

Wisdom for a New Year
Real Religion ~ James 2:14 – 26
February 9 & 10, 2008

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? James chapter 2 verse 14 (931)

- Talk is cheap. Unsubstantiated claims are worthless
- I don't prove that I'm a Christ-follower because I say I am
- I am not fully-devoted to Christ because of what I know
- I show that I'm a Christ-follower through my actions
- **Jesus said, "Your love for one another will prove to the world that you are My disciples."**
John chapter 13 verse 35 (823)

MY love for other Christ-followers PROVES that I'm for real!

- **Love each other with genuine affection, and take delight in honoring (giving value & dignity) each other. Romans chapter 12 verse 10 (866)**
- **Each of us will give a personal account to God. So let's stop condemning each other.**
Romans chapter 14 verses 12 & 13 (867)
- **Accept each other just as Christ has accepted you.... Romans chapter 15 verse 7 (868)**
- **...Live in harmony with each other. Let there be no divisions in the church. Rather, be of one mind, united in thought & purpose. 1 Corinthians chapter 1 verse 10 (870)**
- **Encourage each other. Live in harmony & peace.**
2 Corinthians chapter 13 verse 11 (889)
- **Always be humble and gentle. Be patient with each other, making allowance for each other's faults because of your love. Ephesians chapter 4 verse 2 (896)**
- **Don't grumble about each other.... James chapter 5 verse 9 (932)**

Suppose you see a brother or sister who has no food or clothing, 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? James chapter 2 verses 15 & 16 (931)

- God's not asking me to fix world hunger or the world's homeless problem
- He's asking me to be a good citizen & generous to those around me
- **Dear children, let's not merely say that we love each other; let's show the truth by our actions. Our actions will show that we belong to the truth....**
1 John chapter 3 verses 18 & 19 (942)

Who am I suppose to help???

- God's asking me to slow down & to look at my world through eyes of faith
- **And Jesus will say, "I tell you the truth, when you did it to one of the least of these My brothers and sisters, you were doing it to Me!" Matthew chapter 25 verses 35 - 40 (756)**

☞ ☞ "Preach the gospel at all times. If necessary, use words."--Saint Francis of Assisi

So you see, faith by itself isn't enough. Unless it produces good deeds, it is dead (a corpse) and useless. James chapter 2 verse 17 (931)

- So called "faith" that refuses to obey God is useless
- So called "faith" that doesn't show itself in practical acts of goodness is worthless

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Proving my faith isn't dead

Have "passion-in-action" for the lost all around me

- ***When Jesus saw the crowds, He had compassion on them because they were confused and helpless, like sheep without a shepherd. He said to His disciples, "The harvest is great, but the workers are few."*** Matthew chapter 9 verses 36 & 37 (740)
- Serve on a volunteer team - As each part does its own special work, it helps the other parts grow.... Ephesians chapter 4 verse 16 (897)
- Giving God my tithe - Don't give reluctantly or in response to pressure. For God loves a person who gives cheerfully. 2 Corinthians chapter 9 verse 7 (886)
- Inviting others to church - Pray to the Lord who is in charge of the harvest; ask Him to send more workers into His fields. Matthew chapter 9 verse 38 (740)
- Lovingly engaged in meeting the needs of the world around me ***Jesus said, "I was hungry, and you fed Me..."***

Husbands...

- ***...love your wives, just as Christ loved the church. He gave up His life for her....***
Ephesians chapter 5 verse 25 (898)
- ***...love your wives and never treat them harshly (don't cause them to become bitter).***
Colossians chapter 3 verse 19 (904)
- ***...must give honor (value, dignity, worth) to their wives. Treat your wife with understanding (grow in your understanding of her) as you live together. ...Treat her as you should so your prayers will not be hindered.*** 1 Peter chapter 3 verse 7 (936)

If I start meeting the needs of those around me, won't I be taken advantage of??

- YES!!! God doesn't ask me to protect myself. He asks that I respond to the needs around me with a compassionate heart
- When someone takes advantage of me, they're really taking advantage of God...and they'll answer to Him one day
- Jesus was repeatedly taken advantage of...but he refused to get bitter about it & he kept on loving people by meeting their needs

Now someone may argue, "Some people have faith; others have good deeds." But I say, "How can you show me your faith if you don't have good deeds? I will show you my faith by my good deeds." James chapter 2 verse 18 (931)

- You do your good works and I'll do my faith...
- Faith & good deeds are NOT separate, alternate & equal expressions of Christianity. They are the expression of Christianity.
- Faith (inside of me) is only ever seen through the actions it accomplishes

You say you have faith, for you believe that there is one God. Good for you! Even the demons believe this, and they tremble in terror. How foolish! Can't you see that faith without good deeds is useless? James chapter 2 verses 19 & 20 (931)

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So where do I start??

- Start with what the Holy Spirit has already convicted you of, prompted you about during this talk
- As long as you ignore that prompting, you won't be able to discern God's other promptings in your life

Just as the body is dead without breath, so also faith is dead without good works.

James chapter 2 verse 26 (931)

More...

- What area do I already know that God wants me to “do” something about? List each and write out what action-steps you will take. Share this with a friend for prayer, encouragement & accountability.
- ***Jesus said, “Your love for one another will prove to the world that you are My disciples.”*** *John chapter 13 verse 35* Right now, who is God asking me to love? What will I do to show my love to this person?
- ***Love each other with genuine affection, and take delight in honoring (giving value & dignity) each other.*** *Romans chapter 12 verse 10* - Who will I honor? How?
- ***Each of us will give a personal account to God. So let's stop condemning each other.*** *Romans chapter 14 verses 12 & 13* - Who will I stop talking about?
- ***Accept each other just as Christ has accepted you....*** *Romans chapter 15 verse 7* - Who will I now accept?
- ***...Live in harmony with each other. Let there be no divisions in the church. Rather, be of one mind, united in thought & purpose.*** *1 Corinthians chapter 1 verse 10* - Who will I now live in harmony with? How will I do away with this division?
- ***Encourage each other. Live in harmony & peace.*** *2 Corinthians chapter 13 verse 11* - Who will I now encourage?
- ***Always be humble and gentle. Be patient with each other, making allowance for each other's faults because of your love.*** *Ephesians chapter 4 verse 2* - Who's faults will I now overlook because of God's love for me?
- ***Don't grumble about each other....*** *James chapter 5 verse 9* - What will I immediately stop grumbling about?
- Everyday, pray & ask God to let you to see the world through eyes of faith...so you see the needs God wants you to engage.
- Everyday, pray & ask God to give you passion for the lost all around you. As part of this, if you're not already serving on a volunteer team at Bethel, when will you start? If you're not already giving God your tithe, when will you start?
- Husbands...don't start working on other areas of today's talk until you are already working on your responsibility to love your wife (the section for husbands)! Pick two steps you will take to love your wife. Share this with a friend for prayer, encouragement & accountability.

Next week: Taming my tongue – James 3:1-12

The song in today's service was “Asleep in the Light” by Keith Green, sung by Michael Card