

My brother Bob

- is a graphic artist and designer.
  - He has designed everything from websites
    - to catalogues
      - to billboards,
- so when I found myself in charge of getting t-shirts
  - for our confirmation camp group -
    - I immediately called Bob
      - to see what he could do.
- I told him that our theme for the week
  - was “Walking Wet: Living Out our Baptismal Promises”
    - the idea being
      - that we would focus on helping the confirmands
        - learn ideas and skills
          - that would be helpful
            - as they tried to live as a child of God in the world
- Well,
  - Bob got to work
    - and it wasn't long
      - before I got an excited phone call

- "I think I've got it." Bob said

- "I'll send you an email with the file.

- Take a look and tell me what you think.

- It's simple" he said

"But I think you'll like it."

- I checked my email

- opened the file

- and saw this blue shirt with the words

"Walking Wet: Living Out our Baptismal Promises"

- across the front.

- Not surprisingly,

- I did like the shirt

- and so did everyone else

- when we gave them out at camp.

- What surprised me, however,

- is the response I've gotten

- from friends and strangers

- who have seen me wear the shirt

-- from folks at church

- to a waitress in a restaurant in Roanoke

- I can't tell you how many people have stopped to read my shirt

- and asked me what it means

- this shirt

- has given me the opportunity

- to talk to people about my faith in a way that I never expected.
- This phrase
  - “Walking Wet:
    - Living out our Baptismal Promises”
      - has made my faith visible to the world
        - each time I’ve worn it.
- And it occurred to me this week
  - that what James is calling us to do
    - is really very similar -
      - for while James isn’t telling you to wear a shirt or sign around your neck
        - that says
          - “Child of God”
- James is calling us
  - to make our faith visible in the world
    - through all that we say and do
- Over the next five weeks
  - we’ll be focusing on what James has to say about
    - moving beyond simply believing in Jesus
      - and instead believing and responding to God’s gracious love for us
        - with active lives of faith
  - James didn’t use the words specifically
    - but he really is calling us to “Walk Wet”
      - to live out the good news of our baptism
        - the good news that God loves us unconditionally

- and so - has offered us salvation as a free gift

- through faith in Jesus Christ

- James wants us to be

- in his words

“Doers of the word, not merely hearers”

- which is not to say that you have to earn God’s love

- because we can’t earn something that is already given to us

- No,

- I believe what James is saying

- is simply - - -

- act on what you believe

- allow God’s love for you

- to shape your life in a meaningful way

- allow God’s love for you

- to guide your words and actions

- so that as you move through this world

- you are a walking, talking, caring, helping

- billboard for the love of God

- “Be doers of the word, and not merely hearers”

- James says

Or perhaps you might say

- as we do at a baptism

- “Let your light so shine before others that they may see your good works

- and glorify your faith in heaven.”

- James knows
  - that what you do in the world -
    - really is a powerful witness to God's presence in your life
- and James is calling us
  - to make our faith visible
    - in our lives - -
      - whether we have a confirmation camp T-shirt on or not
  - and just in case
    - you don't know where to start
      - just in case
        - you don't know how to be a doer of the Word
- just in case you don't know how to move
  - beyond belief
    - to faithful action in the world
- James gives us three tips on how to get started
  - First "Let everyone be quick to listen,
    - slow to speak,
      - slow to anger." (*James 1:19*)
- Model the forgiveness and mercy that God shows us
  - by treating others in a similar way
    - don't be quick to get angry or yell or scream
      - be quick to listen - -
        - take the time to discover what is really going on in a situation,
        - think through what it really means,

- and consider what you really want to say -

- before you respond

and when you do respond to a difficult situation

- respond not in-kind

- but with the kindness, love and mercy of God

So first be quick to listen, slow to speak and slow to anger

- and second

- “rid yourselves of sordidness and rank growth of wickedness” (*James 1:21*)

- or in other words

- start replacing those habits

- and possibly even people

- that lead you away from God - -

- with habits and people

- that support you in your life of faith

- Pick one thing to try this week

- that cultivates and nourishes your relationship with God - -

- you are already in worship,

- so what one thing are you going to add to your faith life this week?

- I’m serious -

- this isn’t a rhetorical question

- take the pencil in the pew in front of you

- and write something down

- it might be simply to use the new devotional materials

- that are available today

- it might be to listen to a cd of your favorite hymns
  - or Christian songs
- it might be to pray one minute a day
  - for a friend who is sick
- it might be to strike up a conversation
  - with a person whose faith inspires you
- it might be to read Romans 8:31-39 each day this week
- pick one thing, just one that
  - you can add to your life of faith this week and add it
    - and next week or the week after,
      - pick one more thing and add that too
  - and in time as you become more connected to the implanted word of God
    - that James speaks of
      - the implanted word of God that is in all of our hearts
        - well as you do that - - the sordidness and wickedness
          - will begin to be pushed more and more to the side
    - and what you might call God habits will become more central
- So be quick to listen, slow to speak, slow to anger
  - focus on growing God habits not bad habits
    - And finally “care for orphans and widows in distress” (*James 1:27*)
- Now if you know orphans and widows in distress
  - by all means find a way to provide them assistance,
    - but I think what James means in general is
      - serve others,

- particularly those who can't help themselves
- for just as God in Christ Jesus came to help and save and serve us
  - so we are to follow Christ's example
    - by serving and helping others
- again, I don't want you to feel like
  - you have to go out and save the world by yourself today
- look for one thing you can do to serve and help someone else
  - for example, pray for people recovering from hurricanes
    - plan on taking part in one of our upcoming mission projects,
      - like the Christmas boxes that help children in need
        - or simply find a place where your gifts
          - can make a difference
- pick one thing
  - and make it a part of your faith life this week
- be slow to anger
  - cultivate God habits
    - serve others
      - Be doers of the word, not merely hearers
        - Respond to the generous gift of God's love for you
          - Let the light of your faith
            - shine through you for others to see
- For while not everyone has a T-Shirt
  - that says "Walking Wet"
    - to make you a billboard for your faith

- all of us have the ability
  - with God's help
    - to let our words and actions
      - reveal the hope and joy,
        - love and forgiveness
          - that we know
            - thanks to God's love in our lives.