

Strong and Faithful

(James 2)

Introduction

Last week we started learning lessons from the book of James.

Ask: Who was this James that wrote this book of the Bible? (The half-brother of Jesus.)

James was writing to believers that needed encouragement. In our first lesson, James taught us that if we want to become strong in our faith, we must become **wise**. This week we will learn that James wants his readers to be **faithful**.

Let's brainstorm for a minute. [Teacher, write the student's answers on the board.]

Ask: What would you expect a **doctor** to do? What does a **teacher** do? What about a **fireman**?

Each of these jobs has certain skills or actions they must do.

The same is true for a Christian. Today we'll learn that if you are a Christian, then it is expected that you will demonstrate your faith by the choices you make in what you think, say, and do.

Opening Prayer

Father, show us how important it is for us to have Christ-like behavior. In Jesus' name. Amen.

Memory Verse

What good is it, dear brothers and sisters, if you say you have faith but don't show it by your actions? (James 2:14 NLT)

—And—

Can't you see that faith without good deeds is useless? (James 2:20 NLT)

Lesson

If you are a Christian, then it is expected that you live a godly life. One thing we need to learn is how to deal with our sin.

James 2:8-11

*Yes indeed, it is good when you obey the royal law as found in the Scriptures: "Love your neighbor as yourself." (9) But if you **favor** some people over others, you are committing a sin. You are guilty of breaking the law. (10) For the person who keeps all of the laws except one is as guilty as a person who has broken all of God's laws. (11) For the same God who said, "You must not commit **adultery**," also said, "You must not **murder**." So if you murder someone but do not commit adultery, you have still broken the law.*

Ask: What sins does James address in this passage? (Favoritism, adultery, murder.) [Teacher, discuss these sins with your students.]

Each of these sins hurts other people.

Ask: What is "the royal law" that James mentions in verse 8? (The golden rule.) And, why is it good to obey this law?

He is reminding people that Jesus told us to "'Love your neighbor as yourself.' No other commandment is greater than these." (Mark 12:31).

God does not want us to hurt others, so if we want to become strong and faithful Christ-followers, we must ask God to show us our sin and help us to be aware of how our behavior affects others.

Sometimes our words or our actions can be very hurtful. But, instead of making excuses for our sin or saying that we aren't as bad as someone else, we must recognize our sin is first of all, an offense against our holy God. When we deliberately sin and don't confess and repent of it, it hurts God's heart.

We need to show others that we are true Christians by our loving actions. Our actions must match our beliefs.

James 2:14-17

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.

Ask: Can you imagine telling a homeless person to “stay warm and eat well” without giving them clothes or food?

It’s like telling a sick friend to get better without praying for them.

Ask: What else can you do for a sick friend that would bring them comfort? [Allow answers.]

People should be able to tell if you are a Christ-follower by your actions; by the way you live your life; by your love for others.

James tells us that faith without good deeds isn’t real faith. How we behave, shows others that we love God.

James 2:20-23

*How foolish! Can’t you see that **faith without good deeds is useless**? (21) Don’t you remember that our ancestor Abraham was shown to be right with God by his actions when he offered his son Isaac on the altar? (22) You see, his faith and his actions worked together. His actions made his faith complete. (23) And so it happened just as the Scriptures say: “Abraham believed God, and God counted him as righteous because of his faith.” He was even called the friend of God.*

Ask: What do you know about Abraham? [Allow discussion.]

God chose Abraham to leave his home in Ur and promised him three things: The Promised Land, a large family, and that the Messiah, the Savior of the world, would come through his family line.

Ask: What specific event in Abraham’s life did James use to show that Abraham’s actions matched his faith? (He offered his son, Isaac, as a sacrifice to God.)

Ask: What blessings did Abraham receive for being obedient?

Even though Abraham didn’t end up actually offering his son, Isaac, as a sacrifice, God was pleased that he was willing to be obedient and He called Abraham a righteous man and said he was His friend.

Sometimes acting on our faith can be scary, but the Lord will help us be faithful when we trust His plan and rely on His strength.

If we want to grow stronger in our faith, we must learn to recognize our sins and repent of them quickly. Then, we need to show others that we are true believers by the way we behave. We want others to know that we trust God even when we don’t understand his plan, just like Abraham did.

CLOSING PRAYER

Father, show us every day how to act according to Your word. We want to be stronger in our faith and lead others to you. In Jesus’ name we pray. Amen

LEARNING ACTIVITIES

DISCUSSION

Acting on Faith

In the Bible there are many people who acted on their faith. We are going to talk about several examples and try to think of a similar way you can act on your faith.

1. **Abraham**, in obedience to God, willingly offered his son Isaac as a sacrifice.
 - a. I can give up something I love, like my favorite possession, if God asks me to.

2. Noah trusted that God would send a flood and spent many years building the ark.
 - a. When I hear my parents arguing, I can trust that God will help them to kiss and make up.
3. Esther boldly approached King Xerxes, at the treat of death, to save God's people.
 - a. When someone teases me or says bad things about me because they know I'm a Christian, I can trust that God will give me courage to stand strong for Him.
4. Daniel continued praying to God even though it was against the law and punishable by death.
 - a. Even if it is against the school rules to pray in class, I can pray silently to my God who always hears me.
5. Joseph (Jacob's son) continued telling others about God and making right decisions even though he was thrown into prison because of false accusations.
 - a. Even if I am wrongfully accused of something, I can choose to respond to those people with a Christ-like attitude.
6. Matthew gave up his greedy occupation as a tax collector after meeting Jesus and became one of His disciples.
 - a. I can stop sinning [arguing with my mother, being mean to my little sister, using bad language, disobeying my father...] because Jesus lives in my heart.

GAME CENTER

Dodge the Question

Divide the children into two groups. Have one group form a large circle and instruct the other group to stand inside the circle. Give the outside circle a nerf ball. Then tell the children inside the circle to dodge the ball. If a child is hit, he must answer one of the review questions and then join the other circle. Play continues in this manner. Groups exchange places when the last child has been hit; winners are those last to be hit.

Or, use the following questions in another game or discussion:

1. Who was this James that wrote this book of the Bible? (The half-brother of Jesus.)
2. Why is it important to show others that we are Christians by the way we act? (Maybe they will think we are not real Christians if we don't act like one. It also might discourage someone from wanting to be a Christian.)
3. What is "*the royal law*" that James mentions in verse 8? And, why is it good to obey this law? (The golden rule. We need to show others that we are true Christians by our loving actions.)
4. What actions can you take that will show others you are a true Christian? (See "Acting on Faith" exercise.)
5. What specific event in Abraham's life did James use to show that Abraham's actions matched his faith? (He offered his son, Isaac, as a sacrifice to God.)
6. When can it be scary to act on our faith? (It can be scary to stand strong in our faith when we are standing alone; when it seems like everybody around us is making fun of us. Also, when you feel that the Holy Spirit is prompting you to share your faith, it can be scary to leave your comfort zone.)

