

When Are Good Works Good in God's Eyes?

A man approaches an attractive woman and says, "Don't ever expect me to ever give you any gifts. If you want to live in a nice house, you'll have to pay for it. If you want to ride in a nice car, you're going to have to go out and buy it yourself. Don't ever expect me to tell you that I love you. Will you marry me?" How would you expect that woman to respond?

Do you think she would appreciate his honesty? What if he just lied to her, and told her he would treat her like a princess? What's the difference between what he said, and the lie he could have said if he was going to do the same thing either way?

When a person comes to Jesus and asks for Him to forgive their sins should they do anything after that? What should they be doing if they really love Jesus as their Savior?

To put it another way, is a wedding the beginning of a story or the end of a story?

How are good works any good if they aren't living expressions of love for Jesus?

In some ways the relationship between Jesus and Believers is similar to the relationship between a bride and groom.

⁹ Then came one of the seven angels who had the seven bowls full of the seven last plagues and spoke to me, saying, "Come, I will show you **the Bride, the wife of the Lamb.**" Revelation 21:9 (ESV)

Faith without works is dead faith, but works without faith are dead works.

¹⁴ What good is it, my brothers, if someone says he has faith but does not have works? Can that faith save him? ¹⁵ If a brother or sister is poorly clothed and lacking in daily food, ¹⁶ 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? ¹⁷ So **also faith by itself, if it does not have works, is dead.** ¹⁸ 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. ¹⁹ You believe that God is one; you do well. Even the demons believe—and shudder! ²⁰ Do you want to be shown, you foolish person, that **faith apart from works is useless?**

²¹ "Not everyone who says to me, 'Lord, Lord,' will enter the kingdom of heaven, but the one who does the will of my Father who is in heaven. ²² On that day **many will say to me, 'Lord, Lord, did we not prophesy in your name, and cast out demons in your name, and do many mighty works in your name?'** ²³ And **then will I declare to them, 'I never knew you; depart from me, you workers of lawlessness.'** Matthew 7:21–23 (ESV)

- How does Jesus measure good works?
- Why should we do good works?

Only a person born again in Christ, and made new, can have both faith and works. Good works are only good works if they arise from faith in Jesus Christ.

⁶ And **without faith it is impossible to please him**, for whoever would draw near to God must believe that he exists and that **he rewards those who seek him.** Hebrews 11:6 (ESV)

²⁸ Then they said to him, "**What must we do, to be doing the works of God?**" ²⁹ Jesus answered them, "This is the work of God, that you **believe in him whom he has sent.**" John 6:28–29 (ESV)

⁴⁶ "Why do you call me 'Lord, Lord,' and not do what I tell you? ⁴⁷ **Everyone who comes to me and hears my words and does them**, I will show you what he is like: ⁴⁸ **he is like a man building a house**, who dug deep and **laid the foundation on the rock.** And when a flood arose, the stream broke against that house and could not shake it, because it had been well built. ⁴⁹ But **the one who hears and does not do them is like a man who built a house on the ground without a foundation.** When the stream broke against it, immediately it fell, and the ruin of that house was great." Luke 6:46–49 (ESV)

³ And **by this we know that we have come to know him, if we keep his commandments.** ⁴ Whoever says "I know him" but does not keep his commandments is a liar, and the truth is not in him, ⁵ but **whoever keeps his word, in him truly the love of God is perfected.** By this we may know that we are in him: ⁶ whoever says he abides in him **ought to walk in the same way in which he walked.** 1 John 2:3–6 (ESV)

- What's the difference between a good work and a work that appears to be good but isn't good?
- What kind of foundation will cause a "house" to withstand a spiritual disaster?

But, if I do good works in order to get right with God, then they aren't good works.

²³ for all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God, ²⁴ and are **justified by his grace as a gift, through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus,** ²⁵ whom God put forward as a propitiation by his blood, to be received by faith. This was to show God's righteousness, because in his divine forbearance he had passed over former sins. Romans 3:23–25 (ESV)

¹⁶ yet we know that **a person is not justified by works** of the law **but through faith in Jesus Christ**, so we also have believed in Christ Jesus, in order to be **justified by faith in Christ** and **not by works of the law**, because **by works of the law no one will be justified**. Galatians 2:16 (ESV)

²³ “Woe to you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! For **you tithe mint and dill and cumin, and have neglected the weightier matters of the law: justice and mercy and faithfulness**. These you ought to have done, without neglecting the others. ²⁴ You blind guides, straining out a gnat and swallowing a camel! ²⁵ “Woe to you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! For you clean the outside of the cup and the plate, but inside they are full of greed and self-indulgence. ²⁶ You blind Pharisee! First clean the inside of the cup and the plate, that the outside also may be clean. ²⁷ “Woe to you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! For **you are like whitewashed tombs, which outwardly appear beautiful, but within are full of dead people’s bones and all uncleanness**. ²⁸ So you also **outwardly appear righteous** to others, but **within you are full of hypocrisy and lawlessness**. Matthew 23:23–28 (ESV)

- If nothing I do can make me right with God, what hope can I have of ever getting right with God?
- Can my good works make me right with God?

If I do good works as an expression of my love for Jesus Christ then, and only then, am I doing good works that are truly good, and pleasing, to God.

¹⁴ For the love of Christ controls us, because we have concluded this: that one has died for all, therefore all have died; ¹⁵ and he died for all, that **those who live might no longer live for themselves but for him** who for their sake died and was raised. 2 Corinthians 5:14–15 (ESV)

⁹ As the Father has loved me, so have I loved you. Abide in my love. ¹⁰ **If you keep my commandments, you will abide in my love**, just as I have kept my Father’s commandments and abide in his love. John 15:9–10 (ESV)

- Will our relationship with God change if we do good works? (Remember, what is the one and only way I can get right with God.)
- How can living for Jesus’ sake make a person more alive than living for themselves?

This way of life is whole-hearted, fully alive, and vibrant now and forever.

⁷ So Jesus again said to them, “Truly, truly, I say to you, I am the door of the sheep. ⁸ All who came before me are thieves and robbers, but the sheep did not listen to them. ⁹ I am the door. If anyone enters by me, he will be saved and will go in and out and find pasture. ¹⁰ The thief comes only to steal and kill and destroy. **I came that they may have life and have it abundantly**. John 10:7–10 (ESV)

⁹ As the **Father has loved me**, so have **I loved you. Abide in my love**. ¹⁰ If you **keep my commandments, you will abide in my love**, just as I have kept my Father’s commandments and abide in his love. ¹¹ These things I have spoken to you, that my joy may be in you, and **that your joy may be full**. ¹² “This is my commandment, that you love one another as I have loved you. John 15:9–12 (ESV)

²³ **Whatever you do, work heartily, as for the Lord and not for men**, ²⁴ knowing that from the Lord you will receive the inheritance as your reward. **You are serving the Lord Christ**. Colossians 3:23–24 (ESV)

⁶ **For in Christ Jesus** neither circumcision nor uncircumcision counts for anything, but **only faith working through love**. Galatians 5:6 (ESV)

- What is the definition of the abundant life for a person who committed to living for Jesus and not for himself?
- How is this way of life more joyful than living for yourself?

Martin Luther wrote about good works: “The works are acceptable not because of themselves, but because of the faith that alone exists, works, and lives in each and every work without distinction, no matter how many and varied they are, just as all the parts of the body live, work, and get their name from the head, and without the head, no part can live, work, or have a name... For with faith, all works are of equal value, as mentioned before. But if we doubt or do not believe that God is gracious to us and pleased with us, or if we arrogantly think we can please Him only through and after our works, then it is all pure deception.” *Treatise on Good Works*, by Martin Luther.

Have you entered into a loving relationship with Jesus Christ? Are you growing in that relationship of receiving His love and showing love for Him? If you aren’t growing in receiving Christ’s love and giving your love to Jesus, then you need to ask yourself if you have ever entered into a loving relationship with Jesus Christ.

How can you know if you have a loving relationship with Jesus Christ? Do your words and actions show that you do. Are they truly good works, as defined by the Gospel of Jesus Christ?