

## Before the Lesson

**Read the Scriptures and overview below before your LIFE Group meets.**

Scripture passages: James 2:14-26, Genesis 22:1-12, Joshua 2, John 15:1-11

“Now faith is the assurance of things hoped for, the conviction of things not seen.” (Hebrews 11:1) But having faith isn’t just a feeling or an idea; neither is it simply words uttered and then tucked away. Genuine faith must infiltrate every aspect of our lives. After our initial declaration of faith in Jesus and Jesus alone for our salvation, that faith must be exercised, and it must spill over into the atmosphere of our lives. In short, real faith results in action and obedience. James makes this declaration in chapter 2 verse 17: “So also faith by itself, if it does not have works, is dead.” Yet Paul says in Galatians 2:16, “yet we know that a person is not justified by works of the law but through faith in Jesus Christ ...” How do we reconcile these two strong defenders of the faith who seem to be contradicting one another?

Context, conversations, connotations, concerns ... these were all factors in the underlying principles from which these two great leaders proclaimed and maintained their teaching on faith. One spoke from the viewpoint of justification *through* faith, the other from the view of validation *of* the faith. One used the word “works” in reference to fruit; the other used it in reference to ceremonial ritual. To un-complicate these two seemingly complicated lines of thinking, one must reinforce what faith truly is: assurance and conviction. The assurance comes from the heartfelt faith and belief in Jesus as Lord, and the conviction is proven in the daily life of the believer through a changed, yielded, and obedient life lived for Christ.

**Focus question: Is your faith alive or dead?**

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## Group Discussion

### A Comparison of Faith and Works

- Read James 2:14-26. Compare faith and works.
- Discuss the background and context of James’ ministry. Who was his audience? Where were they on their faith journey? What were their difficulties? (Think about why James was writing his letter to the church.)
- Discuss the background of Paul’s ministry. What was Paul’s background? How was he converted? Who was his audience after his conversion? What was Paul’s emphasis regarding faith in Jesus Christ? Why? (See Acts 7:54-8:3, Acts 9, Ephesians 2:1-10.)
- How do these two very different contexts play a role in the varied points of view regarding faith and works?
- In James 2:14-18, James causes us to ask these questions about our faith: Does it show? Is it real? Can I trust it? James’ emphasis is that real faith is lived out in our actions. In Ephesians 2:8-9, Paul emphasizes that faith has nothing to do with works but is an act of God’s grace. Who is right? Why?

- If you said that both men were right, that is correct! Paul is speaking about justification through faith alone in Jesus as an act of grace for salvation, while James is talking about a living faith that is displayed in our actions of obedience to Christ.
  - Have you come to a saving knowledge of faith in Jesus through His grace? When?
  - Are you showing any signs of a living faith in your daily life? What are they?
- Read Ephesians 2:10. What does it say we were created to do?

### **Two Examples of Faith and Works**

- Discuss the story of Abraham in Genesis 22:1-12 and the story of Rahab in Joshua 2.
  - Describe the two examples of faith you see in each of these passages (justification based on faith/belief and faith displayed through works).
  - How did both of these believers move their verbalized faith and belief in Jesus to an exercised faith because of their love for Him?

### **Personal Application of Faith and Works**

- Read John 15:5. As believers we are to bear fruit. What does that mean? Are you bearing fruit?
- What are the evidences of a Spirit-filled life that bears fruit? (See Galatians 5:22-23.)
- Our faith must be alive and active. It must be evident in what we do, the way we speak, how we respond, and how we view the world around us.
  - Are you bearing fruit in your service for God? How are you serving in your local church?
  - Are you bearing fruit in your knowledge and application of God's Word? How is your personal quiet time (prayer and Bible reading)?
  - Are you bearing fruit in your speech? What kinds of words and responses are you characterized by?
  - Are you bearing fruit in the area of stewardship? Are you tithing? Are you sharing your gifts and talents? How?
  - Are you bearing fruit in what your eyes see, read, or watch? Are you keeping your mind, body, and thoughts pure? Do you need to make some adjustments?
  - Are you bearing fruit in your love and compassion for others? When you see a need, do you try to help meet that need? How long has it been since you participated in a mission project or trip?
  - Are you bearing fruit in your responses to God? What is your obedience level to Christ?

### **Further Study (to be used in your personal Quiet Time)**

Take another look at the section above labeled "Personal Application of Faith and Works." Spend some time praying about these questions and evaluating yourself in these areas. Is your faith alive and active, or is it dead?

For additional resources, visit [warrenlifenotes.com](http://warrenlifenotes.com).