

**The Letter of James 2:14 – 26**

English Standard Version (ESV)

1 <sup>8</sup> If you really fulfill the royal law according to the  
 2 Scripture, “You shall love your neighbor as yourself,”  
 3 you are doing well. <sup>9</sup> But if you show partiality, you are  
 4 committing sin and are convicted by the law as  
 5 transgressors. <sup>10</sup> For whoever keeps the whole law but  
 6 fails in one point has become guilty of all of it. <sup>11</sup> For he  
 7 who said, “Do not commit adultery,” also said, “Do not  
 8 murder.” If you do not commit adultery but do murder,  
 9 you have become a transgressor of the law. <sup>12</sup> So speak  
 10 and so act as those who are to be judged under the law  
 11 of liberty. <sup>13</sup> For judgment is without mercy to one who  
 12 has shown no mercy. Mercy triumphs over judgment.

13 <sup>14</sup> What good is it, my brothers, if someone says he has  
 14 faith but does not have works? Can that faith save him?  
 15 <sup>15</sup> If a brother or sister is poorly clothed and lacking in  
 16 daily food, <sup>16</sup> and one of you says to them, “Go in peace,  
 17 be warmed and filled,” without giving them the things  
 18 needed for the body, what good is that? <sup>17</sup> So also faith  
 19 by itself, if it does not have works, is dead.

20 <sup>18</sup> But someone will say, “You have faith and I have  
 21 works.” Show me your faith apart from your works, and  
 22 I will show you my faith by my works. <sup>19</sup> You believe  
 23 that God is one; you do well. Even the demons believe—  
 24 and shudder! <sup>20</sup> Do you want to be shown, you foolish  
 25 person, that faith apart from works is useless? <sup>21</sup> Was  
 26 not Abraham our father justified by works when he  
 27 offered up his son Isaac on the altar? <sup>22</sup> You see that  
 28 faith was active along with his works, and faith was  
 29 completed by his works; <sup>23</sup> and the Scripture was  
 30 fulfilled that says, “Abraham believed God, and it was  
 31 counted to him as righteousness”—and he was called a  
 32 friend of God. <sup>24</sup> You see that a person is justified by  
 33 works and not by faith alone. <sup>25</sup> And in the same way  
 34 was not also Rahab the prostitute justified by works  
 35 when she received the messengers and sent them out by  
 36 another way? <sup>26</sup> For as the body apart from the spirit is  
 37 dead, so also faith apart from works is dead.

**Observation (What does it say?):**

Consider the observation questions on the back of this page. What do you notice in this passage?

- Underline all of the references to faith and works.
- What words describe faith?  
Box words about faith with works  
Circle words about faith without works
- Where does James use literal illustrations?  
Where does he use figurative illustrations?
- What else do you observe in this passage?

**Interpretation (What does it mean?):**

After observing the passage:

- How would you summarize the words James uses to describe faith with works (the items you boxed)?
- How would you summarize the words James uses to describe faith without works (the items you circled)?
- How would you answer someone who says that James and Paul had different ideas of the gospel, that they contradicted each other?
- If this passage was all you had, how would you explain salvation by faith to someone?
- What other questions come to mind as you read?

**Application (What does it mean for me?):**

- Do you see this passage as burdensome, or do you see it as hopeful, or in some other way?
- How do you see faith and works in your own life? How is “faith completed by works”? Or is it?
- What would be different (attitudes, behavior) if God used this passage to change you?

**Additional questions for thought and discussion:**

For more suggested methods of study: <http://www.goodnotsafe.com/methodical-bible-study/>

For examples of inductive studies: <http://www.goodnotsafe.com/inductive-bible-study-examples-2/>

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**Inductive Bible Study**

(A few general ideas)

**Observation**  
(What does it say?)

What facts do you **observe** about the passage that help bring out the writer's thought process?

- Who are the people involved?
- What action takes place?
- What type of literature is it (poetry, history, didactic, etc.)?
- What details are included or left out?
- Are any unusual words used?
- Is there symbolic language?
- What is the grammar of the passage (pronouns, prepositions, verb tenses)?
- Are words or ideas repeated?
- Any comparisons or contrasts?
- Any cause and effect?
- Are there indications of purpose ("in order that...")?
- Are there conclusions ("Therefore...")?
- Are there explanations?
- Does the passage logically break into sections?
- How would you summarize the passage?
- What would be a good "headline" for the passage?

**Interpretation**  
(What does it mean?)

What questions come to mind about the facts that would help you **interpret** the meaning?

- How would the original readers have understood the passage?
- What is the main emphasis?
- Why does the writer use repetition, or contrast, or unusual words?
- What does the grammar or structure of the passage reveal about the writer's thought pattern?
- Is there a logical sequence in the passage?
- How are different ideas in the passage connected?
- Are there any new ideas or concepts presented?
- Are there difficulties in the passage?

**Application**  
(What does it mean for me?)

What is the impact on your life? What **application** does the Holy Spirit want to show you?

- Is there a command to obey?
- Is there a promise to be thankful for?
- Is there an attribute of God to worship?
- Is there an example to follow?

**Read nothing into the Scriptures, but draw everything from them, and suffer nothing to remain hidden that is really in them.**  
**J.A. Bengel (1687-1752)**

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For a much more detailed description of the methodology, see

Robert A. Traina, *Methodical Bible Study*. Wilmore, Kentucky: Asbury Theological Seminary, 1952.

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