

SCRIPTURES FOR 9/17/06 LIFEGROUP LESSON

James 2:14-26

14What good is it, my brothers, if a man claims to have faith but has no deeds? Can such faith save him? 15Suppose a brother or sister is without clothes and daily food. 16If one of you says to him, "Go, I wish you well; keep warm and well fed," but does nothing about his physical needs, what good is it? 17In the same way, faith by itself, if it is not accompanied by action, is dead.

18But someone will say, "You have faith; I have deeds." Show me your faith without deeds, and I will show you my faith by what I do.

19You believe that there is one God. Good! Even the demons believe that—and shudder.

20You foolish man, do you want evidence that faith without deeds is useless? 21Was not our ancestor Abraham considered righteous for what he did when he offered his son Isaac on the altar? 22You see that his faith and his actions were working together, and his faith was made complete by what he did. 23And the scripture was fulfilled that says, "Abraham believed God, and it was credited to him

as righteousness," and he was called God's friend. 24You see that a person is justified by what he does and not by faith alone.

25In the same way, was not even Rahab the prostitute considered righteous for what she did when she gave lodging to the spies and sent them off in a different direction? 26As the body without the spirit is dead, so faith without deeds is dead.

Ephesians 2:8-10

8For it is by grace you have been saved, through faith—and this not from yourselves, it is the gift of God— 9not by works, so that no one can boast. 10For we are God's workmanship, created in Christ Jesus to do good works, which God prepared in advance for us to do.

Matthew 11:28-30

"Come to me, all you who are weary and burdened, and I will give you rest. Take my yoke upon you and learn from me, for I am gentle and humble in heart, and you will find rest for your souls. For my yoke is easy and my burden is light."

NOTE TO LEADER: There is a lot of material here. Familiarize yourself with it so you know which stuff you are most comfortable with and what you will cut if you get short on time. Try to keep the lesson/discussion 20-30 minutes in length. Good luck and let me know if you have any questions. - Ed
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LESSON 3: NEVER FEAR

NOTE TO LEADERS: All items in *italics* are for your information and not designed to be read aloud.

INTRODUCTION:

This week, Ed shared two different ideas. First, that faith that saves is more than just belief...

THE FAITH THAT SAVES

Have some read James 2:19.

What is your first response when you hear this verse?

Do you ever struggle with believing in a God you cannot see?

Were you ever taught that belief was all you need?

Have someone read James 2:14-17.

Does this passage make you uncomfortable? If so, why?

Have someone read Ephesians 2:8-9.

Does this passage feel like it contradicts the last passage?

Have someone read Ephesians 2:10.

Does adding this verse help your understanding of this passage?

You can see how some would accuse James and Paul of being in conflict, but looking at these two passages together shows that any controversy comes from our definition of FAITH. Is faith completed by deeds or are they totally separate?

Have you ever attended a church that has completely ignored James' treatment of faith (i.e., that insists in FAITH ONLY salvation)?

Does Ed's suggestion that belief must lead to trust, which must lead to risk make sense to you? Why or why not?

Share an experience where you took a risk for the kingdom and it proved worthwhile.

FACING FEARS

The second idea was that, once we accept that our faith should entail risk taking and serving according to our gifts, we can still be crippled by our fear.

Of the three fears Ed described – Fear of Incompetence, Fear of Failure, and Fear of Burnout – which do you struggle with the most?

Share an experience where you were held back by your fear but later overcame it.

Have someone read Ephesians 2:10 again.

What good works do you think God prepared in advance for you to do?

How do you think you should respond to the fact you are “God’s workmanship” created with a specific purpose in mind?

Have someone read Matthew 11:28-30.

Ed shared that burnout is a legitimate concern but that if we are living in subjection to Christ, we should be able to bear up under pressure. He even went so far as to say that this scripture indicates that our labor under subjection to Jesus can refresh us.

Do you agree or do you think Ed must have lost his marbles?

Can you apply this to your life?

CONCLUSION

If we seek to know the gifts God has bestowed on us and we work together to accomplish His will, there is nothing that can stop us. As Paul said, “If God is for us, who can be against us?”