Faith vs. Works, Part 2

In the last message, I began preaching on the Book of James chapter 2, verses 14 through 26. In Part 1, I reviewed how the word *works* is translated here in James 2. In the Greek, the word is *ergon* and it involves *the employment of something*. When employing what God's Word says, it means *the employment of the Word of God in life or as a commission that He gives someone to carry out*; for instance, carrying out the Great Commission to go make disciples.

James 2:14 states, “*What doth it profit, my brethren, though a man say he hath faith, and have not works?*”

Here faith is *pistis*, not *pisteuo*, and comes by hearing and hearing the Word of God. *Pistis* is the first level of faith and by hearing you are then persuaded that what was heard is true, but there is still an application that needs to take place. Level two of faith is when you start applying or acting on God's Word with full trust and confidence in it. This is an increased level of faith because you are trusting and having confidence in what God's Word has said to be true. The works that James refers to are not works as in a to-do list or things most Christians, pastors, and preachers have formulated that are necessary to become a good Christian or stay saved as a Christian. What the word means and how the verse should be read is “… *and have not the employment of the word? can faith save him?*” This is where I brought up in the last message that many professing Christians believe they are acting in faith and trusting and having confidence in God's Word when challenges come, but without the application it does no good. God’s Word is there for us to use. It is how we get righteousness in our lives that God places in our being through His Holy Spirit.

Moving on to verses 17, “*Even so faith, if it hath not works [or the employment of the Word in your life], is dead, being alone [or by itself].*”

Here, James is saying that hearing faith, being persuaded what you heard to be true will die if left there. I have seen it happen to too many Christians along my journey of faith. And I have seen it happen with my faith, especially in my younger years. Often it seems like everything comes at me from all around these days. When I was younger, I just soaked it all in and I learned all I could about God's Word, hearing about faith, but the challenges did not come as hard or as often as they do now. Now if I do not apply the *pisteuo* faith, I find myself knocked down wondering what the heck happened! I might do that at times right now, but I will get right back up and say, “You knocked me down devil, but I am faithing, trusting, and having confidence, *pisteuo* faith, in God. I will employ the Word of God which I have been persuaded and have heard and come to understand to come right back up at you and land on you a few blows from a heavenly perspective; from the Word of God’s perspective.” That is why James says, “*Even so faith, if it hath not works, [or employment of the Word of God] is dead, being alone.*”

Verse 18 continues, *Yea, a man may say, Thou hast faith, and I have works: show me thy faith without thy works, and I will show thee my faith by my works.*”

And oh how one side of the Christian community has jumped on James for that; “*and I will show thee my faith by my employment of the word.*” Go out to Christian communities and they all say, “Faith; I have faith,” and see how they have applied of the Word of God in their lives. I am
willing to gamble on a sure thing because I know for sure once you do the research there are a lot of professing Christians saying they have faith, faith, faith, faith. James challenges them, as does Paul, by saying “Okay, great, you know how to say it, let's see you live it.” Have you had someone say to you that you have to have faith? Your response should, “Okay, define it for me. Describe it. Tell me how I get it.” Of course, the most common answer is you just have to believe. But really have them tell you how; describe it, define it, make it make sense. Often their response to that is that not all things are going to make sense. But if that is true, then why is it in God's book to start with? Is God playing games with us? I do not think He is, but that is how it has been described and defined.

What James is saying here, “I will show you my faith what I have been persuaded and what I know to be true by the employment of the Word in my life” is to take faith to the next level and he goes on by saying in verse 19 what that next level is.

“Thou believest [pistemw, faihe] that there is one God; thou dost well: the devils also believe, and tremble.”

The devils also faihe, pisteuo again, and tremble. Literally, they are struck with extreme fear; they stiffened up, but this does not happen to a Christian with pisteuo faith. We all have trials in our lives, but we can avoid having them get the best of us if we have this level of faith; the so-be-it faith, the pisteuo faith that has all our trust and confidence in God. No matter how hard the trial, it will not beat us.

In Acts, Paul is in a storm with everyone around him in fear. They knew for sure they were going to die. They were not just knocked around, they were certain they would die, except for Paul. He was also in that boat as they were going through the storm. In fact, the boat breaks up and they were swimming for their lives. When Paul gets on the shore, he tries to build a fire, but lo and behold a snake, a poisonous viper, comes and bites him and once again everyone operates in fear, except for Paul. He did not let it bother him. He went through a trial, but it did not beat him. There is an important truth to that. We do not hear much of it any more in the Christian world because they are all about self-pity and feeling sorry for you. They preach this is not what God has destined for you, so you must be doing something wrong. No, if you are in a trial, you are probably doing something right and making some kind of impact on the devil's territory.

Verse 20 tells us, “But wilt thou know, O vain man, that faith without works is dead?”

In this verse, James was never talking about a to-do list or a checklist of what a Christian should do in the material or physical sense. He was talking about what a Christian should do to employ the Word of God, both in the physical and the spiritual sense in their life, and for the Great Commission; not what manmade traditions developed.

I am a believer of Christ first, no matter what I preach. This ministry is designed to make you think through traditions. I am not here because I could not do anything else. That is the furthest thing from the truth. I have proven I am not like these Bible school thumping preachers that have no other choice because it is why they went to school and spent tens of thousands of dollars on their education. I do not sit in that camp. The reason why this ministry exists is because I know I was called and chosen to do what I am doing when I was 17 years old, but drifted from those purposes because I really did not want to do it. And now, I am sick of how Christ and His Word
have been misrepresented and that is why this ministry exists. It is why I just do not get along with or like know-it-all Christians.

I am still learning. There is not a day that goes by that something new is found, and yet so many Christians become stale; they become permanent and unmovable or they retreat. They never advance forward increasing in the mind of Christ because they develop an attitude that they do not need to know anything else. We need to know and faiithe, not just on the *pistis* level, but also at the *pisteuo* level. We need to understand that Christ died for us. We must faiithe in Him and realize He is the one that provided our salvation through the gift of grace and has reconciled us back to the Father and through Him we will get to heaven. Unfortunately, most Christians just do not stay at that point of view. They march forward in their journey and become know-it-all Christians, especially the Christians who read the Bible through every year and have it almost memorized and know exactly what the Word of the Lord is saying. I have come across a few of those Christians. God help them if they try to even provide any assistance to a newborn Christian. They will just cause confusion with their ill-conceived ideas what the Word of God says.

Just the same, James is saying the devils faiithe in God and tremble; they have fear and stiffen up, whether coming from a heavenly or earthly source, which means us! When devils come in the presence of a true *pisteuo* Christian who has gone beyond the *pistis* level, Satan perceives our spiritual armor and freezes when we start believing and being persuaded that God's Word is true. God has even granted us enough grace that we do not have to be in certain levels of faith to have that spiritual armor on, but just imagine when we do get to that *pisteuo* level of faith, the so-be-it faith. It stops the devil in his tracks. The Greek word comes with the meaning of stiffening up or freezing. I have teachers listening, and when a child is reprimanded, especially a younger child, some of the older ones have become immune to discipline, they know they are in trouble, so what do they do? They freeze up because they know they are in trouble. And Satan and his minions know they are in trouble when they see that level of *pisteuo*.

In the remainder of the chapter, James gives two examples. Now if James was trying to press the law on us, he could have picked many examples from the Mosaic timeline of the law all the way up to Jesus, but He did not do that. As I said before, it is ironic that James chose two individuals but not just any two individuals. He chose the father of faith who existed before the law and a whore who was not at that time part of the children of Israel. But she demonstrated the level of faith that took her beyond words and required action; the type of action that would put all her trust and confidence in what she heard not only to be true, she was going to literally base the remainder of her life on it. She could have been caught and they could have eliminated her and her family, the people of Jericho. Instead, she took a chance. We read in verse 20,

> “But wilt thou know, O vain man, that faith without works [the employment of the Word] is dead? Was not Abraham our father justified by works [Literally, imputed with righteous by the employment of the Word of God as in Romans 4.], when he had offered Isaac his son upon the altar?”

Go to Genesis 22:1-6 to see that story. It begins,

> “And it came to pass after these things, that God did tempt [or try] Abraham, and said unto him, Abraham: and he said, Behold, here I am. [I am sure if Abraham knew the real reason God was
trying to get his attention he probably would have tried to hide or definitely would not respond, but he did."

And he said, Take now thy son, thine only son Isaac, whom thou lovest, and get thee into the land of Moriah [or literally, chosen by Jehovah]; and offer him there for a burnt offering upon one of the mountains which I will tell thee of."

Abraham had another son, Ishmael, but that son was not the son that God promised Abraham. That son was a product of Abraham and his wife Sarah scheming to produce a child with a handmaiden. They went outside of God's plan and purposes. God wanted this child, Isaac, to come from Abraham and Sarah, which had bigger implications if you track Christ's lineage. And even God recognized that Isaac was his only son because of the promise and where eventually 'my only begotten Son' would be part of that family lineage. Just think about how they prepared a sacrifice for burnt offering. It was a gruesome sight even with an animal, but imagine this event with a human. Verse 3 continues,

“And Abraham rose up early in the morning, and saddled his ass, and took two of his young men with him, and Isaac his son, and clave the wood for the burnt offering, and rose up, and went unto the place of which God had told him.

Then on the third day Abraham lifted up his eyes, and saw the place afar off. And Abraham said unto his young men, Abide ye here with the ass; and I and the lad will go yonder and worship, and come again to you.

And Abraham took the wood of the burnt offering, and laid it upon Isaac his son; and he took the fire in his hand, and a knife; and they went both of them together.

And Isaac spake unto Abraham his father, and said, My father: and he said, Here am I, my son. And he said, Behold the fire and the wood: but where is the lamb for a burnt offering? And Abraham said, My son, God will provide himself a lamb for a burnt offering: so they went both of them together.

During this time, even Isaac realized they did not have the proper animal sacrifice that was part of the burnt offering available to them at that time. Also, besides what you have been taught or come to understand about God's Word, Isaac was not a child here. That is what makes this story even more amazing, and even though we are focusing on Abraham's faith in these verses, the hidden message is Isaac's faith. In most of the New Testament and the Old Testament not much happens in Isaac's life, but as a young man, I believe in his 30's and possibly even 33, he experienced the ultimate faith challenge, and there was no resistance on Isaac's part at this point. Verse 9 goes on to say,

And they came to a place which God had told him of; and Abraham built an altar there, and laid the wood in order, and bound Isaac his son, and laid him on the altar upon the wood.”

Here we can see there was no resistance. Isaac accepted what was about to happen and he was ready to lose his life. I believe we know why, and that is why Isaac's faith here amazes me.

Genesis 15:1 gives us the base for this event. It begins,

“After these things the word of the LORD came unto Abram in a vision, saying, Fear not, Abram: I am thy shield, and thy exceeding great reward.
And Abram said, Lord GOD, what wilt thou give me, seeing I go childless, and the steward of
my house is this Eliezer of Damascus?
And Abram said, Behold to me thou hast given no seed: and, lo, one born in my house is mine heir.
And, behold, the word of the LORD came unto him, saying, This shall not be thine heir; but he that shall come forth out of thine own bowels shall be thine heir. [Not someone else substituting for an heir. No! One coming from your own bowels.]
And he brought him forth abroad, and said, Look now toward heaven, and tell the stars, if thou be able to number them: and he said unto him, So shall thy seed be.”

In the next verse, we read what Abraham did.

“And he believed [or literally faithed] in the LORD; and he counted it to him for righteousness.”

In these verses, we see Abraham had to profess his faith, and even go beyond professing and start acting and faithing; trusting and having confidence in what God would actually come to pass. Between verses 5 and 6 Abraham could have said, “You know Lord, that is all fine and dandy, but you are telling me my offspring, and all their generations literally, will be larger than all the stars that I can count here tonight?” And God said, “Yes.” Now Abraham, or Abram still at this point, could have argued with God. He could have said, “No way, this can't be true. Stop leading me on God. Enough is enough.” He had many other reasons, but he did not do that. Instead, he faithed in the Lord and the Lord saw it and was pleased and He literally imputed him with righteousness. So when we get to chapter 22, which I read first, you see Abraham in such a state of faith that he understood if he could sacrifice Isaac. Now, we do not have that record here, but I believe he even told his son Isaac not to fear. “This is what God said and it was promised through you; you are my only son in God's eyes. Through you the promise will be revealed.” And I am sure he told him the story of all the stars and what they meant. And God saw that faith and imputed him with righteousness, which we read about in Hebrews 11:17-19,

“There is nothing you could have told Abraham or even Isaac. I can see his father telling Isaac, “You might lose your life Isaac but do not fear, God has given us promises. We just have to keep faithing and employ what God's Word has told us. We can't just believe it and be persuaded it is true, now we have to apply it to our lives and God is testing us to see if we will apply it or is it just more words.” You know the story, as Abraham was raising the knife to sacrifice his son his hand was stopped and God provided an animal sacrifice. Abraham and Isaac both came through the test. Returning to James 2:21, he writes,

“What Abram heard from God at a time prior to the moment of offering his son Isaac up as a living sacrifice, persuaded him by what he heard. So he had to then take it from the “faith wrought with
his employment of what he heard,” his application of what he heard, to “...and by the employment of God's word was faith made complete?” And it is not works as defined by manmade definition; it is works that requires God's Word employed in our life. Have I not been saying that for years now? And it is just not here in James. James just has a unique way of saying it, but Paul said the same thing. They all did from Old to New Testament. In verse 23, James writes,

“And the scripture was fulfilled which saith, Abraham [now at a completed stage] believed [the word here is pisteuo; the so-be-it faith.] God, and it was imputed unto him for righteousness: and he was called the Friend of God.”

Paul and James do not differ on this subject! This is what Paul writes in Romans 4:3,

“For what saith the scripture? Abraham believed [faithed, pisteuo] God, and it was counted unto him for righteousness.
Now to him that worketh is the reward not reckoned of grace, but of debt. But to him that worketh not, but believeth [faithe] on him that justifieth [or become righteous] the ungodly, his faith is counted for righteousness.”

Paul is saying the same thing. If Abraham was justified without pisteuo faith, it would have been works, but it was not that way. Compare Paul to what James writes in James 2:23,

“And the scripture was fulfilled which saith, Abraham faithed [pisteuo-ed] God, and it was imputed unto him for righteousness: and he was called the Friend of God.
Ye see then how that by works [the employment of the Word] a man is justified [Or become righteous.], and not by faith only.”

When we apply God's Word in our life and have trust and confidence what He says is true and will come to pass in our life, we become righteous. So verse 24 could be read as, “Ye see then how that by the employment of the word of God a man becomes righteous and not by pistsis only.” It does not happen just by hearing and not just by being persuaded that it is true, but acting on it. That is where we can apply the ‘A, B, C’s of faith’ as my mentor would say. That is action, based upon belief, sustained by confidence because it then leads us to that level of faith. James goes on in verse 25 to give another example.

“Likewise also was not Rahab the harlot justified by works [ergon here], when she had received the messengers, and had sent them out another way? For as the body without the spirit is dead, so faith without works is dead also [so faith without the employment of the Word is dead also].”

In the very last example here in this chapter, James is using another person who had no concept of the law. This was a person living in Jericho. All she heard about the children of Israel was how they were conquering and the events that happened when they left Egypt. However, she was persuaded by what she heard, and she did not just keep that information. She took it to the next level, to the pisteuo level, and she started acting, employing the Word of God, believing what she heard to be true, so she started trusting and having confidence not in what she was receiving in Jericho, whatever belief system they were practicing, but by what the children of Israel were practicing, a faith in a God that she only heard about. She did not even see anyone until the spies came and lodged in her facilities for whatever reason. That is an interesting story just by itself.
found in Joshua chapter 2 with Joshua sending in spies. Verse 1 begins,

"And Joshua the son of Nun sent out of Shittim two men to spy secretly, saying, Go view the land, even Jericho. And they went, and came into a harlot's house, [They went straight to a harlot's house.] named Rahab, and lodged there. [I am sure what they were looking for was a resting place, but that is another story.]

And it was told the king of Jericho, saying, Behold, there came men in hither to night of the children of Israel to search out the country. [It was reported that there was a group of individuals spying and hiding out somewhere in Jericho.]

And the king of Jericho sent unto Rahab, saying, Bring forth the men that are come to thee, [The king, being a smart king, knew where all desert wanderers would go once they had a little freedom, at least in this king's mind and he was right!] which are entered into thine house: for they be come to search out all the country.

And the woman took the two men, and hid them, and said thus, There came men unto me, but I wist not whence they were: ["They were here, but they're not here any longer.” I guess they did their business and moved on.]

And it came to pass about the time of shutting of the gate, when it was dark, that the men went out: whither the men went I wot not: pursue after them quickly; for ye shall overtake them. [“I don't know where they are or where they were going, but I am sure if you hurry you can probably catch up.”]

But she had brought them up to the roof of the house, and hid them with the stalks of flax, which she had laid in order upon the roof. [She covered and hid them from God's enemies.]

And the men pursued after them the way to Jordan unto the fords: and as soon as they which pursued after them were gone out, they shut the gate.

And before they were laid down, she came up unto them upon the roof;
And she said unto the men, I know that the LORD hath given you the land, and that your terror is fallen upon us, and that all the inhabitants of the land faint because of you. [She heard the stories about what the children of Israel were accomplishing as they were marching closer to her land.]

For we have heard how the LORD dried up the water of the Red sea for you [That was 40 years prior.], when ye came out of Egypt; and what ye did unto the two kings of the Amorites, that were on the other side Jordan, Sihon and Og, whom ye utterly destroyed. [giant-like beings.]

And as soon as we had heard these things, our hearts did melt, neither did there remain any more courage in any man, because of you [“You are making everyone scared.”]: for the LORD your God, he is God in heaven above, and in earth beneath.

Now therefore, I pray you, swear unto me by the LORD, since I have shewed you kindness [literally, I have shown you love and loyalty], that ye will also shew kindness unto my father's house, and give me a true token [or sign];

And that ye will save alive my father, and my mother, and my brethren, and my sisters, and all that they have, and deliver our lives from death.

And the men answered her, Our life for yours, if ye utter not this our business. And it shall be, when the LORD hath given us the land, that we will deal kindly and truly with thee.

Then she let them down by a cord through the window: for her house was upon the town wall, and she dwelt upon the wall.

And she said unto them, Get you to the mountain, lest the pursuers meet you; and hide yourselves there three days, until the pursuers be returned: and afterward may ye go your way. And the men said unto her, We will be blameless of this thine oath which thou hast made us swear.
**Behold, when we come into the land, thou shalt bind this line of scarlet thread in the window which thou didst let us down by: and thou shalt bring thy father, and thy mother, and thy brethren, and all thy father's household, home unto thee. And it shall be, that whosoever shall go out of the doors of thy house into the street, his blood shall be upon his head, and we will be guiltless: and whosoever shall be with thee in the house, his blood shall be on our head, if any hand be upon him.**”

To continue the story, Israel finally gets to Jericho and Rahab and her family were spared because she heard what God was doing with the children of Israel. She was persuaded that God was with them and He no longer was with or was ever possibly with Jericho and its inhabitants, so she had to make a decision not just for herself but her whole family. I am not even too sure her whole family knew about it at this time, probably not. She took a risk, because you know what family members are like. What if a family member would have turned on her before the children of Israel ever arrived. The people of Jericho could have stoned or killed her. She took a risk not just for herself, but for her family members, based on what God was doing with the children of Israel. She became a faither of what God can do with individuals, a nation, and the children of Israel as they were marching through the land of wilderness. She even heard the stories of the Red Sea crossing and I am sure that included how the Egyptians were wiped out. She definitely included in the story how the Amorites were dealt with and eliminated. She did not just hide and start living in fear and say “We are next.” She started believing what she heard to be true and she took a step of faith which was an act of faith. She started employing what she heard to be true, applying it and putting it into action and she came up with this plan with the spies. Of course, they were vulnerable and I am convinced they would have been caught if it was not for Rahab. I do not think they were very good spies if all they had on their mind as soon as they left the camp of Israel was to go to a whorehouse once they got to the nearest town or the town they were designated to spy out. Think about that and put flesh and blood on this story.

However, we see Rahab listed in Hebrews 11 in the Heroes of Faith chapter among individuals who stood out when they had to apply the Word of God in their lives. It did not matter how much of the Word of God they even knew, but they applied it and seen in verse 30 and 31,

>“By faith the walls of Jericho fell down, after they were compassed about seven days. By faith the harlot Rahab perished not with them that believed not [Some translations say “that were disobedient.”], when she had received the spies with peace.”

Rahab could have stayed in the camp of the non-believers, the doubters, the fear-mongers thinking that maybe the children of Israel would just pass over them. Or she could think the situation was too much of a coincidence, listen to the stories, and make a choice about who to put her trust and confidence in. So, she chose to put her trust and confidence in the God of Israel. And by stepping out in faith, not only did she spare herself, she spared her whole family and James acknowledges that in chapter 2:25,

>“Likewise also was not Rahab the harlot justified by works [Or righteous in the eyes of God by the way she employed what she knew about the Word of God], when she had received the messengers, and had sent them out another way? For as the body without the spirit [or breath] is dead, so faith [pistis, the hearing and the persuading of it, without applying the Word of God, without having trust and confidence in it.] without works is dead also.”
The choice whether in the Old or New Testament is the same. Either you are going to trust in what you think you know based on the circumstances, or you are going to faith at both the pistis level and moving into the so-be-it level. That is usually how it happens. We must hear the Word of God to remind us what it said so then we can take it, apply it, and put it into action with all our trust and confidence in Him. That is what James is saying: faith without the employment of the Word of God is dead. It is like a body without the spirit. It cannot exist. Across this land today, a lot of professing faithers are listeners, but not doers, of the Word of God, because they do not want to do anything with God’s Word whether it is for themselves or anyone else. I know Christians as I was growing up in the Lord that had the belief that all they had to do was show up and at least pretend like they were listening to God's Word for God to count it as righteousness I guess so the Spirit of God could dwell in them. They were filling a seat, checking an item off a checklist of works that impress God. Let me tell you right now, nothing we do is going to impress God, except when we live through His only begotten Son and what He did for us to reconcile us back to the Father. If we trust and have confidence in His Son and what He has done for us and what He has given us as a commandment for us to continue to do, then God is impressed. Take it outside that realm and there is nothing you are going to do physically that will impress God. He is only impressed when we have faith His Son.

Paul, James, and Peter all say what His Son's commandments were and they were even prophesied in the Old Testament. We are to abide in Him, stay connected to the vine so we can be nourished, and show our love for others by nourishing them through God's Word. Nothing else will substitute for it and nothing we can do to satisfy our conscience will even come close. Only when we have faith, trust, and confidence in Him when He puts the tests and challenges in front of us, which includes the challenge to get His Word out to the world, not just tests and challenges that apply to our own life. He will challenge you, so do not be just a professing Christian; apply what I have been trying to communicate to you.

Some who write to this ministry say they do not have a job and cannot give any monetary offering to this ministry. It does not matter if all you can give is ten cents. I am not impressed with numbers; you do not have to impress me, but you definitely have to impress Him and what impresses Him is faith; not just talking faith, but living faith that has application. I am jealous with the Nike “Just do it” slogan. I wish I could adopt it and apply it to the Christian realm. “Just do it.” Stop talking about it and just do it. There are not enough doers of the Word. Just do it! If all you have is a dollar in your pocket, then send at least ten cents. If you think that would be insulting, then send a note along with it and say, “I only have a dollar, but I didn't want to be left out in participating in this Great Commission, so I'm going to send ten cents.” I am not insulted by the truth? I would be ecstatic over it because I know it is a sweet smell offering that pleases Him when it is done with the right heart and with the right concept of giving. That is a material example of how you can help this ministry.

Communicating by phone calls and emails is another example. For reasons I cannot explain, they encourage everyone here that not only works a normal day outside of this ministry, but then work here four, five, six hours after that every day with very few days off. And they do it with a glad heart because they are part of what we are doing, part of the Great Commission that they have been assigned to do to go make disciples. Unfortunately, I cannot even get some to email this ministry. It is not about works, but it is about how you help us employ the Word of God. I have to get this message out to the world. I work in the secular world, and you would think the Christian
world would operate with a different perspective. But no, they operate with the secular business mindset that I follow that is impressed with numbers. When I go somewhere and say we have 3,000 emails or phone calls that communicate to this ministry a week, they say “really!” So I invite them to stop and listen to what we are proposing to help us get this Word out. Like I said, too many are stuck in what they think employing the Word of God is when it is concerned with the Great Commission. Instead, start being used as a vessel of God to carry out this Commission if you are a participant of this ministry. Paul, James, all these giants in the Bible, kept saying the same thing, so I will just keep preaching what they preached.

Keep faithing that God will give us enough people, enough manpower, enough finances to go where He wants us to go in the Commission. I am doing everything I can, and I am asking you to do everything you can. It is the same problem every ministry has. You need to keep in focus why you even exist, which is to please Him and serve Him, not yourselves. Deny yourself, take up the cross and follow Jesus. The message has not changed. God wants us to put Him first. He does not say that He will not allow you to participate in things that bring joy into your life and to other people's lives. However, we are to put Him first and by doing that He will probably make those other things more joyous and fulfilling than they were if you did not.

Christians and non-Christians do everything backwards and it is nothing new. Even in the Book of Haggai they had the same problem. That is why God said we are to examine our hearts and consider our ways. Too often Christians put themselves first and everything related to God's work second. I challenge you to put God first. Everything else will come and go, but God will always be there for you if you put Him first. That much I can promise based on what others have done when they put Him first. Time and time again, when we put God first, He goes out of His way to look after us because He always has our interests constantly on His mind. He is looking after us, but He wants to find individuals that will not just be professing faithers, but Christians that will faithe and employ the Word of God in their lives in just about everything they do, wherever they go, whoever they talk to, they will be employing the Word of God as a living testimony.

If we are to be a servant who offers our services to the Lord willingly, then being a willing servant. Look for the next time you have the opportunity to participate in employing that Word of God to nourish others who have not received it. I am trying so many different ways to make you understand God has chosen you to serve Him to fulfil the Great Commission. If I have gotten that point across even through James, then I have been successful. If not, then I will keep hammering at it. I will not quit because I have hardly exhausted God's Word on this subject matter where we are to put Him first and what He has assigned for us to do right after that. The choice is yours. I cannot make it for you. You have to come to that decision yourself. It is either God first or yourself first.

“For the body without the spirit is dead, – so keep employing the Word of God – so faith without the employment of the word is dead also.” The kind of pistis faith, that first level of faith that comes through hearing is not enough even though you believe it to be true. That level of faith gets you off the starting gate and in the door, but God now wants you to act upon it and start trusting and having confidence in Him in your own life so you employ it to get closer to Him, and also what you participate in with whatever ministry or church you belong to in employing the Word of God.

Keep employing the Word of God. Do not become a stuck, spiritless dead body. Come alive and
recognize why you were called to the kingdom for this hour. It is time that you wake up and take some action. It is time to take that step of faith and start participating. Then you will find yourself wanting to participate in the future, saying, “God, whatever is available out there let me be a part of it because I do not want to miss out in this wonderful calling that you have given me to be part of something that the apostles started after Christ left which He asked them to do, to feed His lambs.” The next step is yours.

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In 2 Corinthians 9:7 it reads, “God loveth a cheerful giver.” The Greek word for cheerful is Hilaros which means when someone is prompt to do something, they are ready in mind, with a joyful heart. In the Septuagint it also means to cause to shine. Today I am looking for Hilaros Givers who are ready and full of joy for the opportunity to cause others to shine by hearing, learning, and growing in God's Word. Join with us today and participate as a Hilaros Giver. If you wish to participate use the following link: http://www.teachingfaith.com/giving

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