

FAITH WITHOUT WORKS IS DEAD

YEAR: TRANSFORM / FOCUS: LIVING FOR JESUS / SERIES: JAMES

BIG TRUTH: FAITH WITHOUT WORKS IS DEAD

Romans 3:28; Galatians 5:6; Hebrews 11:32-40

BIBLE VERSE: JAMES 2:26

"For as the body apart from the spirit is dead, so also faith apart from works is dead."

BIG IDEAS

- Good works are selfless actions motivated by love for God and others.
- A faith that doesn't work for the good of others isn't from Jesus.
- Good works cannot save, but are a proof of genuine faith.

BIBLE PASSAGE: JAMES 2:14-26

TRANSFORM: LIVING FOR JESUS

In High School, the Transform Year is an exploration of what it looks like to have transformed influence as we seek to live for a Kingdom that is greater than our own. First, we recognize that we will never be transformed if we are not Living for Jesus. To do this, we must first know who Jesus is by looking at who He says He is (John 8:58), and then look at what the Bible says about how in Him, we live by faith (James 1:6). Next, we recognize that to have transformed influence means that we must live as disciples in pursuit of Christ and His Kingdom over ourselves and our own kingdoms.

SERIES AIMS



Every student should know...

- God is a God of compassion and mercy.
- We are prone to self-deception.
- If our faith does not have works, it is dead.



Every student should feel...

- Joy, even in trials, because of God's goodness.
- Thankful for every good and perfect gift from the Father.
- Responsible to use their influence for Jesus alone.



Every student should strive to...

- Read the entire book of James.
- Memorize the Bible verse each week.
- Reject and repent of faith without works.



Every student should want...

- To grow in their understanding of biblical faith.
- To practice religion based on what Scripture says, not the world, culture, or our feelings.
- To know and generously show mercy.

GUIDES AND WORKOUTS

The Guide provides a commentary page on each week's Bible verse and on each Big Idea that unpacks the Big Truth. Each week also includes a Student Workout as a resource to help the student pursue spiritual disciplines on their own. Additionally, each week has a Family Workout that helps equip parents and guardians to have spiritual conversations with their student.



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BIBLE VERSE: JAMES 2:26

"For as the body apart from the spirit is dead, so also faith apart from works is dead."

We are redeemed to do good works.

"...faith apart from works is dead."

- God's redemption plan was more than a plan to save us from an eternity of hell. It was more than setting us free from our sin natures. God redeemed us to fulfill His purpose and plan for our lives. He set us free to do His will for our lives.
- Each person is created with a purpose and plan and those that God has redeemed are redeemed to do His good works. James speaks of these good works when he speaks of our faith and the connection it has to our works. Our faith is revealed by the works that we do. As we live out our faith, we will do the work of the Lord.

Our faith will result in action.

"For as the body apart from the spirit is dead, so also faith apart from works is dead."

- What God has worked inside of us will work itself out of us through our words and deeds. It is impossible for us to have experienced the grace and mercy of Jesus and not be changed by Him. Our personal faith is not private because our outward works are reflections of our personal faith. When our faith is genuine, people will see a difference in us because of our works.
- When we have experienced His mercy and entered into a personal relationship with Him, we will act on our faith. Because we have the Holy Spirit inside of us, we will respond to the leading and guiding of Him and do the good works that God has called His people to do. Our faith will be an active faith that is lived out in our daily lives in big and small ways.

Our actions reveal if we have true faith or not.

"For as the body apart from the spirit is dead, so also faith apart from works is dead."

- James writes that faith that has no works or actions to back it up is actually dead faith. He means that this type of faith is actually not real. It is a bold statement to say that a person's faith isn't real if their actions don't back it up, but what James is teaching is that real faith will change us so dramatically that our behavior will reveal our faith.
- People of faith think, believe, and act differently than those who do not believe. When we have true faith, we will follow God's Word. We will not do it merely out of compulsion or fear, but because we love God and desire to do His will. We will love others because we love God first and this will prompt us to love those around us. We will grow in our faith and endure to the end because of the faith that is working in us.

BIG IDEA #1: GOOD WORKS ARE SELFLESS ACTIONS MOTIVATED BY LOVE FOR GOD AND OTHERS.¹**[THIS]**

People do good deeds all of the time. We hand out awards to children in school when they are caught doing a good thing or behaving in a way that is deemed good. Throughout our lives we applaud people for their good works if they achieve their goals and reach a certain type of success, but when James writes of good works in verses 14-26 of chapter two, he is not talking about human good works. These good works are actions that are a result of the saving faith we have in Jesus. We realize that we are sinners in need of His mercy and our hearts are open to Him. Our love for Him grows and our behavior looks different from that of people who do not know Him. We choose obedience to His Word instead of following the ways of this world, even if it costs us our friends or popularity. We give of our resources and time to make God known and not ourselves. This is our faith in action.

[THEREFORE]

What actions or works does the world call good, but Scripture would not, because they aren't motivated by a love for God and others?

Many people do good things, but they aren't the good works that reveal a genuine faith in God. Jeremiah 17:9-10 teaches us that our hearts are deceitful and wicked. Our motive for doing something matters. If our good works aren't motivated from a love for God and others, then they aren't a reflection of the faith we have in God. Psalm 51:17 reminds us that what God desires is a humble and contrite heart.

[THIS]

James teaches that our faith isn't really real if our actions don't prove that it is real. Because what we believe in our hearts will work itself out in our actions, the truth of our faith is shown by our behavior, attitude, and words. If we live a life marked by selfless actions out of a love for God and others, we reveal that our faith is authentic. We are doing the good works that James speaks of in 2:18. Our faith produces these works. We will obey Him and live to please Him by seeking His glory above all else. We will love others and seek to put their needs and desires above our own out of our love for God. The "good works" James speaks of are selfless acts that our lived out over our lifetimes. They are not isolated things that we do from time to time. When our faith is genuine and real, our lives will be marked by a life that is lived selflessly doing for others out of a love for God.

[THEREFORE]

What are some wrong motives for doing good things?

We can often do things to be seen as good or because we think we are earning our salvation. Matthew 6:1 warns us not to do good to be seen, but to do good to please God alone. Colossians 3:17 also reminds us that all that we do should be done for the glory of God and not ourselves.

Does your life reveal that you have a faith that is revealed by actions that are motivated by a love for God and others?

Hebrews 13:16 tells us that we should not neglect to do what is good and to share what we have in such a way that is sacrificial. This type of living is pleasing to God. This is doing the good works that James is speaking of. Galatians 6:10 also spurs us on to do good to others because it is an outworking of the faith that we have on the inside. When God has transformed us, we will do good works.

1. James 2:15: Good works come from our love for God and others. We do good for others out of our love for God.

BIG IDEA #2: A FAITH THAT DOESN'T WORK FOR THE GOOD OF OTHERS ISN'T FROM JESUS.²

[THIS]

In James 2:19, James gives a warning about a false faith. In this verse, he warns that simply believing in the existence of God isn't a saving faith. It isn't enough to say that God exists or to even have a knowledge of Scripture. Even the demons believe God exists, so a basic acknowledgement of His existence doesn't save us. Our faith is more than knowledge. Though we do not earn our own salvation, we do exhibit actions as a result of our salvation. Our faith is a belief in our own sinfulness first and a trust in Christ's righteousness as adequate to reconcile us to God. Without this first acknowledgement of our personal sinfulness, we are no different from the demons who say with their mouths that God exists, but with their actions deny He is Lord and Savior.

[THEREFORE]

What attitude must we have to acknowledge we are sinful?

1 John 1:8 shows us that when we acknowledge we have sin, we are honest. In order to admit we are sinful and in need of salvation, we must be honest with ourselves. We must humble ourselves before God and accept the salvation He offers. This sets us apart from the demons. Ephesians 2:3 reminds us that before we humble ourselves, we are like the demons living as children of wrath.

[THIS]

Our true faith will work for the good of others. If we profess to have a faith, yet that faith isn't marked by a care for others, it isn't a true faith in Jesus. Ephesians 2:8 tells us that our faith is a gift from God and Jesus does not give false faith. Our faith in Jesus works in us to make us like Him. It is His righteousness that is applied to us; therefore, when we know Him, we will love others like He does. Our actions will reveal a care and concern for the poor, for the sojourner, for the lowly, and for the vulnerable. When we care for others, we will not pass by someone in need and overlook them. We will not see someone come into our church and ignore their need. We deceive ourselves if we think attending church and living a moral life is real faith in Jesus. We can do these things, but if we do not care for others in real and tangible ways, our faith is not from Jesus. Jesus set the perfect example for us. His life was marked by care for others. He loved the Father and others in an obedient and sacrificial way.

[THEREFORE]

Why is a real faith so connected with the way we treat other people?

1 John 3:15 and 4:20 remind us that a love of others is directly connected to a love of God. We cannot say we love God and hate others. Our actions reveal how we truly feel. If we say we love God and others, then we will act on it.

What are some tangible ways you can show that you love God and others this week?

In Ephesians 4:32, Paul writes that believers should show tenderness to one another and forgive one another. When we love God and others, we can show this love in a tangible way by practicing a life of forgiveness. In 1 John 3:17-18, we see that loving God means loving the poor by caring for them, not just saying we love them. When we give of our own wealth and bountifulness, we show that we love God and others.

2. James 2:19: Faith that doesn't do good works for others isn't from Jesus. It is a false faith.

BIG IDEA #3: GOOD WORKS CANNOT SAVE BUT ARE A PROOF OF GENUINE FAITH.³**[THIS]**

No person is born good or can be good enough to save themselves. We could never justify ourselves before God because we are all born sinful and separated from God. When James writes that faith without works is dead, he is not saying that our works save us. He is not implying that we can work hard enough or do enough good things to make ourselves righteous enough before God. We can never take away our sinfulness. We could live a lifetime as a moral, nice, outstanding person and still not have true faith. The only thing that saves is when we have a repentant heart that understands our own sinfulness, turns away from it, and turns to Jesus and the salvation He offers on the cross. When we cry out to Jesus and believe that He is our Savior and the Lord of our life, we are redeemed and made right before God. This is what saves us from the hopelessness of our sin.

[THEREFORE]

How can we confuse true faith with earning our salvation?

In Matthew 7:21-23, Jesus teaches that good, religious works do not save. When He returns, many will say that they have done good things, but these things will not have saved them because their faith will not have been real.

[THIS]

When James writes about our faith and works, he's teaching that our faith will prove itself by our works. If we really know Jesus, we won't live a life characterized by wickedness. We will not continue sinning as if we haven't been redeemed. Our works are proof that our faith is real and genuine. An encounter with Jesus Christ is transforming and makes us more and more like Him each day. Real faith expresses the presence of the Holy Spirit inside of us. There may be times or days we fall into sin, but over our lifetimes, our lives will reveal that we have been transformed and renewed by Jesus. We will not hate others; we will not choose the way of this world. We will take care of the poor, reject favoritism, serve one another, and choose obedience. We will sacrifice for God and die to ourselves daily. Day by day, we will become more and more like Christ and the genuineness of our faith will stand the test of time and this darkness of this world.

[THEREFORE]

What are some "good works" that are evidence of genuine faith?

Galatians 5:22-23 gives us a list of the works of the Spirit. When we have the Holy Spirit inside of us, these "good works" will be revealed through our actions. These attributes will characterize our lives as our faith is proven to be genuine over our lifetimes.

What attitudes or behaviors hinder you from caring for others and living out your faith daily?

Galatians 5:16-17 helps us understand that when we set our hearts and minds on the flesh, we will follow the flesh, but when we set our minds and hearts on following God, we will not gratify our flesh. When we seek to please God and live out our faith, we must keep our minds and hearts immersed in His Word and focus on His truth.

3. James 2:23: Abraham was found to be righteous because he believed, but his righteousness was revealed through his actions.