

BIBLE TEACHING AND WORSHIP GUIDE



FOR THE HOME-BASED CHURCH

Produced Weekly

How to Tell When Your Faith Is Real
James 2:1-19

Copy this sheet for the Gathering Time, Bible Study, and Worship Experience leaders for the next meeting of the church.

Leaders' Responsibilities:

Important: Each person who will be leading one of the three parts of a session during a series of sessions needs to have access to the "Introduction" article found at the beginning of each series (Bible Teaching #....). The weekly session "Background" located in the Teacher Preparation is much more specific to that day's study.

1. **The Gathering Time Leader** will gather all of the people together and help them prepare their minds and hearts for a wonderful worship experience before God. His/her responsibility is to introduce the congregation to the theme (content) and the Scripture that will be central to their worship experience for the day.

2. **The Bible Study Leader** will then help the people understand what the Scriptures have to say and teach us about the content of the study for the day. He/she will guide the people to make a general application of the study (ie: How does this Bible study apply to people today?)

3. **The Worship Time Leader** has the responsibility to use the theme and Scriptures to guide the congregation to make personal commitments to God's will for each one in regard to the study for the day. He/she will use others to lead in the music, taking the offering, ministry moment comments, and other activities and parts of the **Worship Time** that can aid in participatory worship.

Prior to this Coming Session:

Gathering Time Leader:

Bible Study Leader: Use a white board or large piece of paper to summarize the teachings of this passage.

Make copies, if needed, for the group of the hymn, "**Just As I Am**" from the final page of this session.

Worship Time Leader:

Music Sources:

I Will Sing of the Mercies, *The Worship Hymnal* # 625; CCLI # 3268377

Freely, Freely, *The Worship Hymnal* # 627; CCLI # 13209

In This Very Room, *The Worship Hymnal* # 157; CCLI # 31267

We Are One in the Bond of Love, *The Worship Hymnal* # 387; CCLI # 14459

Just As I Am, *The Worship Hymnal* # 435; CCLI # 23206 Public Domain

Gathering Time: (Suggested time: 15 minutes)***How to Tell When Your Faith Is Real*****Focal Text**

James 2:1-19

Background

James 2

Main Idea

Real faith expresses itself in Christ-like living, especially in loving actions shown without favouritism to people in need or considered insignificant.

Question to Explore

How does how you live—especially how you treat people in need or considered insignificant—prove or disprove the reality of your faith?

Teaching Aim

To help the church define real faith according to James 2 and decide what the definition says about their faith.

Gathering together:

Sing:

I Will Sing of the Mercies, *The Worship Hymnal* # 625; CCLI # 3268377

Freely, Freely, *The Worship Hymnal* # 627; CCLI # 13209

First thoughts:

In the passage we will study today, James addressed a problem which occurred in the early church in Jerusalem. Wealthy people were welcomed more openly than poor people. Think about a church you have been a part of or think about your own home church. This is an issue of importance to home churches because we invite people into our own homes – our own place of security. Our treasures are here. We must ask ourselves what people we are comfortable having in our homes. We want people much like ourselves. We would probably be very uncomfortable if a street person came to our door and indicated they wanted to worship with us. We might be very pleased if a well-

known person – perhaps a wealthy entertainer – asked to join our group. We can say that these are far-fetched possibilities. People most likely come to our home church because someone in the group already has a personal relationship with them and has invited them to come. Nonetheless, we need to examine the attitude of our hearts in relation to people of different socio-economic groups. James' vivid picture of how people in the early church related differently to one group than it did to another is not unrelated to our own attitudes toward other people.

Closing the Gathering Time:

Take time at this point to mention items of prayer concern for the church, announcements of ministry or activities, and anything else that needs to be shared with or by the congregation. Pray for these needs. Remember to praise God in prayer.

Break time! Take five minutes between sessions. Encourage children to use the washroom so that they won't need to leave during the Bible Study time.

Distribute youth/adult Bible study outlines or paper for note-taking, if available.

Also hand out the activity sheets for preschool and younger children to use during Bible Study and/or worship.

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Copy this section for the Bible Study leader.

Note to the Bible Study Leader: Suggested teaching time for the Bible study should be about 35 minutes. Use the “Teacher Preparation” for your personal study during the week before the session. Use the “Bible Study Plan” for the actual session.

Teacher Preparation

How to Tell When Your Faith Is Real

Focal Text

James 2:1-19

Background

James 2

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Question to Explore

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Teaching Aim

To help the church define real faith according to James 2 and decide what the definition says about their faith.

Introduction to your personal study:

Think back to a time when you had the opportunity to relate to a very poor person. How did you feel? Would you have been comfortable sitting next to them in church? You may have sung the old hymn **Just as I Am**. If not, it is printed below. The language is old-fashioned, but the words are meaningful. If this applies to you, should it apply to everyone?

Just as I Am

Just as I am, without one plea, But that Thy blood was shed for me,
And that Thou bidd'st me come to Thee, O Lamb of God, I come! I come!

Just as I am, and waiting not to rid my soul of one dark blot,
To Thee whose blood can cleanse each spot, O Lamb of God, I come! I come!

Just as I am, though tossed about with many a conflict, many a doubt,
Fightings within and fears without, O Lamb of God, I come! I come!

Just as O am. Poor, wretched, blind; Sight, riches, healing of the mind.
Yea, all I need in Thee to find, O Lamb of God, I come! I come!

Just as I am, Thou wilt receive, Wilt welcome, pardon, cleanse, relieve.
Because Thy promise I believe, O Lamb of God, I come! I come!

Just as I am, Thy love unknown hath broken ev'ry barrier down;
Now to be Thine, yea, Thine alone,
O Lamb of God, I come! I come!

Just As I Am; *The Worship Hymnal* # 435; CCLI # 23206 Public Domain

Background:

Please ask for and read the information contained in the “**Introduction**” article found at the beginning of this series (Bible Teaching #....) of Bible Study and Worship sessions. Whoever downloaded this session for you should have that material for you, as well.

Focusing on the Meaning:

James 2: 1-13 -**Saving faith does not show favouritism but shows love to all.**

My brothers, as believers in our glorious Lord Jesus Christ, don't show favouritism. Suppose a man comes into your meeting wearing a gold ring and fine clothes, and a poor man in shabby clothes also comes in. If you show special attention to the man wearing fine clothes and say, "Here's a good seat for you," but say to the poor man, "You stand here" or "sit on the floor by my feet," have you not discriminated among yourselves and become judges with evil thoughts?

Listen, my dear brothers: Has not God chosen those who are poor in the eyes of the world to be rich in faith and to inherit the kingdom he promised those who love him? But you have insulted the poor. Is it not the rich who are exploiting you? Are they not the ones who are dragging you into court? Are they not the ones who are slandering the noble name of him to whom you belong? (verses 1-7)

In outlining this passage in James, Barclay (The Daily Study Bible, Philadelphia: The Westminster Press, 1960, page xiii) gives these interesting titles to the first seven verses of the chapter:

Respect of persons (2:1)

The Peril of Snobbery Within the Church (2: 2-4)

The Riches of Poverty

The Poverty of Riches (2: 5-7).

The word used for favouritism in earlier translations is “respect of persons” which is a New Testament phrase for undue and unfair partiality; respect of persons means paying special attention to someone because he or she is rich or influential or powerful or popular.

“On the surface, the English words ‘respect of persons’ sound like showing respect for persons. The Greek word translated ‘respect of persons’ has its background in an Old Testament word that means ‘to lift up the face of a person.’ Originally, the word had a positive meaning of lifting up a persons’ face in order to help. The word came to be used in the negative sense of showing favouritism to some people based on their wealth or appearance and showing prejudice against the poor and unlovely” **Broadman Comments 1995-96**, Nashville: Broadman & Holman Publishers, page 307).

The word “favouritism” captures very well the idea of the verse. We contrast the idea of showing favouritism to someone with the opening words of the verse - ***My brothers, as believers in our glorious Lord Jesus Christ.*** Believers in the glorious Lord Jesus Christ must not be involved in something so unloving as to show favouritism to someone just because they are wealthy or famous or influential.

Further, James makes this admonition to his brothers and to fellow believers. The world in general will always be enamored with the wealthy and the famous. Believers, however, must use another criteria for judging the worth of individuals.

James led the church in Jerusalem and is obviously addressing a real issue. Many of the early Christians were poor and if a rich person came to their meetings, it would be natural to give them special attention. Giving them appropriate attention is not the issue; giving them undue attention while relegating poor people to sit on the floor is the issue.

The early church had struggles which involved huge changes in the roles the believers had in ordinary life. A slave might be the teacher of his master who came to faith later. It was the glory of the early church that barriers of class, social status, wealth and gender were radically altered. But those attitudes and actions did not change easily and automatically.

And we today still face those issues. A recent family discussion with grandchildren led to the inquiry "Have you ever met a really important person?" Our life journey has let us to meet many important people in the kingdom of God – people who held high positions in institutional life and humble servants unknown beyond a small circle of influence. But we knew that was not the question being asked. Our grandchildren wondered if we had ever met a movie star or singer or athlete. They were ready to be impressed if we had done so.

Is it not the rich who are exploiting you? Are they not the ones who are dragging you into court? Are they not the ones who are slandering the noble name of him to whom you belong?

James reminds the reader that the rich continued to exploit the poor. A rich person owed a debt by a poorer person could literally grab that person by the collar if he saw him on the street and drag him into court and demand payment. There was no sympathy for the family left without a wage earner. And in that society the poor had no recourse but to borrow from the rich.

Further, the rich abused the very name by which Christians are called. The Christian takes the name of Christ; he is called after Christ. "It is as if he was married to Christ, or born and christened into the family of Christ" (Barclay, page 70). How strange that we are impressed by those who have little or no regard for the person of Christ, our Saviour. In Acts 11: 25-26, it is recorded that the disciples were first called Christians. Barnabas and Saul (Paul) had stayed in Antioch preaching and teaching for a whole year.

We need to remember, however, that James would be equally upset if a poor person were given status in favor of a rich person. The point of the passage is that we are equal in God's sight.

If you really keep the royal law found in Scripture, "Love your neighbor as yourself, you are doing right. But if you show favoritism, you sin and are convicted by the law as lawbreakers. For whoever keeps the whole law and yet stumbles at just one point is guilty of breaking all of it. For he who said, "Do not commit adultery", also said, "Do not murder." If you do not commit adultery but do commit murder, you have become a lawbreaker.

Speak and act as those who are going to be judged by the law that gives freedom, because judgment without mercy will be shown to anyone who has not been merciful. Mercy triumphs over judgment. (verses 8-13)

James continues his argument for showing equal attention to the rich and to the poor by quoting Jesus' admonition in Matthew 22: 37 ***"Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind." This is the first and greatest commandment. And the second is like it "Love your neighbor as yourself". All the law and the Prophets hang on these two commandments.*** This commandment

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How to Tell When Your Faith Is Real – 12-32-02-en

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is found is Leviticus 19:18 ***Do not seek revenge or bear a grudge against one of your people, but love your neighbor as yourself. I am the Lord.***

Jesus called ***Love your neighbor as yourself*** as the second greatest commandment. James calls it ***the royal law***. Barclay says that the royal law “may mean the law which is of supreme excellence, the highest part of the law. It may mean the law which is given by the King of the kings, that which is uniquely the law of the king. It may mean that the great injunction is the king of all laws, that it in fact is the law in the light of which all other laws must be used and judged and applied. It could just possibly mean the law that makes kings and is fit for kings. Christians are a royal priesthood belong to God (Revelation 1:6). To keep that greatest law is to become king of oneself and a king among men. It is a law fit for those who are royal, and able to make men royal” (Barclay, page 80).

Jesus ties these great commandments to ***all the law and the Prophets***. These two commandments transform all other law and admonitions of the prophets.

We will keep this in mind as we examine James’ discussion about being sinning by showing favouritism. The Jewish people had fallen into the belief system which balanced out some failure of keeping the law with attention to keeping the law in other ways. One might do some wrong if the majority of his/her actions were within the law. James indicates that showing favouritism is a sin. He contrasts this sin with two of the important commandments – Do not commit adultery and Do not commit murder. Not committing adultery, but committing murder or committing adultery, but not committing murder would not be enough to keep you from being a lawbreaker.

“James goes on to lay down a great principle about the law of God. To break any part of it is to become a law-breaker” (Barclay, page 81). James argues that even though one may be good in many ways, if you treat people with favouritism, you have acted against God’s will.

At this point, one might feel that James is placing too much emphasis on the law. But he continues by indicated that the law by which Christians are judged is ***the law that gives freedom***. We are not governed by a series of rules and regulations imposed from without oneself. We are governed by the inner compulsion of love. The love of Christ within us makes us desire to do right. This is why the royal law is focused on love of God and love of neighbor rather than a series of regulations. The love of God and the love of our neighbor calls upon us to do that which is best for others and which honours God.

To complete these ideas, James reminds us to show mercy. Loving others leads us to forgive their shortcomings. “All Scripture teaching is agreed that he would find mercy must himself be merciful. And James goes even further, for in the end he says that mercy triumphs over judgment, by which he means that in the day of judgment the man who has shown mercy will find that his mercy has even blotted out his own sin” (Barclay, page 83).

James 2:14-19 Faith and Deeds

What good is it, my brothers, if a man claims to have faith but has no deeds? Can such faith save him? Suppose a brother or sister is without clothes and daily food. If one of you says to him “Go, I wish you well; keep warm and well fed,” but does nothing about his physical needs, what good is it? In the same way, faith by itself, if it is not accompanied by action is dead.

But someone will say, “You have faith; I have deeds.”

Show me your faith without deeds, and I will show you my faith by what I do. You believe that there is one God. Good! Even the demons believe that –and shudder.

James gives a clear picture of the foolishness of assuming that faith is something apart from the real world of needs and worthy action. He points out the irony of assuming that good wishes would meet the needs of hungry people or those without adequate clothing.

James strongly asserts that faith without action is dead. There is tension, of course, for us Christians. We truly cannot meet all of the physical needs of the world in which we live. But we must be sensitive to those needs and carefully balance care for self with care for others. There is much luxury in the world; there is much poverty. Each of us has opportunities to alleviate poverty close to us and far from us.

Another issue is addressed. There have always been those who feel their good deeds will be sufficient to gain their salvation. James is not teaching this. He wants his readers to understand that good deeds are a natural result of our relationship to Christ. Our faith impels us to care for others; it empowers us to put selfishness aside to meet the needs of others.

Even demons admit that God exists, James says, and this causes them to fear. James is arguing against a belief which has no impact on life. The demons believe in God, but continue their evil ways.

Some have felt that James is differing from Paul's emphasis on salvation through faith alone. It is important to realize that Paul begins at the very beginning of the Christian life. No man or woman can earn a right relationship with God. That comes from the free grace of God. It is God's forgiveness of sin offered through Jesus Christ. James is addressing the professing Christian. This person claims to be forgiven. Therefore, he or she must live a new life for he or she is a new person. No man can be saved by works; by no one can be saved without producing works. We are not saved by deeds; we are saved for deeds.

Your Goal as the Leader of this Bible Study:

Helping people in your group to consider the truth that how they live—especially how they treat people in need or considered insignificant—proves or disproves the reality of their faith.

For Personal Reflection:

What have I learned from this study?

What personal experience does this lesson bring to mind?

What is one action I will take this week to apply this Scripture passage to my life?

Bible Study Plan (Suggested time: 35 minutes)

How to Tell When Your Faith Is Real

Regroup the church after the Gathering Time and break by singing a chorus that young children can relate to—or another praise chorus if your congregation does not have children. Children who go to their own Bible teaching session should stay with the group until after this song. Have the preschoolers and children accompany the hymn with rhythm sticks, maracas, bells, etc.

Begin by helping the group locate the Focal Text in their Bibles. Also, share with them the Main Idea to be learned from the Scriptures, and the Questions to be Explored by the group.

Focal Text

James 2:1-19

Background

James 2

Main Idea

Real faith expresses itself in Christ-like living, especially in loving actions shown without favouritism to people in need or considered insignificant.

Question to Explore

How does how you live—especially how you treat people in need or considered insignificant—prove or disprove the reality of your faith?

Teaching Aim

To help the church define real faith according to James 2 and decide what the definition says about their faith.

Connect with Life:

Open the Bible study by sharing this fun story: A couple had the good fortune to be seated in the front row of the economy class on a four hour flight across Canada. That row allows for more leg room and is more comfortable than seats further back. A man was seated in the window seat and the wife noticed the elegance and beauty of his suit coat, shirt, and tie. The man spoke politely and settled into his work on a computer.

Later in the flight, the flight attendant for the business class or first class section came back with a glass of ice cream and reached across the couple and spoke to the man.

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How to Tell When Your Faith Is Real – 12-32-02-en

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"Mr. Armani, would you like some ice cream?. I know you are usually seated in the first class section."

The couple was seated next to Mr. Armani, of Giorgio Armani, the international Italian fashion house which is synonymous with high-fashion, and is a prestigious name in the fashion industry.

Not only was the flight attendant so impressed with Mr. Armani that she made sure he had the ice cream designated only for first class passengers, the couple was so impressed to be sitting by him that they didn't care that they were offered no ice cream!

It was a pleasant surprise at the end of the journey to discover that Mr. Armani was traveling with a number of his business associates who were in first class. When there were not enough first class seats available, he insisted they be in first class and he traveled in economy class. A good gesture from the head of the company.

How easily impressed we are by famous, rich or finely dressed people.

It is true today and it was true when James wrote the passage we are to study today.

Guide the Study:

Have someone read James 2: 1-7.

Ask: How does the title James gives Jesus in verse 1 help set this behaviour in perspective? (How can we address "our Lord Jesus Christ" and then act as if one person is more valuable than another?)

Have someone describe the mental picture which James paints in verses 2-4.

Question the group about similar instances of favouritism which might exist in today's world.

From the background material discuss the world favouritism. Comment on its implications for home churches.

Ask: According to verse 5, who has been chosen to be rich in faith and to inherit the kingdom?

Comment: In the early church many believers were poor. The poor had much to gain by accepting the gospel; the rich had more to lose. However, in some congregations both rich and poor worshipped side by side. The slave who accepted Christ earlier might be leading the worship attended by his master. In many countries of the world

today, there is a more open attitude toward the mixing of socio-economic classes. That would not have been true in New Testament time.

Ask: What does James say about how the rich treated the poor?

Now inquire: Would James approve of a poor person being treated better than a rich person. (No, the whole point of the passage is that no one should be treated better or worse because of money, fancy clothes or any external cause).

Have someone read Acts 11: 25-26.

Seek an answer: What is the noble name by which they were called? (Christians – first used at Antioch were Barnabas and Saul (Paul) had preached and taught for a year.)

Have someone read verses 8-13.

Now ask: What is the royal law? See Matthew 22:37.

Also have someone read Leviticus 19:18.

Use Barclay's description of the royal law to emphasize its importance:

Barclay says that the royal law "may mean the law which is of supreme excellence, the highest part of the law. It may mean the law which is given by the King of the kings, that which is uniquely the law of the king. It may mean that the great injunction is the king of all laws, that it in fact is the law in the light of which all other laws must be used and judged and applied. It could just possibly mean the law that makes kings and is fit for kings. Christians are a royal priesthood belong to God (Revelation 1:6). To keep that greatest law is to become king of oneself and a king among men. It is a law fit for those who are royal, and able to make men royal" (Barclay, page 80).

Urge a discussion of this important question: Is it possible to break some laws and not others?

Follow with this: Does doing good some of the time make up for doing bad according to verses 10-12?

Ask someone to reread verse 12.

Discuss: What is different about the laws of the Old Testament and the "law that gives freedom"?

Depending on the response to the above, you may need to share this: The law that gives freedom guides one to do right because of an inner compulsion to honour God. Old Testament laws (and many laws and regulations) were/are external to one's self. If

no one made someone obey or punished one for disobeying, it was often more convenient to disobey.

Say: It is important that we help children and new Christians to understand that we do good because we want to please and honour God, not just to avoid punishment.

Ask someone to reread verse 13.

Describe this concept: Another important concept is introduced. Mercy is of great importance. We must give mercy (forgiveness) if we are to expect to receive mercy.

Have someone read James 2: 14-17.

State: The big question that James asked is “What good is it to have faith, but not express that faith in good deeds?”

Inquire: What is the picture which James gives here? (Telling a person who is hungry and has no warm clothes to be warm and well-fed, but not giving him food or clothing)

Add: Consider how we do this by listening to news broadcasts or reading stories about needy persons, but making no contribution to alleviating the suffering.

Seek an answer: Does this mean we earn our salvation by our good deeds? (No, James is teaching that the result of our being transformed by Christ in a genuine salvation experience is our desire to do good deeds).

Now ask for opinions on this: What kind of belief did James say demons have? (They believe in God, may even be afraid of Him, but continue to act as they have always do. Their “faith” is dead.)

Encourage Application:

If you have two or more youth, this is the time to give them the **Youth!!! Take Ten** page and allow them to move away from the adults and apply the lesson by and for themselves.

List the teachings of this passage on a white board or large piece of paper.

Don't show favouritism.

Understand and practice the teachings of the royal law.

Do good, not because of external rules and laws, but because you want to honour God.

Demonstrate your faith by good deeds.

Take a five minute break to separate the Bible Study and Worship Time. Children may need to use the washroom again before worship.

Youth!!! Take Ten

Bible Study Application for Youth

You may wish to move away from the adults for the final five to ten minutes of the Bible study and help each other as youth to apply the lesson to your own needs.

How to Tell When Your Faith Is Real

James 2:1-19

A youth will lead the following activity and comments. No adults need to be present. If possible, teens should take turns in leading the application time.

Can You Guess Who is Really Important?

Name some of the well-known athletes, musicians, or actors that you would be impressed to see. What would you do to get to see your favorite musician perform live?

How would you feel and how would you respond if a famous actor introduced himself or herself to you?

Would you feel the same way if someone you never heard of introduced himself or herself to you?

Wouldn't it be a shame if you missed the opportunity to spend time with a good friend, a cousin, or meet a really neat new friend because your only focus was on someone "important" or "exciting".

What if you ignored a new person at church because the captain of the football team was there that day? What if you missed the chance to welcome someone who decided to "try church just one time" because you were focused on impressing the cute, popular girl from school.

James just might have a word for you.

Worship Time (Suggested time: 30 minutes)***How to Tell When Your Faith Is Real*****James 2:1-19****Beginning the Service:**

Sing:

In This Very Room, *The Worship Hymnal* # 157; CCLI # 31267**We Are One in the Bond of Love**, *The Worship Hymnal* # 387; CCLI # 14459**Offering:****Praying for the World:**

A church in the middle of a city dump, which more than 3,000 people call home, is a light shining in Egypt. A young man who moved to the community as a teenager leads the church. It is a difficult place to minister. The ancient country of Egypt is undergoing many changes; it is increasingly difficult to share the Christian faith. Pray for this young man and others like him who bravely share the good news of Christ in Egypt.

Sharing Guide:

This sharing guide is written to assist the person who directs the worship time to reemphasize the teaching for the day and help guide the congregation to respond to God's call and will for their lives in regard to the scripture studied. The leader may choose to follow the guide closely. Or, he or she may wish to only use it to give direction and a concept for preparing an original message. The leader is free to choose other ways to communicate and share the concepts presented here.

Teach me, O Lord

Psalm 119: 33-25

Teach me, O Lord, to follow your decrees;***Then I will keep them to the end.******Give me understanding, and I will keep your law***©2001-2010, Eternal Interactive, LLC, All Rights Reserved. www.homechurchonline.com***How to Tell When Your Faith Is Real – 12-32-02-en***

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***And obey it with all my heart.
Direct me in the path of your commands,
For there I find delight.
Turn my heart toward your statutes,
And not toward selfish gain.
Turn my eyes away from worthless things;
Preserve my life according to your word.***

Show me your faith without deeds, and I will show you my faith by what I do. You believe that there is one God. Good! Even the demons believe that –and shudder.

James 2:18

We sometimes forget the joy – the delight- which understanding and keeping God's commandments brought to Old Testament Jewish followers. We know that the many intricate laws which had arisen in the time of Jesus prevented many people from keeping all of the regulations placed on them. We know that the temple had become a place of money changers and things were so far from what was holy that Jesus said ***My house will be called a house of prayer, but you are making it a 'den of robbers.*** Matthew 21:13.

We are glad that the burden of keeping the law was taken away from Jesus' sacrificial death of the cross. We like to think of the teaching of Jesus to ***"Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind." This is the first and greatest commandment. And the second is like it: "Love your neighbor as yourself". All the Law and the Prophets hang on these two commandments.*** Matthew 22: 37-40.

Later in chapter 23, verse 23 of Matthew Jesus admonished the Jewish leaders - ***Woe to you, teachers of the law and Pharisees, you hypocrites! You give a tenth of your spices – mint, dill, and cumin. But you have neglected the more important matters of the law – justice, mercy, and faithfulness. You should have practiced the latter, without neglecting the former.***

Jesus commented on the fact that the teachers of the law and the Pharisees were careful to even tithe their household spices, but had failed to be just, merciful and faithful to God with their inner beings. They were focused on external laws and obedience.

This is not true of the psalmist. He promised to follow the decrees of the Lord to the end of his life. He desired understanding so that his obedience would be an internal commitment – an obedience of the heart. He wanted to delight in the commands; he did delight in the commands of the Lord. He wanted to avoid selfish gain and to not spend his time and energy on worthless things. He asked that his life be preserved according to the word of the Lord.

Jesus taught that the Law and the Prophets – the teachings of the Old Testament prophets, the Ten Commandments – were subservient to loving the Lord God with heart, soul and mind and loving one's neighbor as one's own self. Overshadowed by these great commitments, obeying the law takes its appropriate place. In Matthew 5:17 Jesus taught ***Do not think that I have come to abolish the Law or the Prophets; I have not come to abolish them, but to fulfill them.***

We are not slaves to the law, but we want to honour God in all we do. We can, like the Psalmist, ask the Lord for understanding and help to obey. We can make choices which lead us away from unholy gain and worthless things. We can delight in obedience until the end of our days.

This must be what James meant for us to learn when he wrote ***Show me your faith without deeds, and I will show you my faith by what I do.***

Call to Commitment:

Pray that we may show our faith in acts of worship and service this week.

Concluding the Service:

Sing

Freely, Freely, *The Worship Hymnal* # 627; CCLI # 13209

Just as I Am

Just as I am, without one plea, But that Thy blood was shed for me,
And that Thou bidd'st me come to Thee, O Lamb of God, I come! I come!

Just as I am, and waiting not to rid my soul of one dark blot,
To Thee whose blood can cleanse each spot, O Lamb of God, I come! I come!

Just as I am, though tossed about with many a conflict, many a doubt,
Fightings within and fears without, O Lamb of God, I come! I come!

Just as O am. Poor, wretched, blind; Sight, riches, healing of the mind.
Yea, all I need in Thee to find, O Lamb of God, I come! I come!

Just as I am, Thou wilt receive, Wilt welcome, pardon, cleanse, relieve.
Because Thy promise I believe, O Lamb of God, I come! I come!

Just as I am, Thy love unknown hath broken ev'ry barrier down;
Now to be Thine, yea, Thine alone, O Lamb of God, I come! I come!

Just As I Am; The Worship Hymnal # 435; CCLI # 23206 Public Domain

++++++(Cut here)++++++

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