



Where's the Beef!

Adapted from "Demands of Discipleship" series by Dennis Marquardt.

Have you ever walked into a dark room? Upon entering, you have the faith that the light switch will turn on the light and rid the room of darkness but until we flip the switch, the room remains dark. We have the faith that the electrical system will work but if we do not act, it will not come to pass. In today's day and age, we have all wanted to go from one place to another and the usual mode of transportation is a vehicle of some sort, whether it be a car, a bus, a train or an airplane. We have the faith to believe that the vehicle will transport us from one place to another but until we get on board, we will be left standing in one place.

Our Christianity is a lot like transport from one place to another. We can believe that we can have works of faith but until we jump on board and begin to ride the "works train", we will be left standing on the platform. Once we have come to know Christ and have walked with Him a while, there comes a time when our faith must be put into action. We can become so comfortable in Christ that we allow our faith to just stand there but Christ has called us to faith with works.

Most men have some sort of exercise plan. The key to any exercise plan to be successful is how well we keep up with doing the daily routines. Some start strong, only to fail a few days into it. Others go for a longer distance but allow other things to creep into their schedules and thus cut out the time they spent exercising. To be successful whether in exercising or anything for that matter, we must have a definite schedule and keep it.

The problem with Christianity has always been the tendency of moving off center to either of two extremes. It is either all "faith" and no works, or all "works" and little faith. Conservative Christians sometimes find themselves guilty of only emphasizing the soul, and liberal Christianity has too often been guilty of ignoring it and ministering to the physical needs of man only. The Bible teaches us that being called to a life of faith requires more than just the acceptance of Christ as our Savior, it also means a life of actions that reflect the very nature of Jesus' own life.

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COURAGE

C1: Read and answer or discuss the following.

Ephesians 2:8–10 (ESV) For by grace you have been saved through faith. And this is not your own doing; it is the gift of God, not a result of works, so that no one may boast. For we are his workmanship, created in Christ Jesus for good works, which God prepared beforehand, that we should walk in them.

- Do you ever do a “good deed” to try and get a pat on the back from God?
- Do you have the courage to accept that getting into heaven has nothing to do with works? Why is this difficult for men to accept?
- Have you accepted, based upon faith, that Jesus died and rose for your opportunity to be saved? Have you accepted Jesus Christ as our Lord and Savior? If not, why?

James 2:14–26 (ESV) What good is it, my brothers, if someone says he has faith but does not have works? Can that faith save him? If a brother or sister is poorly clothed and lacking in daily food, and one of you says to them, “Go in peace, be warmed and filled,” without giving them the things needed for the body, what good is that? So also faith by itself, if it does not have works, is dead. But someone will say, “You have faith and I have works.” Show me your faith apart from your works, and I will show you my faith by my works. You believe that God is one; you do well. Even the demons believe—and shudder! Do you want to be shown, you foolish person, that faith apart from works is useless? Was not Abraham our father justified by works when he offered up his son Isaac on the altar? You see that faith was active along with his works, and faith was completed by his works; and the Scripture was fulfilled that says, “Abraham believed God, and it was counted to him as righteousness”—and he was called a friend of God. You see that a person is justified by works and not by faith alone. And in the same way was not also Rahab the prostitute justified by works when she received the messengers and sent them out by another way? For as the body apart from the spirit is dead, so also faith apart from works is dead.

- Faith comes first then works. How do you balance the two?
- Describe the tension between faith without works and works without faith?
- Understanding that even demons believe in God and have works, how is your faith and works different from theirs?
- What kind of works should Christian men be doing after salvation?

C2: Read and answer or discuss the following.

Colossians 1:10 (ESV) So as to walk in a manner worthy of the Lord, fully pleasing to him: bearing fruit in every good work and increasing in the knowledge of God.

- If you have accepted Christ as your Savior, has your life changed at all? How?
- What does the phrase “bear fruit” mean to you?
- Once you accept Christ, what are some ways your life should be transformed?
- Is there more than just attending Sunday mornings to being a Christian?

2 Corinthians 9:8 (ESV) And God is able to make all grace abound to you, so that having all sufficiency in all things at all times, you may abound in every good work.

Matthew 5:16 (ESV) In the same way, let your light shine before others, so that they may see your good works and give glory to your Father who is in heaven.

- How will God supply all you need when you do good works?

- What are some of the good works you can do in your family, church community, and work environment?

- What do you believe the greatest work you can do is? Why? How often do you do this greatest work?

STRENGTH

S1: Read and answer or discuss the following.

Ephesians 2:8–10 (ESV)

- On a scale of 1-4 with 1 being very strong and 4 being not very strong, rate how strong your faith is in Christ? How can you strengthen your faith in Christ?
- What do you believe about doing “good works”? How is “good works” tied to salvation?

James 2:14–26 (ESV)

- What do you understand about James’ comparison between works and faith? What is the difference between Paul’s understanding when it comes to faith verses works?
- What are some doctrinal truths about faith? About works?

S2: Read and answer or discuss the following.

Colossians 1:10 (ESV)

- Paul speaks of walking in a manner worthy of the Lord, what does this mean to you?
- Paul tells the believer that we should bear fruit in every good work. What does that look like to you?

- What actions do you believe God expects from those calling themselves Christians?

2 Corinthians 9:8 (ESV)

Matthew 5:16 (ESV)

- How have people seen your faith in Christ displayed?
- What would be the greatest work we can do for Christ? How often do you participate in the greatest work for Christ?
- Paul wrote that God is able to make all grace abound to us. Why would God make that available to us, for what purpose?
- On a scale of 1-4 with 1 being very important and 4 being not very important, rate how important sharing your faith with others is to you. How often do you share your faith with others? Write out a plan to improve sharing your faith.

ENDURANCE

E1: Read and answer or discuss the following.

Ephesians 2:8–10 (ESV)

- On a scale of 1 to 4 with 1 being very high and 4 being not very high, rate your walking in good works after salvation? Write out a plan to improve doing good works.
- How has God called you to not only have faith in Him but to put your faith into action?

James 2:14–26 (ESV)

- What are your thoughts concerning your faith needing to be shown by your works?
- How have you shown your faith in Christ by being a man of action for the Kingdom of God?
- Being a mature believer in Christ, how has your salvation transformed you into a man of action?

E2: Read and answer or discuss the following.

Colossians 1:10 (ESV)

- As a follower of Christ, should you do more than just pray for people? If so, what?
- On a scale of 1-4 with 1 being very strong and 4 being not very strong, rate how strong your spiritual muscles are. Write out a plan to improve.
- What expectations can you place on your walk with Christ whereby your faith is shown by works?

2 Corinthians 9:8 (ESV)

Matthew 5:16 (ESV)

- How important is it that our actions display our salvation? How well are you doing in displaying your actions? Why?
- Is sharing Christ with others an action of your faith? How well are you sharing your faith with others? How can you improve?

E3: Rate your “works” on a scale of 1-4 with 1 being the highest and 4 the lowest meaning there is fruit from your actions. What is keeping you from moving up the “works” scale?

- Like an exercise program you may have set up for physical bodies, what spiritual exercise plan will you set up for the next thirty days to engage in acts of “good works”?