

**Joke:** Little Susie had been born with such a sunny disposition, she was the most optimistic kid anybody had ever seen.

She loved people and animals, and no matter what happened, she always saw the bright side.

She was also an artistic girl. So one Christmas, her parents got her a big bag of clay for making pottery. They put it on the back porch next to a bag of horse manure for the garden.

On Christmas Eve, dad wrapped the presents. It was a little dark on the porch, and as you may have guessed, he wrapped the manure by mistake, instead of the pottery clay.

On Christmas morning, Susie was so excited to see what Santa had brought her. When she finally got to unwrap her big present, her parents watched with anticipation to see how much she liked her clay.

When Susie opened the package, and then the bag inside containing several pounds of stinky horse manure, the parents were aghast.

But before they could apologize, Susie said, “Oh boy! I got a pony!”

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Innkeeper's Son - Week 2 Christmas 2021

### **Show video - WHM Innkeepers son**

While the Bible does not record an actual innkeeper's son per se, Luke 2:1-7 speaks to the scene just referenced in the video.

It was the night this Hero, the Messiah named Jesus showed up as God in the flesh. It was the first time anybody on earth witnessed His majesty in this way.

Luke 2:1–7 (NIV): In those days Caesar Augustus issued a decree that a census should be taken of the entire Roman world. 2 (This was the first census that took place while Quirinius was governor of Syria.) 3 And everyone went to their own town to register. 4 So Joseph also went up from the town of Nazareth in Galilee to Judea, to Bethlehem the

town of David, because he belonged to the house and line of David. 5 He went there to register with Mary, who was pledged to be married to him and was expecting a child. 6 While they were there, the time came for the baby to be born, 7 and she gave birth to her firstborn, a son. She wrapped him in cloths and placed him in a manger, because there was no guest room available for them.

These were the first moments anybody on earth witnessed His majesty as His unique arrival took place. As with much of the Christmas story, the details conveyed in the Bible are limited.

While we know the big picture of what unfolded regarding Jesus being born in Bethlehem, wrapped in swaddling clothes by his mother, Mary, who laid her firstborn in a manger because there was no room in the inn, we have to use our imagination to consider what else might have happened on that first Christmas night.

The odds are high that Joseph and Mary interfaced with someone who eventually guided them to the stable turned

Labor and Delivery Room.

It is not out of the realm of possibility that someone could have helped the holy couple try to make their night more comfortable.

Whether an actual innkeeper showed up on time and provided in the ways the innkeeper's son suggested or not, we can't be certain, but God has a way of putting people in our paths at just the right time to help in just the right way as they speak words of kindness and encouragement while demonstrating acts born out of faith.

When our faith is both demonstrated and proclaimed, something powerful takes place. Such combinations of words and deeds can be keys to unlock the doors to the Kingdom of God on earth as it is in Heaven.

In fact, several decades after Jesus was born in the manger, one of His siblings named James would go on to write a letter to encourage Christians about demonstrating their faith in ways that were pleasing to God.

James 2:14–26 (NIV): 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. 18 But someone will say, “You have faith; I have deeds.” Show me your faith without deeds, and I will show you my faith by my deeds. 19 You believe that there is one God. Good! Even the demons believe that—and shudder. 20 You foolish person, do you want evidence that faith without deeds is useless? 21 Was not our father Abraham considered righteous for what he did when he offered his son Isaac on the altar? 22 You see that his faith and his actions were working together, and his faith was made complete by what he did. 23 And the scripture was fulfilled that says, “Abraham believed God, and it was credited to him as righteousness,” and he was called God’s friend. 24 You see that a person is considered righteous by what they do and not by faith alone. 25 In the same way, was not even Rahab the prostitute considered

righteous for what she did when she gave lodging to the spies and sent them off in a different direction? 26 As the body without the spirit is dead, so faith without deeds is dead.

What James wrote in this part of his letter speaks to the kinds of actions that the innkeeper's son was describing in the video of his father on the night Jesus was born. His father did what he could to be helpful to Mary, Joseph and baby Jesus in ways that made a lasting impact on this 14-year-old boy.

We may never know how small acts of kindness that stem from our faith can impact others and bless God in the process.

And this part of James' letter is a good reminder of what it means to be people who love God and are living lives that give witness to His majesty.

James wrote this letter many years after Jesus grew up, went to the cross, rose from the dead, and then ascended

into Heaven, just as the Scripture says.

Jesus' little brother, James, eventually grew up to be the pastor of the church in Jerusalem. James dearly loved these people he had the privilege to pastor and lead.

In time they would be scattered all over the place due to the rising persecution of Christians in that day and time.

And so James wrote to them to encourage and instruct them in their faith concerning how to live out their faith in some difficult days of their lives.

Biblical scholars note that we have here a passage from James that lies at the very heart of his concern for what was unfolding in and around the church at that time in history.

James is deeply troubled by an attitude. It is an attitude towards faith that sees it mainly as a verbal profession—such as the confession that God is one.

Did you notice that in verse 19? Let's look at it again.

James 2:19 (NIV): You believe that there is one God. Good! Even the demons believe that—and shudder.

He's saying, "You believe that God is one; you do well."

James is referencing one of the most important passages of Scripture found in Deuteronomy 6 that we looked at last week known as the Shema. (Pronounced: She-Maugh) All faithful Jews believed the creed known as the Shema that starts off:

Deuteronomy 6:4–5 (NIV): Hear, O Israel: The Lord our God, the Lord is one. 5 Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your strength.

James commends his Jewish-Christian readers for believing that there is one God.

He's saying, "That's good! You're doing well on that front."



If the innkeeper was like any other regular Jewish man, this is what he would have believed and practiced as well.

Although that belief was a basic truth of Jewish orthodoxy, such acceptance of a creed is not enough to save a person. Every Jew says, "The Lord is one." Every Jew is telling that part of their faith, but true faith is not only about telling what you believe. There is a showing that is meant to go with the telling.

Let's consider the importance of showing and telling our faith.

Do you remember that thing in school that they called, "show and tell" for some that just might be the best memories from their early childhood school days.

Show and tell was that much anticipated day when the teacher would let the class bring something special from home that they likely already had told their classmates about in playground conversations at recess or during lunch.

However, this was the one day when the kids got to bring that special toy or object from home and show it while they told about it. Yes, show and tell was one of the best days of being a kid at school.

James says in this part of the letter that faith is not meant to be told only; it is meant to be a “Show and Tell” kind of faith.

James is saying if all you are doing is telling me the Lord our God is one, yes, you are telling the truth; but if you have nothing coming out of your life that is showing me anything, then your faith is just an echo chamber of what somebody else has said.

It has no real bearing on your life until your actions back up what you are saying.

Romans 8:19 (NIV): For the creation waits in eager expectation for the children of God to be revealed.

James goes onto say in verse 19: “I’m glad you believe that

the Lord our God is one; that's good. But... "Even the demons believe—and shudder!"

Why are they shuddering? Because although they believe in the one true God whose name is Jesus, they do not have the saving faith in Jesus.

The demons hate Jesus, but they know Jesus and His power. And they know their fate.

What James is asking in his letter is, "How is your belief any different than the demons' belief?"

James says, "If all your faith consists of is telling me a belief, then you're no different than the demons because they say they believe in God too."

James goes on to talk about how our faith without works is a dead faith. Did you notice that in verse 17 and then again in verse 20?

Look at them once more. . .

James 2:17 (NIV): In the same way, faith by itself, if it is not accompanied by action, is dead.

James 2:20 (NIV): You foolish person, do you want evidence that faith without deeds is useless?

James is reiterating how it is not a tell-only faith or a believe-only faith; you're meant to show and tell your faith.

Why: Because faith without works is dead. In other words, telling someone what you believe without any actions to back it up is useless.

James is saying that a faith that only tells but does not have anything to show for it does not even have the power to save you.

Don't skip that part in verse 14.

James 2:14 (NIV): What good is it, my brothers and sisters, if someone claims to have faith but has no deeds? Can such faith save them?

Look again at verse 18. . .

James 2:18 (NIV): But someone will say, “You have faith; I have deeds.” Show me your faith without deeds, and I will show you my faith by my deeds.

We are called to be salt and light.

James let’s us know we need faith. But the faith HE has, real faith, authentic faith, genuine faith, is going to have works that accompany it.

That person is going to have something to show for it like the innkeeper did when he was said to have brought towels and water to help bring comfort to the holy couple in his barn the night Jesus was born.

If that indeed did happen, then the innkeeper is demonstrating what James is writing about in verses 14 and 17.

Then James says in verse 22 that our works alongside

what we say we believe is what completes a person's faith.

James 2:22 (NIV): You see that his faith and his actions were working together, and his faith was made complete by what he did.

James is alluding to the famous story in the faith of Abraham, a patriarch, the Father in the Faith.

Look once more at verses 21-23?

James 2:21–23 (NIV): Was not our father Abraham considered righteous for what he did when he offered his son Isaac on the altar? 22 You see that his faith and his actions were working together, and his faith was made complete by what he did. 23 And the scripture was fulfilled that says, "Abraham believed God, and it was credited to him as righteousness," and he was called God's friend.

James is referencing the story of Abraham and his son Isaac from Genesis 15 and Genesis 22.

And then he makes a mention to another Old Testament character named Rahab who, like Abraham, shows up in Jesus' family tree from Matthew chapter 1.

Rahab is one of the five women Matthew specifically mentions in Jesus' family tree from the introduction in Matthew's gospel.

And I love this interesting detail about Rahab, what detail is that you ask, it was her line of work before she started moving in a new direction because of her faith and belief in God; Rahab was a prostitute.

When she came to faith, what she said she believed she then put into action. And her actions allowed for the Israelite spies not to be captured and eventually to be able to take over the city of Jericho that would lead on towards the entrance of the Promised Land.

That story is told in Joshua 2 in the Old Testament. James references Rahab, once this immoral outcast, whose faith was showing in verses 24-26.

James 2:24–26 (NIV): You see that a person is considered righteous by what they do and not by faith alone. 25 In the same way, was not even Rahab the prostitute considered righteous for what she did when she gave lodging to the spies and sent them off in a different direction? 26 As the body without the spirit is dead, so faith without deeds is dead.

James is saying that it is vital to understand that the main point, that was expressed three times in verses 17, 20, and 26, is NOT that works must be ADDED to faith, but that genuine faith includes works.

That is the very nature of faith. It is meant to be shown and not just told kind of faith.

Again, this is what was described by the innkeeper's son about his father as he reflected on the night when Christ was born as portrayed in the video.

The reason James was taking such a stance in describing true faith is because false teachers in his day were setting



forth an incorrect view of faith.

Some were saying: “It doesn’t matter what you do; it just matters what you believe.” There some that teach that today as well unfortunately.

And in a word, what James is saying is: “WRONG!”

What James, the brother of Jesus, is emphasizing in this part of his letter and that the Word of God teaches throughout is this:

What you do reveals who you are.

In other words, if you say you believe this but live like that, you are living out a different gospel than what is articulated in Scripture.

If you live something totally contradictory to what you say you believe, if your lips and your life do not match up at all, then you need to take a step back and evaluate the authenticity of your faith.

Because: what you do reveals who you are.

It has been said, “When someone shows you who they are, listen to them.” What does that even mean?

It means people will tell you who they are by how they live their lives. So watch people. Watch what they say and compare it by what they do.

And if what comes out of their lips is different than what comes out of their lives, then they are telling you who they truly are by their actions rather than by their words.

After all you have heard that phrase. . .”actions speak louder than words, have you not?

Some may say, “Yeah, but I prayed a prayer and asked Jesus to be my Lord when I was a child.”

To which I would say, “That’s awesome! Seriously, that is wonderful, that’s a great start.” But there’s more to it than that.

And if you tell me that and then after looking at the landscape of your life there is no evidence at all of your faith, no fruit of that faith coming out of your life, there is nothing else besides you telling me that you are a follower of Jesus.

There's no love for your neighbor, that should cause us both to pause and evaluate the authenticity of your faith.

Do you remember what Jesus said in His Sermon on the Mount.

Matthew 7:21 (NIV): 21 "Not everyone who says to me, 'Lord, Lord,' will enter the kingdom of heaven, but only the one who does the will of my Father who is in heaven.

Remember, James told us even the devil believes. . .

All throughout James' letter we hear echoes of Jesus' teachings from His Sermon on the Mount. Do you know why?

Probably because James, both heard it and saw it from Jesus over and over and over again as brothers who grew up together in the same home.

The baby in the manger would grow up to be the Savior of the world who had brothers and sisters that saw and heard the way Jesus lived day by day all throughout His life.

These truths were not a one-time teaching in a sermon; they were a way of life for Jesus. And James probably is reflecting on what he heard and saw in life by Jesus as his brother.

Jesus spoke about what people with authentic faith who were true followers and believers in Him would do in their daily life.

James earlier in his book tells us. . .

James 1:26–27 (NIV): Those who consider themselves religious and yet do not keep a tight rein on their tongues deceive themselves, and their religion is worthless.

27 Religion that God our Father accepts as pure and faultless is this: to look after orphans and widows in their distress and to keep oneself from being polluted by the world.

It goes well beyond a prayer that is prayed to believe and moves toward a life that is demonstrating a faith that is shown with an abiding action.

John 8:31-32 it recaps the words of Jesus when He says. . .

John 8:31–32 (NIV): To the Jews who had believed him, Jesus said, “If you hold to my teaching, you are really my disciples. 32 Then you will know the truth, and the truth will set you free.”

The truth will set you free from what?

It will set you free from the lies of the enemy.

If you keep reading John 8, Jesus tells the Jewish people that their faith must be about something more than who

their ancestor, Abraham was.

It goes beyond saying what you believe; it has got to be authenticated by a life of faith. It is about showing and telling your faith.

Jesus goes on to talk about this being obedient to the word of God as being a part of true faith in John 14 and 15.

Notice what Jesus says about showing and telling your faith. It is a both-and, not an either-or kind of thing.

Jesus says this in John 14:21-24. . .

John 14:21–24 (NIV): Whoever has my commands and keeps them is the one who loves me. The one who loves me will be loved by my Father, and I too will love them and show myself to them.” 22 Then Judas (not Judas Iscariot) said, “But, Lord, why do you intend to show yourself to us and not to the world?” 23 Jesus replied, “Anyone who loves me will obey my teaching. My Father will love them, and we will come to them and make our home with them.

24 Anyone who does not love me will not obey my teaching. These words you hear are not my own; they belong to the Father who sent me.

Jesus goes on to say in John 15:16 and 17. . .

John 15:16–17 (NIV): You did not choose me, but I chose you and appointed you so that you might go and bear fruit—fruit that will last—and so that whatever you ask in my name the Father will give you. 17 This is my command: Love each other.

Jesus is talking about how true faith is not all about lip service or about praying a prayer. It is about some life action that comes with it as a result of someone being spiritually dead now coming to life who is producing fruit from their life of faith.

Showing and telling about your faith is what Jesus is talking about; it's what James is talking about; and it is what the innkeeper's son was referencing in his own way through the video portrayal of the night when God came

down as the Hero to rescue us in the person of Jesus the Savior.

Some people have a hard time with this part of James' writing that we have been looking at regarding one's faith because it can sound directly contradictory to what the Apostle Paul writes about concerning how salvation is by grace alone, through faith alone, in Christ alone.

Paul is right and yet, not in contradiction to what James is saying.

As one biblical scholar notes, "James was combating a superficial faith that had no wholesome effect in the life of the professed believer. Paul, on the other hand, was combating legalism – the belief that one may earn saving merit before God by his good deeds."

In a very real sense, James and Paul are saying the same thing about faith that saves, just from different sides of the same coin.



James is talking about active faith; Paul is talking about passive faith. Paul is opposing works-righteousness and earning your salvation through legalism.

James is opposing easy believe-ism and “praying a prayer but not living a life.”

What both Paul and James write about is how true faith always gives practical evidence. It is what Paul writes about in Ephesians 2:8-10.

Some people have verses 8-9 memorized, but don't stop there.

Keep going through verse 10. . .

Ephesians 2:8–10 (NIV): For it is by grace you have been saved, through faith—and this is not from yourselves, it is the gift of God—not by works, so that no one can boast.

That's awesome isn't it?

Let's continue with verse 10. . .

10 For we are God's handiwork, created in Christ Jesus to do good works, which God prepared in advance for us to do.

If someone were to ask Paul, "Well, what if you are not doing those good works that Jesus created us to do in our new life of faith in Him?"

Paul likely would echo James: "Then your faith without works is dead."

And this is what James is asking us in his letter that we have been looking at today in verse 14.

James 2:14 (NIV): What good is it, my brothers and sisters, if someone claims to have faith but has no deeds? Can such faith save them?

As Bill Hull notes in his writings concerning true disciples of Jesus, "The implied answer to this inspired question is: 'No,

faith without obedience isn't saving faith.' Obedience is critical for salvation, which means that it is essential to the gospel. God's purpose for the gospel is bringing about in us obedience to Jesus, who is the Christ. If you declare Jesus to be the Christ, you are issuing a call to obey him as king."

In other words, we are called to show and tell our faith.

We will never know if there was an innkeeper or an innkeeper's son who really did play a role in the birth of Jesus that first Christmas night.

Those possibilities are simply conjecture and being curiously imaginative about what might have happened that is not specifically recorded in the Bible.

However, what is clear is that Jesus came as the Savior to rescue people from their sin and their separation from God. And reconcile them back to right standing with God.

And our faith in Jesus for salvation must be authenticated

in word and deed according to what is written throughout the pages of the Scripture that God inspired.

May we share our stories of how Jesus saved us as we live lives that demonstrate our faith in kindness and generosity this Christmas and into the new year.

May we all be intentional about living lives that show and tell our faith. So that others can Witness His Majesty.