



How to have a

James

Faith that Works

Devotional – Wk2



I need a faith that works

When is it a good thing to move slowly?

"It's smart to be patient." Proverbs 14:29 (CEV)

Your life has an ebb and flow. Sometimes God wants you to move quickly, but sometimes he wants you to slow down.

First, you should always move slowly when you don't have all the facts. Our culture worships impulsiveness and spontaneity. It tells you that spur-of-the-moment, "gut" decisions are the right ones. You've probably heard repeatedly that you should "follow your heart." But the Bible says, *"The heart is deceitful above all things, and desperately wicked: who can know it?"* (Jeremiah 17:9 KJV). Feelings often lead you in the wrong direction. So you need to rely on truth outside of yourself.

The Bible is clear about that: *"What a shame—yes, how stupid!—to decide before knowing the facts!"* (Proverbs 18:13 TLB). So when you don't yet have all the facts, slow down. Don't rely on your gut, your heart, or your feelings. Take the time to look for objective truth outside of yourself.

Second, move slowly when you're hurt, angry, or depressed. When you're upset, you tend to react and retaliate rather than acting wisely.

James 1:19 says, *"Everyone should be quick to listen, slow to speak and slow to become angry"* (NIV).

Do you see the rhythm in that verse? It says quick, slow, slow. If you're quick to listen and slow to speak, you'll automatically be slow to become angry. But if you're slow to listen and quick to speak, you'll be quick to become angry. Proverbs 15:28 says it this way: *"The heart of the godly thinks carefully before speaking"* (NLT). In other words, godly people put their minds in gear before their mouths. Sometimes you're going to feel angry, hurt, or depressed. That's just part of life. But the next time that happens, slow down.

Reflection: Think about the last time you made a decision too quickly. What were the consequences?

When have you slowed down recently to make a careful decision? How did you see God lead you in that? How will you commit to practicing the one that's most difficult?

A close-up photograph of a hand holding a silver adjustable wrench. The hand is positioned on the left side of the frame, with the fingers wrapped around the handle. The wrench is held horizontally, with its head pointing to the right. The background is a plain, light color.

I need a faith that works

What It Means to Truly Hear

On any given day there are a plethora of ways we can enjoy the Scriptures. We can read our Bible. We can read it on our phone. We can check the verse of the day. We can listen to online sermons and podcasts and Bible apps while we drive or cook.

Hearing God's Word is not a problem for most of us; applying it to our lives is the problem. Do we hear it and receive it? Or do we hear it and walk away from it to do what we want instead?

We all have to decide daily how we handle the Word of truth, and it's not a decision to be taken lightly.

As James 1:19-27 says, there's a huge difference between *hearing* the Word and actually *receiving* the Word.

But be doers of the word, and not hearers only, deceiving yourselves. For if anyone is a hearer of the word and not a doer, he is like a man who looks intently at his natural face in a mirror. For he looks at himself and goes away and at once forgets what he was like. But the one who looks into the perfect law, the law of liberty, and perseveres, being no hearer who forgets but a doer who acts, he will be blessed in his doing. (vv. 22–25)

The key to living out our faith is to not just hear the Word of God, but to humbly receive it and allow it to reshape our thinking so we will do as it says. To hear the Word and not do it, is to not really hear it at all. God's Word is intended to change us, not entertain us. It's not just for our consumption; it's for our construction.

Reflection: Is there a command of the Lord that you have heard, but not yet applied into your life? What aspects of God's truth do you often 'forget'?



I need a faith that works

How often are you looking into God's mirror?

We are not capable of producing the righteousness of God apart from God. Our only hope is Him working in us through the Word and the Holy Spirit.

The Bible is truth, and therefore, it shows us our true reflection: we are sinners in need of salvation. But the Bible also shows us God, and offers us the opportunity to reflect His holiness instead of our sinfulness through a relationship with Jesus Christ.

But unless we spend time cultivating that Word which has been implanted in our hearts, it won't grow, and we won't grow into the mature believers God calls us to be.

Instead, we'll be like "the person who looks intently at their natural face in a mirror" (v. 23), only to walk away and forget what they look like.

It sounds kind of silly. How could someone forget what they look like? But when the Bible tells us we can do nothing apart from Christ, and yet, we care little for Christ in our day-to-day lives, walking away from the mirror is exactly what we're doing.

It is easy to be the person who offers an "amen" when a truth is taught from the pulpit, but we are not nearly as quick to offer up our lives in response to that truth we've just heard.

Reflection: Which lies of the enemy do you believe, rather than remembering what you like in the mirror of God's word?

A close-up photograph of a person's hand holding a silver adjustable wrench. The hand is positioned on the left side of the frame, with the fingers wrapped around the handle. The wrench is held horizontally, with its head pointing towards the right. The background is a plain, light color.

I need a faith that works

What It Means to Truly Do

Here's the thing about living according to the Word of God: it's not optional. If a person says they accept God but they do not accept what God says to do, then they have not actually accepted God.

Jesus said, "If you love me, you will keep my commandments" (John 14:15). If we think we can follow God apart from obedience, we're only deceiving ourselves (v22).

When God's ways are most prevalent in our hearts then God's ways will come out. But if it's the world's ways filling our hearts, then the world's ways that will come out. This is why the psalmist says in Psalm 119:11

I have stored up your word in my heart, that I might not sin against you.

A daily commitment to doing the Word requires a daily commitment to being in the Word, willing and ready to receive what it says. Meekness, or humility, is key. If we don't come to God, needing God, then we'll be unwilling to receive what God says.

The one who looks into the perfect law, the law of liberty, and perseveres, being no hearer who forgets but a doer who acts, he will be blessed in his doing. (v. 25)

The Greek word for "looks into" literally means "to bend down for a better look." It takes time and effort to meditate on God's Word. But God assures us the effort is worth it, promising that anyone who spends time in the Word in order to receive it, and respond to it, will be blessed.

Reflection: Are you giving priority to 'looking into' God's perfect law, to allow it to transform your heart? Or, do you let other distractions and interests take its place?



I need a faith that works

What It Means to Truly Have

God could have just required our obedience and left it at that. But in an outpouring of mercy and grace, God has done much more. Not only has God given us His Word to encourage and guide us, but He's written it on our hearts and given us the Holy Spirit to help us live it.

A true follower of God does what God says, not only when life is easy, but also when life is hard.

When trials come and temptations persist. When loved ones are hard to get along with and the kids are driving us crazy. When the future looks shaky and we're unsure of the outcome. When life is threatening to overwhelm us and fear is threatening to grip us.

Believe God. Respond with faith instead of fear, kindness instead of anger, hope instead of despair. Be doers of the Word, even in hard times. And by our actions, we will testify to the greatness and the power and the truth of our God and Savior Jesus Christ.

Reflection: What are specific, intentional things we (individually, or as a church family) can do to be doers of the Word?

To whom is God asking you to testify of His greatness and power to transform your inner and outer life?