

HFG Questions for “Real Faith Works,” pt 1 (James 2: 14-20)

*Read James 2:14-20

1. Read v. 14. James asks, “*Can that faith save him?*” What do you think James means by “*that faith*”? How is the faith James is challenging different from genuine saving faith?

2. In the sermon, Pastor Cary described two “ditches”—works-righteousness and easy believism. Why do you think Christians are prone to fall into one ditch or the other? Which error do you think is easier to recognize in others? Which is harder to recognize in yourself?

3. What is the Biblical relationship between faith and works?

4. “Faith is the root of our salvation; good works are the fruit of our salvation.” How does that distinction help us understand the relationship between salvation and obedience? What goes wrong when we reverse that order?

5. James’ readers appear to have swung the pendulum from a works-based Judaism to a “no-works-needed” brand of “Christianity.” What are some areas where you’ve been tempted to swing a theological pendulum from one extreme to the other? What would you say is the best safeguard against unbiblical extremes?

6. Read vv. 15 & 16. James uses the example of someone seeing a fellow believer who is hungry and poorly clothed, then simply saying, “*Go in peace, be warmed and be filled.*” Why is this such a powerful picture of dead faith? Can you think of modern-day examples where Christians might offer *words* when genuine faith should move them toward *action*?

7. Describe the two types of faith that James mentions here in verses 14-20. How does James, the lover of pictures, illustrate each of them?

8. Is it possible to be interested in theology, Scripture, preaching, and Christian doctrine while still not genuinely knowing Christ? If so, what are some warning signs that our Biblical knowledge has remained intellectual rather than transforming our lives?

9. “What we do reveals who we are.” How should we understand that statement without thinking that Christians must live perfectly in order to prove their salvation?

10. James says, “*Show me your faith without the works, and I will show you my faith by my works*” (v. 18). If someone who knew you well were asked to identify evidence of your faith without hearing your testimony or knowing your theology, what might they point to?

11. In Matthew 7:20, Jesus said, “*You will know them by their fruits.*” Why do you think Scripture places such emphasis on examining the fruit of our lives? How can we practice Biblical self-examination without becoming either complacent or constantly anxious about our salvation?

12. If genuine faith inevitably produces works, what questions should we ask ourselves when we look at our lives and see very little spiritual fruit? Where should we turn for repentance, genuine faith, and assurance of salvation?