

Group discussion *Each number below includes questions that relate to the scripture. I offer a few answers, but your perspective may be better. The point is to discuss, not to get 100% agreement. Rule of thumb: the fewer questions you ask, the better. Save time for “the big question.”*

Read James 2:14-26 aloud. Sometimes it is helpful to break the passage up into smaller units and have different people read.

1. Describe in your own words the issue that James is addressing in our text.

Do you think this issue is still relevant to Christians today? Why or why not?

Why do you think Christians struggle with putting their faith into action?

2. Of all the illustrations James could pick to demonstrate his point he chooses how Christians treat the poor and needy (15-16). Why do you think he uses this example?

Have you ever had a similar experience when encountering someone in need? What was your experience?

Why is speaking a blessing easy while being a blessing hard?

What does James' example here say about spiritual and physical realms? Are they separate? Are they related? Why does it matter?

3. James draws attention to a person who separates faith from works (18).

How would you describe a person who only had faith? What is the danger for this kind of person?

How would you describe a person who only had works? What is the danger for this kind of person?

Why is it important for Christians to have *both* faith and works?

4. In the midst of his discussion of faith and works James inserts a comment about God and demons (19).

If James is talking about the faith of believers, then why would he bother to discuss the faith of demons?

Why is it important for believers to remember God when talking about faith and works?

5. Some resist the words of James in this text because they think his words contradict the belief that Christians are saved by faith alone. *See Bible Notes for information about this question.*

Do you think James is saying that our works saves us? Why or why not?

How would you explain to someone the difference between being saved by faith and working out our faith?

6. James closes his discussion by referencing two heroes of faith—Abraham (21-23) and Rahab (25). What can we learn about faith from each of these individuals?

See Bible Notes for references to these heroes of faith.

What other biblical examples come to mind that serve as models of faith being made alive with works?

Who is a modern example of faith (in our world or our church) that we can look to encourage us to put our faith into action?

† **The million-dollar question** *If you ask only one question, let this be it. Allow at least 20 minutes. Go around the circle and give each person an opportunity to answer. It's okay if they pass, but at least they get a chance to respond.*

Where is one place in your life where you can put your faith into action? Where is one place our group could put our faith into action?

Resources

Bible notes

One challenge of James' words is that they seem to contradict those of Paul in his writings (e.g., Rom 3:19-5:1; Gal 2:15-3:24). However, it is important to note for this discussion that "works" according to James involve works of charity while "works" according to Paul are works of the Jewish Law as a source of identity.

As a way to prepare for this discussion it may be helpful to go back and re-read the references James makes to Abraham (Gen 22:1-19) and Rahab (Josh 2:1-21).

Kid-friendly activity. *An activity designed to help kids and adults grow in faith together. Do this first, then dismiss the kids so the adults can talk.*

The "Filling Up Faith" Activity

Preparation: Gather enough empty balloons where every child can have their own to hold during the discussion.

Delivery: Hand out a balloon to each child.

Discussion 1: Describe your balloon to me. When do you use balloons? What do you use balloons for? How do balloons work? (Here you may have them fill the balloon with air and let the air out. Do not yet let them tie the balloon off with air in it.)

Read: James 2:14-17

Discussion 2: What does James say about our faith? Why do you think it is important to have works along with faith? Does anyone have an example of when they have seen faith put into action?

Conclusion: James' description of our faith is a lot like the balloon you are holding. When we just have faith (just a balloon), then it is empty and cannot be used to its full potential. However, when we fill up our faith with good works (like filling up a balloon with air), then our faith is alive and can be of use to those around us.

Now let the all the kids blow up their balloons and tie them off. Close with a prayer and let the kids take their balloon home with them.



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LIFE Group Guide

James 2:14-26 – Working Faith

By Wilson McCoy (wilson.mccoy@gmail.com)

The theme: Faith without works is dead. These direct words of James strike at the heart of his plea for Christians. A believer cannot be a person who only speaks of charity and good deeds. A believer is an individual who talks the talk *and* walks the walk.

This week Kevin addressed having a faith that comes alive through works. Too often Christians believe that faith is only an internal conviction or a set of principles to be held. However, James proclaims that real faith is found in external actions. Faith becomes a reality when our principles are lived out to the world around us.

Leadership tip: One challenge of leading a Life Group is creating space where fruitful conversation can happen. Space is created when leaders are comfortable with silence after asking a question. Space is created when leaders show care and attention to all answers given. Space is created when the Life Group time is bathed in prayer before and after the discussion. Hopefully you can create some space this week for your group!

Relate *Use a few to introduce the theme, check everyone's spiritual pulse, and "break the ice." No right or wrong answers – maybe goofy but not wrong! Look for opportunities to affirm and encourage through these questions.*

- ❖ It is Labor Day weekend. Has anyone already done anything special for the holiday? Does anyone have any big plans for tomorrow?
- ❖ Football is back in session. What is your favorite part of the football season? *"Nothing" is an acceptable answer, believe it or not.*
- ❖ How does our group plan on serving during the season of Overflow?