ARE WORKS ACTUALLY IMPORTANT?

A biblical discussion of salvation should not include works except for the sole reason of clarifying that they have no contribution to it. With books like James emphasizing the practicality of Christianity, though, some of those lines can be blurred. Maybe salvation isn’t from works, but shouldn’t there be a stronger emphasis on works? What happened to living for God?

At the risk of over-repeating, one concept needs to remain crystal clear: “For by grace you have been saved through faith, and that not of yourselves; it is the gift of God, not of works, lest anyone should boast,” “knowing that a man is not justified by the works of the law but by faith in Jesus Christ, even we have believed in Christ Jesus, that we might be justified by faith in Christ and not by the works of the law; for by the works of the law no flesh shall be justified.” “Yet indeed I also count all things loss for the excellence of the knowledge of Christ Jesus my Lord . . . that I may gain Christ and be found in Him, not having my own righteousness, which is from the law, but that which is through faith in Christ, the righteousness which is from God by faith” (Eph. 2:8, 9; Gal. 2:16; Phil. 3:8, 9, emphasis supplied).

Thus, the role of works is not salvific; no one can achieve, contribute to, or earn salvation through works. So, what’s the point of them? This week’s lesson will explore the main three points: works are a natural expression of genuine faith; works of faith bring the believer into the abundant life; and works of faith show Jesus to the world.
Write out John 15:1–17 from the Bible translation of your choice. If you’re pressed for time, write out John 15:4, 5. You may also rewrite the passage in your own words, or outline or mind-map the chapter.
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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 John 15:1–17. Write it out multiple times to help with memorization.

How have you viewed the role of works in the past?

What are some beliefs you hold that you can see the impact of in your day-to-day life?

Read more at www.inversebible.org/jam13-3
What questions emerge after studying this passage? What parts are difficult?

What other principles and conclusions do you find?

How does Jesus’ example of the vine bolster today’s lesson?

After looking at your scribed and annotated text, what special insights do your marks seem to point to overall?

Read more at www.inversebible.org/jam13-4
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What relationship do the following verses have with the primary passage?

Isaiah 58
Ephesians 2:8–10
Philippians 3:1–12
John 6:28–29
Ezekiel 36:26–27

What other parables come to mind in connection with John 15:1–17?

Review your memorized verse from John 15:1–17.
Meditate on John 15:1–17 again and look for where Jesus is.

How does the dependence of the branch show you, practically, different facets of your relationship with Christ?

How do you see Jesus differently or see Him again?

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

Read more at www.inversebible.org/jam13-6
Review the memory verse. How does it apply to your life this week?

After this entire lesson's study, 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/jam13-7
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.

How does this week's lesson intersect with the rest of the letter of James?

Do you struggle with thinking you've done "enough"? Why or why not?

In your experience, why is it hard to depend on Christ sometimes?

How has Jesus shown you that He is trustworthy lately?

What have you learned about the practicalities of depending on Jesus?

What works do you want God to work through you?

What is something you feel convicted to do personally? What do you feel convicted that the community should do?

What lessons impacted you the most from this quarter on James?