

# Danger of Counterfeit Faith

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[ 0 : 0 0 ] We're reading from James chapter 2 verses 14 to 26. Faith without works is dead. What good is it, my brothers and sisters, 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 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.

[ 1 : 1 6 ] And the scripture was fulfilled, and 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. This is the word of God. Great.

Thank you, Margo. Let me pray for us. Heavenly Father, as we come to your word, we want to hear you speaking to us. Won't you open up the eyes of our heart to see you in your word, and to see what it means to live by faith, and to trust you, and to know you.

God, you know where each one of us are at this morning. You know our fears and our worries. You know what's on our heart, God. You know where we feel anxious and afraid. You know what we're hoping for and longing for.

[ 2 : 2 5 ] You know our dreams. God, this morning we pray that we will meet with you, the living God. We have already, God, in the sung worship. Thank you for those wonderful songs that you've given to us as a church to sing.

God, your word also, let it speak to us. God, we know that your word and your spirit work in unison. We pray, Holy Spirit, now won't you make your word come alive to our hearts, and speak to us, we pray, in your gracious name.

Amen. One last thing before we dive in is, if you've got a bulletin, open it up. You'll see there's the scripture reading in front of you, or if you've got a Bible on your phone, have it in front of you.

I don't have a lot of scripture on the screen, but I want you to look at the scripture as we go through it. Well, I wonder if you've ever been ripped off by buying something that you thought was true, only to find out later it was a fake or a forgery.

When I was about 17 years old, my older brother wanted to buy a car, and there was a particular car that he wanted. We lived in South Africa. He had done all this market research.

[ 3 : 30 ] He knew what that model, that year, should cost secondhand. He was looking out for a good deal. Anyway, one day, he finds an advert for this particular car at a really, really good price.

And so he thinks, I know this car is worth more than that. So being the entrepreneur that he is, he says, I'm going to buy the car, and I'm going to flip it straight away. I'm going to add 10% and sell it straight away, make a few bucks.

So, he's good at entrepreneurship, not so good at checking things out. Buys this car, a week later, advertises again for 10% more, and when people come to look at the car, suddenly they notice all sorts of things that he hadn't noticed.

This is wrong. This is broken. Turns out the car had been in a serious accident, and someone had done a good job of hiding the cracks and the faults, and he ended up selling it for a big loss at the end of the day, right?

Or I heard of a teenager recently, also a family member, who wanted a pair of Apple AirPods, didn't want to pay the full retail price, found a good deal on Carousal, met the person on Carousal for a good price of AirPods, went home only to find out that they were fakes.

[ 4 : 49 ] They didn't work at all. And so what he thought was a good price for genuine AirPods turned out to be an expensive price for fakes. Discovering something is not what you thought it was can be very frustrating, very disappointing.

How many of us have built a friendship or got to know somebody, maybe a colleague in the workplace, a neighbor, only to find out later they're not who we thought they really were? And of course, it can be very costly.

Some of you are involved in buying businesses, and so you do all your research, all your due diligence, you turn over every stone you can, look at all the financials, but there's always a risk that you buy a business, and at the end of the day, it's not what you thought it was.

And there's a whole lot of stuff hidden behind. I think of people invested in Bernie Madoff's securities, right, a few years ago, and it proved not to be very secure at all. Thinking something is legitimate or genuine when it proves to be otherwise can be frustrating, disappointing, can be very costly.

But it can also be dangerous. It can be very deadly. Imagine you take your car for a service, and the mechanic decides to install cheap imitation brake pads on your wheels instead of the real thing.

[ 6 : 06 ] And one day they give way when you're careering downhill. Or think about somebody, you go to hospital, and somebody buys or installs imitation parts in the ventilator, right?

You need some fresh air, and the ventilator stops working because of fraudulent parts. Being fooled into thinking that something is genuine when it's not can be frustrating, it can be costly, it can be dangerous, it can be deadly.

So what about our faith? What about your Christian faith? How do you know whether your Christian faith is the real deal? Or whether you've just been fooled into thinking that what you think is faith is not really the real thing?

How would you know if it's fraudulent? What diagnostic tool would you use to employ, to test the genuineness of your faith? In the book of 1 Peter, the apostle Peter writes, and he says that like a furnace to silver or gold, trials are to our faith.

A furnace tests silver and gold, and it heats it up, and it reveals the impurities, and the alloys, and the fake materials. So trials do the same thing to our faith.

[ 7 : 20 ] They reveal what's genuine and real when the heat comes. Well, we've been reading the book of James, and the brother of Jesus, James, has been watching these Christians who were once part of his congregation going through these trials, and he seems to be worried by what he sees.

And so he's concerned as to the genuineness of their faith. And so in this passage, he invites them to take a closer look and to examine the authenticity of their Christian faith. Well, to change analogies, James is like a doctor who holds up the x-ray of their faith to the light of day, and he invites them, and he invites us, to look at the x-ray and to see what's really there.

And so James is helping his readers, this scattered congregation that he calls his beloved brothers and sisters, to examine the legitimacy of their faith. And he's concerned that what they think is genuine may be nothing more than just religious tradition or superstition.

And this is James' big idea for the passage today. He says, real Christian faith is not simply believing certain truths. Genuine Christian faith causes you to live differently, and not just because of what you believe, but because of who you've come to believe in.

Okay, so it's not just believing propositional truths, creeds, and statements, as important as that is, it actually, those beliefs cause you to live differently, but not simply because of the theological truth, but because of the person or the being, the God behind those truths, because of who you've come to believe in.

[ 8 : 55 ] Or said another way, James is saying that simply holding to certain theological or Christian truths and doctrines, true as they may be, and as sincerely as you may hold them, if those truths don't cause you to live differently because of a real dynamic relationship with God, then those, your faith may be no more worthwhile than a teenager's fake airpods at the bottom of his cupboard.

And if you know what a teenager's cupboard looks like, that's not worth very much, right? So James is telling us this, that where our professed belief in Christ has no material impact in our faith, doesn't change the way we live, the way we speak, the way we handle conflict, the way we handle challenges, how we steward our finances, our sexuality, our positions in society, maybe our faith is not as sincere, genuine as we thought it was.

And the way that James is going to do this is this, he's going to hold up four pictures for us. The first two are examples of fake or fraudulent faith. The second two are pictures of genuine faith, okay?

I think you see a picture behind me. So James is going to hold up four pictures. The first two are fraudulent faith. The second two are genuine faith. So let's dive in and look at what he says.

Look at the first one with me. Look at verse 14 to 17. He says, what good is it, my brothers and sisters, if someone says he has faith but does not have any works, nothing to back it up?

[ 10 : 25 ] Can that kind of faith save him? If a brother or sister is poorly clothed and lacking in daily food, one of you says, go in peace, be warmed, be filled. Without giving them the things that they needed for the body, what good is that?

So also faith by itself, if it does not have any works, it's dead. James gets straight to the point here. Pretty clear. What's his point?

His point is, talk is cheap. Easy to say the right things. We say what people want us to say. We want to save face. We say the right things. But backing that up with reality, that's another story.

Maybe you've experienced this in business. You want to do business with someone. You have a couple of meals and meetings and someone says, yeah, no, it looks good. I think we can really do something. I think there's a potential deal here.

We'll be in contact. And then you never hear from them ever again. And you phone them. You send emails. Silence. Silence. They're saying the right thing. And we tend to think that as long as nobody's hurt, as long as nobody's offended, as long as I can kind of keep the peace, no harm done.

[ 11 : 34 ] And so we tend to say the right things. James says, unless that's backed it up, it's meaningless. And the point is that we can do the same thing with our Christian faith. We can say the right thing, say, God, I believe this.

This is true. But unless there's some substance behind it, maybe it's all a sham. We say things like, God, I really trust you. But if we don't take any risks, if we don't trust God when it's hard, do we really trust Him?

Confession, I had this a few years ago. I remember writing a position paper for Watermark. This is what we believe on this certain area. And it was very theological, very wonderful, really brilliant paper, if I can say so myself, right?

This is what we believe. Well, about six months later, I actually had to defend that paper. And there was a situation where I actually had to then explain, this is what we believe, and I cowered away.

It's one thing to say, this is what we believe, but when push comes to shove, it was easier just to stay silent, remain quiet, avoid the conversation at all. That's James' point, that validity of our faith and our relationship with God, and whether we really, it's based on whether we really know Him, whether we really love Him, whether we really trust Him.

[ 12 : 50 ] It's not authenticated by what we claim, it's by how we live. And so he asked the question, verse 14, look here, can that kind of faith save a person? His answer is no.

So look at his summary statement, verse 17. So also faith by itself, that means faith in concept or idea only, if it does not have works, if it doesn't correspond to real life, well, that kind of faith is dead.

It's not real faith at all. Okay, first picture, cheap talk. Second picture, look at verse 18 to 20. Here, James anticipates an objection.

So he says, okay, someone might say, well, you have faith, I have works. Okay? You're a faith kind of person, I'm a kind of practical kind of person.

In other words, you say potato, I say potato. You like rice, I like noodles. Okay? Okay? In other words, why do you have to put me in a box and say that I've got it, my faith needs to look like this?

[ 13 : 53 ] There's so many different types of Christians, right? And some people are kind of believing, trusting God, faith kind of people. Some are just very practical, social justice, get their hands dirty kind of people. And so yeah, you might be one of those people, I'm one of these people.

And James says, no, no, no, what you're doing is you're taking one thing and you're creating a dichotomy, splitting into two, and saying choose one or the other. But these two things inherently go together.

Very silly analogy. It's like a hen saying to another hen, you lay egg yolks, I'll lay egg whites. Okay? Not going to be a very good, productive hen.

Those eggs are not going to sell very well. It's like imagine you go to buy a car, you want to buy a secondhand car, you go to a car dealer because you don't want to get ripped off like my brother, and he says, I've got two cars for you.

This one's got an accelerator, this one's got brakes. Which one do you want? Well, that's not going to be a very good car, right? You need them both. James says, one person says, look, you've got faith, belief, trust, I've got works.

[ 14 : 55 ] What's the big deal? No, the big deal is these two go together. Show me your faith apart from your works, I'll show you my faith by my works. Now, drive that car, best of luck to you.

Let's see how far you get. I'll drive my car that has both and I'll show you how this works. Look at verse 19. Here you see something fascinating. It says, okay, you believe that God is one, you do well, even the demons believe that, and shudder.

Now, remember, all devout Jews every day would recite a prayer called the Shema. The Shema is a prayer that's based on a couple of scriptures in Deuteronomy.

The first one is Deuteronomy 6. It says, hear, O Israel, the Lord our God, the Lord is one. So every single day, devout Jews will wake up in the morning and recite this prayer.

Hear, O Israel, the Lord our God, the Lord is one. You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart and all your soul and all your might. The Jewish Christians that James is writing to would have known this prayer.

[ 16 : 01 ] It's probably one of the most important sentences in the whole Old Testament for Jewish men and women. James says, you know that thing that you recite every morning?

You believe God is one. That's great, but even the demons believe that. Even Satan knows that that's true and he's not a Christian. Sam Albury says like this, are you pleased with your right understanding of who God is, your good theology?

Congratulations, you're at precisely the same level that the demons are at. You see, just because you have good theology or you know your Bible really well, you know your doctrine straight as an arrow, doesn't mean you have saving faith.

You genuinely know God. As many have observed, hell is full of demons with great theology. They don't know Jesus. They don't trust him. They fear him, they shudder, but they've never come to him in surrender and love and trust.

Friends, saving faith, genuine Christian faith, is not just intellectual assent to core doctrines and beliefs. It is that, but it's more than that. It's heartfelt trust in who God is and handing our lives over to him.

[ 17 : 13 ] So James tells us that genuine saving faith, yes, it's grounded in theological truth. This is who God is, but it's more than simply knowing a lot about God. It's loving him. It's knowing him.

It's trusting him. If you're a high schooler here, if you're a part of the youth this morning, so glad that you're with us, chances are, you're here because you grew up in a Christian family and have parents that want you to know God.

And that is an amazing privilege. You are very privileged to grow up in a family that has parents, not perfect parents, not a perfect family, but parents who love God and want you to love God.

But one of the dangers, high schoolers, is that you can grow up in a family because you know the Christian stuff thinking that you're a Christian. Because you know the stories, you know the catechisms, and you know the Bible teaching, and you've memorized the Bible verses.

Youth and high schoolers, here's a challenge for you. I want you to go home and at lunchtime today or dinner tonight, I want you to ask your parents this question. Mom and dad, how do you know that your faith is genuine and not fake?

[ 18 : 21 ] Okay, can you do that? And then I want you to ask yourself a question. Am I really a Christian or am I just believing what my parents have told me to believe? Okay, can you do that, high schoolers?

Ask them that question tonight at dinner time. See, you too can be fooled into thinking, yeah, I'm a Christian, I'm safe, I know all this stuff. But do you know him? Do you trust him?

Do you love him? James has given us two examples of counterfeit faith, right? But now he gives us two examples of genuine faith.

Look at what he does here. Look at verse 20. He says, do you want to be shown, you foolish person, that faith apart from works is useless? We said earlier, James is like a doctor, right?

He holds up this x-ray. James is a great doctor, he just needs to work on his bedside manner. Not a good thing to call your congregation, you foolish people. Okay, but anyway, well, that aside.

[ 19 : 17 ] Verse 21, 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 was counted to him as righteousness. He was called a friend of God. Now, if you're new to church, James assumes that we understand some of the Old Testament and so there's a story here that you need to understand.

Let me explain to you. In the Old Testament, Abraham is kind of the founder of the Judeo-Christian faith in many ways. And one day, God comes to Abraham and he says to Abraham, through your descendants, I am going to create a nation of people and through that nation, I'm going to send the Messiah, the Savior, who will save humanity from sin and death and the curse of the fall.

And so Abraham, you're going to have a son and descendants and through them, the Savior of the world is going to come. The only problem is Abraham is one, very old, and two, doesn't have any children.

And so things are not looking good. Well, fast forward about 30 years, Abraham is now even older. He's about 100 years old and God is good on his word and gives him a son.

[ 20 : 36 ] A son called Isaac. And so, it seems like the promise is going to be fulfilled. And so Abraham has the son Isaac, through Isaac and his descendants, the world is going to be blessed and saved.

But then one day, God asks Abraham to do something crazy. He says, Abraham, take your son, your only son, whom you love, go up on the mountain with a pile of wood on his back and sacrifice him to me.

Make a burnt offering and sacrifice your son to me. Now, immediately you can see there's a couple of problems with this. One, what do you do with that? I mean, what parent says, yeah, sure, no problem.

Let me just go kill my son, right? I mean, that itself is, okay, you need to wrestle with that. But in addition to that, everything that Abraham was and had and believed in, his entire legacy, the hope for humanity rested on this one child not dying but staying alive as long as possible and having many, many children.

And so here, God says, the whole hope of the world, I want you to sacrifice it for me. Well, Abraham somehow so trusts God and his promise that he takes his son, his only son, he puts wood on his back, climbs the hill and is about to sacrifice him and at the last minute God says, okay, that's enough.

[ 21 : 58 ] Now you know that I know that you love me and trust me. It's an unbelievable account of taking God at his word. But what's James' point here?

His point is, Abraham's faith was active along with his works and was completed by his work. James' point is that genuine Christian faith is not just theoretical, God, I trust you.

It actually has real relevance in real life on the decisions that we make, on the way we conduct ourselves. Real Christian faith is not just believing propositional truths but really trusting in a real God.

Real Christian faith knows not just that God is God but that he's good. Not just that he's true but that he's trustworthy. Not just that he's a father but that he's faithful and therefore brings our lives and says, God, this is so hard but you are good.

I trust you. This is the point that the writer of the book of Hebrews makes as he looks back on the Old Testament and he recounts the stories of men and women of their genuine faith and how their faith was made visible because of the way it manifests itself in the real contours of life.

[ 23 : 12 ] And so he says, think about Abraham. God comes to him one day and says, Abraham, leave your family, your father's home, your country. Follow me. Trust me. I'm going to take you to a new place. I'm not telling you where it is but trust me and Abraham did.

Or God says that Moses, because of his trust in God, turned his back on the privileges of Egypt growing up in the palace and associated himself with the slaves because he knew that God's promise was faithful.

Or he says, think of the nation of Israel, how they left Egypt, wandered in the wilderness even though they didn't know what lay in store for them. It was genuine faith in the faithfulness of God that caused David to go up against Goliath even though Goliath was much bigger, much scarier, much more experienced soldier than him.

But his genuine faith in the faithfulness of God caused him to actually act. Or think of Daniel and his friends in Babylon, how they refused to bow down to Nebuchadnezzar knowing that that meant the lion's den or the furnace or some other certain death and yet their trust in the trustworthiness of God led them to actually say no.

Friends, think of Hosea, this man whose wife probably left him to go sell herself into prostitution. God says, go and bring her back and marry her again a second time.

[ 24 : 35 ] And Hosea says, you are God and you are good. I trust you. Okay, I'll do it. Or think of Esther who takes her life into the hands and goes into the king's palace and challenges him to revoke an edict, bring shame on himself against God's people.

But she goes because God asks him to. Or think of Gideon who goes against the Midianites even though he's outnumbered 500 to 1. It's his genuine trust in the trustworthiness of God.

And the writer of Hebrews says that this is what faith looks like. Friends, this is James' point. As you look at the panorama of scripture, genuine faith is not just saying, God, I believe you to be true, but I believe you to be trustworthy.

And I'll put my life in your hands. Faith is tangible. It's real. It leads to real action. And so James asks us the question again, is our faith, is my faith genuine or is it fantasy?

Is it intellectual belief about something? Or is it heartfelt faith and trust in someone? Someone that's proved himself to be good. Look at the final picture that James paints for us.

[ 25 : 48 ] Verse 24. He says, you see that a person is justified, that means a person's faith is proven to be true, shown to be true, by works and not simply by faith alone.

In the same way, was it not also Rahab, the prostitute, justified by works when she received the messengers or spies and sent them out another way? For as the body apart from the spirit is dead, so also faith apart from works is dead.

Again, James here assumes that we know our Old Testaments. And so the story here is the nation of Israel, they come out of Egypt, they wander in the wilderness for 40 years. They actually wander there because they don't have great faith in God.

God asked them previously to trust Him and they're like, no, we're not going to trust you. They stay 40 years wandering. Eventually, after 40 years, God says, okay, it's time to go into the promised land.

They cross over the river Jordan and they're going to occupy the promised land. But in order to do that, they need to conquer one or two towns and cities that are in their way. The first city that they come to is a city called Jericho.

[ 26 : 48 ] And so Joshua, the leader, sends two spies into the city to go and suss it out, do some reconnaissance work. But they obviously can't go and say, hey, we're spies.

So they go in and the chances are they go in as kind of merchant traders, right? And they do what most merchant traders do as they pass through the city.

They go to the house of a local prostitute called Rahab and they stay with her to not be seen for who they are. But Rahab is heard.

So Jericho are not Israelites. They're not Jews. They don't know God. But Rahab is heard about the God of Israel. She's not an Israelite, but she's heard that God is powerful and strong and she's heard that this God is faithful to his promises that he makes.

And so she picks up when that the Israelites are coming to attack us and these spies are coming to suss things out. And now she's got a decision. Who will I trust?

[ 27 : 49 ] Will I trust my fellow citizens, the Jerichoites or people of Jericho and fight against God or will I trust the God of Israel and side with him?

Whose side am I going to take? Well, while she's deliberating about this, word gets out that there are two suspicious people walking the streets of Jericho and they stay at Rahab's house.

And so the city officials come to her, knock on her door and say, hey, who are the two guys that you are sheltering in your house and bring them out? And suddenly she's got to decide, who am I going to trust?

Am I going to trust the God of the Israelites that he's going to save his people or will I trust my people? And she comes to the conclusion that God is trustworthy, he's with his people and that no one who trusts him is in danger and no one who stands against him is safe.

And so she makes a decision and this is what she says. She says, I know that the Lord has given you our land. For we have heard how the Lord your God dried up the water of the Red Sea before you came out of Egypt and what you did to the kings of the Amorites who were beyond the Jordan.

[ 28 : 55 ] For the Lord your God, he is God in the heavens above and on earth below. She's saying, I've come to believe he's the real God. So more than just believing it, she acts in it.

And so she says to these two spies, okay listen, you go hide on the roof and she tells the soldiers, oh, I think they went that way. Created our version and she saves these two spies and lets them live.

He may have this Gentile prostitute, this person who in every respect was outside of the covenant people of God. She's not an Israelite, she's not a believer, she's not rich, she's not famous, she's not esteemed, she's the very opposite of Abraham.

Abraham is wealthy, she's poor, Abraham's a man, she's a woman in that culture, not a good thing. Abraham is respected, she's a sex worker, Abraham's a Jew, she's a Gentile, in every way the opposite.

And yet both of them have one thing in common, they trust in the God of Israel. And so here she is, her faith in the living God was not simply believing propositional truths, her faith caused her to make bold and risky decisions, not just because of what she believed but who she had come to believe in.

[ 30 : 12 ] And so James' question, verse 14, does that kind of faith save you? Absolutely it does. Friends, James is telling us that genuine faith is not so much about what you know but who you trust.

And trust by its very nature means you put your hands in the life of somebody else at their mercy. So as we come to a close, where do we find ourselves? Well, the question is where do we find this faith?

Every passage of Scripture in the Bible has got a purpose behind it. The authors, in this case James, didn't just write to tell us, you know, some poetry or something. They've got a purpose. They want us to do something with the passage.

They want us to respond. How does James want us to respond? What is James' purpose for writing this passage? One of the things that's interesting is in nowhere in this passage does James tell us to do a single thing.

There's no action, no imperative. So what does he want us to do? How does he want us to respond? Well, let me tell you firstly how not to respond. The wrong way to respond is to say, okay, well, James tells you that faith without doing a lot of things is useless, so I guess I better get busy, right?

[ 31 : 22 ] Okay, I'll join the multimedia team and I'll join the kids ministry team and I'll go in that social justice outreach. James is not writing, saying, you lazy Christians, get busier.

Okay? That's not what he's wanting to do. What he's wanting to do is he's wanting to say, stop and examine your faith. Does what you say you believe correspond to reality?

Is what's true in your mind played out in the reality of your life? Do you really, he says, to what extent do you really believe?

James has been pushing us to see that Christianity is not about intellectually believing something, but coming to believe and trust in someone. In John chapter six, some people come to Jesus and they say, Jesus, what works must we do to be doing the works of God?

God, we want to get to eternal life, we want to get to heaven, what must we do? Must we fast more? Must we pray more? Must we give money to the poor? What must we do to do the works of God? And Jesus says, this is the works of God, to believe in him whom God has sent.

[ 32 : 30 ] You want to do the right thing? Trust me. Believe in me. Look to me. Friends, where do we find this kind of faith, this genuine faith that so changes our lives that we live and behave and think and act differently?

The kind of faith that causes us to obey even when it's hard. Don't look inwardly to yourself. Look outwardly to Jesus. Let your mind be captured by the trustworthiness and the faithfulness of Jesus.

Do you remember what Rahab says? He says, we've heard the stories that God has been faithful to his people time and time and time again. Friends, hear the stories of where God has been faithful to us.

And where is God most faithful to us? Jesus died on the cross. And so don't look inwardly and say, I've got to do more. I've got to be more. I've got to try harder. Don't look at yourself.

No, friends, forget about yourself and look to the crucified Christ. That's how you know that Jesus is faithful. And so what battle are you facing this week? What trial are you facing this week?

[ 33 : 36 ] What thing at the moment are you wrestling with God and say, God, I don't know whether I can trust you or not. If I step out on the water, will you be there for me? Friends, the cross proves he won't let you down.

Robert Murray McShane, one of my favorite quotes. For every one, look at yourself. Take 10 looks at Jesus Christ. He is altogether lovely. Such infinite majesty and yet such meekness and grace and all for sinners, even the chief of sinners like me.

Live much in the smiles of God. Bask in his beams. Feel his all-seeing eye settle on you in love and rest in his almighty arms. Friends, the amazing thing about Jesus Christ is it doesn't matter who you are or what you've done.

It doesn't mean your background, your socioeconomic status. It doesn't matter if you're the world's worst criminal or the world's greatest philanthropist. If you will simply come to Jesus and take a small step and say, God, I want to trust you, he'll draw near.

He'll save you. He'll rescue you. He'll prove himself faithful to you. In his mercy and in his grace, he will come and meet with you.

[ 34 : 48 ] And so what about you? Friends, some of us have been religious for many, many years. You've done the church thing. You've done the retreat. You've done the CG thing. But maybe you're not genuinely a Christian. Maybe you're not genuinely saved.

Do you know him? Do you love him? Do you trust him? Maybe you believe the facts about him. You do well, but even demons know that. Come and trust him.

Friends, maybe you genuinely are a Christian, but your faith has become cerebral and intellectual. It's become dry and academic. You go through the motions. Why don't you this morning come and get on your knees and say, God, I want to know you.

I want to trust you again. I want you to have your way in my life. Jesus, come and have your way. Let me pray for us as we come to close.

Lord Jesus, thank you so much for your amazing grace. God, thank you for who you are again and again throughout scripture. God, every page of the Bible echoes the fact that you are God, but you're also good.

[ 35 : 50 ] You are true and you are trustworthy. You are a father who loves us and you are faithful and we can bank our lives in you. God, it's very easy to come to church and to sing the wonderful songs we sang this morning, but God, to actually, for that to be the reality of our hearts is sometimes hard.

I pray, God, won't you open the eyes of our hearts, Lord? God, even now, open the eyes of our hearts to see you that we can trust you. Help us to see you, Jesus, how good and trustworthy you are.

Help us to see that Jesus, you went to the cross for us God, come and have your way, I pray. God, both individually and as a church body, as a community, I want you to help us to be those that love you, trust you and obey you.

Father, I pray for the wrestle that's in our hearts this day, this week, God, where we've got some decisions to make, which way will we go? Help us to trust you, God.

Father, forgive us for our eager faith. forgive us, God. But then help us to grow. Help us to become more like you.

[ 37 : 33 ] Pray this in your great and wonderful name. Amen. Amen. Amen. Thank you.