TRUE FAITH

It is undeniable that one common struggle of the church—any church—is legalism. Legalism is the idea that there are requirements for salvation beyond repentance and faith, especially when those supposed requirements are merit-based. This heretical belief cuts at the heart of the gospel, implying that Jesus’ death and resurrection was somehow insufficient, or that humans are able to merit salvation (at least in part) by their own efforts. Legalism is completely unbiblical.

In an attempt to flee legalism, though, sometimes Christians have allowed the pendulum to swing too far in the other direction. The definition is broadened to, “Any outward following of a biblical standard is legalism.” And that’s just not true.

In this week’s passage, James’s focus is not to convince anyone of a life of legalism. His words are not contrary to the fact that salvation is by faith in Jesus Christ. His point is simply to answer the question, “What is true faith?” Faith is neither all action nor all inaction. Instead, it is an inward change that results in an outward change. Although the outward change is not all there is, it can give evidence of whether or not there was an inward change.

Humanity is not saved by works; instead, we are saved by faith. What that faith truly is, then, is indeed a salvific issue and one worthy of close consideration.

Read This Week’s Passage:
James 2:14–26
Write out James 2:14–26 from the Bible translation of your choice. If you’re pressed for time, write out James 2:14, 21, 22. You may also rewrite the passage in your own words, or outline or mind-map the chapter.
Go back to your scribed text and study the passage.

Circle repeated words/ phrases/ideas

Underline words/phrases that are important and have meaning to you

Draw Arrows to connect words/ phrases to other associated or related words/phrases

What special insights do your marks seem overall to point to?

Memorize your favorite verse in James 2:14–26. Write it out multiple times to help with memorization.

What is the difference between actions to become saved and actions because you are saved?

How can we have outward expressions of faith without becoming overly fixated on them?

Read more at www.inversebible.org/jam05-3
After looking at your scribed and annotated text, what special insights do your marks seem to point to overall?

What questions emerge after studying this passage? What parts are difficult?

What other principles and conclusions do you find?

Why do you think James focused on this point so much in chapter 2? Why was it so important?

Read more at www.inversebible.org/jam05-4
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What relationship do the following verses have with the primary passage?

Ephesians 2:8–10
Hebrews 11
Philippians 3:7–11
Matthew 5:16
Galatians 5:22

What other verses/promises come to mind in connection with James 2:14–26?

Think of a few things Jesus asks of you. Where can you find Him doing the same thing in the Bible?

How do you see Jesus differently or see Him again?

What is He saying to you through these texts?

Prayer: How do you respond to seeing Jesus in this way?

Meditate on James 2:14–26 again and look for where Jesus is.

Read more at
www.inversebible.org/jam05-6
Review the memory verse. How does it apply to your life this week?

After this week’s study of the passage, what are personal applications you are convicted of in your life?

What are practical applications you must make in your school, family, workplace, and church?

Read more inSight from the Spirit of Prophecy at www.inversebible.org/jam05-7
Share insights from this week’s memory verse and Bible study as well as any discoveries, observations, and questions with your Sabbath School class (or Bible study group). Consider these discussion questions with the rest of the group.

Do you naturally lean toward legalism or cheap grace? How can we guard against either one?

In your own words, what is faith?

How can we remember the importance of works but keep it in the context of faith?

Share a time your faith was expressed in works. How was it still "of faith"?

Why do you think people say Jesus doesn’t care about how we act? Does He? In what way?

What sentences stuck out to you in this week’s inSight? Explain why.

Share another Scripture that is explained by its context. How can we learn to be balanced students of the Bible?