

TODAY!

What Would Jesus Be Doing If He Were You?

“May the God of hope fill you with all joy and peace as you trust in Him, so that you may overflow with hope by the power of the Holy Spirit” (Romans 15:13).

Insight 2. Your Trust In Our Lord Must Be Validated

Both testaments bear witness that *genuine trust in God* is nowhere close to a mere passive, intellectual belief that *He exists*. Yet that confining mental box that is erected around God is where He resides within so much of western Christendom today.

To clarify what we’re saying, let’s see what James writes about this in the Newer Testament. In his second chapter he is anchoring an Abrahamic understanding of *trust* which is *seen in the actions it produces*. James was countering the widespread and increasing effect of Hellenism, which includes knowing facts about something *without doing anything* in response to that knowledge. (We’ll discuss this decidedly unbiblical worldview in Insights 3 and 4 when we expose the destructive influence of Clement of Rome and Clement of Alexandria.)

James uses a Hebraic style of teaching by opening his discussion with a question: *“What good is it, my brothers, if someone claims to have trust but has no actions to prove it? Is such ‘trust’ able to save him?”* (James 2:14). And of course the expected answer is “NO!”

He goes on to emphasize the Hebraic foundation of trust: *“Trust by itself, if it is not accompanied by action, is dead”* (2:17). Then, referencing the role-model of the Hebraic Restoration, Abraham, and his *trust-based obedience* of offering Isaac on the altar, James affirms elatedly:

“You see that [Abraham’s] trust and his actions were working together, and his trust was made complete by what he did” (2:22).

We are warned against the philosophical Hellenist view of just believing facts *about* God yet having no commitment to Him to obey according to His will for us. That unresponsive apathy indicates you have no living relationship with Him. And you’re in awful company if that’s the extent of who God is to you!

“You believe that there is one God [or literally, God is one]. Good! Even the demons believe that—and shudder” (James 2:19).

To discern the depth of someone’s professed trust, you need to see the choices he makes that result in action taken according to God’s will.

James concludes the subject by reiterating, *“As the body without the spirit is dead, so trust without deeds is dead”* (2:26). Keep in mind that he isn’t telling you to just go out and do something “Christian” for other people. Rather, he is connecting the dots as a lasso around deeds which *flow out of your trust* in your heavenly Father.

If Others Can’t See You Putting Your Faith Into Action, Then You Don’t Have Faith

“If anyone chooses to do God’s will, he will find out whether My teaching comes from God or whether I speak on My own”
(John 7:17).

“I pray that you may be active in sharing your trust, so that you will have a full understanding of every good thing we have in Christ” (Philemon 1:6).

There’s a reason our Lord Jesus repeatedly states, *“He who has ears, let him hear”*

(Matthew 11:15; also 13:9,43; 14:33-35). He is proclaiming an *expected response of action* that's based on what's been taught, a response God has already made clear in His Word. Yet that kind of *responsive hearing* is completely overlooked wherever European or Americanized Christianity has been presented. What do we mean?

Whether or not you respond to the Spirit and take action for Kingdom purposes depends on HOW you hear the scriptural truths. The manner in which you *internalize* the written Word of God determines its importance in your life.

Hearing the Word of God in a Hebraic context means that you *attentively listen with purpose*, because you know that you are expected by our Lord to *put into practice* (take action on) what you're hearing.

That's why Jesus so often summarizes His teachings with the phrase, "*He who has ears to hear, let him hear.*" His listeners certainly understood what that meant! Your intent to *follow through* in what the Spirit and the Word tell you is a deep internal motivation that's grounded on your loving trust in your Lord.

We've discussed in previous materials how the Hebrew language emphasizes the verb in a sentence, focusing on the *action* or *response* that's expected of you. By contrast, English and many other languages emphasize the noun or subject — the *who* or *what* in the sentence. Most English-based translations of the Bible help you learn something about the person or object in a sentence, but put little emphasis on their actions.

The focus on who or what is especially a hindrance to readers when the point is that biblical characters *obey God with determination* in response to His commands to them. And

their trusting obedience is intended for us today as examples so we may respond with the same heartfelt obedience.

That factor of *love-motivated obedient response* to our Father's will is why we often recommend *The Complete Jewish Bible* translated by David Stern. This version encompasses more of a Hebraic sense of the *continuing nature* of commands that are grammatically used with that intent—something that's clear in the Bible's original languages. All too often other translations give the impression that if you obey a command once, that's all that's needed!

Stern's extensive use of Hebrew names and terminology may keep you flipping to the glossary, but that sense of an *ongoing walk* of obedient trust for a lifetime of intimacy with our Lord comes through loud and clear!

To see what we're saying, let's compare Romans 10:9,10 from the Jewish New Testament (JNT, Stern), the New International Version (NIV) and the New King James Version (NKJV):

"That if you acknowledge publicly with your mouth that Yeshua [Jesus] is Lord and trust in your heart that God raised him from the dead, you will be delivered. For with the heart one goes on trusting and thus continues toward righteousness, while with the mouth one keeps on making public acknowledgment and thus continues toward deliverance." (JNT)

That if you confess with your mouth, 'Jesus is Lord,' and believe in your heart that God raised him from the dead, you will be saved. For it is with your heart that you believe and are justified, and it is with your mouth that you confess and are saved." (NIV)

"That if you confess with your mouth the

*Lord Jesus and believe in your heart that God has raised Him from the dead, you will be saved. For with the heart **one believes** unto righteousness, and with the mouth **confession is made** unto salvation.” (NKJV)*

Did you note the difference between the Hebraic emphasis of *ongoing action* in the first translation? This is the emphasis our Lord put on His teachings: not just a one-time act of obedience, but rather an ongoing response that reflects a *changed life* determined to carry out His Father’s will. And finally, John reinforces the ongoing nature of love-based actions when he writes:

“This is how we know what love is: Jesus Christ laid down His life for us. And we ought to lay down our lives for our brothers. If anyone has material possessions and sees his brother in need but has no pity on him, how can the love of God be in him? Dear children, let us not love with words or tongue but with actions and in truth” (1John 3:16-18).

As you’ll see beginning in Insight 7, every command in the Newer Testament calls for *active obedience* that emanates from love and trust. And that obedient trust depends on the presence of the indwelling Holy Spirit, both through His guidance and His empowerment.

You really have *no trust* if it doesn’t lead to obedient action. Your *responsive action* in the Spirit reveals the level of your trust.

Here are a few questions to consider and discuss with those close to you:

- **Does your life flow with actions that evidence to others your genuine loving trust in Jesus and your obedience as His beloved sheep? (See 1John 3:16-18.)**
- **When you read that “*As the body without the spirit is dead, so faith without deeds is dead,*” does it touch your conscience that your own belief system may be dead?**
- **If so, are you willing to repent, turning away from your disobedience and lack of trust, so that you may be restored and fulfill our Father’s will and purpose through you? (See Acts 26:20; John 15:6.)**