

A Screen Door on a Submarine

James 2:14-26

Small Group Discussion Guide

Opening Question (get everyone involved in discussion):

- Describe a person in your life (other than God) in whom you have great faith? What does your “faith” mean in that relationship?
- Before hearing Sunday’s sermon, how would you have defined “faith in God?”

Transition: We’re in a series called “The Gospel on the Ground.” James wrote his letter to early followers of Jesus to show what it looks like when our faith in Jesus meets the realities of day-to-day life. Today James challenges us to think about the authenticity of our faith. Is your faith in God genuine? Is it the real thing?

READ JAMES 2:14-19

- What Genuine Faith is NOT
 - First, what is a rhetorical question? Describe or give an example.
 - In verse 14, using a rhetorical question, how does James describe what faith is not?
 - In verses 15-17, how does James’ imaginary scenario help you understand what faith is not?
 - In verses 18-19, how does James’ use of a logical argument help shed light on what faith is not?
 - On Sunday we heard that **genuine faith is NOT simply agreeing with the right doctrines**. What is your emotional reaction to this statement? Uncomfortable? Scared? At peace? Unthreatened? Why?
 - Does this statement differ from what you have believed about faith prior to today?
 - Pastor Josh related one other thing that genuine faith is not: **It is NOT striving tirelessly for God’s approval**. Do you find yourself struggling in this way? Discuss.

READ JAMES 2:14-19

- What Genuine Faith IS
 - How does the example of Abraham in verses 20-24 show what genuine faith is? (If you want to read the source of this story, turn to Genesis 15:1-7 and 22:1-18.)
 - How does the example of Rahab in verses 25-26 show what genuine faith is?
 - From this passage, can you define “genuine faith” in one, short sentence (or do you remember how Josh defined it)?
 - Josh’s definition, for reference: **Confidence in God that compels you to action**

- Remember the story of the tightrope walker who asked for a volunteer to be pushed in a wheelbarrow over Niagara Falls? “Genuine faith is getting in the wheelbarrow.” Where might God be asking you to get into his wheelbarrow these days? (Some possibilities: serving your spouse; trusting him with your children; switching jobs; not gossiping; being sexually pure in what you look at and how you act; giving with your time and finances more vigorously; interacting with the less popular at work, church, or school; going on a short term mission or serving in the church; meeting a need in the community?)
- How to Cultivate Genuine Faith
 - Read James 1:22-25 and 2:12.
 - What is “the perfect law that gives freedom?” (Pastor Josh said that this is one of James’ labels for the gospel, or the good news of Jesus.)
 - What is the point of the mirror analogy in the verses from chapter 1?
 - Pastor Josh said that we cultivate genuine faith by **staring into the gospel**, and then re-enacting it in our lives.
 - What would staring intently into the gospel look like practically? What habits, practices, etc.?
 - How do these practices free us to have genuine faith?
 - If you were to do some honest assessment, has your faith been more mental assent to certain beliefs, or the kind of confidence in Jesus that compels you to action?
 - What might it look like for you to stare into the good news of what Jesus has done for you, and act it out with the dreams and resources God has given you? Is there some action toward which God is nudging you currently?

Prayer:

- If people have shared vulnerably during your Bible Study, pray for them
- Share other current prayer needs and pray for them