

Word and Life

Throughout the whole Bible runs the demand not only to hear the Word of God but to live it and to make it a guide for our daily decisions. Our faith, which is based on the Word of Scripture, wants to be lived. Faith without the works is dead.

If the Church today is in a crisis of credibility, it has to do with the gap between teaching and practice. It was not only the abuse scandal that revealed some blatant contradictions between Christian morals and church practice. We lose our credibility when we take a vow of poverty and have a luxurious lifestyle; when we preach social justice and pay our workers badly; when we demand solidarity from society and do not realize it ourselves in the church.

Texts

- The word of God is living and active, sharper than any two-edged sword, piercing to the division of soul and of spirit, of joints and of marrow, and discerning the thoughts and intentions of the heart.
Heb. 4,12
- What good is it, my brothers, 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. As the body without the spirit is dead, so faith without deeds is dead. James 2, 14-17.26
- Why do you call me 'Lord, Lord,' and not do what I tell you? Lc 6,46
- I tell you, ask, and it will be given to you; seek, and you will find; knock, and it will be opened to you.
Lc 11,9

Learning from Africa

African theologians point out that the central value in traditional cultures is "life". Good is what sustains life, bad is what threatens it. Passing on life is the most important task.

Services, especially in Pentecostal churches, address the daily problems of life. God is expected to intervene in natural disasters, solve financial problems and drive out evil spirits that are the cause of physical and mental illness.

In the so-called "Prosperity Churches" these expectations are often shamelessly abused for the self-enrichment of pastors. There is also a magical belief that rituals you can protect yourself against evil spirits or even manipulate God.

In our secularized societies, even Christians often no longer expect God to intervene in their lives. But when God is no longer relevant to our daily lives, then we don't need him anymore. We can learn from African Christians to start any activity with prayer and to place our plans, and even our small worries and needs before God while leaving him the freedom to answer us when and where and how he wants.



Food for thought

- **Do we still really expect God to intervene in our lives? What place does the prayer of intercession have in my life?**
- **Where is the discrepancy between our faith and concrete action in our personal and community life?**