

# Beliefs Matter

## Discovery Starters

### Service

We are called to **contribute toward God's Kingdom purposes** in every sphere of life

[Deu 15:7-11](#); [Deu 24:17-22](#); [Psa 112:4-9](#); [Pro 11:10-11](#); [Zec 7:8-10](#);  
[Mat 5:14-16](#); [2Th 3:13](#); [Tit 3:4-8](#); [Heb 13:15-16](#); [Jam 2:14-26](#)

### Belief #6 – Service: Faith-Inspired Good Works

#### Biblical Foundation:

*What good is it, dear brothers and sisters, if you say you have faith but don't show it by your actions? Can that kind of faith save anyone? Suppose you see a brother or sister who has no food or clothing, and you say, "Good-bye and have a good day; stay warm and eat well"—but then you don't give that person any food or clothing. What good does that do? So you see, faith by itself isn't enough. Unless it produces good deeds, it is dead and useless.*

*Now someone may argue, "Some people have faith; others have good deeds." But I say, "How can you show me your faith if you don't have good deeds? I will show you my faith by my good deeds." You say you have faith, for you believe that there is one God. Good for you! Even the demons believe this, and they tremble in terror. How foolish! Can't you see that faith without good deeds is useless?*

*Don't you remember that our ancestor Abraham was shown to be right with God by his actions when he offered his son Isaac on the altar? You see, his faith and his actions worked together. His actions made his faith complete. And so it happened just as the Scriptures say: "Abraham believed God, and God counted him as righteous because of his faith." He was even called the friend of God. So you see, we are shown to be right with God by what we do, not by faith alone.*

*Rahab the prostitute is another example. She was shown to be right with God by her actions when she hid those messengers and sent them safely away by a different road. Just as the body is dead without breath, so also faith is dead without good works (Jam 2:14-26).*

#### Discovery Starter:

James contains an astounding number of commands: 62! Since there are 1,742 words in the Greek text, this works out to be 28.1 words per imperative (WPI). The books with the next highest ratio of imperatives in the New Testament are: 1 Timothy (37.0 WPI),

2 Timothy (37.5 WPI), 1 Peter (44.3 WPI), and Titus (47.1 WPI). Surely James uses these many imperatives because he desired to teach us how to live a life of practical faith that is "pure and genuine" (Jam 1:27).

Imagine having grown up in a household with Jesus as your elder brother! What would it have been like? Jesus was not a theoretical, abstract idea to James, but a genuine, living person with whom he experienced life in all its real practical dimensions. James shared this experience with Jude (both are mentioned in Mat 13:55; Mar 6:3; Jud 1:1. James is mentioned in Act 12:17; 15:13; 21:18; 1Co 15:7; Gal 1:19; 2:9,12; Jam 1:1). It is remarkable that neither of them leverage their sibling relationship with Jesus to gain extra status. In fact, instead of presenting themselves as brothers of the Lord, each deliberately introduces himself as "a slave of Jesus Christ" (Jam 1:1; Jud 1:1). They had observed Jesus' unparalleled example of how to live life. Jesus was their Lord whom they followed.

No wonder that many of James' statements naturally echo Jesus' teaching in the Sermon on the Mount (Mat 5:3-7:29). Jesus' life was reflected in this sermon; a life which whole-heartedly trusted God and lovingly served people in need. James had observed how Jesus has seamlessly blended faith and works in his life. For this reason it is not surprising that James mentions the words *pistis* (faith) and *ergon* (works) exactly 15 times each. There is a perfect equilibrium of these in Jesus' life and in James' words. For them, true work believes (Joh 6:29) and true faith works (Jam 2:17-18,20). Is your faith inspiring your work? Reflect on James' exhortation, "If you are wise and understand God's ways, prove it by living an honorable life, doing good works with the humility that comes from wisdom" (Jam 3:13).

### **Keep Going:**

It only takes 15 minutes to read James and about 16 minutes to read Jesus' Sermon on the Mount. Note the following parallels between James and the Sermon on the Mount. I would like to suggest that these parallels exist not because James read and tried to copy Matthew 5:3-7:29, but because he had lived and talked with Jesus day after day for most of his life. His words reflect the life of the Jesus he had known. As you read through these passages, what stands out to you? What is the Holy Spirit wanting to bring to your attention as you read through these passages? What steps of obedient, working faith can you take in response?

•Jam 1:2-3    Mat 5:10-12

- Jam 1:4 Mat 5:48
- Jam 1:13 Mat 6:13
- Jam 1:22 Mat 7:20-21
- Jam 1:23-25    Mat 7:24-27
- Jam 2:5 Mat 5:3
- Jam 2:8 Mat 5:17
- Jam 2:10 Mat 5:19
- Jam 2:12-13    Mat 5:7; 6:14-15
- Jam 2:14 Mat 7:26
- Jam 2:20 Mat 7:22
- Jam 3:12 Mat 7:16-18
- Jam 4:3 Mat 7:7
- Jam 4:11-12    Mat 7:1-2
- Jam 5:1-3Mat 6:19-20
- Jam 5:10 Mat 5:12
- Jam 5:11 Mat 5:10
- Jam 5:12 Mat 5:34-37

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