JAMES 2:14-26
FAITH YOU CAN SEE

TEACH IT **MIDDLE SCHOOL** SESSION 5

1. Materials

For this session each student will need—

- the James 2 Scripture sheet
- the student journal page for Session 5
- his or her journal pages from Sessions 1-4
- his or her own Bible, pen, and notebook

You'll also need—

- a whiteboard and markers
- colored pencils (at least two colors per student)
- video clip option: a clip, from a video-sharing Web site such as YouTube, illustrating the connection between faith and deeds; use search words like *faith, deeds, with* or *without*. To search for one specific clip you might find helpful, add *Mountain View Wesleyan Church* to the other search words.
- audio option: the song "Deeds" by Sanctus Real

2. Session Intro

GOALS OF SESSION 5

As students experience this session, they will—

- explore the relationship between real faith and real action.
- apply specific actions, in today's terms, to deeds we're told to do in Scripture.
- evaluate the vital signs of their faith, knowing that faith without deeds is a flatline faith.

PRAYER

After your group has gathered, open your session in prayer. Pray that students will be open to honestly evaluating their faith and seeing that meaningful faith will generate activity.

OPEN

Track the Themes

After you've prayed, have students look back over the Scripture sheets and journal pages for James 1 and 2. Ask—

> **What main thoughts or ideas have we seen in James so far?**
> *As the students share their thoughts, elicit the observation that James is focused on practical action. In fact, he resolves almost every issue with an outward action his readers can do: persevere, be slow to become angry, do what the Word says, look after orphans and widows, don't play favorites, and so on.*

Transition into the session with a comment like—

> **James encourages his readers—including us—to respond to life's situations with godly action.**

VIDEO CLIP OPTION
To introduce the idea of faith and action, show a clip from a video-sharing Web site that depicts the connection between faith and deeds. Use search words faith, deeds, with or without. To search for one specific clip you might find helpful, add Mountain View Wesleyan Church to the other search words.

MUSIC OPTION
To introduce the idea of faith and action, play "Deeds" by Sanctus Real found on the *Fight the Tide* album. You can download the song from iTunes or another music Web site.

After viewing the video or playing the song, ask—

> **Why is the connection between faith and deeds so important?**

3. Digging In

It's a Straight Line from Faith to Deeds

Transition into today's study by saying something like—

> **James encourages his readers—including us—to respond to life's situations with godly action. The passage we're about to study puts a giant exclamation point on this encouragement.**

Have students read James 2:14-26 from their Scripture sheets. Using colored pencils, they should mark the words *faith* and *deeds* in different ways with two different colors. For example, they could circle *faith* and draw a box around *deeds*. If they find other words that mean the same thing (such as *action* or *works* instead of *deeds*), they should mark these words the same way.

When most have finished reading and marking, ask—

> **Take a look at the verses that mention both faith and deeds. What does James say about the relationship between the two?**
> *-It does no good to have faith without deeds (2:14).*
> *-This kind of faith can't save you (2:14).*
> *-It does no good to wish people well but do nothing to help them physically (2:15-16).*
> *-Faith without action is dead (2:17).*
> *-Faith and action work together (2:22).*
> *-Faith is made complete by action (2:22).*
> *-You are justified by what you do and by faith (2:24).*

List students' responses on the whiteboard. If any of the points are missing, you can suggest them yourself. Then discuss—

> **What connection does James make between faith and action?**

4. Cross-Checking

Define the Deeds

Explain—

> **Since the beginning of Christianity, there's been a great debate about the value of works. Some think that because salvation is a free gift from God based on faith alone (we don't have to work for it), Christians don't have to do good works. Others think that good works are required for our salvation.**

For the purpose of today's session, here's the bottom line: we do good works because we're Christians, not in order to become Christians.

In a minute you're going to spend some time in solitude with God and the Bible, looking up some verses that will help you better understand the connection between faith (what you believe) and deeds (what you do). As you work through the passages and questions on your journal pages, consider the very real possibility that God wants to take you to places you've never been before in your walk with him.

Instruct your students—

1. Find places of solitude where you can get comfortable and be alone with God.

2. Take your Bibles, Scripture sheets, journal pages, and pens.

3. Follow the instructions under the Cross-Checking exercise on your journal pages.

5. Taking It Inward

Do Good and Do It Secretly

After about 10 minutes call the group back together. The finished chart on the student journal page should look something like this:

Passage	Deeds We're To Do	Cautions about Our Deeds
Matthew 25:31-46	*We, the sheep, get to inherit the kingdom prepared for us if we take care of "the least of these."*	
Galatians 5:6	*What's important is that faith expresses itself through love.*	
Romans 3:20-28		*No one can be declared righteous by doing the deeds of the law.*
Titus 3:8	*Those who trust in God should be careful to devote themselves to doing what is good.*	

Since you aren't going to write ideas from this chart on the whiteboard as usual, check with your students to see how they did filling in the chart. Let other students offer suggestions if anyone had difficulty.

What insights do you have now about the relationship between deeds and faith?
There are deeds of the law that don't save us (Romans 3:20-28). There are deeds that are an integral part of living out our faith such as deeds of love (Galatians 5:6) and good works that are the result of a relationship with Christ (Titus 3:8).

Next you'll be talking with your students about James' illustrations of good deeds and what they might look like today. Say—

James uses three illustrations to show the kind of works he is talking about. Look at James 2:14-26 again. What examples does he give?

Make three columns on the whiteboard (see the following chart), and write the illustrations in the first column as your students mention them. Encourage students to write the same info on their journal pages. Continue the discussion by asking the following questions and writing the answers on the whiteboard. By the end of the discussion, your whiteboard should look similar to the following chart.

What type of work does each illustration refer to, or what is a main characteristic of it?
Write the suggestions in the second column on the whiteboard.

What tangible deeds can we do today to fulfill the kind of works James is talking about?
You may want to give an example to get the ideas started. Write the suggestions in the third column.

DEEDS THEN AND NOW

James' Illustrations	Types or Characteristics	Corresponding Deeds Today
Helping brothers and sisters with physical needs (2:15-16)	*Meeting physical needs of people*	*Collect food for the church's food pantry, clean out closets and give away possessions.*
Abraham sacrificing his son (2:21-22)	*Sacrificial works*	*Babysit younger siblings so parents can go out; donate from savings account to a Christian charity organization; sponsor a child through a group like Compassion.*
Rahab helping the spies (2:25)	*Showing kindness and helping others*	*Tutor at the inner-city after-school center.*

6. Wrapping It Up

Needs and Deeds

This segment of James is one of the most practical passages in the entire Bible. Don't close the session without giving students an opportunity to commit to some outward expression of faith. James gave several examples of outward action in the first two chapters of his letter.

Before we close, let's each lock in on something God may be calling us to do because of what we've studied in James 1 and 2. Maybe you can take an idea from the whiteboard—or take a minute to review the Scripture sheets and journal pages we've worked on so far.

After a few minutes let students share how they would like to respond. Before closing with prayer, talk with the group about how they can encourage each other to follow through with their commitments. You might suggest they schedule a deadline, five days from now, for students to have either started or completed a deed. Send out a group email or text message on the deadline day and ask students to tell you their progress by responding with a number on a scale from one (haven't started) to five (done).