

# JAMES MANDATE & MISSION

*New City Church: Study Guide*

*Week 4 - July 8<sup>th</sup> 2012*

**Read:** James 2:14-26

## **Reflection:**

For the untrained horticulturist, deciphering different types of trees prior to the production of fruit would be quite a difficult task. However, as soon as the produce begins to appear, even a child could point out the difference between an apple and pear tree. Jesus, in Matthew 7, uses this example in reference to determining the true nature of one's faith, "you can tell a tree by its fruits." Similarly, James tells us that those who claim to have faith and yet have no works (fruit) to back up this profession, actually have no faith at all. True saving faith produces action; therefore, there is no such thing as a neutral faith.

In Ezekiel 36:26, referring to the coming Holy Spirit, God promises His people that, "...I will give you a new heart, and a new spirit I will put within you." Then in 2 Corinthians 5:17 Paul tells us that, "...if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation. The old has passed away; behold, the new has come." So we see that a true saving faith results in a transformed heart, which produces transformed hopes, cares, loves, passions, wants and purposes. James tells us that while our good works are incapable of saving us and give us no merit to the grace of Jesus, it is impossible to have been saved by Jesus and not have works that accompany this profession. In the words of Paul Tripp, "True faith will always produce a life changing Love for God which, as a result, will always produce a life structuring love of others."

## **Questions:**

1. Read 2 Corinthians 5:14-17 and Ezekiel 36:22-29. How do the words of Paul and this Old Testament prophecy about the coming of the Holy Spirit relate to the phrase "faith without works is dead?" How do one's actions signify a dead faith?
2. What is James referring to when he says, "was not also Rahab the prostitute justified by works...?" (Joshua chapter 2). How does this passage correspond with the message in Ephesians 2:8-9, which says, "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." Do these two passages contradict each other? Why or why not?
3. Read Matthew 7:15-20 and Galatians 5:22-23. Do these passages give you comfort or conjure questions about your faith? Personally, do your works mirror the transformation that has taken place in your heart or are they evidences of an unredeemed life? How does the Gospel give us hope here?
4. Paul Tripp made the statement that, "True faith will always produce a life changing love for God which, as a result, will always produce a life structuring love of others." What does "a life structuring love of others" look like? How does this message challenge?