

JESUS' BROTHER, CHALLENGES OUR HEARTS

Talk 4 – Is your faith dead? – James 2:14-26

Small group questions

Leaders – if the questions make no sense or you don't know the answer – please contact bishop@bathurstanglican.org.au

1. What resonated with you from the message, or was there something you found challenging or unclear?
2. Is James just going a little over the top here? What is wrong with saying to someone who has no food and clothes 'go, I wish you well, keep warm and well fed'?
3. James presents a hypothetical scenario in vv15ff. Can you think of modern-day parallels or situations that mirror this? How might we, even unintentionally, replicate this in our own lives or church? Do you think there have been times in your life when you have behaved this way?
4. Do we do enough to help the poor? (How do you measure 'enough'!?)
5. Why does he say 'faith by itself, if it is not accompanied by action, is dead'? What sort of 'faith' is he talking about here?
6. How would you respond to someone who says – "well – look – you have faith, I have deeds"?
7. James gave two examples from the Old Testament, of people whose faith led them to action. Because they trusted God, they responded in obedience and in loving care. How were their actions evidence of a true faith (a real trust)? What does it mean when it says that "Abraham's faith was credited to him as righteousness" (think – rightness with God) and that Rahab was considered righteous (ie right with God)?
8. v24 says 'you see that a person is justified (ie put right with God) by what he does and not by faith alone'. How do you reckon this fits with what the apostle Paul says in Ephesians 2:8-9 - 8 For it is by grace you have been saved, through faith – and this is not from yourselves, it is the gift of God – 9 not by works, so that no one can boast.
9. It was the reformer John Calvin who commented on this passage "faith alone justifies, but the faith that justifies is never alone". What did he mean by that and how does this help us understand what James means here?
10. What would you say to someone who said after hearing Sunday's message – "you know what? – I think my faith is dead. I just come to church and go through the service on Sunday, but there's no impact on my life, Sunday to Sunday".
11. How can we help one another to ensure our faith – our trust – is real, vital, fresh and forever growing and deepening?

Heavenly Father, thank you for the message we've heard today, prompting us to reflect on the depth and authenticity of our faith. We recognise the times when our words or beliefs have not found expression in action. As we move forward, may your grace guide us to live out our faith genuinely, showing love and compassion in every step.

For those of us feeling uncertain or challenged about the vitality of our faith, may your Spirit bring encouragement and depth. Help us remain aware of your presence and the chances to demonstrate our faith practically, so our lives resonate with your love and grace. In Jesus' name, we pray. Amen.