**put it into practice**

Craig Mitchell

Session for use with devozine meditations for May 27–June 2, 2013.

**MAKING THE CONNECTION**

“As a youth leader and youth minister, I have often felt the positive expectation of young people to demonstrate with them the faith I confess. In my church, I see young people drawn to people of integrity like moths to a flame. In a world of competing values, they hunger for examples of faithful, daring discipleship—something more than good citizenship. These young people want to see what citizenship in the kingdom of God looks like. But example means little if it cannot be passed on in practice. How do we help shape lives of faithfulness?” —Craig

**MEET THE WRITER**

Craig Mitchell has been involved in youth ministry with the Uniting Church in Australia for—um—many years. He is an educator, writer, researcher, and multimedia author. Craig is currently working on a Ph.D., researching the future of Christian education and faith development among Australian churches. He and his wife are the parents of three young adults. Check out Craig’s social networking site “Forming Faith, Growing Disciples” on Facebook. ([https://www.facebook.com/groups/197862267020518/](https://www.facebook.com/groups/197862267020518/))

**STUFF YOU WILL NEED**

- For this session, arrange to have some of the saints of your church available in person or by telephone. Choose people who put faith into action and are able to speak openly about their faith. Read through the session to see what will be required of them. The number of saints you invite depends on the size of your group.
- newsprint or a white board
- markers
- paper
- pens
- Print on a separate sheet of paper each of the scripture passages from the book of James listed in “Exploring the Word.” (Make a second copy of each page to use later as a key.) Cut each passage into short phrases of four to six words (cutting them apart at logical points, where sentences naturally divide). Place each set of passage pieces (James 1:22–24, James 1:25, 27, and so forth) into a separate envelope.
PLUGGED IN

+ “Hall of Fame,” by The Script, is about fame; but it is also about dedication and acting on your dreams. ([https://www.youtube.com/watch?feature=player_embedded&v=mk48xRzuNvA](https://www.youtube.com/watch?feature=player_embedded&v=mk48xRzuNvA))

+ The videos for Companions in Christ: The Way of Pilgrimage, from Upper Room Books, are useful for thinking about practices that shape discipleship. ([http://companions.upperroom.org/youth](http://companions.upperroom.org/youth))


+ A Wordle of the Book of James (NRSV) — In this word cloud, the larger the word, the more often it appears in the book of James. ([http://www.wordle.net/show/wrdl/6532207/Untitled](http://www.wordle.net/show/wrdl/6532207/Untitled))

+ This background video about the Book of James features lecturers from the University of Nottingham in the United Kingdom. ([http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=fKmwiOKRR-w](http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=fKmwiOKRR-w))

CHECKING IN

Invite group members to form two concentric circles so that they are facing each other in pairs. Ask the first of the following questions (Who taught you how to tie your shoelaces?), and invite partners to tell each other their answer. After no more than thirty seconds, have the outer circle rotate so that people are standing in new pairs. Then ask the second question. Continue in this manner until you have asked all the questions. Feel free to add your own questions to the list.

Who taught you how
• to tie your shoelaces?
• to play a particular sport?
• to set the table for a meal?
• to do a crazy dance?
• to find books in the Bible?
• to sing?
• to do arithmetic?
• to pray?
• to be truthful?
• to be caring toward people in need?
• to be concerned about the environment?

EXPLORING THE WORD


Remind people of this week’s theme in devozine: “Put It into Practice.”
Invite people to form groups of two or three. Give each group an envelope containing one cut-up passage from James, and ask members of each group to put their phrases into the correct order. Give them a short time limit, one or two minutes; then call, “Stop!” Ask each group to read the verses as they have put them together. Then read aloud the original verses.

Ask people to discuss this question and to refer to the scripture to formulate their answers:

**What are some of the challenges we face when we try to put our faith into action?**

Summarize their responses, and record them on newsprint. (Possible responses may be peer pressure, knowing what God wants me to do, being too busy, feeling like a hypocrite, not being prepared to take risks.)

Next, ask people to answer this question:

**If you could interview some famous Christians from the Bible or throughout history and ask them about the challenges they faced, what questions would you ask?”**

Record their questions. (NOTE: You may need to help them get started, using the challenges they listed as a starting point. Possible questions may be:

+ When have you felt that you have lived out your Christian faith?
+ What does it mean for you to live a Christian life?
+ How do you know when you are doing what God wants you to do?
+ How does the Bible help you to live as a Christian?
+ Do you think that living as a Christian is more about words or more about actions?
+ What helps you grow close to God and stay close to God?
+ What habits, practices, or disciplines help you remain faithful to God?
+ Who helped you learn how to live as a Christian?
+ In what ways is being a Christian more than being a good person?

Then, explain to the group that you have arranged for some saints from today’s church to answer the group’s questions.

There are several ways to involve the guests you have invited. Choose the option that seems best for your group or setting, or design your own way to spend time together.

- **Phone Interviews**: The young people could use their cell phones to do phone interviews. (If you choose this method, be conscious of cost, and limit the conversations.) Each person could make a call, or the youth could get together in pairs or small groups to make a call and put the phone on the “speaker” setting. If they choose the latter option, be sure to provide lots of space.
- **Field Interviews**: Send the young people out in pairs to complete their interviews. They will need to quickly write down two or three questions to ask, and they may wish to record the interviews on their cell phones. (This has worked for my youth group, which meets while the adults are having coffee after church.)
- **One-to-One or Small Group Interviews**: If the adults you invited have joined your group for the session, ask the young people to interview them one-on-one or with two or three young people seated with each adult.
- **Panel Discussion**: If you invite three to five adults and have a larger group of young people, you may wish to organize a panel discussion.
After the interviews, thank the guests for their participation. If they are present in the session, invite them to stay for the closing prayers.

**SHARING IN PRAYER**

Place the cut-up verses from James face up on a table in the center of the group.

Say:

> “What does the Lord require of us?
> To do justice, to show mercy, and to walk humbly with God—
> Not only to dream of justice, but to act justly.
> Not only to believe in love, but to show kindness.
> Not only to kneel humbly in private, but to walk humbly each day with God.
> What does the Lord require of us?
> To walk in the way of Jesus
> from Gethsemane to Golgotha,
> from empty tomb to upper room,
> from Emmaus to the ends of the earth.
> The risen Christ stands among us.
> In silence, let us know that he is present
> and we are with him.

Invite people to say aloud one-sentence prayers of praise.

Then invite people to name aloud one person who has inspired their faith and to thank God for that person.

Invite people to move close to the table and to reflect on the words from James, allowing these words to speak to them again. After a brief silence, invite people to select from the pile one phrase they wish to take to heart, words that will shape their lives in the coming days and weeks.

Ask people to form small groups. Be sure that one of the older saints of the church is in each group. Invite the people in each group to pray for one another and then to read to the group the words of James they chose.

Conclude the session with these words based on James 4:7–10: “Submit yourselves therefore to God. Resist evil. Draw near to God, and God will draw near to you. Be cleansed. Purify your hearts. Humble yourselves before the Lord, and he will lift you up.”

**TAKING IT FURTHER**

If the intergenerational conversations have been a positive experience, think about how you might foster continuing conversation and interaction. Ask adults to pray for young people. Bring people together for a social occasion. Invite the youth and adults to continue their discussion of faith in practice. How can you build on this initial experience to strengthen connections across generations?

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