

**Sermon or Lesson: James 2:18-19** (NIV based)  
[Lesson Questions included]

TITLE: True Faith Is Evidenced By Good Deeds

INTRO: Perhaps you have heard the adage, "If you are going to talk the talk, you need to walk the walk." In regard to the tenets of your faith, this adage definitely has applicability. In this study in James, we are going to study a variation of this adage in terms of what a person says he/she believes matching what he/she is doing or failing to do.

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READ: James 2:18-19, with verses 15-17 for context

[Lesson Question: What is the nature of the literary form being used here in verse 18?]

SECTION POINT: These two verses present an anticipated line of thinking followed by the God-given response.

- - The phrase "but someone will say" suggests an anticipated reaction or line of thinking to the contention statement in preceding verse 17.
  - - The fact that this line of thinking is being raised suggests that it is common and perhaps natural to humanistic thinking.
  - - So, the first half of verse 18 states the anticipated line of thinking and the second half of verse 18 through verse 19 starts the answer to this line of thinking.
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v.18 - READ

[Lesson Question: What seems to be implied about a person who says, "You have faith; I have deeds"?)

SECTION POINT: A person who says, "You have faith; I have deeds" seems to be relying upon his/her good deeds as the basis for acceptance by God.

- - A person making this statement in this context seems to be saying that his/her good deeds justifies himself/herself before God, which incorrectly assumes God's acceptance and approval are base on a person's good deeds. (see Romans 3:20, Ephesians 2:8-9)
  - - This person seems to not see the necessity of having faith or perhaps is not willing to personally adopt this faith.
  - - This person may be trying to take a shortcut, attempting to avoid adopting this faith, whereby relying upon his/her good deeds.
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[Lesson Question: What is the essence of the God-given rebuttal "show me your faith without deeds, and I will show you my faith by what I do"?)

SECTION POINT: The evidence of true faith is the natural accompanying presence of good deeds.

- - By implication, if you have no deeds, the faith you are showing me therefore has no substance to it for you, nothing that furnishes credibility to your contention of its supposed authenticity, no tangible corresponding evidence that indicates you genuinely believe the faith you say you have.
  - - I, however, have substantive evidence in the form of tangible corresponding good deeds, which speak for themselves in showing you the authenticity of the faith that I say I have. The evidence of my true faith is the natural accompanying presence of good deeds.
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#### v.19 - READ

[Lesson Question: What is verse 19 adding to this discussion about having true faith in relation to doing good deeds?]

SECTION POINT: Merely believing a truth about the nature or reality of God does not constitute true faith that is accepted by God.

- - You are doing well in believing that there is one God, but this belief only serves to point you in the right direction and does not move you in that direction because even the eternally-condemned demons believe that.
  - - To merely believe things about God are true is separately different from actively placing and committing one's faith and trust in Him in allegiance and devotion and then obeying what He directs.
  - - Therefore, the faith you say you have is no better than that of the demons.
  - - And perhaps your faith is even less than the demons, because from their believing they shudder in reaction when they think about God being one, whereas your believing incites in you only "foolish", "vain, empty" thinking with no actions of good deeds. (v.20, Strong's #2756)
  
  - - An appropriate conclusion would be that it is possible to believe there is one God and yet be intrinsically wicked and unconnected to God. Clearly then, professing or possessing belief that there is one God does not constitute the genuine faith that God accepts.
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#### CLARIFYING SUMMARY:

[Lesson Question: So for simplified clarification, what is the biblically designated relationship between true faith and good deeds?]

SECTION POINT: So for simplified clarification, the biblically designated relationship between faith and good deeds can be summarily expressed as a composite of these 4 statements as follows:

- - 1. True faith alone in Christ alone is required by God for His eternal acceptance of that person, period. (Romans 3:20-25a)

- - 2. But that true faith, by itself, is not pleasing to God if it is not accompanied by good deeds. (James 2:17)

This is because true faith, by its God-given design, is predominantly a call to action. True faith is all about taking action, particularly in 3 areas: 1. taking action on what you believe about God and how you interact with Him (Mark 12:30); 2. taking action on what you believe for your life and how you live that out (Romans 12:2); and 3. taking action on how you regard other people and how you live that out (Mark 12:31).

- - 3. Therefore, true faith, by its God-given nature, has motivations built in that are designed to encourage the believer to live out that faith by doing good deeds. (James 2:18c)

- - 4. But God does not accept a person for his/her good deeds if the person lacks the required true faith (Romans 5:1-2; James 2:17,18ab); then for that person his/her good deeds are just mere good deeds and nothing more (Ephesians 2:8-9; Romans 3:10-12).

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**BIG IDEA: If you have genuine or true faith, then you will be producing good deeds, which is evidence of your faith.**

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#### APPLICATIONS:

- - Do you have an objection of or reservation about God's expectation that you need to be producing good deeds if you have true faith? Is your objection to this valid? Why do you think your objection is valid?

- - Do you try to use an excuse why you do not produce good deeds as a result of true faith? What does God think about your excuse, objection, or reservation? Will your avoidance tactics hold credibility on Judgment Day before God?

- - On a realistic and technical level, how can you say that you truly believe if for whatever reasons you are not producing good deeds? How can you make such a claim in honesty?

Maybe there is something seriously and fundamentally wrong with your faith. Maybe you need to do some deep soul-searching to identify the problem, why you are not producing good deeds in response to your supposed true faith. Maybe you do not have actual saving faith to begin with, and you need to get that right with God by correctly placing your faith in Christ for salvation.

- - Every single person in this group should be producing good deeds, if you are a true believer. For those of you who are not producing good deeds, why not get right with God, now?

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Works Cited:

Bible. "The Holy Bible: New International Version." *The Bible Library CD-ROM*. Oklahoma City, OK: Ellis Enterprises, 1988.

"Strong's Greek Dictionary." *The Bible Library CD-ROM*. Oklahoma City, OK: Ellis Enterprises, 1988.

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