

Morning Overview

Lesson: James: Faith in Action

Lesson Objective:

Today we take a brief look at the book of James. We center our attention on what it means to be a doer of the word, not a hearer only, the treatment of the less fortunate, and faith without works is dead. All three are connected, as they are all centered on relationship between faith and action. James points out, it's one thing to listen to the Gospel, but an entirely different thing when the Gospel enlivens a person to act out their faith. James' concern, as should be ours, is that a person that professes faith in Christ without any works does not have much of a faith. The Gospel should and does enable us to do good works. Good works are not salvific by any means, but any faith without works is not alive at all.

Teaching Summary:

- God's promises do not change despite circumstances, people and even our inability to believe them. God keeps His promises even when we do not trust Him or follow His commands.
- God has promised to always be with His people. He is with us through the presence of the Holy Spirit.
- The Church is growing, but also experiencing persecution. Because of the persecution, followers of Jesus scatter.
- The scattered Church takes the Good News and tells others about Jesus.
- James writes a letter to dispersed Jewish-Christians in the ancient world.
- His concerns are that Christians should be doers of the word, not hearers only; to care for the poor and marginalized; and that works are evidence of one's faith in God.
- James tells us that we should not only listen to God's Word, but we should do what it says – this shows our obedience to God.
- James tells us we should not treat those who are wealthy or of high esteem better than others.
- James tells us we should love our neighbors as our ourselves. We should care for the orphan and widow.
- James tells us that if our faith does not have works, it is dead, or not much of a faith to start.

Scripture: James 1:22-27; 2:8-26

Scripture Memory for March: Acts 17:26-27 (ESV)

God made *(point up for God)*

from one man *(hold up your index finger for the number one)*

every nation of mankind to live on *(sweep both arms out in front of you and to either side like a swimming breaststroke for the motion of every nation)*

all the face of the earth *(put your hand open in front of your face...facing your face and go around in a circle once. That is the motion for on the face of the earth)*

that they should seek *(for seek, put your hands above your eyes and look both left and right like you are searching for something)*

Him *(point up for Him)*

Craft: Faith

Supplies: Faith cardstock, eye, hand and foot stickers, crayons/markers, magnet

Instructions: 1. Add eyes, hand, and foot to Faith cardstock

2. Color Faith letters

3. Place magnet on back



If child has already done craft first hour, have them work on a coloring sheet

Story

Transition

Boys and girls, let's play a quick game. Put your hands on your ears (allow for kids to do so); now touch your feet with your hands (allow for kids to do so); last one, put your hand over your eyes (allow for kids to do so). Thank you for not only listening to the instructions, but for following the instructions. In our story today, we learn about James, who wrote something very similar to this. Let's find out more...

The Church Is Growing

The Church was growing. The Bible tells us every day more and more people believed the Good News! They believed that God sent His Son, Jesus Christ, to rescue us from our sins and He rose from the dead! This was called the Good News. More and more people believed in Jesus and the Church was growing!

Followers of Jesus went to tell others about the Good News. The Good News was spreading far and wide. Some people, however, did not teach the right things. But the Apostles taught that good works were a result of believing the Good News.

Paul visited many places and wrote many letters to churches, which is what we have in the New Testament. But not every book in the New Testament was written by Paul. Some books were written by other apostles like the book of James. James was a servant of God and of Jesus Christ. He writes his letter to the people of God scattered throughout the known world. James wants the people reading his letter to know a few things.

Faith in Action

The first thing is that the Good News changes every person, and it frees that person to love God, obey God, and love people. To love people is an important thing throughout James' letter. He wants Christians to love their neighbor just like Jesus taught.

James wants his friends not to just read or hear the words he has to say, but to actually do them. James wants action.

He wrote, "Do what God's teaching says; do not just listen and do nothing. When you only sit and listen, you are fooling yourselves" (1:22). God requires his people to obey Him – that means doing something – such as not lying, not stealing, not hurting other people with mean words. If a person hears and studies God's Word, they remember it and obey it; this is pleasing to God.

James then had a warning: If a person thinks they are religious – they obey God – but if they say things they should not say, then that person is just fooling themselves. To be a true follower of God you must control what you say. What you say is a sign of your relationship with God.

But James tells us what it means to obey God – to be religious – to care for the orphans (those who do not have parents) and widows (women whose husbands have died) who need help; and to keep oneself free from the world's evil influence. This kind of religion is one that God accepts as pure and good.

Why would people not want to help the helpless – the poor, the widow, the orphan? Many times it is because we are selfish or because we only want to help our friends. In the Old Testament, and in Jesus' words, the law is "Love your neighbor as you love yourself." James writes in his letter this one law rules over all other laws. If a person obeys this law, then that person is doing well.

But if you treat one person as if she were more important than another, James says you are sinning. Christians are not supposed to think or believe another person is more loved, valuable, or accepted than another person. Not loving your neighbor as yourself is breaking God's law – it is disobeying God.

Then James asks a very important question, “Friends, if someone says he believes in God (has faith), but does nothing (does not obey God), then he really does not have faith. Can trust (or faith) like that save him?” To trust in God helps us obey God. Imagine if another follower of Jesus, a man or woman, a boy or girl, comes to you and needs clothes or food. Would you say to that person, “God is with you! I hope you find some clothes and something to eat! Bye!” If you say this or do this, but do not give the person some clothes or some food, or the things they might need then your words mean nothing. James wants followers of Jesus to do more than saying some words, he wants them to do something. If you trust in Jesus, then you will have actions to show that you are trusting Him and obeying Him. James says that if you do not have actions, your faith is “dead.” What James means if you have faith, or trust in Jesus, you show it by the things you do.

Abraham was a person of faith, James writes. Abraham was made right with God by his trust in God. Abraham obeyed God. He offered his son Isaac to God. Abraham’s faith and the things he did worked together. His faith had action.

James wants every follower of Jesus to know: “A person’s body that does not have a spirit is dead. It is the same with faith. Faith that does nothing is dead!”

Questions for Review

Have children answer “yes” or “no.”

- The Church is growing – adding more and more people. (Yes)
- The Holy Spirit is growing the Church. (Yes)
- James is an apostle. (Yes)
- James wrote a letter to encourage people to not just hear, but to do. (Yes)
- James wants followers of Jesus to have faith and action. (Yes)
- If a person treats someone differently because they are poor, that’s okay. (No! They are sinning!)
- James says we should care for the orphan, widow, and poor. (Yes)
- James says loving your neighbor as yourself is the least important law. (No! It’s the most important one.)
- If a person does not have works with their faith, it is okay their faith is still “alive.” (No! Their faith is dead.)