



Faith and Action Must Work Together

James 2:14-26

Thou believest that there is one God; thou doest well: the devils also believe, and tremble (James 2:19—KJV).

You believe that God is one. You do well; the demons also believe, and shudder (James 2:19—NASB).

You believe that God is one; you do well. Even the demons believe—and shudder (James 2:19—NRSV).

Consider the many meanings of “believe,” “believing,” “believe in,” “faith,” “trust,” and “action.” Some “believe” the truth about God; for example, “there is one God.” James wrote that people and demons can believe the same truths about God, but demons shudder when thinking about them. James insisted that “believing” the truth about God should make a difference in people’s behavior. Believing God’s judgment about their future, demons shudder. Believing what God has said about people’s possible futures leads some people repent of their sins. Some who claim to “believe in” God never take the time to learn the facts about God or God’s will. Those who remain unbelieving refuse to repent.

The first step in saving “faith” is “believing” the Bible is true. Demons know the Bible is true, but instead of repenting they try to distort the truths in the Bible to make unbelievers. In addition to believing God’s Word is true, the next steps in saving faith involve “trust,” entrusting our lives and future to God, and then taking “action” by obeying the commands of Jesus revealed in the Bible. Consider James’ example: Abraham “believed” God’s promise about his son: “I will establish my covenant with Isaac as an everlasting covenant for his descendants after him” (Genesis 17:19). Later, when God commanded Abraham to sacrifice Isaac, Abraham “trusted” God’s promise that Isaac would have descendants. Then, he took “action” and obeyed God. Abraham trusted God would do as He promised, and God did; God saved Abraham’s son. Therefore, James concluded: “You see that Abraham’s faith and his actions were working together, and his faith was made complete by what he did” (James 2:22).

Thinking Further

1. What type of love should true faith in Jesus Christ inspire within true believers?
2. According to James, what unreasonable or senseless response does the person who says he has faith, but has no works, give to the hungry person who has no food?
3. If someone's faith is nothing more than intellectual belief, how might that make a difference in the way they live? Can you think of some examples?
4. Hebrews 11 describes faith: "Now faith is the assurance of things hoped for, the conviction of things not seen" (Hebrews 11:1). What did this assurance and conviction of some of those listed in Hebrews 11 lead them to do?
5. How is faith brought to completion by actions, deeds, or works?