

Victoria Fellowship Church
International & Interdenominational
Bible Study Worksheet – December 29, 2024

Theme: Living a Life of Sacrifice and Service Topic: Intentional Service and Sacrifice

Main Texts: James 2:14-26

Key verse: James 2:17 – *“Thus also, faith by itself. If it does not have works, is dead”* (NKJV)

INTRODUCTION: The Bible teaches that there is a difference between a living, saving faith that is, at best, no more than mere intellectual assent. True faith is fruitful and active. It is not just a noun; it is also a verb – an action. Authentic faith is productive, fruitful, and impactful, distinguishing believers from mere religious proclaimers (Luke 8: 21; John 13: 17). Intentional service and sacrifice – our “good deeds” -- are the concrete evidence of genuine faith in the living God. There is no benefit in simply saying one has faith. To know there is a God and even to fear His power is not the same as to trust and obey Him which is true faith. Anyone can say “Lord, Lord”.(Matt 7:15-20). What we say we believe matters less than what we show to be our belief – obedience and true worship to our God and King.

- 1. Read James 2:14-17 and Matt 7:21. How can faith not be “profitable” (v14)?(b)Read. Discuss how Eph 2:8-10 and James 2:14-17 reconcile with each other. (c) What is the effect of our good deeds, or lack of them, on others? (James 2:15-16, Matt 5: 13-16)**

It has sometimes been argued that what James teaches in our main text contradicts Paul’s teaching on justification by faith. However, this is not the case. In Chapter 1:17-18 James makes it clear that salvation is a gift from God who is also the sole author of our regeneration. In other passages, James goes on to emphasise that God is no respecter of persons. As MacArthur has noted “James’s teaching perfectly complements Paul’s writings: salvation is determined by faith alone (Eph 2:8-9) and demonstrated by faithfulness to obey God’s will alone (Eph 2:10)(MacArthur Bible Commentary). What James points out is that faith is not intellectual assent. True faith transforms our conduct and our thought. If our lives remain unchanged, we don't believe the truths we claim to adhere to. Sacrifice and service are at the very core of our Christian life and express our personal relationship with God. Our good works amount to an acknowledgment of His goodness and lovingkindness toward us.

- 2. Read James 2:18-20, Eph 2:8-10, Rom 3:28, 4:1-3(a) Discuss the statement “faith alone saves, but the faith that saves is not alone” in the light of these passages. (b) What are the practical implications for your daily walk as a Christian and your presentation of the gospel to non-believers?**

Believers are descendants of Abraham by faith in Christ (Gal 3:29). Our Lord had some strong words for those who claimed to be children of Abraham but did not follow in his steps (John 8:38-39). Abraham as an illustration of works raises another point of apparent conflict between James and Paul which a careful reading of the passages concerned (James 2:21 and Romans 4:2) dispels. The point made by James is that a living faith cannot be separated from works which is consistent with Paul’s argument in Romans 4. In His exchange with the Jews in John 8:31-47, our Lord says that “if God were your Father, you would love me”, and in John 14:15, He states succinctly “if you love me, keep my commandments”. In other words, love for, and faith in God cannot be separated from obedient action or good works. Our reasonable Christian service to God to live deliberately executing obedience to our sovereign God together with exhibiting, goodness and loving kindness towards others, especially the brethren.

- 3. Read How did Abraham show his faith in God? (b) What can we learn from Rahab about faith and God’s calling? (c) What will you do differently in the coming year because of the insights you’ve gained about living a life of sacrifice and service?**

Prayer: Dear Heavenly Father, thank you for appointing us Your ambassadors and assigning us a means to worship You through intentional service and obedient sacrifice, like our loving role model, Jesus Christ. Father show us our Isaacs and give us the grace to entrust and surrender them to You, making them available for Your glory. Amen