's alive?** How does a body demonstrate it has life? By doing something. By responding to things around it. By waving, by talking, by blinking, by looking, by walking, by breathing, by doing something.

**How does a *faith* prove that it's alive?** How does a faith demonstrate it has life? By doing something. By responding to the Lord. By being obedient to God. By loving God with all your heart, soul, mind and strength and loving others as you love yourself. Genuine faith proves its alive by responding in obedience to the Lord.

**Here's the KEY TRUTH: Real *faith* produces action.**

## Conclusion

What kind of faith do you have?

- Is your faith only in knowledge? You know that God is real. You know that heaven and hell is real, but that knowledge doesn't affect you. It doesn't change the way you live. That's called dead faith. That faith does not save you nor change you.
- Maybe your faith affects your mind and emotions. You know the truth, and get excited or nervous about it. It scares you to know that Jesus is coming again or it may excite you but that knowledge and emotion does not change the way you live. You may have a deep respect for the things of God, but if there is not transformation in your walk but only an emotional response to God then that's not real faith. That's called demonic faith, because that's the kind of faith demons have. They believe and shudder.
- Hopefully you have the kind of faith that affects your mind, emotions and will. Real faith affects your thinker, feeler, and doer. It affects your thoughts, feelings, and actions. That's the kind of faith that saves, transforms and that God uses. That's real faith.
  - Dynamic faith is the kind of faith that David had when he picked up the stone to face Goliath.
  - Dynamic faith is the kind of faith Shadrach, Meshach and Abendgo had when they would not bow and worship the idol.

- Dynamic faith is the kind of faith Moses had when he went back to Egypt to deliver the people of God.
- Noah had it when he built the ark.
- Samson had it when he pushed the pillars down.
- Nehemiah had it when he led in rebuilding the walls of Jerusalem.
- Joshua had when he faced Jericho.
- Elijah had it when he prayed for God to bring down fire on the altar.
- Esther had it when she went before the king on behalf of her people.
- Job had it when he did not turn his back on God when things went wrong.
- Paul had it when he was singing praises in prison when God delivered him.
- Stephen had it when he stood up for Christ despite being stoned to death... and you can have it by confessing Jesus as Lord of your life in your heart and then asking him to increase your faith throughout your life.

Before you can ever have growing dynamic faith, you need saving faith. You need to place your faith in Jesus Christ to save you.