

Grace Downtown CG Discussion Guide

May 13-16, 2019

Series: Faith Lives Here

James 2:14-26



Announcements:

Summer Getaway: Join us for the Summer Getaway at Great Country Farms in Bluemont, VA. Enjoy playgrounds, wagon rides, a jumping pillow, farm animals, and more! Bring family and friends and make a day of it! **Saturday, June 22 from 10 am to 2 pm** at Great Country Farms, 18780 Foggy Bottom Road, Bluemont, VA 20135. Group tickets at the gate are \$8 for guests ages 3+. (Tell them you're with Grace Downtown).

Network Worship Service and Members Meeting: All three congregation of the Grace DC Network will meet for worship at **10:30 am on June 16** at Grace Meridian Hill, 810 Shepherd Street, NW. Worship will be followed by our annual members' meeting to vote on leadership candidates and review budget. There will be no 5 pm Downtown worship service that day.

Civil Rights History Tour of the South: Join us this summer for a Civil Rights History Tour of the South, led by the Grace Downtown Diaconate. The trip to **Georgia** and **Alabama** will be from **Wednesday 8/7 to Saturday 8/10**. Interest meeting will be held on **May 19** after service in the fellowship hall. Contact Meg at megmontee@gmail.com.

Grace Downtown Women's Retreat: Save the Date! **Sat May 18**, come retreat with other women of Grace Downtown for the opportunity to hear teaching, deepen friendships and have time for reflection. We will gather for breakfast in the morning, study God's word together, connect over lunch in small groups, and depart in the early evening. If you are interested in helping with organization and planning, please email the WLC at wlc@gracedc.net. **Deadline to register: May 15.**

Introduction:

Today's passage has spawned controversy over the centuries! The great Protestant reformer Martin Luther called James "an epistle of straw," not even worthy of being counted within the canon of Scripture, and this week's passage lies at the root of Luther's concern. The question many have asked is this: does James's teaching here conflict with Saint Paul's emphasis on salvation-by-faith-not-works?

Before reading this passage, what is your own understanding, theologically, of the relationship between "faith" and "works" in our salvation? How do you see salvation as being an undeserved gift given to us by God in and through Christ's death for us, while simultaneously seeing the importance of our obedience and good works?

Read and Discuss:

James 2:14-26

Read the passage out loud together, and then take two minutes of silence and each read it again on one's own.

Before looking at the details, how would you, in one sentence, summarize James's *main point* here?

1. In v. 17, James says that faith, if not accompanied by action, is dead. How does James use the examples of our response to a poor person (vv. 15-16), Abraham's life (vv. 21-24) and Rahab (v. 25), to make his point?
2. Why is it impossible to separate faith and works, according to James? (see especially vv. 18-19 and v. 26)
3. What does James say about salvation in v. 14 with respect to works?

Summary:

1. James says that faith and works are inseparable, and Paul says that God saves us not because of anything we do but solely by grace (skim-read Romans 3:21-26; Ephesians 2:8-10; Galatians 2:16 and Philippians 3:6-9). Do Paul and James conflict or are they reconcilable? What does justification have to do with good works?
2. Do good works in any way contribute to our being righteous? (Why or why not?)
3. What marks a Christian's understanding of good works different from the perspective of a moral, non-Christian person?
4. James's main point is that one can't have faith apart from works. Is the opposite also true: can one do good works apart from faith?

Application

1. Are you ever tempted to think that your faith in Christ means that you needn't be too concerned about doing good works?
2. How can we hold a high view of good works without falling prey to legalism? How can we helpfully exhort one another to be zealous for doing good works without in any way encouraging self-righteousness or obedience-through-guilt?
3. In what sense do you see in your own life that a deepening of your faith in, and love for, Christ, leads you to a deeper desire to do good works?

Prayer

The Grace Downtown Prayer Team creates opportunities for our community to learn more about prayer together for our church family, our city, and our world. Throughout the coming week, the Prayer Team is asking our church community to pray...

...Lord, we thank you for the work that you are doing in each of our hearts. Please help us to be patient and wait for your timing. Help us to trust that you love us and will give us the good gifts that we need at the best time.

...Heavenly Father, please open up our spiritual eyes while we go through this series on the book of James. Help us to not only see these truths, but put them into practice. Help us to be doers of the word.

...Lord, we continue to ask for your hand to be at work in our world. Please bring peace where there is chaos and turmoil, healing where there is brokenness, and grace to every corner of the world.