

SHOW ME: FAITH
SHOW ME SERIES - Part 4
Ben Rudolph

Good morning Life Fellowship. It is so good to see you. I have been gone for a couple of weeks on vacation in northern Michigan. If you have ever been to northern Michigan in the summer, you know you get 90 degree days and 60 degree days, so it was a wonderful time experiencing a different change of pace. But it is good to be back with you, it is good to be home, and it is good to be back in my own bed. Do you know what that is like? You go away for vacation, it is great, but there is nothing like being back in your own bed. Amen? (*Amen.*)

We'll turn in your Bibles to James Chapter 2 where we are going to be this morning in verses 14 through 26. The book of James is just one of those unique books of the Bible. One of the things that I love to do is kind of look behind some of the Scripture and kind of diagnose who James was. I know Dan has mentioned this, and he has done a great job the last three Sundays. I have been able to follow along online while I was away. And you have heard this before that the book of James is filled with a lot of imperatives, or a lot of commands. And that tells me something, James is a guy who doesn't really mess around with fluffy language. He doesn't care about what you think and James is a person who is not theoretical.

When I think about James I realize that he was very prophetic in his personality. He was probably the type of guy that didn't have a lot of friends, maybe just some really close friends. James is serious about life. He is serious about his faith. And throughout this book of James we just notice it is not like the language is harsh, but it is kind of abrupt. The way James talks is not like the type of person that is warm and fuzzy.

I had two grandmothers and by God's grace they are still living. I have one grandmother who is 90 years old, and another grandmother who is 93 years old. One grandmother lives in Florida and the other lives in New York. I don't get to see them very often, but growing up my grandmother in New York was the grandmother that thought that grandchildren could do no wrong. Do you know that kind of grandmother? There is nothing wrong that her grandchildren can do. In fact if any of the grandchildren got in trouble with their parents, this grandmother was the advocate to stand between the wrath of their mom and dad and the kid. She was always giving out candy. That was my grandmother Rudolph up in New York.

But my mom's mother on the other side of the family was someone who was from high society. And so when we went to her house we had to sit at her table with manners. She taught us manners and she made sure we ate correctly. She wanted to make sure that we were reading our Bibles. She was the type of grandmother that was not warm and fuzzy. Now I know she loved us, but she was not the cuddly type. She was the one that showed her love through, '*Hey, you better be doing what is right.*' And here is what I know, I love both of my grandmothers and I believe I needed both of those voices in my life.

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And we need the voice of James. I don't think any of us after reading the book of James is like, *'I would just love to hang out with James.'* He is not that kind of guy, but we need his voice in our lives. And that is why as we read this section I want us to think about where we have been. James began this book with saying, *'Have joy in the midst of trials. Make sure that you are not wavering in your faith. Be someone who not only hears the word but is a doer of the word. Make sure you take care of widows and orphans. Make sure you are not showing favoritism to people who are wealthy or esteemed.'* And James goes boom, boom, boom to make sure our faith shows.

So James goes through this list of practical wisdom for the Christian life. And then he stops right here in verse 14. I think it is almost like he is giving all these tangible instructions of how we should live out the Christian life, and then all of a sudden he has this section here before he goes any further where he has something we need to be aware of. He has given us all these instructions, all of these commands of what it means to live out the Christian life, but now there is something we need to make sure that we are aware of. And that is this – are you truly a Christian? Is your faith real or is it dead?

As we read this there is no mystery about what James is talking about. So let's just read verses 14 through 26 in James Chapter 2. This is what he says: ***“What good is it, my brothers, (or what does it profit), if someone says he has faith but does not have works? Can that faith save him? If a brother or sister is poorly clothed and lacking in daily food, and one of you says to them, “Go in peace, be warmed and filled,” without giving them the things needed for the body, what good (or what profit) is that? So also faith by itself, if it does not have works is dead.***

But someone will say, “You have faith and I have works.” Show me your faith apart from your works, and I will show you my faith by my works. You believe that God is one; you do well. Even the demons believe – and shudder! Do you want to be shown, you foolish person, that faith apart from works is useless? Was not Abraham our father justified by works when he offered up his son Isaac on the altar? You see that faith was active along with his works, and faith was completed by his works; and the Scripture was fulfilled that says, “Abraham believed God, and it was counted to him as righteousness – and he was called a friend of God.

You see that a person is justified by works and not by faith alone. And in the same way was not also Rahab the prostitute justified by works when she received the messengers and sent them out by another way? For as the body apart from the spirit is dead, so also faith apart from works is dead.”

It cuts right too it. It doesn't mess around. And again, I love chunks of the Bible; I love sections of the Bible where I don't have to come up with the main idea. It is here. James tells us twice that faith without works is dead. That is what he is trying to say. If you claim to be a follower of Jesus, if you claim to be a Christian, if you say you have faith in God, James is saying that there is a type of faith that does not save. And this is a

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problem if you think about it. You know James is probably writing this between ten and fifteen years after Jesus has risen and ascended. And what they are facing now is a problem.

This is a problem that we saw in the first church and it is a problem for every generation, every nation, and of every church that has ever existed. And the problem is there are people who claim to be Christians but live a very hypocritical life. The church today is filled with a lot of people claiming to be followers of Jesus, but who are not following Jesus. And that is a reality and it is something Jesus talked about. He talked about the sheep and the goats in one of His parables. He said, *‘Listen, when I come back I will do the final separation, but there will always be the goats that are mixed in with the sheep. There are always going to be people that claim to be Christians.’*

We saw this in the book of Acts. In Acts Chapter 8 there is this person who claimed to follow Jesus and that was Simon the Magician. But later on we found out that he was not truly a follower. He went through certain steps, he said he had claimed Jesus as His Lord and he was baptized, but he was never truly a follower of Jesus. It is possible to go to church, it is possible to follow all the rules and regulations and be a part of church life, but never have saving faith. That is the reality that James wants to bring out.

So what is the main idea that we have here? It is very simple - real faith shows. There is only one imperative here, but as Dan mentioned over the previous weeks, there are a lot of imperatives. There are over sixty imperatives in the book of James, but there is only one imperative in this section. Do you know what it is? Look in verse 18 where it says: ***“Show me your faith apart from your works, and I will show you my faith by my works.”***

Remember this whole series is called, ‘Show Me.’ And here it says, ‘Show me faith.’ Show me your faith apart from works and you cannot do it. James is saying that real faith, faith that is not dead, faith that is alive; faith that is genuine shows itself in real and tangible ways. There are a lot of things in here I want to get to but there are two ways in which real faith shows up in our lives. Two ways in which real faith really shows up in our lives, and the first one is this – real faith shows up when we examine the genuineness of our faith.

Now there are things that James writes in this section that makes me feel really uncomfortable. Does it make you feel uncomfortable? It should. He is writing this to make all of us feel uncomfortable right now. James is the guy at the dinner party that says the thing that everyone is thinking. He says things like, *‘Hey listen, if you think that you truly are a Christian but there is never proof, there is never fruit in your life, you are not truly a follower of Jesus.’* He says some things that we might bristle at because we have been taught, we have learned over and over and over again if you have been a part of this church for any period of time you know we have taught the Word of God and the Word of God is clear, the Apostle Paul is clear that we are saved by faith alone. Amen?

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We believe that. There is nothing we can do to earn our salvation. There is nothing that we can do to make ourselves approved by God. Our salvation is won for us through Jesus' death, burial and resurrection. He paid the penalty for our sins, and by placing our faith in Him we get His righteousness and we give Him our sins. It is a great exchange, the redemption of Jesus Christ in our lives.

That is how we are saved. So what is James saying here in verse 22 when he says faith is completed by works? Or what is he saying in verse 24 when he says a person is justified by works and not by faith alone? The best illustration I can give you as to what James is saying is this. We have these two trees over here. This is what he is saying; don't mix up the root and the fruit. Does that make sense? Don't mix up the root from the fruit. If the root of faith is alive, what will it produce? It will produce fruit.

We have a fig tree in our back yard. My wife got it a couple of years ago and she planted it. It was just a small thing then, but this spring coming up on that fig tree are figs. Oh yeah. We know that tree is doing well; we know that tree is alive; we know that its root system is okay. We studied as to where to plant this tree so that it was in the perfect place to make sure it was going to have the right environment so that the root system would thrive and we could grow our own figs.

Here is the thing James is trying to say. If the root system of faith is dead, if the faith is not real, it will not produce fruit. He is not contradicting Jesus and he is not contradicting Paul in any way. The Bible is very clear. And the rules of Bible study is this, if you are confused by a passage of Scripture, interpret confusing passages of Scripture by clear passages of Scripture. Does that make sense? Paul does an amazing job of this in Romans Chapter 3 and Romans Chapter 4 of explaining that we are justified by faith.

But James and Jesus both said that by their fruit you shall know them. If someone's faith is real, if the roots are alive the fruit will produce. That is what James is saying. If someone says, *'Hey, I have an apple tree. I have an apple tree. I have an apple tree.'* But then oranges pop up, what kind of tree is it? It is an orange tree. We are supposed to look at the fruit that is being produced to know if the root system is okay. We are not saying the fruit and the root are together. We don't mix up faith and works. It is not faith plus works. The entire book of Galatians is written about that.

Here is what James is trying to say. Don't think that your faith is real if there is no fruit. If no fruit is being produced in your life, you need to do some self-examination. And the reason why I know James is going heavy on the self-examination is because in this passage he asks six questions. Six questions and only one imperative. Now when you are asking questions of people what are you wanting them to do? You want them to think. When you are asking these questions you want them to respond, you want them to think about what the answer is. It is easy to just talk all in imperatives.

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As a parent or when you are trying to teach someone something, one of the best teaching methods we can use is to ask questions, and not just give out all the answers. James asks six questions in this text, and there is no other section like this in the book of James. He is heavy on the questions and he only gives one imperative. What he is trying to say is he wants us to think, he wants us to examine ourselves, and he wants us to really ask ourselves if our faith is dead or alive. Is our faith real and genuine or are we just playing a game.

And this is something the Bible is filled with. Peter says in II Peter Chapter 1 that we are to do everything to make our calling and our election sure. Evaluating our salvation doesn't mean that we walk around in doubt all day long, but it does mean there should come a point in our lives that we are examining our fruit to ask if our faith is real.

Now we can misapply this passage in a number of ways and I want to share with you three ways we can do that. We can misapply this by always doubting our salvation. And maybe you struggle with that. I used to struggle with that. I grew up in a pastor's home learning about the Bible from a very early age and being in church a lot. And I remember reading passages like this, especially when I was in Junior High. Every time I would sin I was like, *'Oh no, I am not a Christian.'* Have you ever had those moments in your life? Every time you sin, every time you mess up, you start thinking you are not saved. And I probably accepted Jesus Christ a thousand times in Junior High because I didn't want to die and go to hell. I didn't want the rapture to come and all of a sudden wake up to my entire family being gone and I am left behind. That was a fear of mine and so I was always accepting Jesus.

That is not what this is about. Listen, the presence of sin in our lives does not mean you are not a believer, but it is your attitude toward sin, it is your relationship with it. Maybe you are kind of like, *'I don't really care. I have sin in my life but so does everyone else.'* Or does your heart break over your own unholiness? Is the sin in your life something that you are saying, *'God help me to overcome this?'*

I remember discipling someone for years in my other church and we would meet together every Wednesday morning. And one of the things he always struggled with was whether he was truly a Christian or not. He would come each week and tell me what he had struggled with that week, and he would say he was not sure if he was a Christian because of his struggle with sin. The reality of the struggle does not mean you are not a Christian, but it is your attitude towards that struggle that lets me know if you are a Christian or not. Does that make sense? The very fact that you care about this issue shows me that you have the heart of God inside of you because you don't want to live like this. Sometimes we can misapply this by always doubting our salvation.

The second way we can misapply this is we make excuses for dead faith. I have heard this numerous times, and I try to be very careful of this as a parent. Right now all three of my kids are close to the age where they are about to leave our home. I have a

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sixteen year old, an eighteen year old and almost twenty year old in my home. And if you were to ask me right now if all my children are believers, you know what I would say? I hope so. And I say that with genuineness. They have all made professions, but there is a part of me as a parent that I believe the real proof will be when they totally leave my house and they are on their own. That is when the environment for their faith is gone and I can see what is alive inside of them. I hope they are believers, there are signs that show me that they are, but I don't know.

What I think we do sometimes as parents or grandparents or friends is to think, *'Well, they raised their hand in VBS when they were five. They live like the devil now, but then at VBS in 1994 they raised their hand.'* We need to stop making excuses for the people that are close to us if there are no signs of real genuine faith. Don't make excuses. Sometimes I think we feel guilty or we feel responsible for our children accepting Jesus Christ as their Lord and Savior. There are two things that are necessary for anyone to accept Jesus Christ and that is the Holy Spirit convicting their lives over their own sinfulness and then their own decision to place their faith and trust in the reality of the gospel.

What part do I play? I can point, and I can pray, but I cannot produce faith in my children's lives, or my friend's lives, or my family's lives. I cannot do that. Sometimes we tend to make excuses because we don't want to confront the reality that maybe someone close to us like our friend or our family member is not truly a follower of Jesus and we need to stop making excuses and start praying for them.

Lastly I think we can misapply this when we become the salvation police. Have you ever known anyone that was a salvation police? Maybe you are having a Bible study together and you are talking about something and someone kind of shares something like, *'I am really struggling with this.'* And the salvation police goes, *'Oh my, are you truly a Christian, because here is what I know. Everyone who agrees with me is a Christian. And the people who don't agree with me I suspect are not really Christians.'* And sometimes we can be the salvation police where when someone's life doesn't align perfectly with our own we want to call them out.

Listen, I remember something that happened not too long ago about a very famous Christian leader, and that was the apologist Ravi Zacharias. We are probably all familiar with his life, his situation and I benefited greatly from this man's ministry. But after his death a lot of horrible wicked things have come out in light of the person that he was. And when I have conversations with people today one of the biggest questions people want to ask is, *'Was Ravi Zacharias truly a believer? How could he do the wicked things that he did yet have the ministry that he had?'* And I am here today to say, *'I don't know. I just don't know, but God knows.'* God knows for sure and He is the one who is entrusted with that. We need to stop trying to police everyone and stop trying to question whether or not they truly are a believer or not. Let the Holy Spirit be the one to bring conviction in their lives.

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So we have to make sure that we examine our works. And one of the best ways that we can examine our works, and examine our faith is to ask ourselves if our root system is good. Make sure, check your heart, ask yourself what you are doing that is flowing out of love and delight in Jesus. What are we doing that is flowing out of the love and the delight we have in Jesus, that our works are not done out of pride, or to show everyone what a great person we are. That our works are not done out of fear, because we are afraid of what God is going to do to us, but that our works are done because we understand His love for us. We need to understand His joy and His delight and His forgiveness. We need to understand His redemption and the grace, mercy and goodness of Jesus Christ in our lives. And because we believe in that, we want to show the works of love. That is faith. So we need to examine ourselves, and ask ourselves the hard questions.

The second thing is not only does real faith show by examining the genuineness of our faith, but real faith shows when we exercise the reality of our faith. One of the things that is interesting in this passage is that there are four unique pictures, unique illustrations that James gives us. It is where he says, 'Show me.' "***Show me your faith apart from your works and I will show you my faith by my works.***"

And he gives four illustrations. He talks about what happens when someone is poorly clothed, and we might say, "***Be warm and filled,***" but not really do anything. Then he talks about demons believing, but their faith is just in their heads or in their knowledge. He talks about Abraham's sacrifice of Isaac. And then he talks about Rahab the prostitute protecting the spies. I think each of those actions; each of those works of faith is a kind of work that displays a kind of faith.

Now here is what we know. We don't need to be convinced to show something that we love. And like I say, when we are responding in faith to the love of Jesus Christ we want to show it off. I think many times when we talk about faith and works and we hear we need to exercise our faith and it needs to show, one of the biggest mistakes we can make as preachers and communicators when we are talking about it is to give people a guilt trip. I am not here this morning to give you a guilt trip by saying, '*Man you better shape up. You better do these things.*'

Yesterday I was at a birthday party for my five year old nephew, Hudson. Aren't kid's birthday parties the best? They are awesome. There is screaming, there is yelling, and there is crying, everything is going on. There is cake and ice cream, and it is wonderful when I can just sit there and observe everything. But one thing that is fascinating for me at every kid's birthday party, and I always look for this, is that the parents always buy a really big gift for their child. That is the quintessential gift. There are some small gifts but then there will be this big gift. And Hudson got a really big gift yesterday. It was a brand new bike. But then guess what Hudson wanted to play with? It was the cheap gift. Don't you love that? Don't you love when you buy these beautiful,

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wonderful gifts and the kid wants to play with the two dollar thing you found in a yard sale? *'This is the best thing ever.'*

Now we could have told Hudson he needed to appreciate this big gift even more, but when he found this small gift he was showing it to everyone and telling them to look at this. This was the gift that he wanted to show off. You didn't have to convince him to play with that toy because he loved that gift. And when we understand the love of Jesus in our lives than these kinds of works flow from that.

So what are these four pictures or illustrations? I think we need to address the hypocrisy that the world sees in the church, and the hypocrisy in our own lives, and then we need to understand that none of us are completely aligned perfectly with our actions and our faith. We just have to admit that. If someone says, *'Man, the church is filled with hypocrites,'* yes, it is. All of us, every human being on the face of this planet is at some level a hypocrite because none of us perfectly abide by every regulation, every rule, every value, every conviction that we have in our lives. There are things that we do that we know are not good for us. Like it happens every time I go to Chick-fil-A. *(Laughter.)* I don't need to super-size that thing, but I do.

So none of us lives perfectly, or does these things perfectly. But these are things that we can address in our lives. And I think these four pictures show us a kind of way that we can exercise our faith. The first one is this in Chapter 2 where it says, ***"If a brother or sister is poorly clothed and lacking in daily food, and one of you says to them, "Go in peace, be warmed and filled," without giving them the things needed for the body, what good is that?"*** That is the first way we exercise our faith when we exercise the faith that demonstrates love. When we truly have living faith we have a faith that demonstrates love; we don't just talk about it. We don't just theorize about it. We demonstrate love in tangible ways. When we see people in need we do something about it.

Here is where the historical context of these Scriptures flow out of it and we can kind of see what is really going on. Have you noticed in the previous three sermons the things that James has talked about? He talks about money and wealth a lot. Did you notice that? He is talking about money and wealth in verse 9 and 10 of Chapter 1. ***"Let the lowly brother boast in his exaltation, and the rich in his humiliation."*** In the end of Chapter 1 he says this: ***"Religion that is purer and undefiled before God the Father is this: to visit orphans and widows in their affliction."*** That is the second time he mentions poverty and wealth and what are we going to do to help people in need.

Then James talks in Chapter 2 about showing favoritism or partiality. When the rich person shows up and the poor person shows up at your church, he says not to treat that wealthy or famous person better than the poor person. And now all of a sudden James brings up another illustration. He talks about a brother or a sister being poorly clothed. What is going on here? This is where we kind of get to know what the situation

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is that is going on in James' own church in Jerusalem. We know this from reading the book of Acts that the church in Jerusalem had a major money issue problem. There were churches all around the Roman Empire that Paul was taking collections from for the church in Jerusalem.

Why? It was because they were struggling with poverty. They were being persecuted and there were widows and orphans in their midst that they needed to take care of. They had left the synagogue, they had left their family system, and they had dishonored their families by following the Messiah. And by doing that they were cut off from their families and there were more people to clothe and more people to feed than what this church could handle. So James was dealing with very real issues, very real problems and this church was struggling. They had problems of poverty and problems of need. And they needed people to give real tangible gifts of money to help them in this need.

This was the cry of a pastor to a people asking them not to just talk about their love but to show it and to demonstrate it. They might have been just talking about how they need to help these people but what was really needed was something tangible to be done for them instead of not doing anything, Real faith, genuine faith, living faith demonstrates love. When we see the need around us, whether it is emotional, spiritual or material, what do we do? Do we just say something nice? Or do we demonstrate the love of Christ with our lives.

The second way we exercise faith is found in verse 19 of Chapter 2 where it says: ***“You believe that God is one; you do well. Even the demons believe – and shudder!”*** James is saying that if we just have a faith that is knowledge only that theological knowledge of the truth it is not enough. We need exercise of faith that goes beyond head knowledge. Listen, you might be able to pass these theological exams. I was talking to a friend of mine and he was on this Bible quiz team when he was in high school, but he didn't love Jesus. It was one of those things where he traveled around and they won all these competitions, but all of his theological knowledge, all of his knowledge of the Bible did not change his life one bit. How many of us have a faith that is rooted in just understanding all the theology but it has no impact on our love for God.

The greatest space it takes for people to move to salvation is that eighteen inches between your head and your heart. So many of us have grown up in the church, we have read the Bible, we have heard all the Bible stories and know all about Jesus, we know all these things but that is not enough. Even the demonic spirits know the gospel. They understand it. They could check the box and say that it is true, but they don't love Jesus. They could pass the theology exam but it does not mean that their faith is genuine.

The third example James gives us is in verse 21 where it says: ***“Was not Abraham our father justified by works when he offered up his son Isaac on the altar? You see that faith was active along with his works, and faith was completed by his***

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works.” Now what does James mean when he says Abraham’s faith was completed by his works? In the next verse he says: “***The Scripture was fulfilled that says, “Abraham believed God, and it was counted to him as righteousness.”***” Now that phrase right there is from Genesis Chapter 15 and verse 6. When God shows Abraham the stars in the sky and tells him He is going to make him a father of many nations Abraham believed God and it was credited to him for righteousness.

The example James gives is of Abraham sacrificing Isaac. This was an event that probably takes place possibly even thirty years after this event. So why is James giving the example of the sacrifice of Isaac and giving the verse from Genesis Chapter 15? He is saying that Abraham’s works complete his faith. Many times in our lives we have a theoretical faith of thinking we would follow Jesus to the ends of the earth. We think we would sacrifice many things for God. We think we would give up our wealth. And we read the story of the rich young ruler where Jesus told him to sell everything and follow Him and we think we would do that. But what would really happen if He asked us to do that? What would really happen when He asks us to do the things that we think we would do? What happens when the theoretical becomes actual? That is what James is talking about.

We need to exercise a faith that destroys idols. Listen there are always things that we say we love Jesus more than ‘blank.’ *‘I love Jesus more than money. I love Jesus more than power. I love Jesus more than my family. I love Jesus more than my friends. I love Jesus more than my social standing.’* We could sit here and think we truly do, but at that moment if Jesus would say He wants us to take our son, our only son, and sacrifice him, what does that faith look like in our life? For Abraham he was willing to do it. We know this from Hebrews Chapter 11 where it says that Abraham had such faith that he believed if he had taken that knife and plunged it into the heart of his son, his son of promise, that God would raise him from the dead. That is the kind of faith Abraham had.

And sometimes God calls us to give up something, to give those loves that we hold so dear, to destroy the idols of our heart, to challenge our love. He knows theoretically we say we will do this but when He gives us the opportunity what will the actual be? We need to exercise a faith that is complete where there are no boundaries to our love of Jesus. There should be no boundaries to what He can ask us to give up for Him because He gave us ultimately Himself for us.

Lastly James talks about Rahab. Verse 25 says, “***And in the same way was not also Rahab the prostitute justified by works when she received the messengers and sent them out by another way?***” We need to exercise a faith that risks approval and safety. There was no guarantee to what Rahab did. She could have been killed, she could have been imprisoned, she could have been tortured, but she was taking a risk, believing in the God of the Israelites to take care of her and her family. This was how she exercised her faith.

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Here is the question I want to ask you. What is the way that God is asking you to exercise your faith this morning? All of us have areas in our lives where our faith has not yet matured. I love that little fig tree we have in our backyard. It is growing and it has about five figs on it. And we are just watching the figs. We want to see those figs come to maturity. I have another tree in my backyard and it is a lemon tree. It is a Meyer lemon tree. It is a lemon tree that we have had for three years. And this Meyer lemon tree has yet to give me one good lemon. The lemons turn green and then they stop. And if you have any ideas for me to help this tree please come see me afterwards. We have researched, we have read, we have talked to people trying to find the answer. But there are certain things I know about this tree. I know it is a lemon tree. It is producing lemons but they are just not fully ripe.

And there are moments in our life where the fruit of our faith have not yet ripened. And God is going to put something in our lives to give us the opportunity for that root system to grow deeper, to get stronger, to trust in Him in ways that we are not right now. True faith, living faith, real faith shows. Real faith shows by our examination of our own genuineness of our faith, and it shows in how we exercise our faith. Where is your faith this morning?

As we end this I don't want to assume anything. I didn't want to come down heavy handed this morning. I have heard those sermons where they try to get every single person in the room to doubt their salvation. Have you ever been in a room like that? I have been, and it is not fun. I am not here to try to convince you that you are not a believer. What I am here to do is to point you to the Word of God and to ask the Holy Spirit to let you know if you don't have genuine faith. I don't know your heart but God does know your heart.

Maybe you have been going through the motions and maybe you have never self-examined yourself. Maybe all the ways that we demonstrate or exercise our faith you know you don't do any of those. There has never been fruit in your life that shows you are truly a follower of Jesus and that you do the things you do out of a love for Him. If you can't point to one thing in your life that was done out of the love you have for Jesus, and you are not sure about your faith, listen, we want to invite you to talk to someone today. We have people in our prayer room, and there are people in the lobby that would love to talk with you. Or come see me afterwards. But if you are uncertain about the assurance of your faith, the reality of your faith, don't leave here today doubting, wondering if your faith is real. Likewise, if you are saying yes, your faith is genuine, but it has room to grow, it has room to grow and to ripen then invite God in to help you do that.

Three quick questions I want to give you then we are done. Number one – would every person you know believe you are a follower of Jesus? Remember the church has a hypocrisy problem in our world today. Whenever I tell people I am a pastor, people that I meet in my neighborhood, or at my kid's soccer games, there is always this moment

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Ben Rudolph

when they go, *'Oh, so you are a pastor.'* I know there is a risk whenever you tell someone you are a follower of Jesus because all of a sudden they are going to be watching you. But that is an opportunity for us to show the love of Jesus in even greater ways. Would every person you know believe you are a follower of Jesus?

Number two – have you asked yourself the hard questions of self-examination? Listen, James asked six questions to get the reader to think. Have you thought through those things? Is the Holy Spirit pricking your heart to really think about the genuineness of your faith?

Number three – how is God growing you in your faith today? Is He challenging you to demonstrate love the way He showed love to us? Is He challenging you to go beyond just the head knowledge? Is He challenging you to destroy the idols in your life, to sacrifice the way He sacrificed for you? Is He challenging you to risk approval and safety the way that Jesus tangibly gave up approval and safety for our sake? What is the faith that He is asking you to grow in today? Real faith shows. Let's show it to a world who is longing to believe. Let's pray.

God, I pray as we conclude our service we would worship you in our response to you today. I pray for everyone in this room that their faith in you would either be true and real and alive or that their faith would grow and be more fruitful. God, let our faith not just be theoretical. I pray, God that in every single person in this room there would be a desire to show you and to show the world a love that we have tasted of. So work in our hearts, God. If there is anyone in this room that has faith that is dead, I pray, God that your Spirit may bring conviction and may your Spirit bring a sense of awareness to their need of you. Even if they have been a part of a church their entire life, God, may they put aside everything they are putting their hope and trust in and may it be in Christ alone this morning. God, make us people of living faith. We pray this in the name of Jesus. Amen.

The preceding transcript was completed using raw audio recordings. As much as possible, it includes the actual words of the message with minor grammatical changes and editorial clarifications to provide context. Hebrew and Greek words are spelled using Google Translator and the actual spelling may be different in some cases.