

James: Living a Life of Genuine Faith Week 6

*Last week we learned that **genuine faith does not discriminate**. We saw that where there is genuine, humble, faith-filled love for others, there will not be partiality or judgment, but rather mercy.*

*This week James gives us a litmus test for genuine faith: whether or not it bears the fruit of good works. Read through the entire book of James, and as you do, underline every occurrence of the word "faith" in **red**. Then re-read **James 2:14-26**. Read it in the ESV and NIV before you begin to answer the questions.*

Look at **James 2:14-16**.

1. What do you think James means by *faith* in **2:14**? What kind of faith? Look back at **2:1** for a hint.

What do you think James means by *works*?

2. Apply: People can place faith in many things. How is faith in Christ different than faith in other things, like elevators, spouses, or savings accounts? How is faith in Christ a genuine, saving faith?

3. Look up the following verses. How does Jesus tell us we are shown to be His disciples?

John 13:34-35

John 15:8

4. According to **John 15:3-5**, to whom must we be connected in order to bear fruit?

5. James gives an example in **2:15-16** of lifeless, empty faith. What kind of action would have accompanied genuine faith in this situation?

6. Where else in his letter has James spoken of how believers are to treat the poor?

Are the poor he now discusses in **2:15-16** the same group or a different group? Explain how you reached your answer.

7. Apply: Have you ever offered pious words of encouragement or sympathy without doing anything practical to help a brother or sister in need? Has anyone ever done so to you? What motive lies behind such statements?

8. Last week we noted that the early church was probably not made up of predominantly wealthy members. Look back again at **Acts 2:42-45**. How did believers in the early church respond to needs within the church?

Why do you think they were so willing to sacrifice for the sake of fellow believers?

9. Apply: How willing are you to sacrifice in order to care for and help meet the needs of those within the community of believers? What keeps you from doing so? What does this reveal about your faith?

Now look at **James 2:17-20**.

10. Note the three ways James describes faith without works in these verses.

2:17

2:19

2:20

11. James challenges those who would separate faith and works in **2:18**. What problem does he point out in their argument?

12. According to **2:19**, what do demons believe about God?

What is wrong with this kind of faith? How is it like human faith that produces no good works?

13. Why is faith apart from works *useless*, as James states in **2:20**?

Now look at **James 2:21-26**.

14. Who are the two people James offers as examples of genuine faith?

_____ and

15. Abraham is perhaps the most significant person in the Old Testament. Read part of his story in **Genesis 22:1-18**. What do you learn about Abraham in this passage? What do you learn about his son Isaac?

How did Abraham's willingness to sacrifice Isaac prove the authenticity of his faith?

16. Now learn about Rahab by reading **Joshua 2:1-21**. What stands out to you about this woman? How was her faith proven to be true?

The word "*justified*" is an important term in this passage, and it is crucial that we have a correct understanding of what James does and does not mean by it. Look back through **2:21-26** and circle the word "*justified*" in **blue** each time you see it. There are two definitions that will help us as we look at this idea.

1. **justified**: to be *declared* righteous or in right standing

2. **justified**: to be *shown* as righteous or in right standing

17. Read the words of Paul in **Romans 3:27-28**. Look back at the two definitions of "*justified*".

Which definition does Paul have in mind in these verses? Rewrite **Romans 3:28** below, substituting the definition you chose for the word "*justified*".

18. Which definition does James have in mind in **James 2:24**? (Look back at **2:14** to help with your answer.) Rewrite **James 2:24** below, substituting the definition you chose for the word "*justified*".

19. Apply: Describe the thinking of someone trying to gain right standing before God by works. How is this kind of thinking not aligned with the gospel?

Describe the thinking of someone who believes faith in God means we don't need to worry about obeying the law any more. How is this kind of thinking also not aligned with the gospel?

20. Apply: How have you trusted in your good works to justify yourself before God? In what area of your life do you believe you're doing a pretty good job with the whole righteousness thing? What would Paul say to you?

In what ways have you neglected to pursue obedience because “God’s grace is big enough”? What would James say to you?

21. Summarize the message of **James 2:14-26** in one sentence:

Wrap-up

What aspect of God’s character has this week’s passage of James shown you more clearly?

Fill in the following statement:

Knowing that God is _____ shows me that I am _____.

What one step can you take this week to better live in light of this truth?

Close in prayer. Confess to the Lord places where you know your faith has not been followed by obedient good works. Ask Him to show you where you have neglected the needs of fellow believers. Praise God for the gift of saving faith and that we are justified before Him by that faith alone. Praise Him that we have been rescued from darkness instead of being required to work our way into light. Ask Him to reveal and purify the heart behind your good works.