



Discussion Guide

Date: 8/30/2026

Sermon Title: How do I live out my faith?

Scripture: James 2:14-26

This discussion guide is a layout to be used with a group or class. We have included opening and closing prayers to start and end your group. The guide may be used for personal or family reflection as well.

OPENING PRAYER

Gracious God, thank you for gathering us together and for the gift of faith. As we open your Word today, help us not only to hear it but to live it. Open our hearts to what you are saying to us through James. Show us where our faith is alive and growing, and show us where you may be calling us to put our faith into action. Give us courage to be honest, grace to listen, and openness to one another. May our conversation lead us closer to you and closer to the people you have called us to love. In the name of Jesus, Amen.

A LITTLE BACKGROUND ON JAMES :

James is one of the most practical books in the New Testament. It is less concerned with explaining what Christians should believe and more concerned with asking: What does faith look like when we actually live it. James is traditionally associated with James, the brother of Jesus and a leader of the early Jerusalem church. The letter was written to Christian communities experiencing the ordinary challenges of life: poverty, wealth, conflict, favoritism, suffering, and the struggle to live faithfully. James has already made this point earlier in the letter. In James 1:22, he tells his readers to be "doers of the word, and not merely hearers." By chapter 2, James gets even more specific. He asks whether it is possible to claim faith while our lives remain unchanged. That is the question behind James 2:14–26.

OPENING QUESTIONS: Choose one of the following questions to start your group or class with.

1. Share an example of someone whose faith you have seen lived out in a meaningful way. What did you notice about them?

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS: Read James 2:14-26. As you read, listen for the relationship James describes between faith and action. After reading, sit quietly for a moment.

1. What word, phrase, or verse stood out to you? Why?

Looking at James 2:14-17. James gives a very practical example: someone is without adequate clothing and food, and another person responds with kind words but does nothing to help.

2. Why do you think James uses such an ordinary example to make his point?
3. What is the difference between: feeling compassion, talking about compassion, and acting with compassion?

4. What do you think James means by “dead” faith?
5. Is James saying that actions earn our salvation? Or is he saying that genuine faith naturally begins to produce something in our lives?

Read verse 18 again. James says: “Show me your faith apart from your works, and I by my works will show you my faith.” This gets to the heart of the passage. James doesn't simply ask: “What do you believe?” He asks: “Can your faith be seen?”

6. If someone watched your life for a week, what might they learn about what you believe?
7. Where does your faith currently “show up”?
 - a. In the way you treat people?
 - b. In your relationships?
 - c. In your generosity?
 - d. In your work?
 - e. In your worship?
 - f. In the way you respond to difficult people?
 - g. In the way you care for people who are hurting?

8. What is one place in your life where you would like your faith to become more visible?

James 2:19 — Believing Isn't the Whole Story. James says even the demons believe that God is one. That's a pretty strong statement.

9. What is the difference between believing something about God and actually trusting God with your life?
10. Can someone know a great deal about Christianity without allowing that knowledge to change the way they live?
11. What does James seem to believe is missing?

James 2:20–25 — Abraham and Rahab. James gives two examples of faith that showed up through action: Abraham trusted God and acted. Rahab trusted God and acted. They are very different people with very different stories.

12. Why do you think James chose both Abraham and Rahab?
13. What does their inclusion tell us about who can demonstrate living faith?
14. What do their stories have in common?
15. They didn't merely say they trusted God. Their faith moved them to act. What is one action you have taken because of your faith that you might not have taken otherwise?

James 2:26 — Read verse 26 slowly again. “For just as the body without the spirit is dead, so faith without works is also dead.” James ends where he began. Faith without action is like a body without breath. It may have the appearance of life, but something essential is missing.

16. What does it look like when faith is actually alive in someone?
17. What are some signs of living faith?
18. What might dead or disconnected faith look like?

SERMON QUESTIONS:

1. Pastor Allison uses the analogy of interconnected muscles to describe faith and works -- in what ways have you personally experienced the danger of separating these two things in your own spiritual life?
2. We hear in both Pastor Allison and Pastor Scott's sermon that we have the odds of faith and works in

3. Dallas Willard said, "Grace is not opposed to effort. It is opposed to earning. Earning is an attitude. Effort is an action." how does this distinction change the way you think about your own acts of service and devotion?
4. James asks what profit or advantage there is in faith that does not result in faithful activity -- what do you think a life of faith without action actually costs a person, both spiritually and relationally?
5. The sermon describes how the laws given to help people live in God's grace were gradually turned into requirements for earning that grace -- where do you see this same tendency showing up in the church or in your own spiritual habits today?
6. Pastor Allisoins share how Matthew the tax collector is presented as someone saved not only from sin and death but from a self-centered way of life -- can you think of a moment in your own journey when following Christ pulled you out of a self-focused pattern?
7. The sermon draws a distinction between what Jesus saves us from and what Jesus saves us for. In your own words, how would you describe both sides of that? What does it mean to be saved not just from death and separation from God, but also from a life centered entirely on yourself?
8. This week we lost Dolly Partner. She is remembered not for her fame or wealth but for being 'the book lady' -- what do you hope the people around you, or your church community, will ultimately be known for when others look back?
9. The sermon suggests that faithful action does not have to be grand or large-scale, but can include small everyday acts of service -- how do you discern which acts of service are genuinely Spirit-led versus simply convenient or comfortable?
10. If your local church were evaluated not by its worship style or doctrinal statements but solely by its acts of service to the surrounding community, what would that evaluation reveal, and what might need to change?

REFLECTIONS:

11. The sermon suggests that turning our gaze outward and serving others actually heals something within us. Have you experienced that? What happened when you shifted your focus from your own needs to someone else's?
12. Where in your life right now is faith staying safely inside the box -- remaining internal and personal -- without producing any outward action? What might it look like to take one step toward changing that?

BRINGING IT HOME:

Think about your own life and complete these sentences:

1. If my faith is alive in me, it should show up in my...
2. One person who might experience God's love through me this week is...
3. One action I believe God is inviting me to take is...

YOU MATTER. YOU BELONG.

James reminds us that faith is never meant to be lived alone or kept inside ourselves. How might your faith help someone else know that they matter and belong? Take a moment to think about that before discussing.

CLOSING PRAYER:

God of grace, thank you for the faith you have planted within us. Remind us that faith is not simply something we believe in our minds or say with our lips. Faith is meant to become visible in the way we live. Where our faith is alive, help it show up through us. Show up in the way we love, serve, forgive, welcome others, and care for people who are hurting or overlooked. Help us not worry about doing enough to earn your love. Instead, help us trust your grace so deeply that your love begins to overflow from our lives into the lives of others. May our faith be alive. And may that living faith show up through us. In the name of Christ, Amen.

WAYS TO RESPOND:

Choose ONE of the following practices to focus on this week:

1. Identify one small, everyday act of service you can build into your regular routine -- returning grocery carts, helping a family member with a task, or checking in on a neighbor.
2. Research one local organization in your community -- a food pantry, a school, a shelter, or a nonprofit - - and take a concrete step toward volunteering or donating.
3. Write down one area of your life where you have been focused primarily on your own needs and worries. Pray specifically about how God might be calling you to redirect some of that energy outward.
4. As a group, identify one service project you can do together in the coming weeks as a shared expression of your faith.