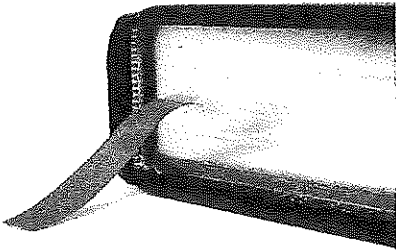


Equipped to Serve



Topic

Equipping for service

Theme

God equips us to do good works through His Word.

Desired Learner Response

The learner will use the Bible as his or her equipper for service.

Materials

- Resources 14 and 15

Scripture Focus

John 13:3–17; 2 Cor. 5:9, 10; Eph. 2:10; 2 Tim. 3:17; Heb. 4:12, 13; 1 Pet. 2:2; 3:9–15

Summary

This lesson expands on the previous lesson, giving more attention to the Bible's equipping ministry in our lives. God created us for His glory and commissioned us for His glory. His Word plays a key role in actually helping us achieve the goal of bringing glory to God.

Outline

I. Reasons for Good Works

- A. To fulfill our purpose
- B. To prepare for the Judgment Seat of Christ
- C. To imitate Christ

II. Implementing Good Works

- A. Prepare your heart
- B. Share your heart

III. Effects of Good Works

- A. Hunger for the Word
- B. Opportunities for evangelism
- C. Fellowship with God

Memory Verse

"For we are his workmanship, created in Christ Jesus unto good works, which God hath before ordained that we should walk in them" (Ephesians 2:10).

GETTING STARTED

I Can Tell Where You've Been

Many places we visit leave their marks on us. For example, even a short amount of time spent in a barn will cause our clothing and our hair to absorb the barn smell.

ASK: What are some other places that leave their marks—visible or *smellable*—on any person who spends time in them?

While we often read and study the Bible in a private place, the fact that we have studied it should be obvious to everyone around us. Others will be able to see the results of our study lived out in our lives.

ASK: What marks does God's Word leave on the person who spends time in it?

ASK: When have you noticed that someone has spent time in God's Word?

My Fragrance

When a person wears the same cologne or perfume consistently over a long period of time, the fragrance becomes part of who he or she is. Just smelling the fragrance causes others to think of that person.

ASK: What fragrance, if any, have you worn consistently over an extended period of time? (Q1)

ASK: What are some fragrances you identify with a spouse, parent, or friend? (Q2)

Being in the Bible will have a lasting effect on us. Others will identify us as having been in the Word. It will become the *fragrance* of our lives. This lesson is about being in the Word so that it might affect our lives.

SEARCHING THE SCRIPTURES

God's Word prepares the hearts and minds of believers for service. This fact is not a coincidence but part of God's plan. God intends for believers to serve Him faithfully. As they do, they will bring glory to God.

I. Reasons for Good Works

After our relationship with God is established through trusting His Son for eternal life, we learn from our Lord and grow to be like Him through His Word. The Christian life is a life of good works. Scripture gives us clear reasons to pursue good works.

A. To fulfill our purpose

God's Word thoroughly furnishes us for all good works (2 Tim. 3:17). The

words *thoroughly* and *all* are emphatic, not redundant. God has saved us to do good works, and He has spared nothing in making them possible. Second Timothy 3:17 should build our confidence as we consider the completeness of God's provision for us. It also should motivate us to study the Word so we will be ready to serve.

Many religious people believe that the purpose of good works is to secure salvation. This widely held error is obviously not Biblical. Yet if believers aren't careful, they can react so negatively against the teachings of works-salvation that they forget the integral part that works play in their lives. In a sense, the efforts of those trying to earn salvation are understandable. It is hard to accept that God would give eternal life as a gift to sinful people without requiring them to clean up their lives first.

READ: Romans 5:6–8. **ASK:** For what types of persons was Christ willing to die? (Q3) *Sinners, including murderers, rapists, thieves, and liars.*

ASK: What would characterize the type of person for whom you would be willing to die? (Q4)

Surely, people might say, *with all the good I have done, I must have evened up the scales at least a little bit*. But no matter how good the intentions of those trying to earn salvation are, salvation is still only by grace through faith (Eph. 2:8, 9). We need to have our sin removed, not have it balanced by good works. God's grace brings us to the Cross, though our needs are many.

READ: Ephesians 2:1–4. **ASK:** How do these verses describe the desperate needs of an unsaved person? (Q5) *As being dead and totally unable to save himself.*

Unless God intervened, we would have no hope. His great love caused Him to show mercy to us (2:4). God did not give us the eternal punishment we deserved. Instead, as we trusted His provision for us in Christ, He gave us eternal life.

Though we work our hardest, not even our best could qualify us for salvation. It does not even make sense to think that we could do good works to qualify for eternal life. Paul asserted, *I do not frustrate the grace of God: for if righteousness come by the law, then Christ is dead in vain!* (Gal. 2:21). There really is no need for the Cross if we could work our way to Heaven.

Even though good works are not a part of securing salvation, they are an essential product of salvation. We should not take a lax approach to good works and view them as if they don't matter.

READ: Ephesians 2:10. **ASK:** How does this verse underscore the importance of good works in the life of a believer? (Q6) *One of the reasons God saved us was so we would do good works for His glory.*

The word *workmanship* means a *manufactured product*. It refers to God's work in us to prepare us to serve Him so we might fulfill our purpose of being *created . . . unto good works*. The phrase *which God hath before ordained* shows that God's purpose for believers to do good works was not an afterthought but a forethought that goes all the way back to before the creation of the world. If good works are so important to God, then doing what we can to get ready for good works should

become a priority to us. When it does, we will study God's Word faithfully, for it makes us *thoroughly furnished unto all good works*.

ASK: What would you say to someone who told you that God is happy when we do good works but understands if we don't always get around to doing them? (Q7) *God expects good works and will chasten us if we claim to be too busy to do them.*

B. To prepare for the Judgment Seat of Christ

Good works are the product of salvation, but they do not appear automatically just because we are born again. It is our responsibility to *work out [our] own salvation with fear and trembling* (Phil. 2:12). When we devote ourselves to following God and pleasing Him, good works will follow (2 Cor. 5:9).

READ: Philippians 2:13. **ASK:** Why should the truths of verse 13 prompt us to do good works? (Q8) *God wants to prepare us for good works so that He might use us to carry out His will.*

While we are not born again because of our good works, we will be judged for them. After God snatches the church from the earth at the Rapture, Christians will appear before the Judgment Seat of Christ.

READ: 2 Corinthians 5:9, 10. **ASK:** What will be the basis for the eternal rewards Christ gives to believers? (Q9) *Christ will reward a believer's good works done for God's glory and in His power.*

We must give account for the use of our lives. Notice the phrase *the things done in his body* (2 Cor. 5:10). Since Christ will reward every good work done for Him out of proper attitudes and motives, we need to strive to accomplish the works He saved us to do. He expects us to have good works to offer Him, and He gives us the Word to equip us for those good works.

James teaches us that we show our faith by our deeds (James 2:20). Without deeds, our faith is proved to be dead. Others observe the reality of our faith in the reality of our works. These works multiply as we spend time in God's Word and become *thoroughly furnished unto all good works* (2 Tim. 3:17). How much a believer studies the Bible will affect him or her for eternity. Those who grasp this profound truth in this life will be forever grateful they did.

C. To imitate Christ

Good works are believers' choices to treat others as Jesus did. The Gospels are full of examples of Jesus' good works. His good works clearly identified Him as the Messiah.

As we abide in Christ, He will do His work through us. *He that believeth on me, Jesus said, the works that I do shall he do also; and greater works than these shall he do; because I go unto my Father* (John 14:12). This is a significant statement. Will we really do greater works than Christ?

ASK: Which one of Christ's works first comes to mind when you read John 14:12? (Q10)

What did Christ mean when He said we would do greater works than Him? Did He mean we would top His water-walking miracle? He meant that our works are greater than His in quantity, not quality. Multiplied millions have carried out Christ's work.

READ: John 13:3–17. **ASK:** What type of work was Christ talking about? (Q11) *Works done to serve one another.*

God calls us to work to imitate Christ in a foot-washing sort of way, not in a water-walking sort of way.

ASK: What characterizes the person who voluntarily washes another's dirty feet? (Q12) *Humility; love; selflessness.*

ASK: What acts of service represent the spirit of foot washing today? (Q13) *Caring for shut-ins; cleaning church restrooms; teaching Sunday School.*

Good works are not about glory and praise but about humbly imitating Christ. Remember that in the last lesson we learned that God created and saved us to bring *Him* glory. Service done for our own praise is not really service at all.

RESOURCE: Display resource 14 to summarize the reasons for good works.

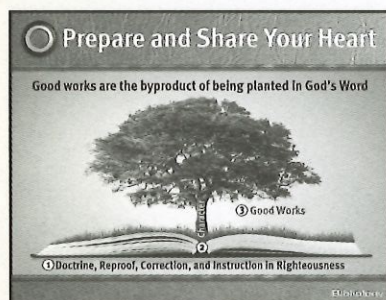


II. Implementing Good Works

A. Prepare your heart

Actions grow out of character just as surely as apples grow from an apple tree. As we study the Bible, we receive the doctrine, reproof, correction, and instruction in righteousness promised in 2 Timothy 3:16. They shape our character.

RESOURCE: Display resource 15 to illustrate the need to prepare our hearts through the ministry of God's Word.



Good works are not just an outward conformity to godly actions. They are the reflection of a changed character. As we discussed in lesson nine, the Word of God will examine our motives—the very thoughts and intents of our hearts (Heb. 4:12).

READ: Hebrews 4:12, 13. **ASK:** What truths in these verses warn us against thinking that our hearts do not matter as long as we do good works outwardly? (Q14) *God's Word discerns our hearts; God can see all there is to be seen in our hearts.*

After our thoughts and motives are exposed to the light of truth, we will be able to deal with the significant sin problems of our hearts. A changed heart will yield a changed life.

B. Share your heart

Truly Biblical love treats others as God treats them. Good works are acts of love. They carry the love of God into others' lives. As we prepare our hearts with

God's Word, we will develop God's love in our hearts. Within our sphere of influence, we can assist our brothers and sisters in Christ to know the Savior more fully by loving them with the Savior's love.

READ: 1 Thessalonians 4:9. **ASK:** How does God teach us to love one another? (Q15) *By His love for us through others; by His example in sending His Son to die for us.*

You can start sharing your love by offering the good works of encouragement and exhortation to others. As relationships build, you can seek out specific needs that you can meet in other believers' lives.

Our church is the key place to share your love. The interconnection of relationships there will allow for many needs to be met through good works.

Good works require sacrifice. Expect to spend time in preparation and follow-up, and do not be surprised if they at times require you to sacrifice financially.

III. Effects of Good Works

A. Hunger for the Word

As we begin to do good works, we will grow in our desire and in our preparation to do more of them. That desire will lead us back to the Word with hunger and enthusiasm. Daily devotions are drudgery unless we are doing them to build ourselves up and prepare to be used by God. If we approach the Bible while seeking specific help in our areas of need, we will have no problem setting the necessary time aside. When we realize that the Bible will allow us to know God and deepen our relationship with Him as it fully equips us to live, we will *desire the sincere milk of the word, that [we] may grow thereby* (1 Pet. 2:2).

B. Opportunities for evangelism

If you love the Lord, you are eager for opportunities to share His salvation with others. The Scriptures have shown you that God has met your greatest need, and you find yourself surrounded by others who have that same need, but their need is unmet.

Good works create opportunities for evangelism. For example, Peter exhorted persecuted believers to do good, even if they suffer for their choice (1 Pet. 3:9–14).

READ: 1 Peter 3:15. **ASK:** Why does suffering for Christ help us communicate the gospel message to the unsaved? (Q16) *Suffering for Christ isn't natural; our enduring suffering authenticates the gospel message.*

We are naturally defensive and self-protective, but Peter commands good works in the midst of our suffering. They have an unexpected result. Our willingness not to strike out at those who make life miserable is actually submission to the lordship of Christ and a testimony of our faith. God's Word instructs us, *But sanctify the Lord God in your hearts: and be ready always to give an answer to every man that asketh you a reason of the hope that is in you with meekness and fear* (3:15).

When we submit to Christ's lordship in our trials, people notice. Most people live for themselves. Showing Christ raises interest in our character. We gain the opportunity to share the hope that guides our good works and that keeps us from

sinful actions and reactions (Matt. 5:16).

Good works are not a substitute for sharing the gospel verbally. Some Christians wrongly believe that they will never have to risk the embarrassment of verbal witness if they just live good lives.

READ: Romans 10:13, 14. **ASK:** How important is the believer's verbal witness in winning the unsaved? (Q17) *A lost person will never know the gospel message unless someone tells him or her.*

Watching someone live for Christ will never get a sinner to Heaven. Since *faith cometh by hearing, and hearing by the word of God* (Rom. 10:17), we must seek opportunities to speak the word of salvation. Good works can create those opportunities—sharing Christ verbally is a good work.

C. Fellowship with God

Our Lord Jesus promised His disciples, *I am the vine, ye are the branches: He that abideth in me, and I in him, the same bringeth forth much fruit: for without me ye can do nothing* (John 15:5). We bear fruit when we abide in Him. We abide in Him when we obey Him (15:10). We obey Him when we love others (15:17). As we abide and obey, we bear fruit that remains (15:16). Our closeness to God comes from a heart that loves what He loves and values what He values. This is a lifestyle, not a momentary event.

MAKING IT PERSONAL

Evaluating My Actions

ASK: Would you say your life is characterized by good works? Explain. (Q18)

ASK: What is the connection between your level of good works and your time in God's Word? (Q19)

Evaluating My Heart

ASK: Why do you do good works? (Q20)

ASK: What attitudes or motives might you need to adjust as you carrying out good works? (Q21)