



**Good Steward Bible Study Series
Faith and Action**

Read James 2:14-26

With your group or on your own, take a minute to reflect on God's word to you through the Scripture.

Consider

What is defined as faith? What is listed as works?

James chooses two specific Old Testament figures to illustrate his words about works and faith. What do the stories of Abraham and Rahab in particular teach you about the relation of faith and works?

When God gave Adam the gift of creation, God also required that Adam participate in the gift, and work towards stewardship of the earth and be a part of its growth and maturity. Adam's relationship with God was partly defined by this work and the closeness of God and Adam is seen as they walk together in the garden, a garden they have both worked on. Our relationship with God is the same. We are to love and respond to God in every way we can, acknowledging and respecting God's gifts with our words, our thoughts, our time, and our actions. The 19th century American religious group, the Shakers, lived by a traditional saying – Hands to Work, Hearts to God. They recognized the interconnectedness of being and doing, of faith and action. The Christian life is neither one nor the other, but is the sum of all our efforts.

**Hands to work,
hearts to God.**

- traditional Shaker saying

Jesus eloquently illustrated this idea in the Sermon on the Mount in Matthew 5. While preaching to a great crowd he turns worldly expectations upside down – identifying two unexpected types of people who will be important members of the future kingdom. On the one hand, Jesus identifies a list of vulnerable peoples and those in need. He offers particular blessings for the poor in spirit, those who mourn, the meek, the pure in heart, and the persecuted, singling them out to receive special notice. But he also identifies another group of blessed folks – the merciful, the

seekers of righteousness, and the peacemakers, those who have chosen to take steps to make their faith a lived reality. Jesus recognized and encouraged the physical manifestations of loving God, blessing those who stepped out through their faith to protect, support, and fight for those in need.

This extends to every nook and cranny of our lives. We are called to actively pursue justice, truth, beauty, and goodness in our neighborhoods, cities, and churches. And no matter where we live, we share a responsibility to always live out our faith and our promise to God by taking an active role in tending and protecting the creation. As James says, “faith is brought to completion through works.”

Consider

1. What are some examples from your own life where you see a direct correlation between faith and action? How did your faith lead to the action, or vice versa?
2. We have talked about the importance of combining faith and action in our Christian lives, but (in the context of your own life) why do you think the combination of faith and action are so important to God? Also, why is it important to combine faith and action in relation to God’s creation?
3. In what aspects of your life do you still need to take action to reflect your love and respect for the gift of God’s creation?

Prayer

O God, our deliverer, we thank you that you have not left us alone. Thank you for the Spirit who intercedes for us. Give us wisdom beyond ourselves that we might see the path you have set before us. Grant us words that bring life to the broken, the suffering, the addicted, the lonely, and those who long for the fulfillment of your kingdom. Amen. - Common Prayer

Additional Scripture

Matthew 5
Hebrews 11

Additional Resources

Serve God, Save the Planet: A Christian Call to Action by Matthew Sleeth
Go Green, Save Green: A Simple Guide to Saving Time, Money, and God’s Green Earth by Nancy Sleeth