Week 20

Faith in Action

Andrew’s Language Arts class has been given a new assignment. Each student is assigned to write a paper about his or her hero. As Andrew and his friends talk about the assignment at lunch, it seems most of the kids in his class want to either write about a sports star or a popular music performer. Sure, these are people that seem to have it all. Everyone knows their name, they have lots of money, and they are really good at what they do. But does that make them heroes? Many of them have been on the news because they have gotten into some sort of trouble. Andrew is pretty sure they are not the kind of people his parents would consider real heroes. When Andrew thinks of a hero, he thinks of David, of Daniel, of Joshua, and even Esther, the heroes of the Bible that he has learned about in his class at church. He thinks of police officers, firemen, doctors, and those that serve others. As Andrew and his best friend walk home from school that day, his friend asks who he is going to write about. Andrew has an opportunity to live out his faith by telling his friend about the heroes of the Bible. He is pretty sure his friend will find what he thinks is a bit crazy. But Andrew doesn’t care if his friend laughs at him. He loves both Jesus and his friend too much to miss this opportunity.

14 What good is it, my brothers and sisters, if someone claims to have faith but has no deeds? Can such faith save them?
15 Suppose a brother or a sister is without clothes and daily food.
16 If one of you says to them, “Go in peace; keep warm and well fed,” but does nothing about their physical needs, what good is it?
17 In the same way, faith by itself, if it is not accompanied by action, is dead.

Monday: Read James 2:14-17. As we begin this section of James chapter 2, we see that James continues to be concerned about those who trust in God living like it. As he has been writing in his letter, true believers speak and act in ways that show what they believe to be true. Chapter two, and indeed James’ whole letter, is about practical Christian living. Not only does he teach us how to respond to God, but also how to have a Christ-like relationship with others.
Have you ever heard it said, or maybe even thought yourself, that it is very difficult to tell the difference these days between Christians and unbelievers? Evidently, it wasn’t so easy to tell the difference back in the Apostle James’ day either. Real Christianity, real faith, is not just something to be talked about. It is something to be lived, and something to be acted upon. What is faith? The word faith is defined as the belief, conviction, or persuasion that something is true. As Christians, what truth is our faith based upon? We believe that Jesus is the Son of God; that salvation is through God’s grace and is not anything that we can earn; that salvation through Jesus Christ is the only way to heaven; and we believe in the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead by which we can be saved. These are the main “truths” that we should understand and believe if we are followers of Jesus Christ. These are the truths that our faith is based on.

Let’s look again at how we can become part of God’s family:

1. **God loves you and has a great plan for you (Psalm 139:13-16)** - God made the world, God made people, God made you. God wants to have a relationship with people, and God wants to have a relationship with you!

2. **We have all sinned (Romans 3:23)** - Everyone must understand that he is separated from God. Sin is choosing to do things our way instead of God's way (some examples of sin are: disobedience, lying, fighting, or even stealing).

3. **We deserve to be punished for our sins (Romans 6:23)** - A "wage" is what we deserve for doing something. A parent works at a job and earns money or a wage. The wages of sin is death. Death is not just dying it is separation from God forever. We will all die, but we can not be with God in Heaven because of our sin.

4. **Even though we chose to sin, God still loves us and offered to forgive us (Romans 5:8)** - How do you think it makes God feel when you sin? God promised that one day a Savior would come who never sinned, and would die for all people. Do you know who that Savior is? Did you know that He died for you?

5. **Jesus died for us (John 3:16)** - Because sin separates people from God, everyone needs a Savior. Do you know why Jesus died? Jesus loved us so much. He willingly died for us, so we could be with God forever. Jesus rose from the dead, so we could have eternal life.

6. **You can become a Christian by confessing that Jesus is your Savior and Lord (Romans 10:9)** – To become a Christian and part of God’s family you must:
   - Admit you have sinned
   - Believe that Jesus Christ died for you on the cross and rose from the grave.
   - Commit your life to living for Jesus Christ
Tuesday: “Living out faith,” means that our Salvation is followed with actions that are proper according to what we believe. *Read James 2:17.* So while faith is the ability to believe, it also must be acted on for it to come alive. James in talking about faith says, “If it doesn’t cause us to do something, it’s dead.” He means that if our faith does not move us to action in response to what God has done for us, that even though we believe, our faith is inactive or unproductive. Can you think of any examples in the Bible of people moving in faith? Write them in your notebook. *Read Matthew 14:29.* Peter first had to get out of the boat in faith, and then he walked on water. In Matthew 16:13-20 we read that Peter answered, “You are the Christ, the Son of the Living God.” For Peter stepping out in faith helped to bring him to the truth that Jesus was the Messiah! What are some ways that you are living out your faith or can live out your faith in your life? Write them down in your notebook.

Wednesday: *Read James 2:14-17 again.* Will your faith by itself do anything to feed or clothe the poor and hungry? No, it won’t. If you are genuinely concerned about the poor and hungry in your neighborhood, it is fine to believe that God can do something about it. But it is even better if you also believe that God is going to do something about it *through you.* Faith, by itself, is inactive when it comes to helping the poor. *(Note that James is not saying anything whatsoever about faith in Jesus for eternal life. This is not the point of this section of his letter.)* He is talking about how our faith in God to feed the hungry and clothe the poor should lead us to somehow helping feed the hungry and clothe the poor. If you believe God can meet these needs, but you yourself do nothing to help, then your faith is inactive and unproductive. This does not mean that your faith does not exist. It does exist. But your faith is not active. God wants our faith in Him to spur us to step out and do things that turn our faith into action. When we pray for something, God then wants us to seek to become the answer to our own prayers. When we tell God that we believe He can do something, He may turn to us and say that He will do it through us if we step out in faith and let Him. Faith in God is not us, “letting go and letting God do it,” but is us “stepping up and taking action” trusting that God will work in and through us to accomplish His work in this world.

Thursday: In the Bible we can find examples of people with great faith. Interestingly though they are not all God’s chosen people, the Israelites. Let’s look today at three examples of people with great faith from the ministry of Jesus.

1. **The Roman Officer – Matthew 8:5-13** When Jesus returned a Roman officer came and pleaded with him. Jesus said, "I will come and heal him." But the officer said, "Lord, I am not worthy to have you come into my home. Just say the word from where you are, and my servant will be healed. When Jesus heard this, he was amazed. Turning to those who were following Him, He said, "I tell you the truth, I haven't seen faith like this in all Israel!"

How did this man put his faith into action? *This Roman officer knew that Jesus had such authority, that he believed his request for the healing of his servant would be given him without the need for the Lord Jesus to personally come and touch him, but only needed to "say the word."*
2. **The Sick Woman – Mark 5:25-34** A woman in the crowd had suffered for twelve years with constant bleeding. She had heard about Jesus, so she squeezed through the crowd and touched His robe. For she thought to herself, 'If I can just touch His robe, I will be healed.' Immediately the bleeding stopped, and she could feel in her body that she had been healed of her terrible condition. Then the frightened woman, trembling when realizing what had happened to her, came and fell on her knees in front of Jesus and told Him what she had done. And Jesus said to her, 'Daughter, your faith has made you well. Go in peace. Your suffering is over.'

This is another powerful example of faith. How did this woman put her faith into action? *She struggled through the crowds to "just touch Jesus' robe," because she believed she would be healed if she could just do that. She didn't need Jesus to touch her, or speak words to her. She only needed to touch Him and experience His power.*

3. **The Gentile Woman – Matthew 15:21-28** Then Jesus went north to the region of Tyre and Sidon. A Gentile woman who lived there came to him, pleading, 'Have mercy on me, O Lord, Son of David! For my daughter is possessed by a demon that torments her severely.' But Jesus gave her no reply, not even a word. Then his disciples urged Him to send her away. Then Jesus said to the woman, 'I was sent only to help God's lost sheep—the people of Israel.' But she came and worshiped him, pleading again, 'Lord, help me!' Jesus responded, 'It isn't right to take food from the children and throw it to the dogs.' She replied, 'That's true, Lord, but even dogs are allowed to eat the scraps that fall beneath their masters' table.' ‘Dear woman,’ Jesus said to her, 'your faith is great. Your request is granted.' And her daughter was instantly healed.

How did this woman put her faith into action? *Jewish culture kept Jews from interacting with Gentiles, most especially women. Yet here was a Gentile woman who braved ridicule and possible rejection just so that she could ask Jesus to heal her daughter who was "possessed by a demon that torments her severely." Although Jesus didn't reply at first, the woman kept urging and pressing on despite the disciples' urging to send her away. In the end, Jesus granted her request, because her "faith is great."*

What did these three people have in common? They believed in Jesus and that Jesus could help them. Each of them put their faith into action by interacting with Jesus. And each of them received what they wanted. As you think about “putting feet to your faith,” how can these three examples help you? Write your thoughts in your notebook.
Friday: After working through the devotions this week you may still be wondering about how you can live out faith in your own life. The great thing is that you don’t have to figure it out on our own. The Bible provides examples of people who did just that and you can learn from them. You also have the Holy Spirit to help you along the way to show you what God would have you do. Write out a prayer to God about the devotions this week.

Write out your own devotion in your notebook based on James 2:14-17 using the S.O.A.P. method.

Sample Prayer: Heavenly Father, teach me how to put my faith into action. With Your help my faith can be turned into action in my everyday life. Putting feet to my faith doesn’t mean that I have to do incredible things. Help me to trust You so that I can step out in faith to further Your kingdom. In Jesus’ name. Amen.