

This midweek study will explore the biblical notions of justification and works. Use the following main points, Scriptures, teaching discussion ideas, and questions to help students gain a better understanding of the essential doctrine for this session.

Essential Doctrine: Justification and Works

Justification is not the result of human effort or good works; it comes through faith in the righteousness of Christ. Although good works do not lead to justification, justification leads to good works in the life of a believer (Eph. 2:10). Faith without works is dead (Jas. 2:17). While good works do not establish justification, they do verify a genuine faith and make our justification evident to others.

1 The purpose of the Law is to show us that our works won't justify us (Rom. 3:20; Gal. 3:19).

Option: Ask students if they can recite the Ten Commandments in order. If no one can, see who can list off the most. Ask them to raise their hands if they have broken at least one of these commandments.

- ▶ *Do you think it would be possible for you to go just one day without breaking one of the Ten Commandments? Would that be difficult? Why or why not?*

Read Romans 3:20 and Galatians 3:19.

- ▶ *According to these passages, what does God's Law show us about ourselves?*
- ▶ *What do these verses tell us about the possibility of earning our salvation through works of the Law?*

The Law was given to show us we were sinners. Since the Law sets an impossibly high standard for righteousness, we are made aware of our inability to do enough good works to meet that standard.

2 Justification is by faith alone (Gal. 3:11; 5:16).

Option: Instruct students to imagine they are in a courtroom with God sitting in the judge's seat. If He asks them why He should let them into heaven, what would their answers be? There aren't enough good works in us to even stand a chance before God. Therefore, the only hope we have in standing before Him would be faith in the finished work of Christ on our behalf.

- ▶ *Define the word faith. What does it mean to have faith in Jesus?*

Read Galatians 3:11.

- ▶ *If our righteousness can't be found through doing good things, how does this passage tell us we will be made righteous?*
- Had we been justified by good works, we would get some of the credit for our salvation. Since our right standing before God can only be through Jesus Christ, then He gets all the glory for our salvation. When justification is by faith, Christ gets all the glory.
- ▶ *Why do you think every other religion makes salvation about doing good works? What does "faith alone" say about the character of the one true God?*

3 Saving faith is not alone (Matt. 7:15-20; Jas. 2:17).

Read James 2:17.

- ▶ *What did James mean when he said that, without works, faith is dead?*
- ▶ *Do good works produce faith or does faith produce good works? Explain.*

True saving faith produces in us a desire to do good works. Good works don't precede faith, but faith brings good works. If we claim to have faith in Christ, but do not desire to live the way He has called us to live, our faith might be fake.

WRAP IT UP

- ▶ *Allow someone to give a brief explanation about how a sinner is justified before God. How is this different from other religions?*
- ▶ *What is the relationship between faith and works? Which comes first?*

True faith in Jesus Christ produces righteous deeds in believers' lives.