

ICEBREAKER:

Does your family tell stories of previous generations (e.g., “the time your grandfather did such-and-such”)? Or if you have children, what stories do you tell them about your own youth and childhood?

Interpret: Read James 2:14-26

1. In verses 14-16, James asks three rhetorical questions. Restate the questions in your own words, and give the answer to each.

2. When should someone’s claim to have “faith” be received with skepticism, rather than accepted at face value? Why?

3. What example does James give of empty words that benefit no one? What would you think of someone who acts like this? What would you say their true attitude is? (vv. 15-16)

How is “faith” without works similar to this? (vv. 17, 20, 26)

4. From verse 19, what could you conclude about the value of affirming a creed or statement of faith?

5. When was Abraham first considered righteous? Why? (Gen. 15:1-6)

6. Read Genesis 22:1-18. How did Abraham’s faith and actions “work together” in this narrative? How was his faith “made complete” by what he did? (v. 22).

7. What does James conclude that Abraham’s actions in Gen. 22 demonstrated? (v. 24) How can this be reconciled with Paul’s statement in Rom. 3:28? (See Heb. 11:17-19)

8. Read the story of Rahab in Joshua 2:1-24 and 6:20-25. How was Rahab’s faith demonstrated? What was the result? (v. 25; see Heb. 11:31)

Summary:

Does James contradict Paul? This question is brought up when you compare these passages for example: Romans 3:28, 4:1-5 compared to James 2:21, 24.

How might they actually be complimentary not contradictory.

Root/Fruit. Paul usually emphasizes the root of justification, which is faith in Christ alone. James emphasizes the fruit of justification, which is good works.

- Paul focuses on the MEANS of our salvation: We are saved BY God's grace. • James wrote about the OUTCOME of salvation good works.

- (There are occasions, however, where Paul emphasizes the fruit of justification as well. See Galatians 5:6; Eph. 2:8-10.)

- You cannot teach justification without sanctification

- **Grace** is the source of our salvation. God welcomes the sinner; his grace draws us to faith. The well-known, morally upright person to the obscure immoral person... Both need the saving forgiveness of God through Christ.
- **Christ** is the basis for our salvation. We rely on his perfect life, death, resurrection for us.
- **Faith** is the means of our salvation. We embrace Christ by faith.
- **Works** are the evidence of our salvation. Real faith bears fruit.

Apply:

In what kinds of “deeds” is your faith typically expressed? Do you think James would consider your faith useful or useless?

If you are bearing fruit, then rejoice that God has been gracious to you, that he is at work in you, and He will bring this work to completion.