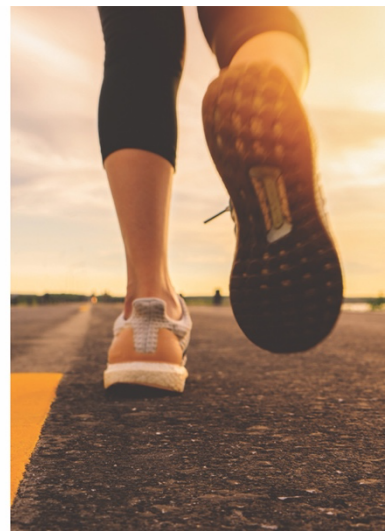




Reasons to Rejoice
BIBLE STUDY

WHERE THE RUBBER MEETS THE ROAD

THE BOOK OF JAMES



Where the Rubber Meets the Road: James Chapter 2

Please read the whole Book of James once again before we finish chapter two. This will help you keep it all in context and enable you to feel the flow of the chapter and the author's purpose in writing. Before you begin, take some time to pray for the Holy Spirit to guide you into all truth!

In chapter one, James focused on the fact that real faith produces real works. Now, he continues the conversation about authentic faith and presents the reader with a few additional ways to recognize what he calls "genuine faith."

1. List the key words you find on your "Key Word" sheet.
2. What would you say is the main subject, theme, or emphasis of James chapter two? Give the chapter a title that reflects that.
3. Can you find any comparisons or contrasts in this chapter?

4. How does this chapter relate to chapter one?

You may think we should cover the following questions at the end of our lesson, but I really felt compelled to present them here, as we begin our study in chapter two. I think it will help us approach our text in a more intentional way.

5. Rick Warren says to “Look for these 9 things as you study Scripture.” If possible, (and if they apply), briefly answer each:

- a. Is there a sin to confess?
- b. Is there a promise to claim?
- c. Is there an attitude to change?
- d. Is there a command to keep?
- e. Is there an example to follow?
- f. Is there a prayer to pray?
- g. Is there an error to avoid?
- h. Is there a truth to believe?
- i. Is there something to thank God for?

6. In verses 1-13, what is the main issue that James is addressing? Briefly explain “how” this illustration is another example of a flimsy faith. What other words or terms can be used to describe this issue?

Swindoll wrote, “Prejudice is an English word that stems from a Latin noun that emphasizes a prejudgment of someone, causing us to form an opinion before knowing all the facts. And once we’ve reached our conclusions, ignoring those essential facts, we’re well on our way to irrational thinking -- thinking that results

in an insidious attitude buried deep inside that says, ‘My mind’s made up. Don’t confuse me with the facts.’” The translation for the Greek word for “personal favoritism” gives the sense of “receiving the face.” That’s such a great definition! We know that God doesn’t show partiality (Acts 10:34), because He judges the heart, not “the face,” or the outward appearance.

It’s important to remember that James is not saying that it’s better to be rich or poor, nor that all rich and poor people are characteristically alike, but he’s focusing on the motive and attitude of the one who is discriminating between them. He has made distinctions and assumptions of each of them, and clearly, to James, that is sin. There’s no way around it ... genuine, “real” faith does not practice partiality, inside or outside of the church.

7. Besides financial and class distinctions, how else do people commonly practice discrimination?

8. What are some reasons that people discriminate? Do you think they/we are always aware of it?

James is clear ... how we treat people is a reflection of our faith. We say “everyone is welcome” to the table, yet we continue to treat some like they really weren’t invited. We esteem one while we ignore another. Showing favoritism is the exact opposite of what Scripture tells us to do. This isn’t talking about using wisdom and discernment as we deal with people ... that’s another topic!

9. You knew I was going to ask. Do you practice discrimination or partiality or show favoritism toward some people? Be honest. Ask the Holy Spirit to open your eyes to any area that displeases the Lord.

10. Are you guilty of making assumptions by “first impressions” or by looking at “the face” rather than the heart? How can you avoid doing this?

11. Notice that James is talking about partiality and favoritism within the church setting. He’s talking to “brethren,” which are fellow believers. Do you think this still happens today? What are some general examples of favoritism that can be seen in the church today?

In 2:8, James refers to the “royal law” which is simply the law of love. He quotes from Leviticus 19:18, which Jesus used in His own teaching in Matthew 22:37-40 when He was challenged by the lawyer. Jesus said to “love our neighbor as ourselves,” which is basically the same principle we find in Matthew 7:12, “Whatever you want men to do to you, do also to them.” The royal law, or “king of the law” is called that because it came straight from Heaven! And when a King gives an order, it’s binding. It carries authority. Yes, love conquers all! James says if we break that one law, we’ve broken them all. Showing partiality, which refuses to love everyone equally, breaks the greatest commandment ... love. The royal law should govern ALL our behavior.

12. What are some others way we can be guilty of breaking the “royal law” besides showing partiality?

13. Explain verses 12-13. What does James say about mercy? How does this speak to your heart? Define mercy and explain how it relates to being a respecter of persons in this context.

I love to read Max Lucado. He has such a practical way of presenting truth. Regarding loving each other and treating each other like the family that we are in Christ, he writes, "It's not always easy to love each other, is it? I once saw a person on a religious broadcast with poofy hair and pink clothes and bright shoes, and you should have seen how his wife was dressed! How can we be in the same family? I wondered. The answer came as they began to speak. They spoke genuinely of Christ on the cross. They spoke of grace for all sin. I'm not too keen on the way they look, but I love the One to whom they look. And since we look to the same One, are we not family? Then there is a fellow with whom I disagree about everything. Politics. Ethics. What he sees as important doctrine, I see as tradition. What I see as necessary change, he sees as rocking the boat. I've never known a man with such poor judgement. But each Sunday we sit in the same church. Each Sunday we partake of the same bread and drink of the same cup. And each Sunday I'm reminded: the Lord determines who sits at the table, not me. And if the Lord invites him and me to the same table, are we not family?"

14. Write your thoughts on the above paragraph. (I don't know about you, but I'm pretty convicted!)

15. What is James' main point in verses 14-26? Can you explain the relationship between faith and works? Does Paul disagree, according to Ephesians 2:8-10?

16. Is James saying people can be saved without faith?

As you read, keep in mind James' main purpose in writing this book. Paul looks at the root of salvation, while James is looking at the fruit of salvation. Faith and works are like two sides of a coin. James isn't teaching a "works" doctrine at all. Please make sure you understand that. Griffith Thomas wrote, "It has been well said that Paul and James are not soldiers of different armies fighting against each other, but soldiers of the same army, fighting back-to-back against enemies from the opposite direction."

John Calvin wrote, "Faith alone justifies, but the faith that justifies is never alone."

Faith, without any visible sign, or works, or fruit ... is worthless. If our faith isn't producing something, it's dead. (Someone once said, "Faith is like calories: you can't see them, but you can always see their results!") In verse 14, James asks a rhetorical question ... can that kind of faith save him? The answer is no. He then, in true James' style, gives us some illustrations and examples of what he means.

17. What examples does he give to illustrate his point? How does 1 John 3:17-18 and 1 John 2:3-6 reinforce that principle?

18. How and why is faith "dead" if it's not accompanied by works?

19. How do some rationalize dead or inactive faith? (Are you?)

James reminds them that it's not enough just to "believe" in God, even the demons do that. This is where the rubber meets the road. Real faith results in works. It's not passive, it displays itself. James now gives the reader two examples of genuine faith that was demonstrated by outward actions. He chose two very opposite people and situations to broaden the application for all of us.

20. Read Genesis 22:1-12. Also read Hebrews 11:17. How did Abraham demonstrate his faith?

21. Read Joshua 21:1-14. Also read Hebrews 11:31. How did Rahab demonstrate her faith?

22. Note the differences of these two illustrations. Why do you think James uses them?

Some get confused by the word "justify." The Greek word, depending on context, can mean either "to declare righteous" as in a legal proceeding, or "to demonstrate as righteous." Abraham was not saved by faith plus works, but by a faith that works. Weirsbe wrote, "How was Abraham 'justified by works' when he had already been justified by faith? (See Romans 4) By faith, he was justified *before God* and his righteousness declared; by works he was justified *before men* and his righteousness demonstrated."

James ends this section (verse 26) by reiterating his main point ... faith without works is dead, or useless.

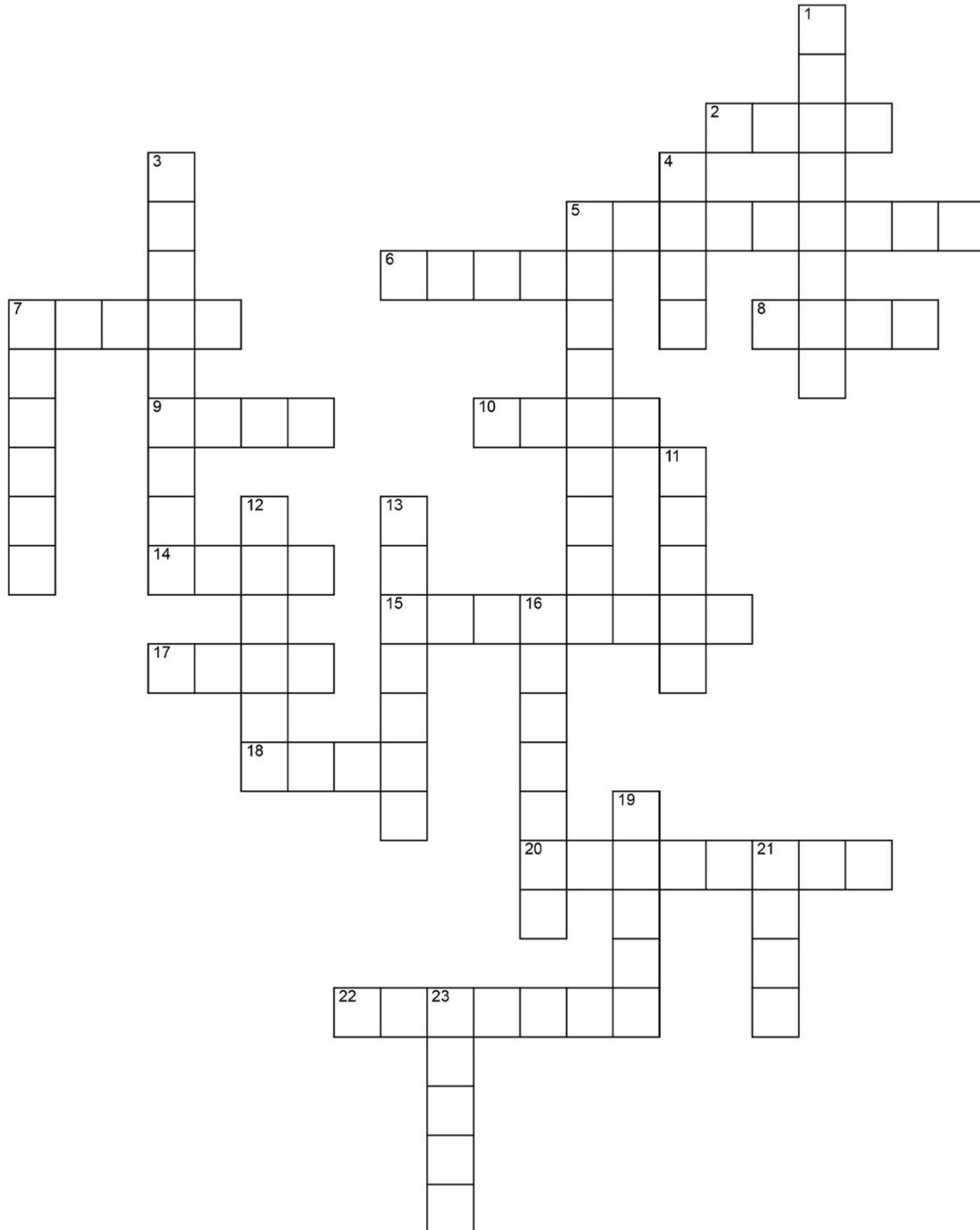
23. In our chapter, James describes a dead faith, which can be more of an **intellectual** experience. He talks about a demonic faith in which our **emotions** are touched and cause us to fear and tremble. He then talks about a saving faith, which results in a changed life, demonstrated by our works. This dynamic faith leads to obedience to the will of God. Here's where the rubber is going to meet **YOUR** road. How would you describe your own faith? Profitable or useless? Dead or alive? Intellectual or emotional? Or dynamic and living? 2 Cor. 13:5 says to "Examine yourself, whether you are in the faith, prove your own selves ..." Is your faith counterfeit or real?

Well, this was an amazing chapter, wasn't it? I love James' style of writing. Short and to the point. Well thought out, stating the point, giving illustrations of that point, and wrapping it up again. So practical. Honestly, like our faith is supposed to be. Alive. Practical. Useful. What's the point of a faith that's dead? Is that what God intended? Does that bring glory to our Lord?

24. For our last question, write what most impacted you from James chapter 2. What specifically grabbed your heart, and how do you plan to apply it?

Memory Verse of the Week: "For as the body without the spirit is dead, so faith without works is dead also." James 2:26

James 2



Across:

2. Was not Abraham our father justified by works, when he had offered Isaac his son _____ the altar?
5. Do not they _____ that worthy name by the which ye are called?
6. For if there come unto your assembly a man with a gold ring, in goodly apparel, and _____ come in also a poor man in vile raiment;
7. What doth it profit, my brethren, though a man say he hath faith, and have not works? can _____ save him?
8. And one of you say _____ them, Depart in peace, be ye warmed and filled; notwithstanding ye give them not those things which are needful to the body; what doth it profit?
9. If a brother or sister be naked, and destitute of daily _____,
10. For whosoever shall _____ the whole law, and yet offend in one point, he is guilty of all.
14. For as the body without the spirit is _____, so faith without works is dead also.
15. For he that said, Do not commit adultery, said also, Do not kill. Now if thou commit no _____, yet if thou kill, thou art become a transgressor of the law.
17. But _____ thou know, O vain man, that faith without works is dead?
18. Hearken, my beloved brethren, Hath not God chosen the poor of _____ world rich in faith, and heirs of the kingdom which he hath promised to them that love him?
20. Are ye not then partial in yourselves, and are become judges of evil _____?
22. But if ye have respect to _____, ye commit sin, and are convinced of the law as transgressors.

Down:

1. And ye have respect to him that weareth the gay _____, and say unto him, Sit thou here in a good place; and say to the poor, Stand thou there, or sit here under my footstool:
3. Ye see then how that by works a man is _____, and not by faith only.
4. Seest thou how faith wrought with his works, and by works was faith _____ perfect?
5. Thou _____ that there is one God; thou doest well: the devils also believe, and tremble.
7. And the scripture was fulfilled which saith, Abraham believed God, and it was imputed unto him for righteousness: and he was called the _____ of God.
11. My brethren, have not the faith of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Lord of _____, with respect of persons.
12. Likewise also was not Rahab the _____ justified by works, when she had received the messengers, and had sent them out another way?
13. For he shall have judgment without mercy, that hath shewed no mercy; and mercy rejoiceth _____ judgment.
16. So speak ye, and so do, as they that shall be judged by the law of _____.
19. Even so faith, if it hath not _____, is dead, being alone.
21. Yea, a man may say, Thou _____ faith, and I have works: shew me thy faith without thy works, and I will shew thee my faith by my works.
23. If ye fulfil the _____ law according to the scripture, Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself, ye do well: