

James: Growing Up in Christ

Week Four: James 2:14-26 (with Romans 4)

Small Group Discussion Questions

1. What is the biblical relationship between faith, works and salvation?
2. What is cheap grace (see quote below)? Bonhoeffer said that cheap grace was the deadly enemy of the church in his day (1930s and 1940s in Germany). To what extent is this true in our day? How have you seen cheap grace rear its ugly head in the church, in believers, or in your own life?
3. Why do you think so many people think they can “come to Christ” but remain, for the most part, unchanged? What are the theological and cultural forces that make such a belief possible?
4. Talk about “the problem of demons with good theology” (v. 19). Talk about a time when you were ‘right’ but, at the same time, unloving and ungracious.
5. What is James saying about Abraham’s faith and works?
6. Has God ever given you instructions that didn’t make any sense? Did you obey Him or ignore Him? Is God asking you to trust Him in some way right now that’s difficult?
7. *If there’s time, take a look at Romans 4 and compare and contrast what Paul says with what James says in 2:20-24. Do they contradict one another? Would Paul and James be able to sit down together and agree about faith, works and salvation?*
8. Do you need Paul’s gospel or James’ gospel? Why? (This question is not meant to suggest that they are different gospels, but that they are applied differently to different people, struggling with different things. For example: you might say that Paul’s gospel is for those struggling with legalism and self-righteousness and James’ gospel is for those struggling with complacency and cheap grace.)
9. What is costly grace (see quote below)? What makes it costly? How is it different from cheap grace?
10. When did God’s costly grace take hold of your heart? What changed when it did? How does encounter/discovery continue to power your walk with Christ?
11. Contrast the man in verses 15-16 with Rahab in verse 25. How are they different?
12. How has your faith led you to leave your comfort zone, take risks and get your hands dirty? Would your closest friends say that your relationship with Jesus is safe, predictable and tidy—or dangerous, adventurous and messy?

Close in Prayer Together.

“Cheap grace is the preaching of forgiveness without requiring repentance...it’s grace without discipleship, grace without the cross, grace without Jesus Christ, living and incarnate...Cheap grace means the justification of sin without the justification of the sinner. Grace alone does everything they say, and so everything can remain as it was before. Well, then, let the Christian live like the rest of the world, let him model himself on the world’s standards in every sphere of life, and not presumptuously aspire to live a different life under grace from his old life under sin...” -*Dietrich Bonhoeffer, the Cost of Discipleship*

“Costly grace is the kingly rule of Christ, for whose sake a man will pluck out the eye which causes him to stumble...Such grace is *costly* because it calls us to follow, but it is *grace* because it calls us to follow *Jesus Christ*....It is costly because it costs a man his life, and it is grace because it gives a man the only true life. It is costly because it condemns sin, and grace because it justifies the sinner. Above all, it is costly because it cost God the life of his Son: “you were bought at a price,” and what has cost God much cannot be cheap for us. Above all, it is grace because God did not reckon His Son too dear a price to pay for our life, but delivered Him up for us. Costly grace is the Incarnation of God. -*Dietrich Bonhoeffer, the Cost of Discipleship*