

Introduction to Homework

In his epistle, James exhorts the Jewish Christians of the 1st Century on how to live a life of authentic faith. He calls all Christians to examine their faith in light of Jesus' teachings regarding what he calls the royal law: loving your neighbor. Each week we will look at different aspects of authentic faith – faith that withstands temptation and trial; faith that fosters self-control; faith that actively puts others first; faith that recognizes the value of each individual in the eyes of God; faith that is compassionate, loving and merciful; and, faith that is humble and gentle in spirit – all of which are integral to a living faith that fosters spiritual maturity. James challenges each of us to look deeply into our thoughts, words and actions asking ourselves if they reflect a true and living faith in Jesus.

Each week in our class meeting we will discuss the preceding week's homework, giving the most attention to discussion questions marked with  . Following the homework discussion I will present additional scriptural material relevant to our passages of study, or I will provide historical background information that will help us better place upcoming scripture readings in context. (If you have missed the lecture presented during the class, notes are available on-line and listed as "Lesson Notes". The lesson notes cover the majority of the material presented in class.) Homework packets will be handed out at the end of each class meeting and are also available on-line at www.livingingodsword.org.

Homework will primarily focus on studying scripture passages from the Book of Acts, and may include thematically related scripture passages from both the Old and New Testaments. Before reading each selection, spend a few minutes in prayer asking the Lord to help you understand what he would have you learn (and share!) from each passage. You may uncover a truth that I or others missed. (It's been known to happen!) Read the selected passage and answer the questions that follow. The first few questions will be straight forward from the reading itself designed to inspire careful reading of details, and to point in the direction of why the passage was chosen. The next few questions will require more thought, perhaps a link to another related passage, and will require you to come to some kind of conclusion related to the scriptures. Among these questions will likely be a marked discussion question that will be discussed in our next meeting. Complete the homework as best as you can, and as best as your time allows! God will surely bless you for whatever time you put into your homework. Even if your week (heaven forbid!) doesn't allow you to complete (or even start – now I'm scandalized!) your homework, come to our weekly meeting anyway. You will still benefit from our discussions and hopefully be encouraged to stick with it!

One of the things I have discovered in studying the Bible is that the more I do it, the more I crave it! When I am not in the Word of God for any length of time, short or long, I desperately miss it. I feel out of touch with the One I most adore, I long for Him, and when I get back into his Word I am refreshed, renewed, and I know I have been missed, too! Spending time with Jesus is the most important thing we can do for ourselves and our loved ones. His influence emanates from us and affects those around us. Through us we spread his light to the world. *Lord, let each one of us be a beacon drawing those in the dark closer to you!*