

Counterfeit Christianity

Two Distinguishing Characteristics of Genuine Christianity

Introduction: Priming the pump for tonight's discussion.

- Let's begin with our own observations. What is one thing that stood out to you from the message that you would share with the group? Was there a moment where God spoke to you personally through His Word?

Exploration: Questions to guide our group discussion.

- We learned this week that a genuine Christian lives an exchanged life and an obedient life. Christians grow over time to look more like Jesus, but when we meet Jesus, He really does change our hearts. We should be moving further from the old nature and deeper into a walk in the Spirit. We learned that taking in the Word of God is paramount in this transformation. Let's discuss the importance of the Bible in a Christian's life, and share some practical ways that we've found to plant the Word of God in our souls.
- Like changing out of an old stained set of clothes, and putting on clean garments, a Christian should be putting away our old sinful life and taking on a life of continued obedience to Jesus. What does James say about a person whose life bears no indication of transformation, whose life bears no actual fruit of salvation? What would you say to a friend or loved one who claimed to be a Christian, but whose life lacked the evidence that James described?
- James described the Bible as a spiritual mirror that reflects back to a Christian how he or she looks in contrast with Jesus. When we see our disheveled state, a Christian is supposed to make adjustments based on the Word in order to conform to Godliness. Considering 2 Timothy 3:16-17, what are four ways that the mirror of God's Word reflects Christ to us?
- James and Paul are sometimes viewed in contradiction, but we've learned that there is no real contradiction. James simply cannot fathom a real Christian faith that doesn't do what Jesus taught. James might say...people do what they actually believe. In your opinion, how does acting on what we say that we believe demonstrate genuine faith in a way far greater than words alone?

Additional Scriptures for Deeper Study:

- Philippians 2:12-13
- 1 Thessalonians 3:1-8
- Matthew 7:15-23
- 2 Timothy 3:1-15

Application: How can I apply this to my life this week?

- As we think about James' challenge that genuine faith bears itself out in both an exchanged life, and by an obedient life, are there "checks" in your own heart from the Holy Spirit about this that would lead you to confirm your own walk with Christ? Has this study revealed a need to examine, or to confirm, the genuine nature of your own faith?
- What areas in our Christian life are more talk than action? Are there areas where the ideals or values that you speak need to become real in what you do? Would you talk to God about this, and perhaps share your decision with a trusted friend?