

GLENKIRK CHURCH



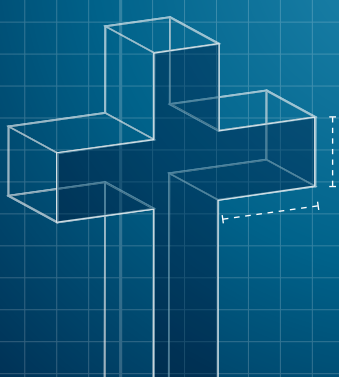
WEEKLY DEVOTIONS

The DEVO

SEP 27 - OCT 1, 2021

FAITH WORK

the book of
James



MONDAY

James 2:14-17; Luke 10:25-37

This week we are going to be focusing around a passage in James about faith and obedience. To explain true faith, James uses the following four different illustrations: the ill-clad and hungry brother or sister; the believing demons; Abraham, the friend of God; and Rahab, the prostitute. We will spend the first four days looking closer at these illustrations and then end the week by putting it all together in James 2.

First is the illustration of the ill clad and hungry brother or sister. This parable of the Good Samaritan is told as a lesson in how we should treat one another, how we should look past our differences and the things that divide us, and how we should reach out in care for one another unconditionally. Looking at this story in light of the James passage and in light of the discussion Jesus is having in Luke 10 gives a new perspective on this well-known story.

This man of the law who is questioning Jesus wants to know what he can do to inherit eternal life. The answer given is to love the Lord your God and to love your neighbor as yourself. Jesus commends this answer as the right one. These two truths are from the Old Testament. In Deuteronomy we are told of the amazing love God has for us, and our response is to love the Lord our God with all our heart. It makes me think of the song that says, "Oh How I love Jesus ... because He first loved me." We love God, and we also love our neighbor as ourselves. You see, the gospel leads to a life-long obedience to the

Word of God, which includes radical love for God and a radical love for our neighbor, demonstrated in the story of the Good Samaritan.

Think of the scene: This man questioning Jesus about who his neighbor is now goes on to hear a story about a man in a ditch. Doesn't this question sound so very different when asked by a man of the law in a debate than when it is asked by a man in a ditch? This needy man's neighbor is anyone who is willing to help him. Here, Jesus shifts the tone; He shifts the perspective; and He gives a radical picture of what it means to love your neighbor. When we think of it from the perspective of the man in the ditch, we realize that he was willing to accept anyone as his neighbor if he/she would only help him. Perhaps he would not have formerly considered the Samaritan his neighbor, but now he is his gracious savior.

QUESTIONS

How does giving of ourselves for the poor demonstrate our faith? Is your faith demonstrated in the way you treat others? How can you show God's love to someone today?

PRAYERS FOR BRYANT AND ANNE WILHELMSSEN (GLOBAL GRACE FELLOWSHIP)

Bryant and Anne Wilhelmsen minister to refugees in Germany. Please pray for the Wilhelmsens as they minister to Afghan refugees fleeing their homeland. Please lift up those waiting to appear before an asylum court.

TUESDAY

James 2:18-19; Mark 5:1-20

James says that even the demons believe, and shutter. Today we will be looking at the story of a man possessed by many demons. I have found this passage in Mark to be fascinating. First of all, I think we need to pause and be astounded that Jesus crosses the lake and goes to this man in the first place. This man is everything a good Jewish person would reject: naked, disorderly, unclean; however, Jesus is not afraid of being tainted by him, nor is He afraid of being tainted by our sin.

The second astounding thing I find about this passage is that the man is demon possessed but is inexplicably drawn to Christ. Not only is he drawn to Jesus, but he is humbled by Him. He falls right to his knees in a posture of defeat. He knows clearly who Jesus is—and gets it right—“*Jesus, Son of the Most High God.*” He knew Jesus’ identity better than His own disciples did! However, while he knows who Jesus is, he is crippled by fear that Jesus will torture him. Jesus, then, calls the demons out without having to call on a higher power—because our Savior is power itself.

What does this story then teach us about true faith, which is the theme of our week? James presents the poverty of faith without works by comparing it to the faith of the demons. The demons know who Jesus is. They are clearly aware of His identity, but their response is crying out and running in fear. You see, true faith has a natural

response. It inspires trust and confidence over fear and trembling. The demons, while correct in their understanding of who Jesus is, do not have a true and life-changing faith. Their faith led to fear while the faith of Abraham, which we will see tomorrow, led to obedience and trust.

QUESTIONS

According to today's verses in James, why is faith without works considered dead faith? How has your faith led you to trust at times when perhaps it would have been easy to let fear creep in? What do you need to trust God with today?

PRAYERS FOR BRYANT AND ANNE WILHELMSSEN (GLOBAL GRACE FELLOWSHIP)

Pray for those to whom the Wilhelmsens minister at their Bible study. Many face depression and previous trauma. Currently a young Persian couple and a Kurdish Freedom Fighter are waiting for court trials. Please pray for wisdom and truth as they face different judges.

WEDNESDAY

James 2:20-24; Genesis 22:1-19

This story of Abraham and Isaac is also one that I am sure you have heard before; and if you are like me, it might be a disturbing one. I just had my first child in March, so this story haunts me in a new way now. Why would God ask such a thing? Abraham's faith is tested in a way that makes us very uncomfortable. However, he trusts in the promises of God, and therefore is willing to do even the unthinkable if God asks it of him.

I won't even attempt to explain why this is how God tests him, especially in such a short time, but I will say that Abraham does what I would hope to be able to do as well. He holds on to the promises God has already made to him and therefore trusts that God is going to make a way. God has promised that through Isaac he would have many descendants. Isaac was the promised child. So, it is because of that promise that Abraham is able to say, *"Stay here with the donkey while I and the boy go over there. We will worship and then we will come back to you"* (Genesis 22:5).

Abraham believed that somehow he and Isaac would come back to his servants. I can only imagine that he believed God would raise Isaac from the dead. What incredible faith! He knew that if God had made a promise to him, He would be faithful to keep it because He had in the past. How many times have I doubted God's promises? How many times have I gotten caught up in fear and allowed my doubt to

creep in? Oh, to have the faith of Abraham, knowing that God who has been faithful in the past will continue to be faithful, even when all doesn't make sense.

QUESTIONS

Describe what it means to love someone the way you love yourself. What are some practical things you can do to have more strength to devote to loving others?

PRAYERS FOR BRYANT AND ANNE WILHELMSSEN (GLOBAL GRACE FELLOWSHIP)

A note from Adoptive Parents: "Their genuine affection and concern for the children is obvious. The impact of the warmth and love can be seen in each child living at FHC ... and those ... with forever families. ... They train staff and caregivers ... to understand and address the needs of all the children in their care." Lord, bless FHC's compassion for the children.

THURSDAY

James 2:24-26; Joshua 2

We come today to yet another astounding story in the Scripture: Rahab, the prostitute, who would later be counted as an ancestor of our Messiah. What an amazing reversal, yet again, the Lord makes. The Scriptures are full of them. They are full of surprises from a God who is never predictable but is always faithful. This, once again, is a tale of the unexpected.

So, Rahab meets the needs of God's people as they present themselves. She risks all of life—her personal safety, her house, her resources—because of her living faith. Hebrews 11 tells us that it is by faith that Rahab did what she did. Her profession in verse 9 starts with *"I know..."* It is not clear how she knows that the Lord has given them the land, just that she does. One sermon I heard on this passage said that faith begins by God's gift of "effective hearing." The most important part of this is that it is *God's gift*. Rahab knew because God had somehow given her this gift. It doesn't always make sense to us how God gives us faith, but He does. God in His amazing sovereignty fanned into flame her spark of faith, and that was all it took.

What a contrast we have in these last two stories. Both are examples of great faith, but they are certainly different. Abraham is a major Biblical figure. Rahab is a minor participant. Abraham is the father of the faithful. Rahab is a mere foreigner. Abraham is respected. Rahab

is disreputable. Abraham is a man. Rahab is a woman. God uses both stories to show amazing examples of faith and trust. Rahab not only has to act in faith, but then she has to trust that the spies will be faithful to their promise to her. That requires patience and faith. Sometimes when we are faithful, we then have to be patient as we wait to see what God does.

QUESTIONS

Have you ever seen God use the unexpected? How does that encourage you? Where do you perhaps need to be patient as you wait for God to act?

PRAYERS FOR BRYANT AND ANNE WILHELMSSEN (GLOBAL GRACE FELLOWSHIP)

With various COVID restrictions, the Wilhelmsens are not able to host the children's ministry or visit refugees in their homes. Currently they meet off campus and send care packages to refugee families through the security guards. Please pray that the Lord would continue to show them creative ways to spread the gospel and love of Jesus Christ.

FRIDAY

James 2:14-26

James presents four illustrations of true faith. His first two illustrations are negative ones: not helping an ill clad, hungry brother or sister and the demons' faith that causes trembling. If we just walk by the hurting and hungry, our faith has not changed us. Faith that overlooks those in need is not a faith that loves their neighbor in the way God calls us to. If we have faith but are filled with fear and trembling, our faith has not changed us. James is showing that true faith should cause a change in how we treat one another and how we react to situations.

Then, the last two examples are positive ones: Abraham the faithful and Rahab the trusting. Abraham trusted God's promises and knew that God would keep them, even when what He was asking didn't make sense. Rahab inexplicably knew what the Lord was doing, having been given a gift of faith that can only come from God. She saw a need and acted to meet that need of God's people. These two examples illustrate the statement James is trying to make: Faith is seen in action. Faith is seen in obedience.

So, what does all this teach us about our own faith? Faith is not just a private transaction with God; it is a life of active consecration. Faith and obedience go hand in hand. Faith cares for the needs of others and trusts in the promises of God. And what is the result of such faith?

We are not filled with fear and trepidation like the demons but with confidence and trust. We are able to say, even if it doesn't make sense, "I will trust that God is faithful and will come through on His promises." That is the kind of life-changing faith that God calls us to in Scripture. It is a faith based around the promise that God loved us first, and, therefore, we love Him, and we do so by living our life in obedience and trust.

QUESTIONS

As you consider this passage as a whole, how do you want to grow as a person of faith that is demonstrated and fulfilled by a life of works? Where in your life do you feel that your faith needs to translate into action and obedience?

PRAYERS FOR BRYANT AND ANNE WILHELMSSEN (GLOBAL GRACE FELLOWSHIP)

Pray for Anne and Bryant as they are tired and very concerned for those to whom they minister. Their energy is focused on building up the broken, but they ask that the Lord would give them strength as well. Pray that the Lord would prepare them to receive the many Afghan refugees who will be coming into their area soon.

Sources

- Chris Wright, “The Life of Love.” Sermon on Luke 10:25-37 can be found at https://www.allsouls.org/Groups/350588/Sermons/Sundays/C245_Journeying_with/C245_Journeying_with.aspx
- David Turner, “The Faith of Rahab.” Sermon on Joshua 2 can be found at https://www.allsouls.org/Groups/139375/Sermons/Sundays/A024_Over_the/A024_Over_the.aspx
- J.A. Motyer, *The Message of James: The Bible Speaks Today* (Downers Grove: Inter-Varsity Press, 1985).

