“What’s Faith Got to do with it?”

Good Morning and Happy Mother’s Day to all you Mothers out there. We are glad that you have joined us this morning. Since Larry taught last week on “The Incredible Worth of a Woman”, today we are going in a totally different direction.

Today we are going to study a topic that is quite controversial and I’m a little hesitant to preach on it, so I decided that for the first part of the sermon, you are going to preach to me. That way, if there are disagreements, you can email or call each other with your differences of opinion instead of calling or emailing me. Does that sound fair? I don’t want anyone to walk out of here saying, “Bo said this and Bo said that”. Nope, I’ll ask the questions and we will go with your answers and I’ll have the proof my means of the videotape to back me up that you all are teaching the class today!

 To get started, I’d like us to decipher a few passages of scripture. Turn with me in your Bibles to James 2. James is towards the very back of your bible between Hebrews and 1 Peter. We are going to start at verse 14.

[**14**](http://biblehub.com/james/2-14.htm)What good is it, my brothers and sisters, if someone claims to have faith but has no deeds? Can such faith save them?

What does this passage of scripture say to you when you read it? *(This is the part where you participate.)* Say it out loud and clear so everyone listening at home can hear your answer. This will be very beneficially for all of us trust me, and…it takes me off the hook! In simple English what does it say when you tear it apart?

Answer: Can faith without deeds save a person? So what is your answer to this question…can faith without deeds save a person?

Answer: NO.

What about the person that says, “I believe, I have faith and I know God”? Is that enough to be saved?

(Give example of intending to start working out and getting fit. You know in your heart and believe that it’s healthy and good for you. You have every intention of following through with it, but you never once do it. Is it enough to have faith and believe in working out but never doing it? Absolutely not!

So, do we all agree that if a person says they are a Christian but there are no actions to show for it, is he or she saved? (Probable answer is no.)

Put a marker or your finger here as we are going to come back to this in a few minutes.

Taylor, tell us what Romans 10:9 says:

[**9**](http://biblehub.com/romans/10-9.htm)If you declare with your mouth, “Jesus is Lord,” and believe in your heart that God raised him from the dead, you will be saved.

And Romans 10:10 says this:

[**10**](http://biblehub.com/romans/10-10.htm)For it is with your heart that you believe and are justified, and it is with your mouth that you profess your faith and are saved. [**11**](http://biblehub.com/romans/10-11.htm)As Scripture says, “Anyone who believes in him will never be put to shame.”

And then in verse 13, scripture says:

[**13**](http://biblehub.com/romans/10-13.htm)for, “Everyone who calls on the name of the Lord will be saved.”f

Confusing huh? So, how does that compare to what we just read in James 2:14? (Dialogue)

Now, let’s read these same verses found in Romans from Eugene Peterson’s “*The Message”* to see if it helps us clear up the contrast between James, the brother of Jesus, and the Apostle Paul, probably the greatest Disciple who ever lived. Again, starting in Romans 10:9:

*It’s the word of faith that welcomes God to go to work and set things right for us. This is the core of our preaching. Say the welcoming word to God—“Jesus is my Master”—embracing, body and soul, God’s work of doing in us what he did in raising Jesus from the dead. That’s it. You’re not “doing” anything; you’re simply calling out to God, trusting him to do it for you. That’s salvation. With your whole being you embrace God setting things right, and then you say it, right out loud: “God has set everything right between him and me!”*

*11-13Scripture reassures us, “No one who trusts God like this—heart and soul—will ever regret it.” It’s exactly the same no matter what a person’s religious background may be: the same God for all of us, acting the same incredibly generous way to everyone who calls out for help. “Everyone who calls, ‘Help, God!’ gets help.”*

Now, what have you learned by reading or listening to that translation compared to the NIV version? (This is the first step, if you truly want to follow Jesus and enter the Kingdom of Heaven. It is not the only step or the last step…it’s the first step). Was there any “action” or “deeds” or “works” done here in this first step? Yes! The action taken was submission…putting God’s desires ahead of your own. Does that make any sense to you? Do you see the difference here?

Let’s move on to James 2:15-16

[**15**](http://biblehub.com/james/2-15.htm)Suppose a brother or a sister is without clothes and daily food. [**16**](http://biblehub.com/james/2-16.htm)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**](http://biblehub.com/james/2-17.htm)In the same way, faith by itself, if it is not accompanied by action, is dead.

What are these passages in verses 15-16 saying to us? (Dialogue)

(Explain Jewish custom of, “Go in peace, I wish you well.”)

Have you ever heard a great message by someone and you felt really convicted? What good is that conviction if there is no action behind it? Worthless!

Look at verse 17 again, what is that passage saying? (Dialogue)

(Words serve me, actions serve others)

We all need to know that “faith” is not in contrast with “works or deeds”. They are not opposites, but rather go hand-in-hand. James is explaining here, in essence, that there is a living faith and a dead faith. A dead faith is a faith not accompanied by action. So, what does a living faith look like? It is faith accompanied by action, right? So where can we find examples of that kind of faith in the Scriptures?

(Dialogue)

Turn with me to Galatians 5:22

[**22**](http://biblehub.com/galatians/5-22.htm)But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, forbearance, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, [**23**](http://biblehub.com/galatians/5-23.htm)gentleness and self-control. Against such things there is no law. [**24**](http://biblehub.com/galatians/5-24.htm)Those who belong to Christ Jesus have crucified the flesh with its passions and desires. [**25**](http://biblehub.com/galatians/5-25.htm)Since we live by the Spirit, let us keep in step with the Spirit.

Is any action described here? This is the result of our faith…this is the result of living our lives for Jesus. This is what others see, this represents our character…who we really are and who Christ is! And when people see us demonstrating these characteristics, they realize there is something different, something special about us that separates us from the rest of the world! I used the phrase last week that “people don’t care about how much you know until they know how much you care.” Do these traits, the fruit of the Spirit, display how much you care to others? Do these traits demonstrate the love that Christ has for us? This is only one example of “living faith”. We see examples of “dead faith” throughout the church today…faith without action. The CEO’s, the Sunday only church goers, the ones that believe in God but never attend Church or open the bible to study His amazing work of art. They are the ones that refer to God as “the man upstairs”, not Abba Father or Daddy. They have the perception that they are saved, but never gave Him the time of day outside of their own needs, wants and desires. And lastly, they are the ones who can’t understand why acting out your faith is necessary or warranted. True spiritual faith, that faith born from God, is a compelling faith. A faith where you feel compelled to finish the work that Jesus came here to do on Earth and the work that He commanded us to perform while He was with us, and because of all that He did and is doing for us even in the present day! Sorry about that, I accidently went into preaching mode! You all are teaching this class today, not me!

Are you feeling me? Do you agree or disagree? Ok then, let’s move on to the next passage in James. Let’s look at verse 2:18

[**18**](http://biblehub.com/james/2-18.htm)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.

See, this is the division that has somehow taken place within the walls of the Church. Some people would say, “That Church or that group of people, they’re all about works and I’m all about faith. Faith is all we need.” And in this passage, James clearly disagrees with that kind of senseless thinking. In other words, your actions explain or show your faith. What is this saying to you?

Let’s turn to Hebrews 11. It’s the book just prior to James. Follow along as I read these several verses.

[**1**](http://biblehub.com/hebrews/11-1.htm)Now faith is confidence in what we hope for and assurance about what we do not see. [**2**](http://biblehub.com/hebrews/11-2.htm)This is what the ancients were commended for.

[**3**](http://biblehub.com/hebrews/11-3.htm)By faith we understand that the universe was formed at God’s command, so that what is seen was not made out of what was visible.

[**4**](http://biblehub.com/hebrews/11-4.htm)By faith Abel brought God a better offering than Cain did. By faith he was commended as righteous, when God spoke well of his offerings. And by faith Abel still speaks, even though he is dead.

[**5**](http://biblehub.com/hebrews/11-5.htm)By faith Enoch was taken from this life, so that he did not experience death: “He could not be found, because God had taken him away.”[a](http://biblehub.com/niv/hebrews/11.htm#footnotes) For before he was taken, he was commended as one who pleased God. [**6**](http://biblehub.com/hebrews/11-6.htm)And without faith it is impossible to please God, because anyone who comes to him must believe that he exists and that he rewards those who earnestly seek him.

[**7**](http://biblehub.com/hebrews/11-7.htm)By faith Noah, when warned about things not yet seen, in holy fear built an ark to save his family. By his faith he condemned the world and became heir of the righteousness that is in keeping with faith.

[**8**](http://biblehub.com/hebrews/11-8.htm)By faith Abraham, when called to go to a place he would later receive as his inheritance, obeyed and went, even though he did not know where he was going. [**9**](http://biblehub.com/hebrews/11-9.htm)By faith he made his home in the promised land like a stranger in a foreign country; he lived in tents, as did Isaac and Jacob, who were heirs with him of the same promise. [**10**](http://biblehub.com/hebrews/11-10.htm)For he was looking forward to the city with foundations, whose architect and builder is God. [**11**](http://biblehub.com/hebrews/11-11.htm)And by faith even Sarah, who was past childbearing age, was enabled to bear children because she[b](http://biblehub.com/niv/hebrews/11.htm#footnotes) considered him faithful who had made the promise. [**12**](http://biblehub.com/hebrews/11-12.htm)And so from this one man, and he as good as dead, came descendants as numerous as the stars in the sky and as countless as the sand on the seashore.

[**13**](http://biblehub.com/hebrews/11-13.htm)All these people were still living by faith when they died. They did not receive the things promised; they only saw them and welcomed them from a distance, admitting that they were foreigners and strangers on earth. [**14**](http://biblehub.com/hebrews/11-14.htm)People who say such things show that they are looking for a country of their own. [**15**](http://biblehub.com/hebrews/11-15.htm)If they had been thinking of the country they had left, they would have had opportunity to return. [**16**](http://biblehub.com/hebrews/11-16.htm)Instead, they were longing for a better country—a heavenly one. Therefore God is not ashamed to be called their God, for he has prepared a city for them.

[**17**](http://biblehub.com/hebrews/11-17.htm)By faith Abraham, when God tested him, offered Isaac as a sacrifice. He who had embraced the promises was about to sacrifice his one and only son, [**18**](http://biblehub.com/hebrews/11-18.htm)even though God had said to him, “It is through Isaac that your offspring will be reckoned.”[c](http://biblehub.com/niv/hebrews/11.htm#footnotes) [**19**](http://biblehub.com/hebrews/11-19.htm)Abraham reasoned that God could even raise the dead, and so in a manner of speaking he did receive Isaac back from death.

[**20**](http://biblehub.com/hebrews/11-20.htm)By faith Isaac blessed Jacob and Esau in regard to their future.

[**21**](http://biblehub.com/hebrews/11-21.htm)By faith Jacob, when he was dying, blessed each of Joseph’s sons, and worshiped as he leaned on the top of his staff.

[**22**](http://biblehub.com/hebrews/11-22.htm)By faith Joseph, when his end was near, spoke about the exodus of the Israelites from Egypt and gave instructions concerning the burial of his bones.

[**23**](http://biblehub.com/hebrews/11-23.htm)By faith Moses’ parents hid him for three months after he was born, because they saw he was no ordinary child, and they were not afraid of the king’s edict.

[**24**](http://biblehub.com/hebrews/11-24.htm)By faith Moses, when he had grown up, refused to be known as the son of Pharaoh’s daughter. [**25**](http://biblehub.com/hebrews/11-25.htm)He chose to be mistreated along with the people of God rather than to enjoy the fleeting pleasures of sin. [**26**](http://biblehub.com/hebrews/11-26.htm)He regarded disgrace for the sake of Christ as of greater value than the treasures of Egypt, because he was looking ahead to his reward. [**27**](http://biblehub.com/hebrews/11-27.htm)By faith he left Egypt, not fearing the king’s anger; he persevered because he saw him who is invisible. [**28**](http://biblehub.com/hebrews/11-28.htm)By faith he kept the Passover and the application of blood, so that the destroyer of the firstborn would not touch the firstborn of Israel.

[**29**](http://biblehub.com/hebrews/11-29.htm)By faith the people passed through the Red Sea as on dry land; but when the Egyptians tried to do so, they were drowned.

[**30**](http://biblehub.com/hebrews/11-30.htm)By faith the walls of Jericho fell, after the army had marched around them for seven days.

[**31**](http://biblehub.com/hebrews/11-31.htm)By faith the prostitute Rahab, because she welcomed the spies, was not killed with those who were disobedient.[d](http://biblehub.com/niv/hebrews/11.htm#footnotes)

[**32**](http://biblehub.com/hebrews/11-32.htm)And what more shall I say? I do not have time to tell about Gideon, Barak, Samson and Jephthah, about David and Samuel and the prophets, [**33**](http://biblehub.com/hebrews/11-33.htm)who through faith conquered kingdoms, administered justice, and gained what was promised; who shut the mouths of lions, [**34**](http://biblehub.com/hebrews/11-34.htm)quenched the fury of the flames, and escaped the edge of the sword; whose weakness was turned to strength; and who became powerful in battle and routed foreign armies. [**35**](http://biblehub.com/hebrews/11-35.htm)Women received back their dead, raised to life again. There were others who were tortured, refusing to be released so that they might gain an even better resurrection. [**36**](http://biblehub.com/hebrews/11-36.htm)Some faced jeers and flogging, and even chains and imprisonment. [**37**](http://biblehub.com/hebrews/11-37.htm)They were put to death by stoning;[e](http://biblehub.com/niv/hebrews/11.htm%22%20%5Cl%20%22footnotes%22%20%5Co%20%22Some%20early%20manuscripts%20stoning; they were put to the test;) they were sawed in two; they were killed by the sword. They went about in sheepskins and goatskins, destitute, persecuted and mistreated— [**38**](http://biblehub.com/hebrews/11-38.htm)the world was not worthy of them. They wandered in deserts and mountains, living in caves and in holes in the ground.

[**39**](http://biblehub.com/hebrews/11-39.htm)These were all commended for their faith, yet none of them received what had been promised, [**40**](http://biblehub.com/hebrews/11-40.htm)since God had planned something better for us so that only together with us would they be made perfect.

The word faith in the Greek is “pistis” and it means this:

1. Conviction of the truth of anything, belief; in the NT of a conviction or belief respecting man’s relationship to God and divine things, generally with the included idea of trust and holy fervor born of faith and joined with it.
	1. Relating to God
		1. The conviction that God exists and is the creator and ruler of all things, the provider and bestower of eternal salvation through Christ.
	2. Relating to Christ
		1. A strong and welcome conviction or belief that Jesus is the Messiah, through whom we obtain eternal salvation in the kingdom of God.
	3. The religious beliefs of Christians.
	4. Belief with the predominate idea of trust (or confidence) whether in God or in Christ, springing from faith in the same.
2. Fidelity, faithfulness
	1. The character of one who can be relied on.

And with that, notice that there is an action following. Let’s look again at this passage. (Highlighted areas)

Faith-Action! Faith-Action! Faith-Action…over and over again, these examples of faith are followed by action.

Are we on the same path here? Are we all on the same sheet of music?

James 2:19

[**19**](http://biblehub.com/james/2-19.htm)You believe that there is one God. Good! Even the demons believe that—and shudder.

This verse is a really important verse because I’ve been in a lot of churches in my lifetime and have seen them serve the community, give and outreach to the poor and needy, but in some cases, their theology was a little off. Turn with me to Deuteronomy 6:6 and let me explain. Let’s read this together in unison.

[**4**](http://biblehub.com/deuteronomy/6-4.htm)Hear, O Israel: The Lord our God, the Lord is one.[a](http://biblehub.com/niv/deuteronomy/6.htm%22%20%5Cl%20%22footnotes%22%20%5Co%20%22Or%20The%20LORD%20our%20God%20is%20one%20LORD; or The LORD is our God, the LORD is one; or The LORD is our God, the LORD alone)

This phrase is quoted by devout Jews each morning as they rise and each evening before retiring for bed. It is referred to as the sh’ma. There is only one true God is what this means. Now, what is this verse mean to you? (Dialogue) (It is not good enough to believe! Even the demons believe! Demons have great theology and they know a lot about God)

Turn now to Mark 5:2

[**2**](http://biblehub.com/mark/5-2.htm)When Jesus got out of the boat, a man with an impure spirit came from the tombs to meet him. [**3**](http://biblehub.com/mark/5-3.htm)This man lived in the tombs, and no one could bind him anymore, not even with a chain. [**4**](http://biblehub.com/mark/5-4.htm)For he had often been chained hand and foot, but he tore the chains apart and broke the irons on his feet. No one was strong enough to subdue him. [**5**](http://biblehub.com/mark/5-5.htm)Night and day among the tombs and in the hills he would cry out and cut himself with stones.

[**6**](http://biblehub.com/mark/5-6.htm)When he saw Jesus from a distance, he ran and fell on his knees in front of him. [**7**](http://biblehub.com/mark/5-7.htm)He shouted at the top of his voice, “What do you want with me, Jesus, Son of the Most High God? In God’s name don’t torture me!” [**8**](http://biblehub.com/mark/5-8.htm)For Jesus had said to him, “Come out of this man, you impure spirit!”

[**9**](http://biblehub.com/mark/5-9.htm)Then Jesus asked him, “What is your name?”

“My name is Legion,” he replied, “for we are many.” [**10**](http://biblehub.com/mark/5-10.htm)And he begged Jesus again and again not to send them out of the area.

Did that demon know anything about Jesus or God? How was his theology? Did he know what he was talking about? He knows the power of God and he was terrified. Is his knowledge of theology better than ours? Most people that attend church don’t fear God like that!

Proverbs 1:7 says,

[**7**](http://biblehub.com/proverbs/1-7.htm)The fear of the Lord is the beginning of knowledge, but fools[c](http://biblehub.com/niv/proverbs/1.htm#footnotes) despise wisdom and instruction.

We all should fear God as much as the demon does!

Back to James 2:20. Let me read on a little for the sake of time.

[**20**](http://biblehub.com/james/2-20.htm)You foolish person, do you want evidence that faith without deeds is useless[d](http://biblehub.com/niv/james/2.htm#footnotes) ? [**21**](http://biblehub.com/james/2-21.htm)Was not our father Abraham considered righteous for what he did when he offered his son Isaac on the altar? [**22**](http://biblehub.com/james/2-22.htm)You see that his faith and his actions were working together, and his faith was made complete by what he did. [**23**](http://biblehub.com/james/2-23.htm)And the scripture was fulfilled that says, “Abraham believed God, and it was credited to him as righteousness,”[e](http://biblehub.com/niv/james/2.htm#footnotes) and he was called God’s friend. [**24**](http://biblehub.com/james/2-24.htm)You see that a person is considered righteous by what they do and not by faith alone.

And then he goes on to give additional evidence of why this person is foolish.

[**25**](http://biblehub.com/james/2-25.htm)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**](http://biblehub.com/james/2-26.htm)As the body without the spirit is dead, so faith without deeds is dead.

Who was Rahab and what did she do? (She put her faith in action!)

So the bottom line question I have for you today is do you have a living faith or a dead faith? This question reminds me of a saying I heard from way back, “shake what your Mama gave ya!” What are you doing with what your Lord God gave you? Is for self-interest or for the service to others? Are you sitting around with all of this theology running through your head and not making the best use of it? What is it going to take to make your faith active? Is it a divorce? A death to a loved one? A terminal illness? A loss of a job? The loss of your home? What is it that will get you on the path that God has mapped out for your life? Let’s get active together and put our faith to work by seeking, saving and discipling others.