

Introduction:

1. Is it easier for you to see contradictions in yourself or to see them in other people?
2. Describe a time when you were impressed or influenced by a believer who did not just talk the talk--- they backed up their talk with action.

Understanding:

3. In the message we heard about Abraham in James 2:21: **Was not our father Abraham considered righteous for what he did when he offered his son Isaac on the altar?** The story is found in Genesis chapter 22. God speaks to Abraham, and He tells Abraham to do the most unthinkable thing that you could ever imagine. "Sacrifice your only son, Isaac, on an altar." Now, look at Genesis 15:5-6 where God talks to Abraham. Did Abraham have to do anything here? Are these passages saying 2 different things? How do they fit together? How are they a model for us?
4. If our faith is not real, it can't not produce fruit in our lives. Does that make sense? There will be integrity—wholeness—undividedness—between what we say we believe and the way we act. Not perfectly — not all the time—nobody has fully arrived! But where there is faith...there will be fruit. Read Luke 6:43-45. How does this describe the fruit that the Lord gives? How does this encourage you in your own walk? Does Jesus say you are a good person because of the good deeds you do or do the good deeds come from something else? Why is it encouraging to reflect on this?
5. Hebrews 11 describes many great heroes of faith and is often called the "Hall of Faith". Read verse 31. Why was Rahab listed there? What does her listed profession say about favoritism? How does that encourage you?
6. You run into an old friend who has not been to church for many years. They tell you "I believe in 'once saved, always saved'. I believe the facts about Jesus. I'll worry about obeying him later". Based on today's passage, how could you confront that person with the truth in love?
7. Read Ephesians 2:8-10. Compare verses 8-9 with verse 10. How do you see BOTH faith and action here? Is one more important than the other? What does faith result in? Do you see that at work in your own life?
8. Billy Graham recently said (at the age of 95!) "Satan has cleverly misled people by whispering that they can believe in Jesus Christ without being changed, but this is the Devil's lie." Someone tells you they heard that Billy said this and it troubled them greatly. How can you simultaneously bring them God's truth AND reassure them?
9. We might get nervous to think only of James 2:24--- but remember what we heard in week 1. Read James 1:18 again. How does this verse give you the assurance that you need to deal with James 2:24? How does that spur you on to serve the Lord?
10. One writer said "Paul gives the declaration of our righteousness and James gives the demonstration of our righteousness." Why do we need to have both of these things in our lives? What happens if we swing too close to only having one of them?

Application:

Keep in mind that James reminds us that the thing that impacts people the most is integrity. When the message of our lives matches the message of our lips, there is a power to that kind of life. And living that way is only possible through the power of Christ in us. Let's ask God for that power and that integrity in our lives.

Now look at the application questions:

11. A.W. Tozer said this: "We can prove our faith by our commitment to it and in no other way. Any belief that does not command the one who holds it is not a real belief—it is only a pseudo-belief." Is it possible that God is speaking to you through the book of James and exposing your faith as pseudo-belief? Fake faith? And if that's what God is showing you, do you have the honesty to own it, and do you have the desire for something more? In which area of your life does this change need to begin?
12. This week, will you keep your eyes open for those Rahab moments—where God might be calling you to risk?
13. James 2:17 says our faith is dead if it results in no works. There can be no true faith that fails to produce works. This can include care for the poor, but also includes good works of all kinds. What kind of works are you weak in? Ask the Lord to spur you on to grow in them.