

## FAITH WITHOUT ACTION

From a very young age I was taught that it was my responsibility as a member of the congregation that I support my church with my tithes and my talents that faith wasn't enough, and I was encouraged to take an active role in the church. I thought, isn't my belief enough? I have faith and I have seen the positive aspects of that as I have turned my problems over to God, trusting that he would lead me through. But faith doesn't come from what God does for us but what we do for others' that is faith in action. We are called to be active in our faith, to do for God what he calls us to do for others, for his children. I don't speak of children in the age sense but in the God sense. Some of his children are very old. A neighbor came over and the mailman had left my mail in his box. Accident? I don't think so. His wife died Easter Sunday. I had known this, and I had intended to go over to the house but instead talked to one of his children in the parking lot urging her to let me know if there was anything I could do. I have often said this to people and then have gone off feeling as if I did my part. But when he showed up at my door with my mail, I asked him in, and he began to talk. We sat at the kitchen table, and he poured out his hurt, his feeling that he didn't do enough, his sadness and I listened and told him he had done well and had dealt with a sickness that had lasted a long time. I didn't fix it, I didn't take him cookies, I didn't send a book on grief, I just listened. I have friends who have done both, brought me food and listened. The listening was what I needed most. He talked for about an hour, and I thanked God that I had been patient because I was trying to get ready for a memorial service for my niece where my listening skills would once again be put to good use. I also recalled from my own grief that the best listeners were those that listened the days I was angry, the days that I was sad, the days I didn't want to get dressed and the house was a mess (something I once blamed on my husband and now cannot. Was it me all along?) and the days I didn't want to talk about it.

James 2:14-17 What good is it my friends, if a man claims to have faith but has no deeds? Can such faith save him? Suppose a brother or sister is without clothes and daily food. If one of you says to them, "Go I wish you well; keep warm and well fed but does nothing about their physical needs, what good is it? In the same way, faith by itself, if it is not accompanied by action is dead, but someone will say, "You have faith, I have deeds. Show me your faith without deeds, and I will show you my faith by what I do.

Dear Lord, some days you call us to action when we see those around us have needs, some days you call us to feed the hungry, to clothe the naked, to bring truth and light to the overburdened and some days we are called to listen. Help us to respond with your loving thoughts for people. We ask Lord that you help us to respond to those who are ill, those who are hungry, and those who need clothing and essentials and those who grieve. May we not turn away our eyes but respond with the tenderness of your children remembering not just who we are but whose we are. Be with our Pastor and bless his ministry. Be with our family of believers may we give each other love, acceptance, and gentle guidance. Be with our staff and leaders, guide them and help them in their mission. Be with us Lord in our comings and our goings, in our needs and our good fortune and may we always feel your presence in our lives. In the name of your blessed Son, Jesus Christ. Amen

Grace Epperson